



"MEDIA RELEASE"

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The article below appears on page 21 of today's Adelaide Advertiser with a glorious photo of Kelly included. We would like to thank the over 100 responses we've had this morning supporting this article. Clearly there is a great demand for SA Premier Mike Rann to take urgent action in conjunction with Kelly and d4d.

Please forward this article to your associates and databases.

LABOR PAINS ON KELLY'S BIG DAY

A champion of rights for the disabled is wheeling around the corridors of power on a daily basis, writes Dignity for Disabled founder and former leader David Holst

Today is a very special day for people with a disability in South Australia as Kelly Vincent, Dignity for Disabled (d4d) Member of the Legislative Council is officially sworn into office.

Amid much excitement and tears, a bright, intelligent and vivacious young woman with a pure heart will commence her official role.

She will no doubt captivate our state and lead us on a journey to a place where people with a disability are valued and respected.

It's a long road.

Premier Mike Rann, who has a reputation for treating people with a disability with disdain, has yet to ring or meet Ms Vincent (although he has written to her).

It is a standing joke within the disability community that photos of Mike Rann alongside people with a disability are so rare as to be almost collectors items – no surprise given SA habitually funds disability services at the lowest level per client of any state in the Commonwealth.

On Tuesday, live on Radio 5AA's breakfast program, Mr Rann showed again how little interest he has in disability issues when he could not remember Ms Vincent's name or the official name of the party she represents.

For decades people with a disability have dreamed of having a voice in parliament and with d4d winning a seat and Ms Vincent's MLC position now guaranteed for the next eight years, a polite but educated and strident disability voice will be projected around the corridors of power, to the

media and wider community with the clarity of someone who truly understands what living with disability means.

While Ms Kelly's appointment gives her a platform to raise her voice, it does not necessarily give her the ability to change anything without the Government's support.

People must realise that despite the brilliant and vocal job Nick Xenophon did as an ardent No Pokies campaigner, pokies still flourished with support from the major parties during his time – to his disgust.

Ms Vincent will bravely lead the disability charge, propelled with the courage of idealism and the conviction acquired by living her 21 years with a serious disability, but true success will only come when other political parties share her priorities and use their combined power to fix the disability crisis that ensures people with a disability live in SA in a lifestyle that is a national shame on our state and country.

Since 2004 the disability community under the d4d banner has campaigned very publicly about its despair. Early meetings and advertising sadly warned of even worse to come.

Politicians played political hardball as though the sector was melodramatic yet those living so close to the bottomless emotional cesspit of disability supports know that on at least two officially reported occasions, recently parents and carers have allegedly attempted to murder their children,

The campaign for urgent action to fix the disability crisis has been widely supported in the media and by the general community and the election of a candidate on a single issue disability ticket cannot be ignored.

As Ms Vincent networks across the state there is no doubt that her presence and appealing profile combined with her professionalism will further raise public understanding of very serious disability related issues and it's clear that future disability-aligned votes will follow.

When Mr Rann eventually meets face-to-face with Ms Vincent, one wonders how he will explain this tragic chapter in ALP disability history including broken promises and lack of disability priority.

Why did Mr Rann promise a 10-year plan to address unmet disability need and allow for future demand before being elected in 2002, and never deliver?

Mr Rann will no doubt refer to the forthcoming Cappo Social Inclusion Board inquiry which he commissioned prior to the election.

This move is seen by most as little more than a delaying tactic to avoid immediately addressing the real issues. There is no doubt Monsignor Cappo will consult widely and deliver a professional and succinct summary that the disability crisis is not imaginary but terribly and tragically real (and worsening).

But the disability sector cannot afford the risk of waiting another two years for the Cappo report, or it becoming yet another in a long list of reports gathering dust, while the Government refuses to act.

Mr Rann can avoid further embarrassment by welcoming Ms Vincent as a true parliamentary colleague and working to put behind him, the disability despair that has flourished in his time as Premier.

He needs urgently to sit down with Ms Vincent, Treasurer Foley and their teams and fast-track a crisis management plan, including tens of millions of dollars of additional funding in the 2010 SA Budget targeted to reverse the tidal wave of disability distress that mushrooms daily in SA.

Let's hope Mr Rann can live up to his promise of listening and follow it up with some real action.

If not, no doubt we will see more people with a disability taking to the streets, with Ms Vincent like a modern-day "Joan of Arc" in her wheelchair, leading the charge.

What an inspirational and motivational sight that will be.

David Holst
Chair
Disability Speaks Steering Committee
0418555683

www.disabilityspeaks.com.au

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