

## Community Development and Justice Standing Committee

### Submission for Inquiry into Accommodation and Intensive Family Support Funding for People with Disabilities

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Kalparrin and at least two of our Members would appear before the committee to present our case if required.

#### Key Issues of the Inquiry

Kalparrin conducted three indepth interviews with our Members, and 43 members responded to a survey we conducted about the application process for IFS and Accommodation Funding. The feedback received from our membership addresses the key issues of the Inquiry.

#### 1. The adequacy of current processes for determining funding support for people with disabilities.

- Criteria for Selection
  - o There is a belief that the process for selection of recipients is crisis driven, rewarding people who don't plan and punishing people who self-care.
  - o There is a belief that families have to 'compete' with each other for the very limited funds.
  - o Families find it very difficult to ask for help, and usually don't ask until they are at crisis point – if their application is then rejected they are completely devastated and become disillusioned about the true availability of services offered by the Disability Services Commission.
  - o Many families receive rejection after rejection, while their situation continues to deteriorate.
  
- The application form
  - o The application form is complex, confronting and stressful to complete by families who are already under extreme duress.
  - o The abstract nature of questions on the form, make it difficult for parents to know how to respond to questions.
  - o It is not clear what information is required to complete the form and be successful.
    - Families fear that disclosing some of their existing care arrangements (through organizations such as Red Cross) will preclude them from obtaining IFS or Accommodation funding, even though what they currently receive is grossly inadequate.

- There is a misconception about the true cost of respite services - some families currently access subsidized respite services at a cost of \$20/day, but know if they were to receive IFS Funding they would be charged the unsubsidized rate of \$500/day. Families are confused as to what actually is the best outcome.
- Communication of application outcomes
  - The families who have not been successful in being granted funding have received letters simply stating they “were unsuccessful”. This is no further explanation or feedback. Given the complexity of the application process, the length of waiting time while the applications are assessed and implications to families if they are not successful, a more individualised letter providing some feedback as to “why”, would reassure families that their application forms (whilst unsuccessful) were given due consideration.

## **2. The level of the unmet need.**

- Rate of success of applications
  - A survey of our Membership showed that 45% of those who applied for IFS or Accommodation Funding were not successful.
  - Of those who were not successful 50% had applied more than once.
- Number of applications submitted
  - The majority (75%) of families who applied for funding have applied between two to four times, each time waiting three to nine months to hear a response.
- Waiting times for feedback on applications
  - The anticipated time frame for the assessment of applications is 3 months however, several of our member families received notices deferring the decision for 9 months (applications lodged in December 2012 did not receive final notification of success or failure until August 2013). This extended delay caused significant additional stress to the families.

### Examples of families who missed out on Accommodation Support Funding

Family 1. Two parents and two children, the eldest (now 24 years) has a disability.

- The family applied for Accommodation Support for child (now 24 years old) to move into a Group Home in December 2012, as the parent in a caring role was really struggling (had a hernia operation during the year, and has had to delay knee surgery indefinitely because cannot afford respite care for the carer’s recuperation period).
- The application assessment was deferred until August 2013 when a rejection letter was received. A revised application was then submitted in October, but a response to this application has now been deferred until January 2013.
- All letters of rejection received since December 2012 have had no explanation given as to why they were not successful. This contrasts with letters of rejection received prior to

December 2012 which included a graph showing the rating DSC had given the assessment (from “Super Urgent” through to “Can Wait”) and would indicate how the application stood in relation to all applications received. Under this older system Parents/Carers felt reassured that their applications had actually been read and considered.

Family 2. Single parent with one older son (27 years old) with a disability, and two younger siblings aged 10 years and 12 years old.

- Applied for IFS funding when child was younger, and was rejected 3 – 4 times.
- In 2012 applied for Accommodation Support when mother was at crisis point but was again rejected.
- In February 2013 as a single parent, with other children to also look after, and the safety of the family was at risk due to the aggressive behaviours of her son – the mother had to resort to taking her son to the DSC funded Emergency Care Group Home. Her son has remained at the group home ever since.
- The mother has continued to apply for Accommodation Support during this time, but so far has not been accepted.
- Every three months the mother has to reapply for her son to stay in the Emergency Care Group Home – and faces the horrendous fear of the funding running out and her family being subjected to the violence of her son again.
- The mother cannot understand how there is “no money” for her son to go into a group home through the DSC Accommodation Support, and yet he is currently accommodated in the DSC Emergency Care Group Home.

### **3. The nature and extent of planning required to meet increasing demand for these support services in Western Australia in the future.**

Kalparrin is not in a position to comment on this as the scope of our information is limited to our Membership base, 1100 families. Any comments on the extent of planning required would have to be based on State wide statistics in the incidence of families with disabilities.

#### **Kalparrin’s general attitude towards the issues under inquiry**

This inquiry is particularly important to Kalparrin because we provide practical and emotional support to the families of children with disabilities. We are concerned for the wellbeing of the families in our membership who are in crisis. We see the devastating consequences for the whole family, when families do not receive enough support and respite.

#### **Summary of reasons behind our comments**

In the week following the advice to being sent to families of their applications for IFS and Accommodation funding, Kalparrin and WA Special Families received many distressed calls and Facebook postings for families who had been rejected. The families were reaching out to charities like Kalparrin because they felt let down by the Disability Services Commission and had nowhere else to turn.

**Recommendations or comments on the specific terms of reference.**

The feedback Kalparrin has received from its' members identifies the following keys issues with the specific terms of reference:

The process for applying for funding and the basis for assessing the needs is too complex and lacks timeliness and transparency. Providing families with guidance at the initial application stage of the process, followed by timely feedback on their application status would significantly reduce the amount of stress that applying for funding produces. Many families no longer apply for assistance and choose to remain in crisis because the amount of stress the application process puts on them is too great and puts the whole family under duress.