

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Draper to take concerns over program cuts direct to Disability Services Minister

August 6 2004

Concerns over cuts to disability services raised by angered parents in Tamworth last night will be taken directly to the NSW Minister for Disability Services Carmel Tebbutt, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper said today.

Mr Draper met with about 25 parents and relatives of disabled people at the information evening organised by Challenge Disability Services to discuss reforms to programs for disabled school leavers.

The meeting revealed the depth of concern among those affected as the reforms threaten to reduce the capacity, program quality and number of hours service providers such as Challenge can offer clients.

“Challenge chief executive officer Barry Murphy has predicted the programs the organisation currently offers will be cut by 40 to 60 per cent which will have enormous ramifications on the quality of life for the most disadvantaged members of our community and their families,” Mr Draper said.

“The hardest hit will be the clients who receive the highest rate of funding due to the severity of their physical disability. Many parents feel the Department views their child as not being worthy of receiving high level funding due to the fact their disability negates the likelihood of securing employment.

“These reforms will strip disabled community members of the right to engage with the wider community in a way that gives their life meaning.

“Individual programs which enable clients to enjoy tasks such as handing out reading material in hospitals or distributing internal mail under supervision will be scrapped with everyone instead herded into group activities.

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Under the cuts DADHC will cease the *Adult Training Learning and Support* and *Post School Options* programs and replace them with *Community Participation* and *Transition to Work* programs

For some families funding levels will be cut by up to 60% with *Community Participation Programs* now offering \$9000 per individual with moderate support needs, \$13,500 for high support needs and *Transition to Work Program* funding of \$15,699 per individual.

Previously funding of up to \$23,000 was available to some high support clients.

Mr Draper said while there was a recognised need to overhaul the current system due to funding disparities, the cuts were unacceptable.

“To ask service providers to offer programs with less funding is setting the standard of living for families of disabled people back decades to when they carried the burden of care squarely on their own shoulders,” he said.

Mr Draper has scheduled a meeting the DADHC Minister and Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay in Sydney on Monday, August 9, where the MPs will communicate the impact of the changes and hand over representations from affected individuals.

“I’m pleased to see the Minister publicly state that if service providers cannot deliver what her department is asking in replacing old programs with others at lower funding rates then she will look at the issue,” he said.

Mr Draper will attend a similar meeting in Gunnedah on Tuesday night while Mr Torbay will attend a public meeting in Armidale on Saturday morning. A rally has also been organised in Tamworth at 12pm on Thursday, August 12.

End Release

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