'Shannon Speaks'

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At the ABC studios in Adelaide last Friday evening, leading Minda Inc. self-advocate Shannon Mitchell, captivated the onsite television station staff and no doubt tens of thousands of viewers watching across SA. Visiting to watch the broadcast of her personal impact story on SA Premier Jay Weatherill and their mushrooming friendship Shannon reminded so many that discussions around disability funding and NDIS is really all about people and not just a focus on money.

Please enjoy the wonderful and charming broadcast replay with our compliments

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-06-21/fighting-for-the-disabled/4773142

With National Disability Insurance kicking off next Monday, July 1st we need to ensure that people like Shannon are pivotal in the future development of DisabilityCare Australia. The launch conference in Melbourne on the weekend attended by 1350 supporters (including Shannon) was a wonderful event full of euphoria and deluged with great expectations. An ill-informed attendee could think all national disability issues are now resolved?

At the same time people with Intellectual Disability like Shannon seem very poorly represented in the new NDIS structure that has been put in place by the Federal Government around the DisabilityCare Australia Board and Advisory Committee announced last week by Federal Minister Jenny Macklin.

Despite intellectual disability being the largest potential consumer group of future DisabilityCare services there is remarkably no representation of people with Intellectual Disability on the Advisory Committee specifically set up to advise the Board.. While sensory and physical disability consumers are comprehensively represented people with Intellectual Disability and families with lived experience of supporting such service consumers have been not offered a key role in future policy development. One would have imagined multiple representations on this Committee were automatic for the Intellectual Disability constituents, but it has not happened? This will need to be changed.

Disability Speaks will be writing to Bruce Bonyhady, Chair of DisabilityCare Australia whose appointment we loudly applaud asking this situation be urgently rectified. The importance of adding appropriate representation to the DisabilityCare support structure is vitally important for all stakeholders.

In the meantime please enjoy Shannon on the ABC. Shannon is a wonderful Ambassador for people with Intellectual Disability and should be applauded for her stoic and brave efforts. We will be approaching SA Opposition Leader Liberal Stephen Marshall to invite him to lunch soon with Shannon. No doubt Mr Marshall will enjoy the interaction and we look forward to reporting back on that encounter. Special thanks to Simon Royal and the ABC team for their portrayal of this remarkable young lady.

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