

At the National Press Club in Canberra, Dr Rhonda Galbally told it like it is!

Full report on: www.lisainc.com.au : DVD available from LISA Inc.

"What does it mean to be an Australian with a disability in 2009? What is life like in the lucky country, in this land of the fair go? One answer we might expect would be, A citizen with the same rights as everyone else!

But if you have a physical, sensory, psychiatric, or intellectual disability, what is life really like? Many Australians would say, It's better, isn't it? The bad old days are gone - Aren't they?

The horror and abuse that went on in institutions, that's all gone now, hasn't it. The poverty, the discrimination, the exclusion, the fear and hatred, that's all ancient history, isn't it?

I would love to be able to say yes, that is all ancient history, but I can't. I'm here to tell you that despite this nation enjoying the longest economic boom in its history, very little has changed for most Australians with a disability.

Young people living in group homes - forced to go to bed every night at 5 pm because the staff say so, unable to help themselves to food from the locked fridges, unable to go out for a walk through the locked doors!

A young man who was assaulted by a fellow resident in his group home, but who continued to live under the same roof as his abuser because there was nowhere for either of them to go!

People who will sleep in their wheelchairs tonight because there's no-one around to help to get them to bed!

Families who become so desperate they abandon their children in respite care or in hospital because they can no longer care for them at home!

There are so many stories to tell - and each with its own heartbreaking punch line. You will find them in this report - Shut Out. And 'Shut Out' is a unique document. It's unique because the Rudd Government established a nation-wide consultation, asking people with disabilities and their families two important questions: What is your life like now, and what would you like your life to be like?

No Australian Government had ever asked people with disabilities and their families

those questions before! The response was overwhelming!

What I saw and what I heard was profoundly shocking, and utterly shameful. Here we are, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, yet I heard that most Australians with disabilities and families struggle to access the very necessities of life.

These statistics are outrageous. But where is the outrage? Why is it that we lack the will to close this gap? I believe our lack of will reflects our low expectations. We accept the differences in outcomes because somewhere deep down we don't really believe kids with disabilities have potential.

Families who are struggling with high rates of physical, emotional, and financial stress. Ageing parents spoke movingly of sharing and supporting their son or daughter. But the dire lack of suitable accommodation and then young adults dream to move out of the family home into a home of their own.

The dire lack of suitable accommodation and lack of adequate support put an end to that dream. Now, both children and parents are old, and stuck in desperate situations. It is these aged parents who are in the tragic position of hoping that their children die before them.

'SHUT OUT' graphically demonstrates the ways in which all systems are failing people with disability and their families. And unfortunately things are only going to get worse.

Australia-wide people see that we clearly cannot continue the way we are going. To do so, would be both socially and financially irresponsible even scandalous. We need a safety net for individuals and we need a safety net for the country, a national disability insurance scheme would be such a safety net.

There are many misconceptions in the community about such a scheme, but in reality the concept is very simple. A national disability insurance scheme would provide funding for early intervention, essential care, support, therapy, aids and equipment, home modifications and training and most importantly. It would provide this early on, in order to maximise potential, facilitate independence and insure planned transitions over the life course.

The scheme would, in short, provide people with what they need, when they need it, to ensure that they reach their full potential.

And the scheme would provide assistance to all people with a disability no matter how they become disabled. And it will put an end to the current inequities that see people

receiving different levels of support depending on how the disability is acquired.

It shouldn't matter whether you are born with a disability, acquire one through a car accident, or develop one through a serious illness, everyone should be able to get what they need when they need it in order to lead as full a life as possible.

Such a scheme will have an in-built incentive to maximise independence. Such a scheme will have an in-built incentive to maximise opportunities for participation and productivity. And because participation and productivity would be maximised, there would be savings. Not only in the disability service system, but in health, income security and other programs.

The idea is uniting the disability sector. For the first time in this country Carers Australia, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, and National Disability Services have formed an alliance to campaign for a national disability insurance scheme.

Disability is in fact the responsibility of every Minister in every portfolio across every level of government. It's the responsibility of every Premier of every state. It's the responsibility of every Mayor and every CEO in every municipality across the country. Disability must be on everyone's agenda!

Take a copy of 'Shut Out' with you today, or download it from the website and read it, and get others to read it too. And when you read this report you'll find that many of the people you are reading about are not so different from you. They have the same hopes, they have the same needs, they have the same rights, they live in your cities - in your suburbs and in your towns. But they are **shut out** of the life that you take for granted.

Read about your fellow Australians, and ask yourself, **How would you feel if the person who was shut out, was you?"**

LISA Comment: We certainly need a NDIS to ensure services are a **right** not a hand-out. But having rights to services, does not mean they will be "right"! So we say, "The NDIS needs to be complemented with a really effective complaints process, to ensure a level playing field for people with a disability and their families". See www.lisainc.com.au "Achieving a Carers Mission Statement".

Tony & Heather Tregale

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