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Autism groups condemn family violence

Media Release - For immediate distribution

Disability organisations and advocates from across the nation have spoken out together to condemn family violence and grieve the death of two autistic children this week.

“We are grieving the murder of Elisa and Martin, two autistic children who have lost their childhood and an opportunity to have full lives as Autistic people,” said Briannon Lee, Co-Convenor of Autistic Family Collective

“We are also horrified at the reframing of family violence as an act by parents who were suffering. A reframing which paints the children as the cause of their own death and the murderer as a suffering hero.”

‘Autistic people (and our disabled colleagues) stand united in the belief that we are not a burden or a tragedy and that we do not cause suffering.’

ASAN AU/NZ Chair Katharine Annear agrees,

“These deaths are not understandable, acceptable or justifiable in the face of autism; they are criminal in the face of humanity,” she said

“Two children are dead there should be outrage.”

The groups have called on the media and autism organisations to be responsible in their commentary about crimes against disabled people.

“Time and time again the media perpetuates a stigma against Autism and disability which further alienates us and creates a false dichotomy that we are burdensome and that our neurodivergence is an excuse for violence and murder,” said Bendigo Autistic Advocacy and Support Service Co-Convenor Beck Kelly who has issued a statement with fellow members Sarah Hansford and Susanna Flanagan.

“The way the murder of Elisa and Martin has been portrayed devastatingly highlights the real and ethical responsibility that journalists have in reporting these crimes.”

Disability advocates Australia wide added their support to the statement, noting that in the absence of any information about the apparent murder suicide, the community and media response invokes victim blaming and stigmatising community reactions.

‘Speculation about motives including a perceived lack of support or the concept of ‘burden’ devalues the lives of the children who are the innocent victims of this tragedy,’ says disability advocate Samantha Connor.

'There is no evidence that the identity of the children played any part in this crime. This disturbing community and media response, which includes the publication of articles which tacitly endorse family violence, is both stigmatising and victim blaming.'

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