

Kelly Vincent MLC, Maiden Speech

South Australian Parliament, Legislative Council, 13 May 2010

Kelly's Parliamentary Advisor, Sam Paior, says, "During Kelly's speech she was struggling to turn the page. After an awkward kind of silence, she stopped, paused, unflappable, looked up and quipped disability moment, to which the gallery erupted. Then she looked over to John Darley MLC who got up, stepped over and turned each page from then on.... Awesome: Just awesome!"

Full speech: <http://www.lisainc.com.au/userfiles/file/Kelly%20Vincent%20Maiden%20Speech%2013-05-2010.pdf>

Interview: http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/05/lms_20100513_0915.mp3

"Sitting here in this chamber as the youngest female, and the first person with a physical disability ever elected into South Australian parliament, is, as you can imagine, not an easy thing to describe. So, I would like to employ one of the basic rules I often use in what I suppose is now my 'other life' as a writer: begin at the beginning.

Until recently, I would have said that the beginning of my disability advocacy journey occurred roughly 18 months ago, as I had been struggling to get a new wheelchair for about that long. (I was approved for the wheelchair in January of 2008, but would not sit in it until October of 2009).

During this period, I began speaking at disability related conferences and forums about this experience, and the effect it was having on my body, mind, and life. I would usually just get up on to the stage and ad lib something, as I am of the view that the last thing the disability sector needs is yet another power-point presentation. Through these speeches, I developed something of a small cult following, and, while I really enjoyed doing them, and appreciated the support and increased awareness, it occurred to me that I still didn't have a new wheelchair.

Some people with a disability wait up to five years, perhaps more, for equipment such as a wheelchair. They may wait fifteen years or more for supported accommodation, unless their primary carer in their current house dies or is forced to abandon them, unable and unwilling to care for them any longer.

A sixteen year old girl with burns to 70 percent of her body may, and does, go without the wheelchair she requires to be mobile at school, because the school lost the wheelchair more than a year ago, and have not yet received a replacement.

I am happy to notice that today, a hearing loop has been installed into the public gallery of this Chamber, so that people who are hard of hearing can also participate in our work in this, the people's parliament. But it pains me that a deaf person misses out on a large part of presentations in public places, because the building's hearing loop is out of order, or never installed.

And the list goes on.

If we applied this concept to education, our children would have to wait somewhere between 2 and 5 years for "equipment" school books and uniforms. Worse still, imagine being unable to offer a child a place in a school until another student dies?

This is of course unacceptable, even outrageous. The ramifications of a child not having ready access to education, especially in their early years, are potentially greater than any of us can imagine. They may become illiterate, have underdeveloped social skills, and potentially be unable to make as great a contribution to society as they would otherwise be able to. If the disability funding model were applied to education system, there would be a public outcry, followed by a complete overhaul of the system.

And yet this happens in the disability sector. Every. Single. Day.

Perhaps what I have just said will give you a little insight into why I am set back a little when people try to suggest that Dignity for Disability is a 'single issue' party, because disability knows no boundaries. It crosses transport, education, social inclusion, access, and discrimination, for a start. Anyone who needs proof of the wide reach of disability need only look up at the galleries of this chamber and behold all of the special guests who have graced us with their society and audience today. I sincerely thank them all for this. It is a true honour. Disability affects people of all ages, races, genders, classes and religions, in very different ways. And this should be a source of joy and celebration, just as much as it is seen as a difficulty."

LISA Comment: We are confident Kelly Vincent and Rhonda Galbally will make an awesome team in support of all people with a disability, especially those unable to advocate effectively for themselves... "Great work Kelly!"

LIFESTYLE IN SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION (LISA) INC.

Tel: 03-9434-3810: Email: vk3qq@optusnet.com.au

Web: www.lisainc.com.au : www.lisa-aus.blogspot.com