

Standing Committee on Law and Justice
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000

26th July 2010

Attention: Ms Rachel Callinan

Re: 3rd Review of LTCSA and the LTCSAC
Response to Additional Question on Notice

Discharge of participants to private service providers

During the financial Year 2009/2010, in response to a Health Department directive, Sydney West Area Health Service applied a 10% reduction in FTEs (Full Time Equivalent staff) to all clinical services in Sydney West. The Westmead Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service was subjected to this reduction and an FTE target was set well below the service's usual staffing establishment.

This meant that any positions within the service which were vacant at the time, were unable to be recruited to and would continue to be left vacant until the service's FTE status fell below the target set by Sydney West. At the time of the 3rd Parliamentary Review of LTCSA, crucial positions remain vacant at Westmead BIRS as a result of this FTE cut.

The Community Rehabilitation Team of the Westmead BIRS is wearing a significant percentage of the vacancies, which in effect are "frozen" positions. These include a full-time clinical psychology position, and part-time occupational therapy and physiotherapy positions. Having these positions vacant means that Westmead BIRS is unable to provide non-inpatient therapy programs to its recently discharged patients. Alternative services are organised through the private sector. This is not ideal as it can lead to fragmented and less specialised service provision which is more difficult and challenging to case manage and coordinate.

We feel that it is not appropriate to apply an FTE reduction to a service which has significant revenue raising potential and can cover a large component of its operating costs through revenue. The Westmead BIRS is a service that has raised over \$1.5 million dollars/year in revenue for the Area Health Service in the last 2 years. It should be exempted from FTE reductions so that it can maintain its ability to service patients at a cost far less than the gross cost and at the same time retain a minimum level of core staffing needed to maintain a specialised service.

The efficiency and quality of rehabilitation care provided to participants of LTCSA residing in Sydney West (particularly non-inpatients) would be improved and enhanced if the funding arrangements of the Westmead BIRS were changed to one where the service was guaranteed an expenditure budget it could operate to rather than operating on FTE targets which can fluctuate in response to many variables.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Joe G', written in a cursive style.

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