

THE PROGRAM OF APPLIANCES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE (PADP)

Organisation: Department of Paediatric Occupational Therapy
The John Hunter Children's Hospital

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Department of Paediatric Occupational Therapy
John Hunter Children's Hospital
Locked Bag 1
Hunter Region Mail Centre NSW 2310
Telephone (02) 4921 3700
Facsimile (02) 4921 3599

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The Occupational Therapy Department at The John Hunter Children's Hospital, Newcastle, are greatly concerned about the proposed centralisation of PADP. Our client group comprises of children and adolescents in the Hunter Region with a wide range of diagnosis. A large percentage of these clients have significant physical disabilities that impact on their ability to participate in age appropriate activities.

Our clients require significant amounts of equipment in order for them to participate in daily living tasks safely and independently.

We work with the Hunter Area PADP office on a regular basis to provide children and adolescents in the area with the necessary equipment to ensure they (and their carers) are safe in their home environment and have access to the community. The Hunter Area PADP is run extremely well and efficiently. The team there work very hard to provide a fair and equitable service for all, and are extremely supportive of all therapists working with them.

Local therapists attend bi-monthly meetings to assist with approval of equipment and this system currently works very well. It ensures that the approval process is fair and is a great learning process for therapists as far as eligibility criteria etc.

If centralisation occurs local therapists will lose the role of providing input to the committee meetings and we are concerned that therapists will not even be present at such meetings, which is essential given that we have invaluable knowledge about equipment and meeting client needs.

The equipment loan pool at the Hunter Area PADP is well stocked and maintained and means that local therapists can easily access trial equipment which speeds up the application process for the client. If the centralisation occurs we have great concerns that we will lose this local stock of trial equipment and have to use equipment from Sydney which will delay the equipment prescription process and mean that clients are waiting longer for urgent pieces of equipment. This will impact on speedy and safe discharge from hospital; the client's safety being compromised; and slow down the client's ability to participate in age appropriate activities.

We would welcome further discussion regarding this process.