



disAbility connections
(victoria)

QandA at DVC Meeting 14 October 2010

1 Will your party support a National Disability Insurance Scheme once the Productivity Commission has completed its Inquiry?

Colleen – The Greens support the role and needs of carers and family members being taken into account in catastrophic injury insurance funding arrangements. The Australian Greens have committed to dramatic reform of disability service systems following the final report from the Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into a Disability Care and Support Scheme, due in July 2011. We believe the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme should create a system that is equitable and sustainable. People with disabilities, their families or carers should be placed at the centre of service delivery. They should be able to make their own choices, have control and receive the support they need for as long as they require it.

Telmo - On 23 November 2009, the Prime Minister announced that the Government would conduct a feasibility study into new ways of funding and delivering long- term care for severely and profoundly disabled people. The Productivity Commission is undertaking a public inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme and has been asked to report by July 2011. Over 500 submissions have been lodged to date.

Commission will consider:

- how a scheme should be designed and funded to better meet the long- term needs of people with disability, their families and carers
- how to determine the people most in need of support, the services that should be available to them, and service delivery arrangements
- the costs, benefits, feasibility and funding options of alternative schemes

- how the scheme will interact with the health, aged care, informal care, income support and injury insurance systems
- its impacts on the workforce
- how any scheme should be introduced and governed
- what protections and safeguards should be part of the scheme.

This is an important opportunity to explore new ways of supporting people with a disability and their families. The inquiry will examine a social insurance model which could be funded by a levy across the whole population. Victoria has lodged a submission to the Inquiry noting that a national scheme would be a major step forward in providing a broader, more equitable system of support however there are a range of issues for the Commission to consider.

The submission is available online at

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/disability-support/submissions>

Bernie – The Federal Coalition will support the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Would like value for money and to get results

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?

Colleen – We agree with Carers Victoria that public housing priorities do not support do not support the choice of adults with disabilities or mental health problems to leave the family home. Social housing services need to meet the ongoing needs of people with a disability, not just the needs of those in crisis. Accommodation options on offer need to be in step with the policy aspirations of the disability sector. Much can be achieved with the will and dollars to make it happen.

The Greens remain concerned that people with complex needs will not get their share of the benefits brought about by new social housing. Reluctance by housing providers to allocate housing to people with complex needs has resulted in large numbers of people being housed in the private Supported Residential Services (SRS) sector. These people need better quality care.

The Office of Public Advocate has raised too many concerns about the quality and standard of care breaches by SRSs for the Greens to see the private sector as the only solution. We support an increase in public housing projects and more innovative public housing options that are targeted towards vulnerable community members.

The Greens believe funding increases need to be based on population increases. We support thorough population planning in the aged care, disability mental health and housing sectors. Given the link between homelessness and mental health issues we also see great importance in creating a state-wide mental health and housing strategy and support calls by VICSERV to do so.

Other things that the Greens would work towards include:

- The prompt roll out of support packages for people awaiting purpose built housing
- Greater Government funding for more innovative accommodation options, and services that implement individualised planning models

- Better State and Federal sector partnerships to ensure timely access to social housing

- A dramatic boost in funding for services for those at risk of being admitted to aged care (such as rehabilitation services that can maximise recovery and create pathways to community living)

- A State commitment of future funding and resources to address unmet needs that were identified by the National Younger People in Residential; Aged Care initiative

Telmo - A number of developments are underway to respond to the accommodation needs of people who have a disability. The Older Carer Strategy will deliver 100 new shared supported accommodation places across Victoria for people with a disability who are living with ageing carers.

my future my choice is a joint Commonwealth/State funded initiative aimed at reducing the number of younger people with disabilities who are living inappropriately in residential Aged Care (RAC). A total of 104 new purpose-built accommodation and support places are being developed to enable people move out of, or avoid entering RAC along with approximately 50 packages which will support people to remain in their homes or private accommodation.

The Innovative Housing Opportunities Program (IHOP) matches individual support packages to housing units for 45 people with a disability who wish to live semi-independently within the community.

In addition, the 2010/11 State Budget allocated capital and support funding for the delivery of 20 new Shared Supported Accommodation places.

Disability Services, in partnership with other programs and key stakeholders has commenced work on a Housing and Support Strategy for People with a Disability. It is acknowledged that a more contemporary range of housing and support is required to meet the diverse needs of people with a disability and to ensure that government and community investment achieves the maximum outcomes.

Bernie - We need to spend money but also think about how it is spent, a needs based planning and flexibility. Any Government will not have the amount of money needed to fix the problem in 2 years

- 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?**

Colleen - The Greens acknowledge the stress that caring has on families and will continue to argue for adequate funding of special respite services. Flexible approaches and proper funding is required for before and after school care, out of school care and vacation care for families that need it.

The Greens welcome initiatives that resulted from the Commonwealth Disability Assistance Package program, but we believe larger financial commitment can be given. Caring should not be a barrier to employment and community participation.

Telmo - The Government acknowledges the important role that carers play in supporting family and friends with a disability, and the role that respite support plays in sustaining the care and relationship and has provided \$89 million in 2010 – 2011 for 22,000 episode of respite.

While the Government has undertaken significant reforms to improve the lives of people with a disability and their carers it also acknowledges that further work is required to improve access to respite services.

The Government has placed increased emphasis on making available a range of respite support options that are flexible and offer real choice. By providing a range of respite supports it is anticipated that where individuals may not be able to access one specific type of respite, other supports are offered. Options include home support, overnight

breaks, alternative family placement, recreation programs, weekend camps and activities, and other flexible and self-directed supports.

Further, the provision of Individual Support Packages enables the tailoring of solutions to the individual and their circumstances. This means that people with a disability are supported to live in the community in accordance with their support needs and personal preferences.

In the 2010-11 budget, the Victorian Government has allocated over \$4.8 million in new capital funding and \$5.5 million in operating funding over three years-(commencing in 201-12) to deliver an additional 15 facility-based respite places for people with high and complex needs. These new places will provide an additional 90 episodes of respite support in 2011-12. This will grow to 135 episodes of respite support every year to support care relationships. One of these will be built in the North West Region. With the transfer of the Respite for Older Carers Program to Victoria via the National Disability Agreement, the Government has developed a statewide model that creates a pathway and specialist planning approach for older carers to access support and plan for the future. The model includes implementing strategies to identify families who may not be currently using respite, recreation, or other carer support services. The model also includes links to other carer support services and other service providers, for example, general practitioners and allied health services that may have contact with ageing carers. The model includes the provision of support with short and long term planning and assistance for ageing carers to plan for the transition of the person they care for in advance of a change in their own circumstances. The model is being implemented in the 2010-2011 financial year.

An additional \$3 million for 330 episodes of respite support for older carers will be provided in 2010-11, increasing the total commitment to older carers to \$21 million in 2010-11.

It is also important that families and carers have access to information about the range of available respite supports and in 2008-09 the Government committed \$500,000 to support work in this area. In April 2010, the new Respite Online Information Service, Respite Victoria Was launched. The new service provides access to the latest information about available respite services to carers of people with a disability.

The Department of Human Services is also currently in the process of developing a plan to guide the development of Disability Services funded respite and carer support into the future. The development of the plan is part of the strategy outlined in the *Victorian State Disability Plan 2002—2012* to reorient disability supports to be more flexible so they respond to individual needs.

Development of the plan and an accompanying regional implementation framework will support the continuous improvement and development of Disability Services funded respite and carer support. It will also help to ensure that carers have a higher level of choice, due to an increased responsiveness and flexibility in the provision of supports.

Bernie - There is no doubt there is a respite crisis in Victoria and it is having a huge impact on families. There is a need to prioritise and respite needs money devoted to try and solve this problem.

- 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?**

Colleen - I support the Disability Act 20056 and the expansion of the role of the Office of the Disability Commissioner to ensure the Act is implemented and there is a strong advocate for people with a disability, carers, advocates and agencies.

Telmo - There are numerous avenues for complainants to seek redress of actions, improvement to services or for appeal and review of decisions, however, the Disability Services Commissioner's role has filled what was previously a gap. The Government is satisfied that the role of the Disability Services commissioner is appropriate and fits well in the continuum of support and assurance for service users. Accordingly, the Government is not considering strengthening the role.

The Disability services Commissioner Role is modelled on that of the Health Services Commissioner, while the focus is complaints, the Disability Services commissioner has broader powers than simply hearing and conciliating complaints. There is a significant educative role and critical process and systems improvement function that underscores complaints management and resolution. While there may be some shortcomings, conciliation is preferred to the adversarial approach in this context, and is consistent with best-practice complaint resolution.

Unlike VCAT, the Disability Services Commissioner is not constituted in a judicial framework and removal of VCAT appeal where it is currently defined could serve to diminish a person's rights of appeal. However, it should be noted that not all complaints or appeals can be referred to VCAT.

Bernie - People are not clear on the Disability Service Commissioners role, it's another layer of bureaucracy and doesn't go far enough on solving problems. It needs to concentrate on practicalities.

- 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?**

Colleen - I would consider 30 minutes to be a reasonable time for children or anyone with high support needs to be on a bus. The real issue here is lack of services close to a person's home. Where shorter journeys cannot be achieved using larger buses, there needs to be a return to more individualised services that meet people's needs and reduce travel times.

Telmo - Since 2007 the Victorian Government has introduced 89 new bus services across Victoria to make it easier for children to get to and from special schools.

The Government invests more than \$50 million every year to provide free school buses for more than 7000 students in Victoria with special needs. We understand the circumstances of families with children attending special schools — that's why we provide a free bus service or the option of financial assistance for families wanting to privately arrange travel for their child to attend school. We work closely with the bus companies, schools and families to determine the most practical routes for all students accessing the bus services. Currently around 90% of students arrive at their school in less than 90 minutes. We recognise more is needed.

Bernie - I would consider 30-45 minutes is a reasonable time. Established schools are too far away and due to a population explosion they are getting further away. A Prep – Year 12 Autism School is required and schools are not being built where they are needed.

- 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 (like DCV he! he! ☺)**

Colleen - Individualised funding packages and planning are important in improving community inclusion and individual decision making, but can also put people in a position of vulnerability without strong advocacy support. The Greens support increased resources and independence for advocates and will be making this a key priority in the new parliament, especially to ensure advocates are available on an equitable basis in regional/rural areas, new suburbs and to people of diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Telmo - The Victorian Government has supported and encouraged community inclusion for people with a disability for many years now. The Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 clearly outlined the Victorian Government's strong belief that people with a disability should be part of and actively involved in the life of the community. The Victorian Government supports the Commonwealth Government's belief that the protection and promotion of human rights is every nation's responsibility. The Victorian Government strongly supported Australia's signing and ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2006, the Victorian Parliament enacted the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006). It was the first state in Australia to pass a law protecting the human rights of individuals. Also in 2006, the Victorian Government established the Office for Disability with a mandate to put disability on the agenda across the Victorian

Government. The Office is the first of its kind for Victoria and is located within the Department of Planning and Community Development. The Victorian Government believes that advocacy, with and for people with a disability is an important means of making sure that the rights of people with a disability are strengthened and upheld.

To this end the Victorian Government funds the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program, which is administered through the Office for Disability which works under a human rights framework. The Office for Disability is working with the disability advocacy sector to look at ways to make advocacy stronger and more rigorous in its practice and approach. Over the last twelve months the Office for Disability has hosted several forums for the disability advocacy sector. The aims of the forums have been to encourage discussion with the sector about the program and the strategic direction of disability advocacy in Victoria. Some of the measures that have been and are being undertaken to enhance advocacy include:

- establishing new services including the Youth Disability Advocacy Service, the Women with Disabilities Victoria Advocacy Information Service, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy Service in Shepparton and providing more funding to existing disability
- advocacy and self-advocacy organisations such as Star Victoria, Brian Injury Matters, Diversity and Disability and Reinforce.
- establishing two resource units, the Self-Advocacy Resource Unit and the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit
- supporting better data collection around individual, systemic and self-advocacy

The Victorian Government is working with the Commonwealth Government and all other state and territory governments through the Office for Disability to explore the development of a National Disability Advocacy Framework.

Bernie - It is important that someone with a disability still has rights and we have to ensure they are protected. With enthusiasm and programs community attitudes can change.

- 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?**

Colleen - The growth areas have been badly planned in a number of ways, you can't just put thousands of houses in without infrastructure, transport, libraries, schools, maternal health centres and services for people with a disability.

Governments and councils when allowing new suburbs or communities must incorporate and plan for all services to be available from when people first occupy their new homes rather than in the 2-10 years following. The key issues I see facing people with a disability and families in new areas are lack of schools, transport, specialist medical and ancillary services, employment opportunities, respite and neighbourhood houses, day programs and adult education options.

Telmo - The department has in place a number of policies to ensure that support services and infrastructure are available and located in the areas of greatest need:

Investment in disability services is driven by the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012. The Plan includes a strong commitment to the reorientation of disability supports to more flexible approaches to support people with a disability in maximising their independence and potential. Budget decisions are made to further the objectives of the Plan. The department undertakes planning and demand and supply modelling for disability services across Victoria using national and Victorian data. This modelling informs future service directions and budget developments.

The department is also participating in projects at the national level under the National Disability Agreement which will contribute to improved modelling of the demand for disability services. One of the priority projects under the National Disability Agreement is better measurement of unmet need for disability services. Results from this project will assist Victoria and other states and territories in improving allocation of disability services. The department has in place a regional equity formula which informs the allocation of new disability funding and services at the regional level. This formula is based on Australian rates of severe and profound disability from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers. Rates for age and sex groupings for people aged five to 64 years are applied to the most recent regional population statistics from the Australian Census. Estimates arrived at using this formula are then further weighted for the indigenous population, rurality, and socio-economic status, in order to reflect the higher costs of delivering services to these particular population subgroups. Sub-regional allocations are informed by the extensive experience of regional staff and regional planning processes. These provide an excellent insight into service demand at a local level and the availability of service providers and, in the case of capital developments, appropriate sites and properties for service development.

Bernie - The Government should give the money back from Stamp Duty made on new homes to provide infrastructure for people with disabilities and those within the growth corridors.

Questions from Group 2

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?

Bernie - This is outrageous as the population of the Western suburbs is going through the roof. Where is the logic? The Western suburbs are treated abominably. The only way to turn it around is to get onto your member for Parliament and give them hell. Current Government has safe seats, don't believe it will lose votes if these issues aren't addressed.

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

Telmo - People with a disability live in a variety of housing arrangements, including their own homes, private rental accommodation, public housing and accommodation provided by disability service providers, including emergency and transitional housing, respite, residential institutions and shared supported accommodation or Community Residential Units (CRU5). People who live in residential units live in this type of accommodation because they need the level of support that can be provided in a group setting with rostered staff. People with a disability who live in accommodation provided by a disability service provider are excluded from the operation of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA). However, the Government believes that people in residential services provided by disability service providers should have rights in relation to their accommodation. The Government also believes, however, that this should be done in a manner that recognises and complements the provision of high quality support to residents. After careful consideration on how to achieve this, the RTA could not be amended to provide these rights to residents and enable a disability service provider to meet the requisite duty of care to all people with a disability living in that accommodation. To overcome this difficulty, the Government has safeguarded the residency rights of people with a disability by creating a division for Residential Services in the Disability Act 2006 (the Act). This division specifically provides a range of rights to people with a disability living in the different types of accommodation provided by disability service providers. The Act allows for a balance between the rights, duties and obligations of the disability service provider and the rights of each resident and of all residents living in that accommodation. The Act also allows for people residing in other forms of residential services to have access to a number of residency rights, where possible. Amendment of the RTA would have been limited to providing rights to

residents living in CRUs only. The Act imposes obligations on disability service providers in relation to the residential services they provide.

These include ensuring that:

- the premise is kept in a state of good repair
- all residents have appropriate access to their room and shared facilities
- staff and residents respect the privacy and dignity of all residents
- residents receive clear information about any charges they are required to pay
- residents are advised about procedures for making a complaint
- appropriate notice is provided in a range of circumstances.

Under the Act, disability service providers are required to provide people with a Residential Statement providing specific details in relation to the accommodation provided. A Residential Statement will include the residential charges and what residents will receive for these charges. People in residential services, as with other disability services, also have access to an independent complaints mechanism with the establishment of the Disability Services Commissioner. In addition, the Disability Act also provides rights for people who reside in CRUs to have certain matters reviewed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). These matters include the process for charging and the process for issuing notices to vacate to residents in a CRU.

3. 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?

Colleen - The conflicted role of DHS in being the provider and monitor of disability services has often been raised with me. It would seem to me that strengthening the role of the Office of the Disability Commissioner to be an independent statutory authority would mean that would have independent oversight of services being provided by both DHS and the Non-Government sector. This again is one of those areas that the Greens would want to work with organisations until we come up with exactly the right model rather than just a yes/no answer. It should be noted that it is the government that is responsible for funding and shortfalls in this area, especially in supported accommodation, respite, education and equipment, are their responsibility.

4. Are you in favour of Self Directed models of funding and why?

Bernie - I am in favour of self directed models of funding and it is important that all funding be directed toward the need.

5. 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?

Telmo - In establishing greater opportunities for self-direction, we have put effort into developing the necessary supports and mechanisms for people who need assistance in identifying their needs and goals, working out how best to meet them and how to manage the funds allocated to them for their supports. The options now available differ in terms of levels of control and level of responsibility people have. For people who require more assistance we fund service providers to help plan and for service providers or the financial intermediary to administer funding. However, increasing control for people with a disability and their families and flexibility is an area we want to continue to develop. We will continue to look at how support packages are constructed and the types of support for individuals and families that are permissible.

6. Inaccessible train stations – help!

Colleen - We need to recognise people’s basic human rights and address discrimination head on, such as the discrimination that is evident in our unfair two tiered public transport system. A transport system that some can access some cannot!

The Greens have spoken in Parliament on this issue and have worked with the community to raise these issues in the public and media. We believe the appalling and accessibility of Victoria’s transport systems is unacceptable and fails to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. Two examples of this are the Laverton and Footscray station, while technically both of these stations are Disability Discrimination Act compliant, the lift breaks down. How do you get on or off the station? The stairs are so steep that an able-bodied person would have a problem with them, especially if they’ve got a pusher or a trolley. So while they may be compliant, they are incredibly difficult to use and may leave people stranded on platforms or words, at risk of injury.

7. 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?

Bernie - It is only fair justice. People should be paid equally. It should be legislated.

8. 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?

Telmo - A key strategy of Government to support people using pay Services in 2010 was to move away from block funded services to individually attached and portable funding. People/their families can now use their funds to meet their changing needs or expectations and to have more control and choice over their supports. The Government continues to invest in transitioning Day Services sector towards the provision of more community inclusive and self-directed supports via a range of key initiatives such as: Changing Days, Enhancing Sector Capacity and Community Facility Redevelopment.

9. 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?

Colleen - Separate to the importance role of Community Visitors, carers and families need a way for advocating for someone they care about. The Greens want to increase resources for advocacy groups, who can work with carers and parents to ensure an individual's unique needs are met and services are appropriate and of high quality.

10. 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?

Bernie - Families are important support structures. No one can show love like a family. All Governments should be encouraging and supporting families. In regards to encouraging younger people to be a carer, it takes a certain type of person to be a carer. Increased wages and conditions is not the answer.

Happy to listen to suggestions

11. How can you support DCV and other grass roots advocacy groups?

Telmo - The Victorian Government recognises and acknowledges the valuable role that Disability Connections Victoria and grass roots advocacy groups play in making sure that the voices of people with a disability are presented to, and heard by government and the community. This government has allocated an additional \$1.1 million to community organisations through the Disability Advocacy Program. The Victorian Government, through the Disability Advocacy Program now provides over \$2.2 million annually directly to 22 community organisations, including 2 resource units. This funding is allocated to independent community organisations to provide advocacy with and for people with a disability to ensure that their rights are upheld and strengthened. Where appropriate, advocacy support is also provided to families and carers. The two resource units have been set up to strengthen and support the disability advocacy and self-advocacy sectors but don't actually undertake any advocacy. Some of their roles include improving advocacy practice, developing networks, resourcing self-advocacy groups and developing new groups. Many other Victorian Government departments also provide opportunities for project funding for community groups including advocacy organisations and networks.

12. 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?

Colleen - We need proper rehabilitation programs and housing that promotes self development. The Government needs to support programs that help people maximise their abilities and therefore equip them better to participate in the community. If people have a living environment that promotes learning new skills they will be more likely to become more independent. Everything possible should be done to provide the best possible housing for people with special needs to ensure they can become as independent as possible.

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

Bernie - would be distressed to find if people didn't have equal access to social/ affordable housing. I would hope equality would be prevailing. I am happy to take on any new cases.

14. 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?

Telmo - The Government recognises the importance of helping people with a disability and their family to develop a plan for their support that can reduce the likelihood of them facing a crisis. Disability Services is currently piloting a proactive approach to planning that assists people with a disability to plan earlier and to build strong links with their local community. This intensive approach supports a person with a disability to identify their goals and needs and provides practical support to build their informal networks, link them to community supports and where required to access disability funded supports. It is also recognised that for some people with a disability, life events can lead to a crisis situation. At these times, Disability Services provides an immediate response that will ensure a person's critical needs are met. When a person's life is more stable, Proactive planning can occur to ensure arrangements and supports are identified and put in place to meet the person's goals and needs.

Telmo's personal view is that we need to plan before a crisis. We need to work with the Government to ensure that it happens.

15. 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?

Colleen - The Government needs to provide capital funding to upgrade public facilities to meet access requirements. Government needs to show leadership and ensure our public spaces reflect the needs of all who want to use them. Disability Action Plans need to be implemented and the Disability Discrimination Act and Building Code of Australia and Australian Standards on access to premises need to be fully enforced and complied with. Landlords especially should be required to meet standards before leasing buildings. At this point I have to be perfectly honest, the building that houses the Greens party office in no way meets disability access standards. In fact, it can be difficult for able bodied people. At our last state conference I raised the difficulty of me campaigning for disability access standards when the office fails to meet those standards. Once the state election is over we will start a search for an office that

allows everybody to participate because it will be accessible. This is an example of where landlords should be required to meet standards in order to lease the property as the tenants, in this case the Greens, are unable to make the required changes.

16. Would it be possible to have a Migrant Resource Centre in the inner suburbs as Preston and St Albans?

Bernie - Yes it should be possible. Considering how many migrants there are in the City.

An audience member did mention there was one in North Melbourne.

17. 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?

Telmo - All businesses must comply with the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)** and the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (CW)** and ensure they do not discriminate against people with a disability. The Victorian Government supports the implementation of disability action plans which are a legislative requirement for public sector bodies under the Disability Act 2006. Through disability action plans Departments are undertaking actions to reduce barriers to people with a disability accessing their goods and services. Work is commencing to improve government procurement systems to require contractors to provide accessible and inclusive services. Since September 2009 purchases from Australian Disability Enterprises (supported employment) have been made exempt from some standard procurement processes making purchasing from these organisations simpler.

18. 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?

Colleen – My experience is that you need an independent body to refer such an issue to, such as the Auditor-General. When you know exactly what the problem is you can begin to work on the solutions. I would be more than happy, when given some examples, to write to the Auditor General requesting an inquiry. The Auditor General gives people the opportunity to submit their experiences and I have a high regard for their work.

19. 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)

Bernie – Another level of bureaucracy imposed on us! I would think that if the person is doing their job properly this shouldn't happen.

20. How do we lessen the gap between policy and practice? What sounds great on paper doesn't always happen at the coal face?

Telmo - We must all continue to advocate and strengthen partnerships, more work needs to be done. We need to seek Political consensus and for the parties to work together. There is unfinished business for 2 million Australians. These challenges are not Labor or Liberal. All Parties need to work together.

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