



# Media Release

30 June 2014

## Disability organisation takes a stand against today's axing of 'Ramp Up'

"The Abbott Government's lack of support for the disability community is echoing loudly today with the axing of funding for the advocate website 'ABC Ramp Up' and we at Muscular Dystrophy Australia want to ensure that voice is not lost by initiating a similar platform which is not at the mercy of the government," said Muscular Dystrophy Australia's Executive Director, Boris M Struk.

"Scrapping a website which provides an avenue for social and political commentary from the perspective of those living with a disability is an abhorrent decision which only highlights the government's complete disregard for this sector of the population," said Mr Struk.

"MDA is working towards ensuring that the voice of this community is not muzzled for too long and we are currently in the process of creating a new universal platform for any person in the disability community to have access to, regardless of condition, and have the ability to provide content for the site," said Mr Struk.

"As the head of a disability organisation and the parent of a son with Muscular Dystrophy I am appalled that this website has been valued so poorly by the government, but this is not something we will just take in our strides and accept," said Mr Struk.

As of today, existing stories and articles on the Ramp Up website will remain accessible but new articles or comments will not be able to be posted, due to the scheduled ceasing of funding previously provided by the Department of Social Services.

Boris Struk's youngest son Ryan, 34, has lived with Muscular Dystrophy since the age of three and is currently an Arts student majoring in Media and Communication studies and International Relations.

"Unable to type, I'm hammering out this article with voice recognition software and an on-screen keyboard. I have a genetic condition and a set of wheels, I'm a card-carrying member of the disabled community. The devil's advocate in me, would see this as politically expedient for the government. After all, it's tough keeping the masses silent when applying 'crippling' reforms to the disability support pension," said Ryan.

"If the audience is often not exposed to realistic images of disability, how are they able to imagine, that a lot of people with disabilities, are not noteworthy at all. Most are just regular chumps going about their lives. It is crucial to have a dedicated platform for discussion, like Ramp Up where people with disabilities, can set the discourse. It gives them a voice and a means to break stereotypes," said Ryan.

The new platform in development by MDA will be accessible by all members of the disability community and there is scope for the MDA Head Office in North Melbourne, a wheelchair accessible building, to be potentially used to facilitate meetings for a new disability advocate group.

To arrange an interview or photo opportunity with MDA's Executive Director, **Boris M Struk**, please contact:

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