

## **National Conference Welcome**

Welcome to the inaugural Get Building SDA conference.

To say that we're excited to get this day under way is very much an understatement.

The SDA market that is starting to develop, I think is one of the most exciting things that we've been able to see on the social landscape of Australia for many years.

It's also a great sign, actually, that's a fantastic sign, turn your mobile phones off, it's a great symbol of collaboration that we're all here today and the SDA market will only work with collaboration and a sense of optimism and the right amount of energy towards that.

To begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting.

I pay my respect to their elders past and present and the Aboriginal elders of other communities who may be here today.

I would also like to acknowledge the Honourable Paul Fletcher, Minister for families and social services, Mr. Rob de Luca, the CEO of the National Disability Insurance agency. Other officials from the NDIA and other government agencies including the Department of Social Services and a range of government agencies from Victoria and Queensland. The many people with disability and their family members and support workers attending here today. A wide range of disability housing and SDA providers from all sectors, disability support providers, support coordinators and other professionals helping to provide services under the NDIS, financial and investor organisations, academics and building and property professionals.

We welcome you all and of course, our Auslan interpreters will be standing up in front of you throughout the day.

I mentioned very briefly in my opening remark that there is a sense of optimism in this room.

The numbers of people at this conference, I think, are a great testimony to that.

Four hundred people registered today, but more importantly, there are over a hundred people on a waiting list trying to get in to this room and I think that's a great example of the market that's been developed as we move forward. But I thought the best way to start this conference would be to put a bit of a human face on why we're in this room.

I'd like to, in your minds, introduce you to a resident who I know who has benefited extraordinarily by the involvement of the right type of home.

His name's Brian, he lives in Brisbane.

Brian was a member of the Australian Navy.

He went to Iraq as a member of the Australian Navy very proudly. He did an incredible tour of duty.

On his way back from that tour of duty, he stopped off in Goa in India for leave.

That night, like any other person, he went out and he had a great time, he had a great opportunity with his mates just to see Goa.

At some stage during that night, a mate, a young person passed him a cigarette that was laced with china white, a very powerful drug.

He had a heart attack and passed out, before they could revive him, he had an acquired brain injury that would impact the rest of his life.

Here is a young man who you think would be cradled by our system, who would be brought back to Australia and would be looked after, the old institutional system.

Brian sat in a hospital room and inside a nursing home for over eleven and a half years.

During that time, his whole demeanour kept falling and kept declining and when he was able to move in to a residential home that was able to, first of all celebrate his youth, celebrate his needs, celebrate what he wanted to do and how he could express himself, there was a huge change in his ability to be able to live a life that he wanted to live.

Before that, he'd had, he'd been basically nonverbal.

He also had to be tube fed in most cases. And within three weeks of being that, back in the home, in a young care home in Brisbane, he was able to start using words, he was also able to basically get off the tube and start eating and tasting food for the first time.

He cried when he tasted food for the first time after eleven and a half years, an extraordinary story of absolute liberation.

So today is about building independence, building choice and building dignity for individuals who have been impacted, and their families, by disability.

Where we are going is a really exciting time, it will create, it will need coordination from all of us and energy from all of us and a truly optimistic belief that this can happen.

This conference in itself is an example of that; Youngcare and Summer working together.

Actually, Luke and, so Luke the CEO of Summer, but I know you already know him, we had a coffee after a Senate enquiry in August last year and we believed that this was going to be a great example of the way that we could demonstrate a collaborative spirit towards the SDA market.

That's why we're here today to actually get this flying.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**