

INQUIRY INTO POST SCHOOL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

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Subject: Submission to Post School Disability Programs lodged by Mary Bills

Summary

Submission to Parliamentary General Purpose Standing Committee No 2

Inquiry into PSO and ATLAS funding changes

Sutherland Shire Carer Support Project is a project of the Sutherland Shire Community Care Network Inc. The project provides support to carers of people with a disability and frail older people living in the Sutherland Local Government Area.

From the time that letters were sent to families about the ATLAS/PSO changes the Carer Support Project had a number of calls from carers who were concerned about the changes and what it would mean for their son's/daughters. Specific concerns were raised by four carers, and general concerns about the future of the program by a number of others, including two who care for teenage daughters still in the school system for another 2-3 years.

Of the four carers with specific issues three were currently receiving ATLAS funding and one was joining the program in 2005. Of the three in the system, who all attended different services, two had been contacted by the service provider about probable reductions in days of service or staff ratio or costs of service. These carers had also been told the level of funding allocated to their son/daughter under the new system. The young adult sons/daughters of these carers all had quite high support needs. Two of the carers had dual caring roles at home caring for elderly parents as well as a son/daughter with a disability.

Concerns raised:

- Carers talked about their concerns when faced with the prospect of reduced funding for their adult children. Parents had been informed there were likely to be cuts in service provision particularly based on the reduction in funding.
- Two parents sited initial funding changes from \$17,500 to \$13,500 and from \$16,000 to \$9,000 when their sons/daughters moved into the Community Participation program. The funding finally provided was at a level higher than originally stated, however, parents had been through a number of months of insecurity and worry about the future. One parent is still waiting to hear about the number of days of service her daughter will receive once the new programs are in place. Another parent noted concerns about possible staff reductions and increases in fees. He was worried that reduced staff numbers would leave his daughter open to risk.
- A carer of a young man moving into the Transition to Work program expressed concerns about the appeals process when her son did not receive his first choice of service provider. She was not told how they determined who received a place in the first choice. Her son was on a waiting list. She was also concerned about what happens at the end of the two-year period if he is unable to gain employment as he would need further support.
- Concern was expressed about the process used to determine the original decision on the level of funding allocated (i.e. moderate or high support needs). One carer said her son was assessed to require high support level funding when he left school in 2002, she was told that he would receive moderate support level funding under the Community Participation program. There was no information provided about how this decision had been made and no input from her or her son.

Working with carers who are already struggling with the added tasks of providing care, particularly high need care, to someone with a disability, I see the stress they face from day to day. The time frame and the uncertainty around these funding changes increased that stress considerably. It is also a concern that these carers were forced to spend additional time and energy to lobby to have the levels of funding and time frames increased.

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This submission has the approval of Robert Mander the chairperson of the Sutherland Shire Community Care Network Inc. Management Committee