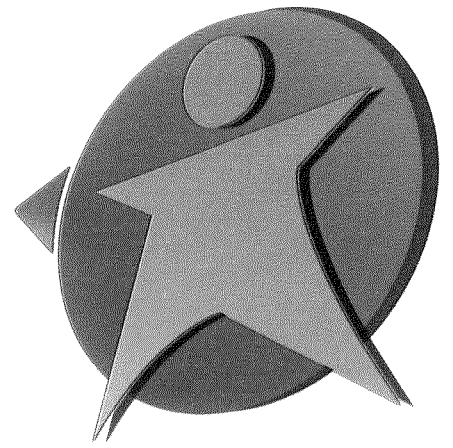


INQUIRY INTO POST SCHOOL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

Organisation: The Junction Works Inc
Name: Ms Jaqueline Andres
Position: Children's and Disability Services Manager
Telephone: 9606 9628
Date Received: 14/04/2005

Subject:

Summary



The Director,
General Purpose Standing Committee Number 2,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Legislative Council
GENERAL PURPOSE
STANDING COMMITTEES

14 APR 2005

RECEIVED

12th April, 2004

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re: Misplaced Submission to the Inquiry into changes to Post School Programs for young people with a disability

We refer to our telephone conversation with Madeleine Foley from your office on the 12th of April 2005 and as suggested we are re sending our submission.

It is evident that due to one of a staff member's error in the spelling of your email address, your office has never received our submission. We became aware of this fact as we navigated your website to confirm our document had been published. As we could not locate it, we immediately contacted your office were to our dismay were advised that our submission had never been received.

We take full responsibility for this error and urge you to consider accepting our submission as we feel it would be unjust not to include information on the impact this reform will have on the families and young people we represent.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on Ph (02) 9606 9628.

Yours faithfully,

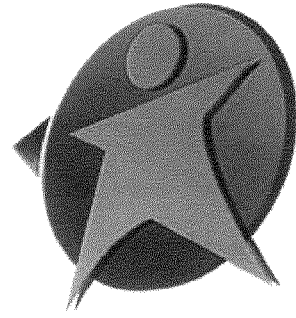
Jaqueline Andres
Children's and Disability Services Manager

PO Box 15
Austral NSW 2171
Ph: (02) 9606 9628 Fax: (02) 9606 9296
Email: thejunctionworks@bigpond.com

ABN 54 049 120 714

the junction works
inc

**the
junction**
SUPPORTING PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES



The Junction Works Submission

To the

Legislative Council Enquiry conducted by

The General Purpose Standing Committee No2

Into Changes to Post School Option Programs

For young adults with a disability.

March 2005

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Create Choose Strive Achieve

**At The Junction we inspire, we support
we educate and we care
For all as one**

*The Junction Works Inc.
PO Box 15
AUSTRAL NSW 2171
Email: thejunctionworks@bigpond.com
ABN: 54 049 120 714
Phone: 9606 9628
Fax: 9606 9296*

PREAMBLE

The Junction Works Inc has been providing services to the community since 1987. The organization's focus is to provide services to a wide cross section of community. The Junction has been providing the **Post School Options** programme since 1994 and subsequently the **ATLAS** programme since 1999.

The Junction commenced operation with 8 clients with both a physical and intellectual disability. Currently, The Junction provides a service to over 110 clients with a Disability.

We also provide a Disability Case Management project which offers an intensive case management plan and brokerage component to people aged between 12 and 60.

The Junction has had extensive involvement in the PSO/ATLAS programme. Our CEO was the regional Representative for South West Sydney for 8 years. Our CEO also participated in the DADHC working party on the Community Participation framework.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Service Providers across the state acknowledged the need to commence a reform process pertaining to the ATLAS programme, which included:

- An increase in Funding Levels, particularly to acknowledge the complexity of health needs for people with high support needs;
- Improved access to Supported Employment;
- Financial incentives to the corporate sector to provide employment opportunities;
- A tax system where corporate philanthropic donations are encouraged;
- A monitoring system that ensured service providers were meeting the desired outcomes of the programme and informed DADHC of barriers to participation;
- Assistance with access to buildings;
- Assistance with staff training;
- The development of a process to improve the transition process for clients who had difficulty in obtaining employment;
- The implementation and adequate resourcing of a service system infrastructure to ensure that people with a disability received access to services that provided life long learning opportunities;
- An assurance that clients can re-enter into the ATLAS programme if their work placement fails; and
- Employment options that are not based on productivity, but on a person's right to employment, which is competitive with people who do not have a disability.
- For DADHC to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport to secure transport options that are safe and affordable.

It was a strong belief of service providers that all stakeholders needed to be consulted and strategies implemented to improve this service system that was under pressure.

We were adamant that a reform of the ATLAS programme meant that there had to be

mechanisms in place to ensure that everyone could have their say. We do not believe this took place.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care often speak of partnerships with the non-government sector, however their rhetoric is not translated into action.

The implementation of the review left clients, families and service providers in a state of flux.

In July 2004 DADHC announced the Adult Training Learning and Support and Post School Options Reform Initiatives. DADHC stated *“Following the NSW State Budget I am writing to advise you of changes to post school options programmes (ATLAS and PSO). In 2005 the Department will be intruding two new programs that give a more targeted approach to meeting the differing needs of school leavers with a disability and current participants of the ATLAS and PSO programmes. The changes are directed to improving transition to employment outcomes for school leavers and providing certainly of longer-term support for those who are unable to move to the workforce. Over the past ten years our post school options programmes have achieved employment outcomes for less than 3% of participants, even though assessments of school leavers’ skills indicate that many can make the transition to work employment or employment programme. At the same time the current programme is not well designed to provide long term supports for those school leavers who are unable to make the transition to full time employment as it is time limited.”*

The new policy direction is underpinned by a number of false assumptions about the programme.

RESPONSE

The Disability sector has been informing DADHC on a monthly basis that employment outcomes are often difficult to obtain. This is specifically due to the non-existent Commonwealth employment places available to young adults who are work-ready. The Department blames the service providers for only 3% of service users obtaining work. The bottom line is that, historically, there have been no supported work placements available. We have had clients on a waiting list for some 3 to 4 years awaiting a supported work placement.

Secondly, in reference to school assessments, we have found that often these assessments did not give an accurate view of the person's ability levels with particular attention needs to be given to behavioural issues. These factors would ultimately affect the person ability to gain work within the 2-year timeframe.

Thirdly, in reference to the programme not being well designed to provide long-term supports. We believe this to be untrue. The programme has always been designed to provide life long learning to people with a disability. Service providers have implemented programmes to address the changing needs of clients. However, if the Department were speaking of a poorly designed funding system, and poorly designed expectations around anticipated outcomes, then this statement would be accurate.

This sector works under extreme conditions and, like all work environments; there are elements of risk. Our staff work for an average annual amount of \$30,000. They remain in this sector because they love the work and are committed to the rights of people with a disability. When the Department announced the reduction in funding, the only choice service providers had was to restructure their programmes and thus reducing staff levels. For organizations a tremendous fear was that we would have to dismiss long-standing staff that had shown their loyalty and commitment.

The long-term effect on this sector is that the reform has reduced some organization to surrender funding, lose excellent staff and continue to provide services under stressful circumstances.

It is not only our staff that would have been affected. Our greatest distress was to see our clients have a reduced service and intimately place additional stressors on the family unit.

Why should family resign from their employment to look after their adult child?

This government has a social responsibility to care for the vulnerable in the community.

It is not acceptable for the DADHC to state to families “You will not have a reduced service”. How can the department expect a service to continue to provide ongoing services with a reduced budget?

Amongst this entire crisis the Department decides to open the tender process to other agencies. This is ludicrous when you have a service system under extreme distress.

The Department then decides to send out Service Provider Preference Forms to families. Most families, especially those from a CALD background, had difficulty understanding why they were given a preference form when they were happy with the existing service provider.

Whilst we applaud the State Government for not reducing the funding for PSO clients, it again appears ridiculous that they have one set of rules for PSO and another for ATLAS. To add salt to the injury it is based all on the date you commenced the programme.

Providing life long learning opportunities for people with a disability is a fundamental right.

The Junction Works Inc would like to make the following recommendations

Recommendation 1

That DADHC work the Commonwealth to ensure supported employment places for people with a Disability. We suggest a timeframe should be set and be strictly adhered to. In the interim Service providers should not be expected to increase the 3% access to employment

Recommendation 2

That the State Government makes a financial commitment to the provision of long term services for people with a disability. Thus acknowledging the complexity of changing needs and adjustment in family circumstances.

Recommendation 3

That DADHC re-evaluate the exiting funding levels to ensure that all people receive a service for five days. This would enable clients to receive ongoing vocational and life long learning opportunities. The **minium** benchmark should be \$18,500 per annum.

Recommendation 4

When DADHC consults the community they provide opportunities for **all** stakeholders to have input. Not just the chosen few.

Recommendation 5

That DADHC implement a service monitoring system that ensures the best possible outcomes for clients. This system will also provide DADHC with clear examples of barriers and strengths of the programme

Recommendation 6

That DADHC, with consultation from the sector, develop an assessment methodology that addresses the client individual needs.

Recommendation 7

That DADHC never again places families and service providers in a stressful situation, which has created terror and anxiety.

Recommendation 8

That DADHC improve their consultation mechanisms and their unrealistic timeframes.

Recommendation 9

That DADHC work with the Ministry of Transport to secure safe and affordable transport for people who attend the ATLAS programme.

Recommendation 10

That DADHC make a serious commitment to improve their partnership arrangements with service providers and provide service providers with positive feedback about the valuable programmes they have been providing.

Story One

A Young woman enters the ATLAS programme in 2001. She is referred to Job Support. This agency provided supported employment options for clients with a disability. Job Support assesses this young woman and refers her to The Junction for further support and skill building.

The Junction works with this client to develop work skills. A component of this is locating work experience. The client is placed back on the supported employment waiting list. At the completion of the ATLAS 2 year timeframe DADHC exits her from the programme. She has no job. No ATLAS programme. Her mother gives up work to look after her. At this present time she sits at home watching Television. Her mother states she has lost all her skills.

Story two

A young man with high support needs resides at home with his grandparents. The grandparents are in their 80s. Their grandson has complex medical needs. A reduction in days would place additional stress on this ageing family.

Story three

A Young man enters the ATLAS programme in 2001. The Junction supports this client in skill building and secures him 8 hrs work. DADHC inform The Junction,

late last year, he will be exited from the programme in April 05. His father has just passed away and he is coming to terms with his own sexuality.

Story four

There are many families who have stated if a service is reduced than they will have to cease work and look after their child.