



MEDIA RELEASE
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Call to end neglect and abuse of people living with disability in the South Australian healthcare system

JFA Purple Orange is calling on the South Australian Government to take immediate action to protect the health and wellbeing of people living with disability and end the ongoing neglect and abuse prevalent in our healthcare system.

On 14 February 2022, the findings of an investigation into the failings of a state-run government facility to adequately provide basic care to a man living with an intellectual disability was publicly released. It revealed “failings in hygiene, wound care and weight monitoring and how this led to a situation that should have been avoided”¹.

In May 2021, the man was rushed to hospital from the Transition to Home (T2H) care service run by the Department of Human Services at Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre where it was reported he had “an infected pressure wound, appeared to be malnourished and was left to sit in faeces and urine for long periods”.

The T2H program was implemented as a step-down service for people living with disability from hospital who otherwise were unable to find appropriate long-term accommodation.

“It is distressing for many people in the disability community that there is once again a revelation about someone’s life being at risk because of support issues,” Robbi Williams, CEO of Julia Farr Group, said.

“There needs to be stronger oversight in place to protect people, not just because of the increased risk of the consequences of infection, but because they deserve to be treated with dignity, and should be able to trust state-run services to support them well while in healthcare settings and to successfully return home from hospital.

“This incident reinforces the importance of investing in a proactive approach to addressing the needs of people living with disability in healthcare settings.

“We cannot just rely on a ‘complaints based’ mechanism for identifying service problems and how they might be improved. We need systemic improvements to healthcare systems that will improve the safety and health outcomes of people living with disability, and where those improvements are planned in partnership with the disability community.

¹ Comments attributed to Grant Davies, HCSCC, Public Summary, “T2H investigation completed; recommendations made”, 14 February 2022.

“Healthcare services that are safe, accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of patients living with disability is imperative in addressing these unacceptable health outcomes.

“Furthermore, the mere fact that the state government had to implement the T2H program highlights the desperate need to drastically increase South Australia’s accessible housing stock allowing people living with disability to find suitable affordable housing where they are in control of how their support happens and are part of their local neighbourhood instead of living in a facility.”

With the 2022 state election looming, JFA Purple Orange is calling on all political parties to make a commitment to improving the lives of people living with disability and end the ongoing abuse, neglect and mistreatment, by:

- **Funding meaningful measures to address the widespread barriers to safe access and inclusion** across all South Australia’s hospitals and health services.
- **Co-designing and implementing a professional development training program** to be rolled out across all hospitals, local health networks, and community and mental health services that includes a focus on eliminating violence, discrimination and marginalisation of people living with disability.
- **Mandating the accessibility standards in the National Construction Code 2022** in South Australia for all new residential builds in line with the commitments of other states and territories.
- Producing a **long-term** fully funded housing plan for South Australia to address the current housing crisis including through **investing significantly in new accessible affordable social housing** to address the current shortfall.
- Increase state **funding to make independent advocacy services available to support all people living with disability** in South Australia.

Additionally, this horrendous situation highlights the importance of external oversight measures, such as the Community Visitor Scheme (CVS), for state-run facilities and hope they are being adequately funded and resourced.

We urge the government to respond to these recommendations as a matter of urgency.

You can view our election requests in full by visiting our website. We will provide an update on the responses we receive from parties and candidates before the state election.

Media Enquiries

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