

Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee

Inquiry into Aged Care

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Greenacres would urge the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's Inquiry into Aged Care to consider the following submission.

The submission does not necessarily address the Terms of Reference singularly or as a whole, but does offer relevant comment on points within the terms of reference.

It is disappointing that the Terms of Reference do not specifically address the adequacy of support for people with a disability who have worked in supported employment for most of their lives and require transition to retirement and retirement option programs.

about Greenacres:

Greenacres Association is a service organisation that provides day support, training and employment for over four hundred people with a disability in the Illawarra Region of New South Wales.

The Association has a number of outlets offering specialised services specific to the needs of its service users, they are:

- ◆ two supported employment services that employ over two hundred people
- ◆ an open employment service called Greenacres Workwise that places people with a disability in open employment and supports them on the job
- ◆ an intensive school to work program for young people with a disability under the Adult Training, Learning and Support program (Atlas)
- ◆ six community access services that provide a range of specialist programs for one hundred and twenty service users that are unable to work
- ◆ a community access program for six service users in wheelchairs who are provided with needs based support either in their homes or accessing the community

Introduction:

The barrier to the receipt of effective services that meet the changing needs of people with a disability have always been at hand, and to the people directly concerned, the people with a disability, their families and carers, these barriers at times appear insurmountable.

One of the needs now emerging is the issue of the generation of ageing people with a disability who have worked in supported employment for most of their lives and want and need to retire. Both Federal and State Governments must recognise that this is a growing impasse that has to be addressed urgently.

Effective transition programs and services (comparable to those available for able bodied people in Australia) are essential as a person with a disability reaches the age of retirement and eligibility for aged care services.

There is great concern amongst people working directly with ageing people with a disability that they will not be able to secure the appropriate supports and services that they, as an individual require to remain living a meaningful life in the community as they age. Lack of, and uncertainty about service provision makes it difficult, if not impossible for these people and their supports to plan for the future.

Greenacres would strongly argue that the nature and philosophy of service delivery must undergo fundamental change so that services for this group of people will meet their individual needs. Not their needs as perceived by the often flawed ideology of funding providers or for the convenience or "easy fix" for service providers.

Services for ageing people with a disability must be sufficiently flexible to meet their diverse needs and must take account of changes in those needs as they further age. For this to take place, changes must also occur in Governments with regard to priorities in funding and programs.

**Greenacres
Retirement
Options Program:**

Six years ago Greenacres identified a need for a transition to retirement program and retirement options for our ageing employees. There were twenty two people in the forty to sixty age group whose productivity, skills and competencies were regressing. Collectively they had attended work for a total of five hundred and twenty two years.

Many of these people were the children of the foundation members of Greenacres and we had a moral obligation to provide them with a quality service. There were no appropriate disability specific programs for them in the Illawarra Region and generic services and their participants were not keen to integrate with people with a disability. It must also be remembered that these people have been supported for most, if not all of their lives and would not cope without support (at least initially) in generic services, and the generic service participants were not keen to integrate with people with a disability.

Greenacres carried out intense lobbying of both State and Federal Governments. We prepared a detailed paper with data we had collected with regard to our service users and submitted it to the Director General of the Department of Ageing Disability and home Care. We presented the same paper to the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Service in Canberra.

In October of 2001 the New South Wales Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care called for expressions of interest from people wanting to operate a Day Service and a Case Management Service for people with a disability who had worked or were working in supported employment and required retirement options in the Illawarra Region.

After an eleven month delay the Department decided on a "tri-partite" arrangement and awarded tenders for the ageing service to Greenacres Association to operate the Day Care Program, Life Without Barriers to operate the Case Management Service and Wollongong City Council to provide generic recreational options and its large volunteer base.

This type of service is ground breaking and the first of its kind in Australia.

The New South Wales Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care is to be congratulated for its recognition of the ageing issue and in having the courage to fund the Wollongong Pilot Program.

For Greenacres this was the missing piece in its service delivery model for Business Services. Greenacres commenced its service fifty years ago in November 1953, two of its original service users have commenced their transition from work into the retirement options program.

There are dozens of Disability Services throughout Australia that encounter exactly the same issues with regard to their ageing consumers. The situation grows more critical each year and has to be addressed by Governments.

The Federal Government's "Assistance for Business Services" which states that "every individual and service will be supported" does not go nearly far enough to address the needs of ageing employees in Business Services that require assistance to move onto more appropriate support services and activities.

The Commonwealth document talks about offering people who wish to retire from Business Services access to a personal case manager to support them in making an informed choice about their future. It states that the case manager will provide the people with a disability, their families and carers with information on the different service options, and will explore the impacts of these choices on the individuals and their families.

In theory this sounds fantastic, but the reality is that there are not services out there for these people to access, In the Wollongong area alone there was not a single appropriate service available until the NSW Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care funded the Retirement Options Program.

If retirement option services were available it would also have the "flow on" effect of opening up places in Supported Employment for young people with a disability transitioning from school to work.

The Commonwealth does not look favourably on Supported Employment service providers taking on employees that result in the service exceeding their targeted numbers. There are not enough places available for young people wanting to transition from school to Supported Employment.

The Australian Government should join with State and Territory Governments to co-jointly fund appropriate Day Options Programs throughout Australia under the CSTDA for ageing/aged people with a disability.