



# "MEDIA RELEASE"

16.07.2009

## "ABANDONED?"

The recent horrific court case regarding a father attempting to kill his severely disabled son highlighted how desperate the crisis in SA is for Disability services. With Mental Illness (and divorce rates) running at 80% plus of families with a disabled family member it is only a matter of time before a distraught parent fatally harms their child. Highly respected SA disability service provider the Julia Farr Association has recently released an information paper on why parents harm their disabled children. The inevitable coronial inquiry will deliver a damning assessment.

As the dust settles on the 2009 State Budget and the charade of budget estimates has been played out the real impact for people with disabilities is clear.

While government talks tough on sending lawyers after motorcycle groups, people with a disability in SA have never done it tougher.

Abandoned was the undeniable outcome of this year's Budget for South Australians living with a disability. With waiting lists for essential services beyond crisis the needs of those most vulnerable in our community were blatantly ignored again. One online blogger caustically wrote " We have a C grade Government, ignoring an A grade crisis, making F grade decisions. Not even a media release from Disability Minister Rankine? Is Government strategy increasingly based on families not abandoning their children? Three Disability Ministers and three CEO's of Families and Communities in 5 years and never ending Disability SA executive changes has not delivered improved services.

Critically with major non-profit charitable disability organisations hit with huge losses in income as result of the economic crisis, this year's Budget has placed at risk their long term viability. Organisations like Minda (with over 1000 dependant clients) who will burn \$4.7 million of their finite assets during this financial storm have been hung out to dry.

Government official documents irrefutably confirm S.A. has the lowest State expenditure per person with a disability some 54% below the national average. A meagre 2.5% p.a. budget funding increase to disability services was all that was announced. This will not shorten waiting lists, will jeopardize services currently being provided and will not cover CPI. Try justifying "economics" to the 670 people (according to the Government's current data) who are rated Category 1 Critical awaiting services, people categorised as 'homeless and at high risk of harm to self or others'. Or try justifying this year's Budget priorities to the hundreds of children on waiting lists for much needed equipment like a bigger wheelchair who missed out on funding. The State Government's patchwork approach has injected funds 5 times in the last 4 years to fix the childrens equipment waiting list as we all know children grow?. This year the government did not bother but the children still grew!.

Government must think the obligation of a parent with a disabled child is to quit their job, surrender their marriage, spend every dollar the family has available buying alternative services and provide care for decades until the parents die. Sector gossip suggests there are today between 30 and 40 seriously disabled clients hospitalised due to lack of appropriate available accommodation plus 50-60 younger clients still housed in aged care facilities. Not addressing the impossible disability waiting lists is one of this Government's most significant policy failures during its 8 year term. This lack of support has given rise to the formation of this new group Disability Speaks.

Disability Speaks would like to publicly invite Premier Mike Rann to pick any place, day, time, date and moderator and Disability Speaks will organise a public meeting so that he can personally explain Government priorities to the thousands of people who will turn up and ask " When will S .A. 's most vulnerable, those with serious disabilities receive the essential support they desperately need? "

Premier Rann 's attendance at this meeting may change his concept of tough??

**DISABILITY SPEAKS**

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