



MEDIA RELEASE

21 December 2011

Not a moment to lose to look out for our neighbours

Yesterday's court hearing of a South Australian couple accused of murdering their intellectually disabled daughter again brings attention to the issues for families where there is a person living with disability. CEO of the Julia Farr Association, Robbi Williams, said these issues need to be addressed by the wider community.

"The death of this young woman is a tragedy, and causing harm to a loved one is never ever the answer. However, we have to ask ourselves how we as a community can help reduce the chances of a tragedy like this happening again. It is not just about getting more disability funding and supports, and building hope for a good life, though all these things are really important. It is also about all of us being good neighbours," Mr Williams said.

"We can lead busy lives, but it is important that we look out for our neighbours, particularly those neighbours living with increased vulnerability, such as people living with disability, older Australians, and young families under pressure."

Mr Williams said that for all of us a key element of a good life is having friends and good neighbours—people in our daily lives who look out for us.

"People living with disability are people first, and deserve the same. By extending a hand of welcome, of friendship and concern, we each can help make a good life for someone. And we may even save a life by noticing when something doesn't seem right and sounding the alert before it's too late."

Mr Williams said the Association's recent *Tellus* survey has provided further evidence of the difficulties many families face. The survey results, due to be published early next year, show many families are under great personal pressure as a result of the informal support they give to a family member living with disability.

"Family members often take on a lot when supporting a loved one living with disability, and the pressure of this can be aggravated by difficulties accessing information and support, and also in accessing the mainstream opportunities and amenities that many people take for granted," Mr Williams said.

"We know that for many people living with disability, primary support is provided by family members. Our own data tells us that eight out of every ten families say this comes at a significant—and often devastating—cost, in terms of mental and physical health, relationships and opportunity."

"It's clear from people's comments in the survey that they are struggling to see a light at the end of the tunnel. People report they are missing out on much of what life has to offer. People lose hope and struggle to see the possibility of living an ordinary valued life. This is not a good situation for anyone in the family, including importantly the person living with disability," Mr Williams said.

"Every single person in our communities has the capacity to help change this, through ordinary acts of neighbourliness."



For comment please call:

Chief Executive Officer

Robbi Williams

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How to access help and support

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse or neglect, call:

- National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1800 880 052 or TTY 1800 301 052, 8am-8pm daily, or
- Crisis Care: 131 611, 4pm-9am on weekdays, and 24 hours on public holidays and weekends
- Life-threatening situations: you should always call 000.

About *Tellus*®

The 2011 *Tellus* survey was designed by the Julia Farr Association to discover the deeper issues for people living with disability and their families, issues that are not apparent via census data or other standard data-gathering methods.

The survey was conducted between over a period of 15 months, and 886 people participated nationally, with two-thirds of the respondents from South Australia.

The full results will be released in early 2012.

