

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Disabled community claims a victory in modification of services

13 August 2004

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper today welcomed a decision by NSW Minister for Disability Services Carmel Tebbutt to modify proposals to change post school programs for people with disabilities.

“The Minister has listened to the disabled community in the New England north-west who had genuine concerns over the future of their children who would have been offered little more than a baby sitting service,” Mr Draper said.

Mr Draper congratulated the community who rallied in force in Armidale and Tamworth and held meetings in Gunnedah to show the Department how debilitating the proposed cuts would be on their ability to function in society and on their quality of life generally.

“My colleague Richard Torbay and I took the community’s concerns to the Minister in good faith and in the current climate it’s refreshing to see the Government is prepared to act on this issue,” he said.

The Minister today stated that people on the Post School Options (PSO) program would not be subject to any changes with their existing funding continued.

Her department will also act to ensure that Adult Training Learning and Support (ATLAS) participants do not face a reduction in the hours of support they receive on the new programs. In addition, funding will be made available to service providers to make any changes that might be required and to ensure that individuals don’t suffer significant reductions in the hours of support they receive.

Mr Draper said the effect of the reforms would be tested after expressions of interest for running the new programs closes on September 3 and individuals were assessed as eligible to enter either the ATLAS or Community Participation program.

Challenge Disability Services, the major service provider in the New England north-west area, has 19 clients in Tamworth, Gunnedah and Muswellbrook on the ATLAS program and up to 25 on the PSO program.

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“Under the former proposal, ATLAS participants stood to lose \$5600 in funding each per year. I will be keeping a close eye on the amount and reach of the funding to be provided under the new arrangements as this will be critical in helping service providers fulfil their obligations,” Mr Draper said.

“It will also be imperative to monitor the transition to the new program as the Minister has stated that action will need to be taken if any individual on ATLAS faces a reduction in hours,” he said.

Mr Draper and Mr Torbay will meet with the Minister again after the closing date for the expressions of interest to discuss the potential outcomes of the reforms.

End Release

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