

Diamond Valley Leader Newspaper

Shaun Campbell, August 17, 2011

It is estimated that more than four million Australians, or 18.5 per cent of the population, had a disability in 2009.

Big win for disabled

'Overdue' national funding plan gets thumbs up from all quarters

DISABILITY advocates have joined state and federal politicians in celebrating a report calling for a national insurance scheme for people with a disability.

The Productivity Commission's final report into disability support reform, released last week, has called for a national disability insurance scheme to be gradually rolled out over the next seven years to improve an "underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient" system.

Ross Coverdale, chief executive of Lower Plenty-based disability service Araluen, said the proposed scheme, which would not be means tested and would cover every Australian, was "long overdue".

"The funding of disabled services is very hit and miss," Mr Coverdale said. "There is a long lead time, but it is important to get it right.

"Families have been waiting for decades, but now they have hope."

Lifestyle in Supported Accommodation spokesman Tony Tregale said the scheme would provide funding for the "have-nots".

But he said seven years would be too late for the elderly struggling to look after their adult children.

"There is a huge list of senior citizens who have a life sentence because there is no finance available," Mr Tregale said.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu have committed to an immediate start on the scheme.

Ms Gillard said care and support should be based on people's needs, "not a lottery of what kind of disability they have".

Mr Baillieu said the scheme must provide funding certainty, simple access to services, fair eligibility criteria and choice to disabled people and their families.

Big loss for this family

Family in dispute over email claims

WATSONIA-based disability advocates say a government department policy to redirect their emails is an infringement on their human rights.

Tony and Heather Tregale said the Victorian Department of Human Services had redirected their emails to its quality and performance effectiveness manager since 2006 because of alleged abuse.

Two pages of the policy, seen by *Diamond Valley Leader*, accused the couple of sending more than 150 emails in two years and of personally attacking staff.

Mr Tregale denied allegations of abuse and said the department had provided no evidence. He said questions from the couple about issues regarding their son Paul, who had lived in supported accommodation for 14 years, were rarely answered.

If you were a criminal in court you would have your say; it is against our human rights," Mr Tregale said.

Department spokeswoman Shelley Markham said the service had made a single point of communication to ensure matters raised were addressed in a timely manner because of the volume of correspondence.

Parliamentary secretary for family and community services Andrea Coote, who called the policy "undemocratic" while in Opposition, said she had replied to all the family's letters since the election.

Ms Coote said none had addressed their email problems and she would now assess the issue.

LISA Comment: "Big Brother wields the Big Stick on anyone who dares to question its questionable activities!"

The Office of the Disability Service Commissioner in Victoria say the top reason people with a disability and their families don't complain about questionable services is, "Fear of Intimidation".

This also applies to direct care staff in supported accommodation group homes.

Despite the Whistleblowers Protection Act 2011, staff who speak out about questionable activities are treated like undesirables – sent to “Coventry”, at best.

Those who are really effective in penetrating bureaucratic green zone defences, can expect to receive the full impact of their missile defence system.....

For the past five years, the Department of Human Services in Victoria, with ministerial support, has electronically blocked/redirected, within the firewall of their statewide web-server, the Emails of LISA Inc., Coordinators, Tony & Heather Tregale.

This all powerful government department implemented its discriminatory action with no consultation whatsoever. Tony & Heather had no knowledge of the six page, ministerial approved, directive against them.

It's presence was mooted by the State Ombudsman, and revealed by FOI application. But only two pages would be released. The DHS say they periodically review the matter, but Tony & Heather are never part of that review.

This government department has never justified that which they used to convince the then minister to approve the restriction order. There is no termination date - So it is a life sentence!

These despotic actions of this state government department is little better than those of many third world countries.

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