

**INQUIRY INTO TRANSITION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS  
WITH ADDITIONAL OR COMPLEX NEEDS AND THEIR  
FAMILIES**

**Organisation:** Little By Little

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# *Little By Little*

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## **NSW Legislative Council**

### **Inquiry into transition support for students with additional or complex needs and their families**

#### **Who are Little by Little ?**

Little by Little Inc. is the registered Charity that supports Kurrambee School. Little BY Little was formed in 1994 and has supported the school by providing additional resources (buses, Living Skills Centres, therapy equipment, etc) ever since.

The Charity's objectives are -

- \* to support the work of Kurrambee School in meeting the needs of its students and ex-students,
- \* to promote the provision of additional and appropriate services for persons with an intellectual disability and/or high support needs,
- \* to liaise with community groups to extend existing or establish additional and appropriate services,
- \* to provide services to meet the needs of Kurrambee students and ex-students.

#### **Background -**

Kurrambee School provides education for students with an intellectual disability (moderate to severe). Many of our students also have additional disabilities (sensory, behavioural, physical, etc). We cater for students from Kindergarten to Year Twelve so many of our students spend their entire school years at Kurrambee School.

In the last few years of their schooling our students are prepared for their next environment in the following ways -

- community access (school buses and public transport)
- work experience (open and supported employment)
- Ageing, Disability, Health Care (ADHC) Assessing (class teacher, Support Teacher Transition, families, other personnel)
  - bus trips to Service Providers
  - advertising Expos in local area
- supporting families in making decisions through conversations
- Organise "experience" to chosen service provider (funded by the school or Teachers Release Face to Face Teaching)



- Sharing of information to service providers (Health Care Procedure, Behaviour Support Plans, Risk Assessments, Crisis Plans, Individualised Educational Plans, Reports, Equipment, Augmentative and Alternative Communication Systems, Technology, etc)
  - Follow up by Year 12 Teacher in new year

The majority of our students upon leaving school access ADHC funded services such as Community Participation (CP) and Transition to Work (TTW). Many of our students fail in their first Community Participation setting, particularly those with Challenging Behaviours.

Anecdotal evidence suggests nearly 60% of our students we had identified as having challenging behaviours that left school between 2006 and 2009 and went into Community Participation programs failed in their first setting.

The support issues that Little By Little has identified include the following -

- Lack of transition time
  - CP workers not having to be trained
- Lack of training available to CP workers
- Unrealistic expectations of school leavers
  - Service provision may be inappropriate
- Continued Lifelong Learning may not occur
  - Information gets lost in the system
- High turnover of staff in the CP centre
- Some service providers rotating their staff

Families generally find out their ADHC funding results late in the school year which allows little time for schools to organise successful transitions into the student's next environment. There is also little funding for this to occur. Staff at Community Participation centres do not have to be trained and if not experienced in the field may not understand the complex needs of their new clients in terms of the functions of a young person's behaviour (why they do what they do) and how best to support the behaviour (so as not to maintain the behaviour but rather to teach new skills to replace the behaviour). Generally, our school leavers have been in the one setting for a long period of time (up to 13 years) so moving to a new setting, in a different environment, with unfamiliar staff, unfamiliar peers and unfamiliar routines can be very daunting and scary for many of them. We have also found that information is not always shared between all staff and some CP providers rotate their staff which is not helpful for CP services users with Autism.

## **Recommendations -**

Little By Little's recommendations to improve the transition process from school to post school environment, in particular to a Community Participation program include -

- Increased/extra funding for transitioning "at risk" students
  - ADHC Assessment process completed in Year 11
    - Follow up funding ... support for families
  - CP workers having to be trained if new to the field
    - Training for CP workers easy to access
- What's actually happening in the program ? Is it meeting the young person's needs ?



Students who were considered to be at risk of 'failing' in their post-school environment would benefit from extensive transition opportunities. A best practise model would be for familiar staff to accompany the student on visits to the new service provider building up time to whole days and then once the young person established relationships for the original staff member to start fading out but still be available for follow up support. If ADHC assessments were completed when students were in Year 11; families, schools and service providers would have the time to transition appropriately. Many of our families report that when things go wrong they don't know what to do or whom to contact. In this case, our ex-families have contacted the school and are given help as appropriate.

As educators, we believe that in order for Community Participation programs to be successful learning needs to be continued throughout life. There needs to be more emphasis put on what skills these young people in Community Participation programs are learning or maintaining. They should not just be there to be entertained or kept happy. Community Participation workers that are not trained or experienced would not have the capacity or skills to encourage or facilitate this lifelong learning process. This in turn effects the programs they are able to offer to their clients and subsequently the behaviours and/or response they will receive from young people in their services is effected.

We thank you for the opportunity to participate in this enquiry. Please contact us if you have further questions about our submission.