

Ai-Media is a for-profit social enterprise, founded in 2003, to end the experience of exclusion that people with disability face. Ai-Media's mission statement is *The End of Disability*: while impairment is a fact of life, disability is not.

This document outlines Ai-Media's policy positions ahead of the 2013 federal election.

1. Fiscally responsible (short payback period for investments)
2. Deliver choice and control to individuals
3. Increase workforce participation
4. Increase skills
5. Increase employment (especially in regional Australia)
6. Increase global competitiveness of Australian businesses
7. Reduce welfare payments
8. Foster innovation and creativity
9. Improve education outcomes

Recommendation 1: Introduce a flexible upper limit on Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) in line with NDIS (and international best practice)

Problem & Impact:

- There are financial disincentives to employers hiring people with disability who need assistive technology (such as interpreters, real-time captioning, or attendant care).
- PwD in Work: Current funded employment supports (EAF) only \$115/wk (\$6k p.a.)
- 827,460 Australians on Disability Support Pension on \$404/wk
- Are we prepared to pay more to keep PwD out of work than support them in work (??!!)

Solution:

- Introduce flexible upper limit (in line with NDIS) taking into account functional impairment and access needs at work
- Higher paying jobs likely to require greater supports

Investment Payback Period: Immediate

- Manager with disability on \$125k pays \$36,000/yr in income tax

International Best Practice

- UK – Access To Work and Transition to Work (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplying-dwp/what-we-buy/access-to-work/>) include up to 20% employer co-contributions

Recommendation 2: Provide NDIS-type supports to students in Higher Education

Problem & Impact:

- There is no individualised funding in higher education to facilitate additional support needs for students with disability
- Education excluded from NDIS
- Low participation in HE for PwD – and it's a struggle to get supports when they make it

Solution:

- Apply the NDIS to Higher Education

Investment Payback Period: 3-5 years

- In conjunction with Employment changes

International Best Practice

- UK – Disabled Students Allowance (£20k per annum individualised funding)

Recommendation 3: Implement Gonski Payments for Students with Additional Needs in School Education

Problem & Impact:

- Currently supports are rationed and poorly targeted
- Education excluded from NDIS
- Poor educational outcomes for kids with disability and over-reliance on residual state sector

Solution:

- Apply the NDIS to School Education, or Gonski payments based on need
- Innovation Fund to test new approaches (no current room in fixed budgets)

Investment Payback Period: a lifetime

- In conjunction with HE/NDIS/Employment changes
-

Recommendation 4: Strengthen Australia's innovation system by targeting investments in growth companies

1. Keep R&D incentive scheme
 2. Keep & expand Commercialisation Australia scheme
 3. Innovation Funds in government departments
 4. Look to Israeli model http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3546/Start-up_nation:_An_innovation_story.html
-

Recommendation 5: Reduce Red Tape by having a single filing system for Payroll Tax

- Currently have to submit 7 separate forms with the SAME information each month
 - Compliance costs massive
-

Ai-Live Progress Update

- DEC 2009 – Deaf Yr 9 Student in Western Sydney trials Ai-Live – goes from bottom of class to first in yearly exams in 10 weeks
- JUN 2010 – Ai-Live wins Episode on ABC's The New Inventors (Season Finalist)
- MAR 2011 – Australian Senate Urges Federal Funding support for Ai-Live (no funding mechanisms exist for innovative disability services to improve educational outcomes)
- JUL 2011 – Victorian Deaf Education Institute and University of Melbourne commence independent evaluation of Ai-Live with 30 students in Victoria
- SEP 2011 – Ai-Live awarded \$1.7m Commercialisation Australia Grant to scale up technology for hundreds of concurrent sessions
- JUN 2012 – Ai-Live completes successful international validation pilots in Germany, UK, Netherlands, USA, Singapore and HK
- DEC 2012 – Ai-Live wins 2nd CA Grant to expand autism, cerebral palsy, and those developing literacy. Wins VDEI tender for expanded program.
- JAN 2013 – Initial results of University of Melbourne evaluation demonstrate positive outcomes for students in pilot
- APR 2013 – Ai-Media to apply to UK to extend pilot internationally to cover deaf students, other disabilities, and general application.

Tony Abrahams - Ai-Media CEO – 02 8870 7700 / 0405 369 652 – Tony.Abrahams@ai-media.tv
Alex Jones – Ai-Media Co-Founder – (SMS) 0410 477 883 - Alex.Jones@ai-media.tv

12 March 2013