

**Submission
No 4**

Outsourcing Community Service Delivery



Date Received: 20/04/2012

Partially Confidential

Dear Committee Manager and Members

I would like to lodge a submission to the Committee on Community Services. My son lives in a Group Home at King Creek near Wauchope. The residence in which he resides contains a client base of people with dual diagnoses and extremely challenging behaviours.

The previous government – with input from the very competent staff and the parents - put a lot of time and money into this house in both the physical settings/extensions and the behavioural programmes, to make it as safe and pleasant for clients and workers as is reasonably possible. This is an ongoing process and we are still working towards making it better still eg – the installation of a swimming pool. I feel confident that an NGO would not have gone and will not in future go to these lengths.

We pay our taxes for the government to supply services and this is a vital one. The non government sector by its very nature involves the concept of a profit margin. How could an NGO possibly deliver the same level of service as the government department does, bearing in mind the profit margin? It just cannot be done. Therefore costs will be cut. Staffing number levels, staffing experience levels, access to specialist services, outings, physical surroundings/maintenance, food, power usage, transport and more – may all come under threat.

The private sector has already failed THREE TIMES to be able to provide a day programme for my son because of his extremely challenging behaviours. Three separate providers in Port Macquarie have attempted and failed to provide him with 3 or 4 hours of care during the day. How then would I have any confidence that NGOs could adequately provide for his safety and needs 24/7 ?

The government sector now also provides his day program successfully. The government is supposed to be there to provide its citizens with safety, security and services. Our most vulnerable (through no fault of their own) are no exception to this.

If the plan to privatise Community Services is given a green light regardless of the feelings of those directly involved, then I sincerely suggest to you that this be not just a blanket coverage, but that all group homes be looked at, or “graded” more individually – they do not all fit into one neat little “square hole” ready for the peg to be rammed home. The level of care, the type of care and the experience needed by the people staffing them varies greatly from home to home. If they are to be run successfully for the people living their lives in these homes, and the staff who are working there, this needs to be considered. In the case of some facilities, the government is definitely the best and only successful choice as a service provider. Thank you.

