

Clr Pederson Chairperson Social Inclusion Advisory Committee

Chair's Vision Statement

Social Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting 7 March 2018

My vision for the social inclusion committee:

As chair of this committee my overall vision is that we advocate for the rights of all Ryde residents to participate fully in the community, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, level of education, sexual identification, socio-economic status, physical ability or psychological ability. At all times observing the importance and joy of diversity.

I think in order to achieve this we must continue to identify where residents are experiencing discrimination, bullying, isolation, access issues or lack of important services in our LGA. For example: Identifying where residents are still excluded due to language or literacy skills.

Of course we must discuss the continuation of the great work previous committees have already done and begin new tangible, positive projects that will make a difference in the lives of those suffering isolation in Ryde.

At the last census, 5,341 people or 4.6% of the population in the City of Ryde, identified as disabled so I would quickly like to make mention of the State governments plan to cease disability advocacy funding from June 30. I have identified many services that will be forced to close or downsize in the Ryde LGA. The state government argues the NDIS will cover these services. We know it won't. More importantly only 10% of all people with disability will be provided with an individually funded plan under the NDIS. For the other 90% the loss of funded advocacy, independent information and peak representation will mean an even greater gap in access to services/supports, and barrier to full inclusion in the NSW community. This means access to information regarding services and accessibility will become even more important a job for City of Ryde Council. I see the committee playing a very important role in identifying the loss in services as a result of these cuts.

We must identify, in our quickly changing city, any impediments to social inclusion in our built, natural and social environment and advocate to council, business and other tiers of government on behalf of those isolated by ignorant policy, cessation of services or non-inclusive development approvals. I was deeply disappointed to hear that a local organisation was considering defunding two all abilities social events that brought great joy to so many in Ryde.

Only last night my colleagues and I had to voice our opposition to the removal a several public bus stops that the state government felt were too close together. Obviously a decision made with a young able bodied residents in mind. Last night council also adopted my motion to write to State government requesting a long overdue bus service through East Ryde to Top Ryde. I tabled 300 signatures from the elderly, parents of teenagers and the disabled who want public transport so they can access Centrelink, Top Ryde library, medical services and shops.

From those who oppose extra services, I've heard responses like 'tell them to catch two buses or walk for 20mins to another bus stop' Many of us here know limited access to affordable transport

just leads to isolation ... or loss of dignity as the elderly and disabled must wait for family to drive them around. We know how important independence is.

I also envisage a committee devoted to the recognition and celebration of distinct abilities, talents, and skills of all individuals identifying as living with disability or mental illness.

I envisage a committee who strives to bring the community together in innovative ways to celebrate their differences and celebrate those things that make them the same.

I have been part of and have knowledge of arts organisations whose sole purpose is social change and social cohesion. I hope that during our meetings where fitting I can introduce or remind you about those organisations and the benefit of their work to the socially isolated. Some of you may have heard of Milkcrate theatre; the inclusive companies like beyond the square or Ever after theatre (with whom I have worked as a co-ordinator) The wonderful treehouse theatre - who help heal teenage refugees through bringing their stories to life. There is also the fabulous work of accessible arts, Hatch, in bard tv, Focus on Ability film competition among many other inclusive arts programs.

Of course we must focus on information and advocacy but events are an important part of bringing people out of their homes to investigate services. One example of how this can work well is a charity I work with each year called Sydney homeless connect. Cleverly, this event invites the homeless to Sydney town hall for Xmas in July lunch, a haircut, a new pair of shoes, a photo, a hug, a massage and personal care packs. Before the visitors leave they must pass through a hall of front line services. Dentists, doctors, mobile phone providers, somewhere to get photo ID, vets for their dogs, and importantly Family and community services. I know we can't see a lot of homeless people in Ryde but we have them and it's on the rise. Homelessness, not having an address, excludes people from our community. People fall through the cracks unfortunately and with the closure of so much public housing in Ryde we are seeing the public housing community - many disabled, elderly and suffering mental illness, anxious and in upheaval.

We should also look to the Human rights commission and host events around some of their very successful campaigns. Ryde has already been very actively involved in the 'racism it stops with me' campaign and I hope we can plan more small events.

In closing I just want to say thank you for coming forward and I hope that during our meetings each of us will listen with an open mind and respectfully consider the opinions of each member sitting beside us, so we can organise our ideas and deliver for our wonderfully diverse community here in Ryde.

Thank you and welcome.