

MEDIA RELEASE

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Kelly Vincent MLC Introduces Bill to protect those with Disabilities

Disability (Mandatory Reporting) Bill 2010 affords same protections as Child Protection Act to those with intellectual or severe communication disabilities.

Kelly Vincent, Australia's youngest parliamentarian, plans on South Australia being the first State in Australia to extend the protection of Mandatory Reporting of abuse or neglect to people with certain disabilities.

The Disability (Mandatory Reporting) Bill 2010 will encourage and demand that professional support workers, volunteers and other professionals report any suspected abuse or neglect, and offer those people protections and confidentiality when they make a report.

Kelly Vincent, MLC said "In my first few weeks in office, I was horrified to discover that some of our most vulnerable citizens, people with severe intellectual disabilities, do not have the same protections from abuse and neglect as children, yet many of these people function at the same intellectual level as children, and some as infants."

The incidence of abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, (who make up around 1-2% of the Australian population) is one of the great unknowns, and in South Australia, there are no public records of numbers of recorded abuse among this population.

"We have no idea how many people with disabilities in care suffer abuse or neglect. The numbers are not reported by Disability SA, but I know, through my great concern and anger as I witnessed my own daughter's abuse brought about by incompetence and neglect, and that of many of our members, that it happens" said Dell Stagg of the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability.

People with intellectual disabilities are:

- victimized at a much higher rate (4-10 times more frequently) than other citizens;
- at higher risk for re-victimization;
- frequently severely abused and for longer periods of time;
- most frequently victimized in their residences by persons they know and who may be responsible for their services and supports; and inadequately educated and supported to recognize, resist, and seek alternatives to abusive situations.

“We have a responsibility to these people, and to the entire community, to ensure that every mechanism is in place to ensure they are well cared for, and protected from abuse and neglect, so I am putting forward my Bill in parliament today and look forward to unanimous support from my fellow parliamentarians on this very important piece of legislation” said Kelly Vincent.

Community Responses:

‘We have worked with the Hon Ms Vincent on this Bill and are fully supportive of any actions taken to protect our most vulnerable citizens. At Bedford and at NDS we have been working on internal structures for reporting, but am pleased to see strong legislation come into fruition.’

- Max Dyason, State Chair, National Disability Services (NDS)

‘It’s absolutely necessary and it’s been a long time coming. For our daughter, who can’t communicate like other people her age, that means another layer of protection which has, until now, been sadly lacking. It will make people proactively look for signs of abuse or neglect and more importantly, plan to prevent it.’

- Jayne Lehmann, mother of Sarah.

‘I applaud the introduction of the new Bill on Mandated Reporting for adults with a disability. The new bill will assist in giving much needed protection to vulnerable adults in our community.’

- Janine Lenigas, CEO, Amandus: Lutheran Disability Services

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Dignity for Disability Inc is the political party for those who believe in 'a fair go' for everyone. We are a human rights based organisation that aims at ensuring representation in Parliament for people with disabilities, in particular. We have a unique opportunity, which we must grasp together. With strong leadership, and by bringing the often fractured disability community together, we can bring about real change. Our goal is to ensure **Dignity Through Choice**. More information can be found on the web at www.d4d.org.au