



# “Strathmont”

**“A snapshot of everything that is wrong with disability services particularly the problem resolution process”**

**MEDIA RELEASE: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

When the South Australian Sunday paper The Sunday Mail last weekend slammed the dismal quality of life of local disability residential facility Strathmont Centre and the depressing conditions in which sixty six local DSA clients with intellectual disability live the online blog on “Adelaide Now” provided a sobering snap shot of just what is wrong with disability service delivery both locally and nationally and the resolution process. There is no question that this centre is underfunded, run down and a sobering place to accommodate people with intellectual disability.

Whilst the paper got the message right about the need for urgent action, mother Margaret Morris provided the clearest insight when she said her son was happy there and would not cope in the wider community. “We don't want it to close”

Kelly Vincent MLC (d4d) also got it right in the article when she said “It is vital that the Government remain mindful of the fact that many of these residents have lived in Strathmont since early childhood.” and “Therefore, it is absolutely essential that any residents moved from the centre are given adequate support every step of the way to help them adjust to life within the community.” Ms Vincent could have also added “ it is essential that the government adopt a strong person centred planning approach and actually ask the clients where they want to live, who they wish to live with and the lifestyle they want and then provide appropriate resources to deliver such services.”

Both d4d and Kelly are widely known as strong advocates for consumer driven choice.

Elsewhere in S.A. modern person centred choices are currently being offered to 511 clients of major S.A. non government organisation Minda which is establishing new benchmarks of service delivery with an ultra modern person centred approach. It would be fundamentally wrong if clients of DSA were denied similar options on the basis of having the wrong service delivery agency supporting them. A DSA department statement reported in the Sunday Mail that “ There are many benefits to appropriate community-based accommodation and there are ongoing plans to move residents into this style of care,” suggesting that the option of choice is not going to be offered to the Strathmont clients is very disturbing.

S.A Disability Minister Jennifer Rankine now has the opportunity to deliver quality services to Strathmont residents by ignoring the self appointed experts and instructing her department to sit down with the 66 clients of Strathmont and come up with individual plans. Rankine will no doubt be aware that the old fashioned and hollow calls of a one size fits all approach by some in the article are not supported in the numerous blogs attached to the Adelaide Now website. The somewhat hysterical and emotional commentary of one advocate quoted that “ I want to drive the bulldozer that knocks this building over” clearly does not necessarily enjoy the broader support of consumers and their carers anymore. The “community relocation only option” pushed by die hards from the eighties is being widely challenged by more educated and discerning service consumers. One feels Darren may choose to see his home upgraded rather than demolished.

Clients with disabilities are demanding the same options available in the general community where the need for social interaction has become a key component of numerous accommodation models as

general community lifestyles move away from the isolated quarter acre block focusing more on community access and personal solutions to address social interaction priorities. Moving Strathmont residents against their will would be a terrible outcome. Noting again the comments of Darren Morris's mother (who may know best what suits her son) bloggers have rightfully identified that no one should have their lifestyle forced on them by academics, experts or over zealous government agencies

The sector has lost faith in parliamentarians to resolve the service delivery model issues. We were all reminded how out of touch parliamentarians are when reported comments by Federal Liberal Senator Suzanne Boyce last week that "all special schools should be closed" shows that despite reading (we assume she did but it is possible she did not?) the draft NDIS policy paper she had completely failed to grasp the overwhelming theme that in 2011 people in the disability sector wanted to make their own choices on what services they deemed suitable, who delivered those services and what manner they would be delivered. Instead Senator Boyce showed the same disdain for people with disability that has permeated both state and federal governments for decades that people should be denied choice contrary to the NDIS draft.

Disability Minister Rankine's response will be eagerly awaited

Online blogs and comments on the Strathmont issue can be viewed at

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/the-strathmont-centre-adelaides-crying-shame/comments-e6frea6u-1226028690111>

**David Holst**

**Chair - Disability Speaks Steering Committee**

**Chair - Intellectual Disability Association of S.A  
0418 555 683**

**[www.disabilityspeaks.com.au](http://www.disabilityspeaks.com.au)**

**[disabilityspeaks@internode.on.net](mailto:disabilityspeaks@internode.on.net)**

Disability Speaks will distribute on behalf of any organization that meets suitable criteria online information that is of wide disability community interest via our database that now numbers nearly 4,000 recipients for Government, advocacy groups and other major disability organizations. We hope in the lead up to elections, state or federal, we can distribute policy and support information from political groups. Such distribution is not in any way endorsement by Disability Speaks. From time to time Disability Speaks will also distribute media releases commenting on developments in the disability sector. We strongly encourage you to forward all releases to your friends, clients and disability supporters and encourage them to subscribe direct. To do so simply send an email subject "subscribe" to the address below, to unsubscribe please use