



"MEDIA RELEASE"

10.12.2009

" Grateful ? "

Please excuse our lack of excitement!!

The SA Disability Minister Jennifer Rankine today announced a \$7.7 Million dollar annual increase in disability funding (\$31.0 million over four years) and importantly that the SA Social Inclusion Board chaired by Monsignor David Cappo will prepare a report for the government in order to develop a blueprint for long term disability reform across all government agencies.

The impending high level report by the social inclusion board is a very good thing and long overdue. Dignity 4 Disabled and Disability Speaks have been calling for such an inquiry since 2004. David Cappo is highly respected and whilst a more powerful Royal Commission or a legal inquiry like the Mulligan report into child abuse would have been preferable the disability sector will have confidence that after consultation a robust report will be presented. Disability Speaks was advised the report has been commissioned by the Premier?

The injection of such a miniscule amount of additional funding however can only be described as pathetic!

A government expecting goodwill for this funding reflects the disdain with which the SA government has treated the disability community over the last seven years. The adage that you should be grateful for the crumbs you receive remains in vogue while Foley and Rann rule by reminding us again with today's announcement.

In this years 2009 state budget the government freed from the previous contractual CSTDA obligation to the federal government that lapsed in 2008 to increase annual disability funding by over 5% increased SA's annual funding by only 2.5% per annum. (Less than inflation)

Today's announcement simply gives back what the state pilfered from the disability community in June. Such games with numbers will not distort the facts of SA's disability crisis that continues to escalate

- the demand for disability services grows at 9.5% per annum
- inflation increases the cost of services over 3.5% per annum
- over 3000 people are on waiting lists for services
- over 1000 of whom are rated critical
- the funding announcements today will not shorten waiting lists for services; they will continue to escalate rapidly!
- SA will remain the lowest level per client funder of disability services in the nation
- If SA disability funding was increased by 50% tomorrow it would still remain less than national average
- and on a per capita basis SA will still spend \$60 million dollars less per year than the national average.
- the most expensive support needed, supported accommodation is not mentioned in the Ministerial release.
- and ordinary decent people dedicating their life to supporting a disabled family member are being told by this announcement either harm or abandon your child or Disability SA has neither the funds or ability to support you!

This additional funding is being directed to Disability SA under a format that will be seen by some as the beginnings of the collapse of the current disability service delivery model.

The government appears to have given up on new funding for clients in the system that have been assessed, found eligible and require support.

A government committee, the Family Support Assistance Panel (FSAP) will attempt to target funding to families on the verge of disintegration or where physical harm is threatened.

The FSAP committee has existed for some time and this funding now theoretically gives it additional financial mass to avert more deaths or near tragedies in the SA system.

This is the ultimate crisis management program..... no rules, pray for guidance!

What this approach fails to accommodate is that as in the recent case where a father shot his intellectually disabled son was found not to be mentally ill but suffering from a psychotic moment, unless sufficient cash is injected into disability services across the board in SA no one will be able to identify which carer is likely to crack next and the tragic outcome that may eventuate. Friends, family and supporters of Beverly Eitzen who is alleged to have murdered her son Peter in July have told Disability Speaks that there was no better mother, better carer or better person than Mrs Eitzen and they believe she simply cracked one day under the enormous daily pressure.

Whilst funding a committee whose target may cynically be labelled "reducing the body count" may have an impact, if Premier Rann or Minister Rankine believe this barely crisis management model can support the sector until the Cappel inquiry is completed or the Australian Productivity Commission reports back on a National Disability Insurance scheme in 2011 and the federal government then delivers they miss the mark.

Still SA has missed the mark on disability support for the last 7 years!

No committee will be able to identify who will snap next and where the next tragedy will arise.

It is unfair of the government to put DSA in a position whereby they are expected to anticipate the next disaster when the department already has over 3000 clients who have been formally assessed and identified as fully qualified for urgent services with some 1000 plus rated critical.

As usual Premier Mike Rann was not at today's announcement.

His attendance at important disability announcements remains rare.

The government has indicated that there will be more additional service announcements; with additional funding attached prior to the state election in March 2010 we will watch with interest!

Disability Speaks remains committed to distributing important information in a bi partisan manner and attaches for your interest the Ministers official release we ask you to circulate it to your contacts.

More information on the 2009 SA Budget can be found at the disability Speaks website www.disabilityspeaks.com.au

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