



MAKING A DIFFERENCE: NDIA'S Lynne Foreman with MP Sarah Henderson and NDIA's Maryanne Diamond at the official opening.

Picture: GLENN FERGUSON

DOORS TO NEW NDIA HQ OPEN

CHAD VAN ESTROP

Designer six-level building all about inclusion

THE \$120 million National Disability Insurance Agency national headquarters in Geelong has opened as the scheme moves to support 460,000 people nationally by next year.

Located on Malop St at the site of the former Carlton Hotel, the six-level building will house 600 NDIA staff by April and inject \$334 million into the Greater Geelong economy, the Federal Government says.

Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services Sarah Henderson said the two-year construction created hundreds of jobs and put \$300 million into the local economy.

"Beyond construction, the building will deliver continued economic benefits for the region," Ms Henderson said.

"The NDIA has become an integral feature of the local community, reinforcing Geelong's position as a centre of

excellence for disability and personal injury insurance."

NDIA CEO Robert De Luca said the office would be well served by the NDIA's diverse workforce.

"Almost 12 per cent of NDIA employees identify as



The interior of the new NDIA headquarters. Picture: GLENN FERGUSON

Minister for Families and Social Services Paul Fletcher said the building led the way in accessibility for those with

having a disability, so this new office will ensure our entire workforce has the accessible facilities, technologies and work environment they need to continue the important work they're doing in delivering the NDIS to Australians

disabilities. "One of the building's key features is the Changing Place facility on the ground

with disability," he said. John McKenna — who works casually for the NDIS and has arthrogryposis, a condition that causes congenital joint contracture — said it was one of the best buildings he had seen in terms of accessi-

floor — a specially designed toilet with an adjustable adult-sized changing table, a tracking hoist system to support lifting and a circulation space to move around the room easily.

"The Changing Place facility exemplifies one of the core values of the NDIS in creating an inclusive society," he said.

The \$200,000 tracking hoist, hundreds of sit-down stand-up desks, signs with brail underneath and lights

that cater to those with light sensitivity issues are just some of the other features spread through the six-level building.

East Geelong disability advocate and NDIA casual employee Lynne Foreman said the building would encourage more people with disabilities to enter the workforce.

"The NDIA is leading the way employing people with disabilities. The simple things like wider doors make a real difference."

bility for those with disabilities. "It's friendly and bright. People with disabilities just want to feel included," Mr McKenna said.

The NDIS has grown from 30,000 participants in 2016 to more than 250,000 today.

Minister for Families and Social Service Paul Fletcher said the scheme is serving 70,000 people who have not previously had access to care.

"It is one of the very powerful indicators of how the NDIS is transforming lives."