



“The Best of Both Worlds”

Is what intellectual disability service consumers are demanding

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The SA Government has released a detailed evaluation of the Strathmont Redevelopment and Community Living Project.

Strathmont as you will recall has received widespread negative publicity in recent times.

It is an excellent report and the Minister should be complimented for commissioning it and making it publicly available.

As expected the report confirms that there are perceived benefits from moving clients from a hopelessly outdated facility like Strathmont to new purpose built community accommodation.

For those with a vision restricted by fear and paranoia of congregate living they will focus on the positive comments with glee.

What is disturbing is that the report also confirms again that increased isolation can be generated by such accommodation models specifically for people with high levels of intellectual disability.

This negative outcome potential is already widely known but often ignored by those who push community living as the only accommodation option

Observation of the residents reveal “ they engage in very few social interactions and have relatively little to do during their waking hours”

Comments from volunteers who assisted the clients included “another believed that some residents seemed isolated and had more activities when they were at Strathmont” are impossible to ignore.

For those like the Intellectual Disability Association of SA (IDASA) who want to modernise and lift the debate on developing and creating more vibrant and client centred accommodation models this report confirms once again what so many parents carers clients and families have been complaining of for years “ they want the best of both worlds”.

They want modern living in environments where clients with intellectual disability (noting in many instances their needs are very different from people with other forms of disability) are the beneficiaries of accommodation models that do not yet seem to exist.

The report can be accessed at www.dfc.sa.gov.au/research/.

Your comments and feedback as always would be appreciated.

David Holst

Chair - Disability Speaks Steering Committee & Intellectual Disability Association of S.A (IDASA)

Mob. 0418 555 683

Web. www.disabilityspeaks.com.au

Email. disabilityspeaks@internode.on.net



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