

15 September 2019

Midget tossing has no place in 2019

It is incredibly disappointing that we have to talk about midget tossing in 2019. It is something that we would have hoped was an outdated mistake of the past that we've learnt from and now know better. For a venue to promote an event such as this, it echoes back to times when little people were put on display based upon their physical differences during the days of the traditional sideshow "Freak Shows". Events such as these continue to reinforce these outdated stereotypes that portray people of short stature as objects of entertainment, the "butt of the joke" and something to be profited off.

However, the most pressing concern with events such as this is that unfortunately we know they can and do translate into real-world consequences, having the potential to end tragically. Studies have shown that 12% of people with dwarfism have experienced physical violence, and events such as these are perfect examples of how something that may start as a joke can lead to violence, abuse and severe injury in the community, however unintentional. We shouldn't overlook the importance and power of being able to laugh at yourself, however, when a joke becomes targeted at pulling someone down, it is no longer funny.

Those who choose to participate in these events decide to do so of their own accord (and have every right to) – it is not our place to dictate how anyone chooses to earn a living. However, the reality is that these choices don't only impact those involved, they also impact the wider short statured community, who are then forced to address the ongoing stigma related to people of short stature within the entertainment industry. With this in mind, the Short Statured People of Australia (SSPA) urges venues and entertainment producers to support people of short stature in the arts by employing them based on talent and ability, rather than purely based on stature.

The SSPA's core value is "*equality of opportunity*". We believe that there is no area where this is more important than when it comes to an individual's right to participate in the community wholly without the threat of ridicule.

We want to congratulate the hotel for recognising their error in judgement and cancelling the event, and also thank the wider community in bringing this issue to the forefront of public discussion. We hope that in the near future we can look back and view these events as they are: outdated and unacceptable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Milliard', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sam Milliard

National President - Short Statured People of Australia