

Submission

Hi my name is Simone Stevens; I am 32 years old. I have cerebral palsy which I developed at the age of three and a half months old; through septicemia (Blood Poisoning) I was comatized for four months and was like a new born up until 7 years old.

When I was growing up my parents were not informed about carers or respite, I did not attend a respite facility until I was eighteen years old thanks to my best friend's mother who informed my parents.

Before getting a unit and a support package I was on an emergency waiting list for two and half years because of my father's alcoholism which affected me physically, emotionally and mentally for that time I lived in the respite facility as it was the only safe place which I felt I could feel happy and fulfill my goals and get through day to day life. In November 05 I was given temporary accommodation through Karingal a two bedroom unit where I stayed for 17 months.

For the past three years thanks to the department of housing I'm living in my own home which I love as I love the independence it has given me. However, in order for this to have been successful I was given a Support and Choice Package which I had since October 2005, which assists me with having carers that come in and assist me in daily life.

As the years have rolled on I have developed more physical limitations and difficulties though I am unable to access private health insurance as it is too expensive on top of other bills which need to be paid on the disability support pension does not cover it especially to people who just have a physical disability and are able to live independently as Community Residential Units (CRU's) are not even an option as it is impossible to get into them as the requirements is you need to have some degree of intellectual disability to be accepted. Which I would like the government to relook this issue.

I am on a number of advocacy committees to brooder and expand my knowledge of different levels advocacy issues and needs of people that need advocates in their lives.

In 2005 when I first received my Support and Choice Package I was with SCOPE though found myself in a very bad situation and had a nervous

breakdown as my speaking up was considered "Attention seeking behavior" and was constantly labeled "A difficult client" I have moved on from those times though I still have times where things get emotionally difficult. Though two years ago I moved to Disability Attendant Special Services Inc (DASSI) where I actually have a fantastic communication with all of my carers but especially have a fantastic communication style with my service provider coordinator.

Earlier this year I ended my participation where I was attending CREATE who were an organisation who supplied me with a Key Worker since May 2003 though unfortunately since July 2008 with a new key worker who made life extremely difficult after trying to figure out communication styles which failed I decided to end it and I'm currently not under any key worker (Case Manager) though I'm much happier.

If I can be involved with your organisation I would be deeply honored. I am heavily involved with Victorian Advocacy League for people with Intellectual Disabilities (VALID) I am also on VALID's Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the annual Having A Say Conference which I have on since 2007 and was chair person in '09' I am currently deputy chair person of VALID's Board of Management which I was appointed in Dec 09. I am also deputy chair person on Barwon Disability Resource Council (BDRC) which I have been apart of since '07'.

Since August 2007 I was given an electric wheelchair which has improved my level of independence as I am now utilising public transport eg buses. However McHarry's buses the local bus carrier in my area all their buses are not all wheelchair accessible and people with disabilities as well as the general public that need low floor buses are waiting sometimes over an hour to get to their destination I have countless conversations with McHarry's though they just keep saying it is lack of funding.

Also in '08' was finally given a Companion Card I had been trying to apply since 2005 though I kept getting knocked back because of my physical disability and because I could do basic transfers though it is safer if I had someone with me. if I can prevent other people from this reoccurring I will do it as I have vowed to assist people with disabilities and people around them to apply for things they need to better assist with mobility

- Simone Stevens

