

Monday, 10 January 2011

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madame

I recently attended a conference presented by the standing committee in Toowoomba. During the community forum I made certain statements and I would like to clarify them.

Presently Breakaway operates and administers;

- Centre-Based respite
- In home respite
- Social support and community access
- Respite Older Parent carer program
- Supported accommodation at “The Anden” through the “Accommodation services initiative”
- As well as other programs and packages

We believe we operate the Older Carer Parent supported accommodation and Respite programs very well and believe explicitly in their purpose. Many carers have waited and anxiously wait for an opportunity to involve their family member in supported accommodation and Breakaway is endeavouring to accommodate this demand.

It is evident that the demand for supported accommodation is considerable and it is expected that this will only increase. Presently there is considerable concern about the number of beds required and what it would cost to fund this enormous expected demand.

I believe there is a more efficient way to alleviate many of these concerns and I wish to note the following points and whilst I will use the Older Carer Parent programs to support my assumptions, this philosophy can be extrapolated across all relevant services;

- Breakaway’s supported accommodation facility “The Anden” has a recurrent budget of 449k to support 6 residents. Though we were not privy to the establishment and setup costs I would expect an equivalent Greenfields site to cost in excess of \$1.5 million to establish.
- The Respite Older Carer Parent program has a budget of 228k and supports 40 clients in a 3 bedroom house on a rotating basis, 49 weeks a year.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests the respite policy is poorly supported as often clients are rushed into supported accommodation after the family unit has imploded and the carer(s) are no longer able to support their family member with a disability, requiring enormous emergency resources.
- At the inquiry, representatives from Disability Services and the Department of Communities Queensland, stated that it is their understanding that only 29% of carers and 50% of clients are

ready and willing to consider supported accommodation at this time and would prefer to remain as a family unit as long as possible.

- The present re-active policy, inclusive of low rates of respite support, often force people with a disability into supported accommodation, years, if not decades sooner than they would otherwise wish to, causing all family members undue stress and if they were appropriately supported along with their caring family, their transition into supported accommodation could be delayed for a considerable amount of time.
- Increasing and even doubling respite across all programs (eg Centre-Based, In-Home, Community and social groups) would alleviate a considerable amount of the expected demand for supported accommodation and delay the need to provide many of these beds for many years to come. The cost of increasing respite funding to this level would be a fraction of setting up and supporting supported accommodation.
- This would also reduce and delay the number of young people with disability tragically forced to be accommodated in Old people's Homes (Nursing Homes)

In summary, if the number of people with disabilities is increasing all the time any initiatives that can raise the average age of people seeking supported accommodation will in the long term assure the sustainability of the service.

Yours faithfully

Paul Devine
Chairperson