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MEDIA RELEASE

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Parliament urged to remove ‘gag’ on people with disability

MELBOURNE: Disability advocacy group VALID is calling on Victorian legislators to act swiftly to repeal provisions of the VCAT Act which effectively gag people under guardianship or administration orders from speaking openly about their experiences.

This week, VALID attended Parliament when the Greens’ Spokesperson on Disability, Anasina Gray-Barberio MP, introduced a private member’s bill to amend the law and remove this unjust and unnecessary restriction.

In a powerful speech, Ms Gray-Barberio outlined the harm caused by the law and the need to restore people’s right to speak about their lives. The bill was adjourned for further debate in two weeks. VALID is urging all Government and Opposition MPs to support its passage.

“The Government talks about choice, control and valuing lived experience, yet existing laws silence some of the most vulnerable people in our community,” said VALID CEO Fionn Skiotis. “We can’t keep ignoring the voices of people whose rights are curtailed.”

Longstanding disability rights activist Uli Cartwright was also present in the Legislative Council chamber and was acknowledged by Ms Gray-Barberio.

Uli said: “This law has caused confusion, fear and distress. Passing this bill would send a clear message that people with disability can be trusted to speak for themselves.”

The existing provision is out of step with both the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Victoria’s own Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The Victorian Public Advocate has previously called for change, stressing the importance of transparency and freedom of expression.

VALID urges all MPs to support disability rights and do the right thing by removing this outdated and discriminatory law, as a non-partisan measure.

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