

DISABILITY CONNECTIONS VICTORIA

Meeting on 14 October at the City of Moonee Valley
Questions on Disability put to a Panel of State Politicians

Colleen Hartland - Greens Upper House Member for the West
Bernie Finn - Liberal Upper House Member for Western Metropolitan
Telmo Languiller - Labor Party Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities

QUESTIONS GROUP 1

Each panel. member has up to 2 minutes to answer each of these questions.
All questions will be asked,

- 1 Will your party support a National Disability Insurance Scheme once the Productivity Commission has completed its Inquiry?
- 2 Given that there are over 1000 people waiting for long term accommodation, and many people who would like long term accommodation but aren't even on the list how do you propose to address this issue?
- 3 Given that long term accommodation is not an immediate option for many people, respite becomes a critical support for families and carers. DCV members applaud the increased range of respite options but for some people and in many circumstances these do not meet our needs. We require facility based respite. But the region does not have enough respite beds. And to make it worse often respite beds are taken by people who have been relinquished, are homeless or in crisis (not unusual to have at least 2 of the 5 beds filled this way). What can be done?
- 4 The Victorian Disability Act 2006 introduced the Office of the Disability Commissioner. Our experiences have been mixed. When it works well, it's great. But many DCV members are frustrated that either the Commissioner cannot hear their complaints or his office can only conciliate. Would you consider strengthening his role so that individuals and families do not have to go to VCAT and how would you do this?
- 5 The issue of children with disabilities spending up to 2 hours each way on a school bus (20 hours per week to 30 hours of school contact time) creates great distress for the children and their families. The Education Department says this is within their guidelines. What do you consider to be a reasonable time for children with high support needs to be on the bus? What can be done to address this?

- 6 Individualised Planning and the move to community inclusion are fantastic initiatives. But not everyone has the skills, experience, confidence or time to be actively involved. The need for advocacy, both 1: 1 and systemic is becoming ever more obvious. What will you do to enhance advocacy supports for individuals and families as well as to work within community structures
- 7 The Northwest Region has 4 of the 5 growth corridors. What do you see as the issues facing individuals with disabilities and families moving into these areas and how will you ensure that the infrastructure and the support services that enable people with a disability to lead independent lives are available and adequate to meet demand?

QUESTIONS GROUP 2

Only one panel member has up to 2 minutes to answer each of these questions. These questions are drawn randomly from the list. We don't expect to have time to ask them all! You can address any or all of these in your opening statement or closing summary.

1. The Education Department has decided to relocate 2 special Developmental Schools out of the Western Suburbs and redevelop them in other suburbs. How can we ensure that children with disabilities have the same rights as other children to go to a school in their local community?
2. Inaccessible train stations - help!
3. People cannot be included in community activities if we can't access the buildings? What will you do about the fact that so many public and private buildings are still not accessible let alone disability friendly once you're in e.g.: toilets?
4. Intake and response at DHS seems to be overworked and under resourced? They don't seem to have all the information we need and getting an answer takes ages. How can you assist the processes to be improved?
5. Are you in favour of Self Directed models of funding and why?
6. The Disability Act 2006 outlines the roles of Community Visitors but doesn't recognise the role of family members as advocates especially for people with higher support needs and/or complex communication. How and when might this be addressed?
7. Do you have any plans to outsource DHS managed services to the Non Government sector to remove the complexities that arise because DHS is the funder, the provider and the monitor of disability supports?
8. There is a significant wage difference between people employed within DHS and the Not for Profit sector. What would you do to ensure equal pay for equal work?

9. Baby boomers are getting older and everyone talks about the impending crisis of the increasing numbers of people moving out of the workforce and into retirement. It's not only the unpaid/family carers but the paid workforce too. What plans do you have to support carers of all kinds to keep caring and to encourage younger people to see caring as a career?

10. Why can't people in residential units have tenancy rights like everyone else?

11. How do you think people with a disability can be supported so that when they become adults they can leave the family home and lead as independent a life as possible?

12. The person who raised this apologises for sounding like a broken record but asks how the process of Incident Reporting can be strengthened so that it captures all the issues and so that the complainant can be sure that their issue does not fall between the gaps, get overlooked or ignored? (the suggestion raised many times is a numbering and therefore trackable system)

13. There are some really good initiatives to support Young People in Nursing Homes and assist young people to move back into the community. However there are still about 1600 people under 65 living in nursing homes with 250 people under 50 admitted to nursing homes every year. Without a commitment to expand resources to address housing and support needs and systemic change this group will again be lost to the system. Please respond.

14. How do you plan at the big picture level for future needs, especially as we know that the Disability Supports Register only reflects immediate needs , not wants and certainly not dreams?

15. Housing is core to social inclusion and having an independent life. Both Federal and State governments have made significant investments in the development of socially affordable housing. What strategies would you put in place to ensure people with a disability have equal access to this new housing?

16. How will you support people with disabilities to live in the community independent of their families, if this is what they want to do?

17. In the 2007 Federal Budget there was \$1.8 billion allocated to building 1750 more Residential beds over 5 years. How many were allocated to Victoria? How many have been built so far? Are any in the NorthWest? How can we ensure that people in the North West have access to these?

18. The Victorian Disability State Plan 2002-2012 talks about the reorientation of disability supports. What strategies will you put in place to ensure that day programs reflect the changing needs and expectations of individuals and families and how do you see organisations such as DCV supporting this process?

19. DCV received many questions about supporting individuals and families at critical milestones one being turning 18. How can you support people through this period so its less traumatic e.g. school to adult services, recreation stops, changing respite providers etc
20. Some children and adults have support needs that mean that group activities are just not suitable e.g. children with autism don't respond well in larger groups if they have to wait or take turns. But so many activities - specialised and community are costed on group funding. If you need 1:1 you have to pay extra. What could you do to minimise this impact - because it effectively means people miss out because we can't afford it.
21. What will you do to enhance outcomes and supports for children with disabilities including anaphylaxis and epilepsy in schools?
22. How many people with disabilities are employed in the Victorian public service? Australia-wide statistics indicate up to 20% reduction in the past few years. Please comment.
23. I'm always asked to give my opinion, sit on this Reference Group, support this cause, fill in this survey. The people conducting the project get paid but I'm expected to continuously do this for nothing. Is this fair?
24. Australia has signed the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities. Victoria has the Charter of Human rights. How are these and other initiatives influencing policy development and outcome expectations?
25. Can we please have a new model of transition support for people with disabilities where their family is in crisis, they are relinquished and homeless but there are no immediate places to put them. Then they won't block up respite and can be stable at what is a difficult time?
26. How can you ensure people with disabilities, families and community advocates are included in planning at regional and State-wide levels?
27. How do we lessen the gap between policy and practice? What sounds great on paper doesn't always happen at the coal face?
28. How can you support DCV and other grass roots advocacy groups?
29. What is your vision and policies for special education look like?
30. The Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Annual report for 2009/10 highlights a significant increase in workplace discrimination, particularly for older workers, women and people with disabilities. Would you consider a media campaign to raise community understanding of inclusion and disability awareness.

31. How could you enhance work opportunities for people with a disability including the baby boomers?

32. What is the role of government in ensuring that businesses with government contracts adhere to Disability discrimination legislation and to the vision of community inclusion?

33. Would you accompany me (the supplier of the question) on a tour of the day placements?

34. What are the 2 key visions that you personally would put in the next Victorian State Disability Plan? And what would be the key to ensuring your vision becomes reality?

35. Is it reasonable that the planner gets paid, the financial intermediary gets paid but families are expected to administer and monitor a support package for "love" Do you think it reasonable that a fee could be charged to defray time and out of pocket expenses and if so what might be a fair rate?

36. The amount of money available for an Individual package is often pre-determined by the amount of money someone wants to pay rather than what is needed. How can we adjust the system so packages are more realistic?

39. When are schools going to be localised and comply with the State Government legislation of inclusion for children with disabilities?

38. How can DCV and its membership assist you to undertake your role as a state politician?