

**Submission
No 116**

INQUIRY INTO POST SCHOOL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

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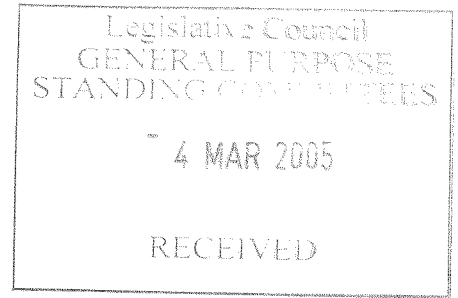
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Subject:

Summary

3rd March 2005-03-04

Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 2
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



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ENQUIRY INTO THE CHANGES TO POST SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH A DISABILITY

It is with great disappointment that we provide this letter to the inquiry into the ATLAS Program Reforms as it is extremely hard to believe that the Labor Government shall make appropriate adjustment to return the ATLAS program to the equitable program that it previously was.

The implementation of the reforms was undertaken without any consideration for the physical and emotional impact that they were to have on the lives of the individuals with a disability and their family members. To place these already stressed and struggling people through a poorly planned, badly communicated and extremely flawed reform process that in essence was a cost cutting exercise was a demonstration of the limited compassion of the minister and her supporters.

The decision to exclude PSO and then the raising of the minimum Community Participation funding level to \$13,500 was done in a climate of hostility and threat. The reform process lacked any level of recognition that the disability community had been working effectively and consistently together for many years. It lacks any recognition of the need to consult with the community and to work together to provide the very best for the most disadvantaged.

Any credibility that Minister Tebbutt had prior to the announcement was destroyed when she continued to state that the intention of the reforms was not to reduce service delivery hours. A cut of approx. 25% from an already stretched budget that is struggling to meet OH & S requirements and then to state that it will not result in a reduction in service delivery hours is a statement lacking any respect for the integrity of disability services. North West Disability Services has worked consistently to provide five days of service to the (one on three) moderate level individuals and with the reduction in funding shall struggle to provide above three days and will only be able to provide four days if the level of staff support is reduced and this shall impinge on the quality of the program delivered and also reduce the Occupational Health and Safety coverage. A reduction from five day to three days for many is a great impact. Some mothers shall need to give up work, some have threatened to desert their children and hand them over to DADHC to support, while others, disillusioned and frustrated have talked of personal injury and giving up altogether.

The very minimum level of funding must be \$15,699 for both Transition to Work and for Community Participation with additional funds available to support the very high support needs individuals. Individual funding must be maintained as the most equitable and suitable means of providing dignity and choice in people's lives. The opportunity to move between organisations must be available whilst also providing the opportunity for people with a disability to work part time and receive a program of training and support under Community Participation. Set Up funding must be reintroduced to enable organizations to resource and provide for individuals as

they enter the service. The chaotic approach to assessment must be abolished and school leavers must be assessed in year ten to enable maximum support and suitable transition. The lack of any consistency and forward planning must be abolished and people then will be supported most suitably to get on with the business of living their lives within the limitations that the disability has imposed.

North West Disability Services submits this letter to the inquiry and ask that we are also provided with the opportunity to address the committee if there is any doubt at all about the detrimental impacts of reduced funding levels and block funding. We do not believe that a reform process that benefits government at the expense of the person with the disability, is just and could possible be allowed to continue. The inquiry is your opportunity to see the error and unconscionable impact that this reform has, and continues to have, on our community of disabled individuals who look to the government for a fair and equitable opportunity to function effectively in society.

Yours most sincerely,

Sandra Crittenden
For the Board of Directors of North West Disability Services