



Community & Public Sector Union
Civil Service Association of WA

Community & Public Sector Union
SPSF Group, WA Branch
Civil Service Association of WA Inc

www.cpsuca.org

UnionLink: 1300 733 800
Email: help@cpsuca.org
Reception: 08 9323 3800
Fax: 08 9323 3878

Address: 445 Hay St, Perth WA 6000
Mail: PO Box X2252, Perth WA 6847
ABN: 78 678 313 448

23rd September 2014

Ms Margaret Liveris
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
GPO Box A11
PERTH WA 6837

Dear Margaret

Petition No 46 — Disability Services Commission Accommodation Services

On the 8th of September 2014 the Committee received a letter from the Minister for Disability Services responding to the above petition. The Minister's letter includes a number of statements that are not consistent with information received by the CPSU/CSA from our members, families and guardians of individuals in care, stakeholders with an interest in these matters and during negotiations with representatives of the Disability Services Commission.

I attached a briefing note which identifies the Minister's statement along with the information we have for the Committee's consideration.

Yours sincerely

Toni Walkington
Branch Secretary/General Secretary
Community & Public Sector Union SPSF Group WA Branch
Civil Service Association of WA

Minister's statement

I believe this transition will give people with disability far greater choice of support models and greater control over how their funding is utilised.

CPSUCSA Response

Individuals have always had the choice to transition to other providers and the Minister acknowledges this in her letter, "Individuals regularly choose to leave the Commission's accommodation services to take up supports in the non-government sector. This is a practice that is carried out routinely..."

The CPSUCSA believes that the current program of transitioning does not increase individual choice. Once individuals are selected for transition they no longer have the choice to stay with DSC and the staff who currently care for them.

Minister's statement

As I have outlined above, Western Australia's disability sector offers a great range of support models. These extend far beyond the group home model offered by the Disability Services Commission and extend to smaller shared living situations, co-resident arrangements, and supported individualised living. It is simply beyond the capacity of government to extend its service model (which, as I have outlined above, the NDIS encourages reducing) to include this type of flexibility

CPSUCSA Response

The CPSU/CSA is aware that the DSC has a number of smaller shared residences and some cases individuals are provided with single accommodation.

In a meeting with Jon Peach, Executive Director Services, on the 21st of August 2014 the CPSUCSA was advised that plans were being developed to provide accommodation services for up to 50 individuals in emergency or transitional circumstances and that these would not be within the group home environment.

Minister's statement

The Government specifically funded an Independent Information Officer position, the contact details for which were broadly distributed (including via the CPSU/CSA). This was a non-government officer whose sole role was to independently discuss the process with affected people.

Response

The Independent Information Officer (IIO) was engaged in January 2014, this position ceased at the end of July 2014 (DSC, Transition Process Update – July 2014). Uptake of the IIO's services was limited so it was decided that the contract should be allowed to expire.

The statement by the Minister implies that the officer was there to provide general advice about the transition process. However, the role of the IIO was specific; their role was to provide impartial advice around the different types of accommodation support models outside of the group home model. An affected resident or their family would only be referred to the IIO if they decided to seek alternative or individual supported accommodation. As residents have thus far chosen to remain with their current housemates there were very few referrals made to the IIO.

Minister's statement

There has been unfortunate propagation of a "two week handover" myth by some groups opposed to the transition, which is categorically not true I can assure families and advocates that it will not be a case of en masse staffing change-overs.

Response

Families of residents of the Albemarle Home were advised that a notional 2 week period was allocated but this was very much open to variation according to need at a meeting with the DSC Transition Officer on 19th March 2014. These families stated that a 3 month period was required, however the Transition Officer advised that this would not be possible and that DSC could not afford to do this.

In an email conversation on the 4th of September 2014 a DSC Officer advised, "*The Group Home will remain under DSC administration from 22 September 2014 until 6 October 2014 (please note these dates are subject to change). As of the 6 October 2014 Hancock Group Home will no longer be administered by the Commission, and DSC staff will be deployed to alternative work locations within the Services Directorate at this time.*" Later in the same email it was stated "*There will be no change to routines, systems, our staff will still seek instruction from their LAS who will be in the group home for the entire 2 week period*".

The above quotes in conjunction with verbal advice received from DSC indicate that a two week handover period followed by the immediate redeployment of house staff was and still is the intent of DSC.

Minister's statement

One of the guidelines used in prioritising people for transition is that their needs must be able to be met by the non-government sector. If this were not the case, the process would not be commenced. Where an individual decides they are not happy with their chosen provider following transition they can, like any West Australian with individual funding, choose to change their service to another provider.

Response

While the information received by the CPSUCSA does not contradict the Minister's statement there is concern that the criteria only relate to current needs. An individual's needs will change over their life time¹. Current criteria for transition does not take into account an individual's future care plan and there is mixed capacity within the non-government sector to provide a whole of life service.

The Minister also states that if the individual is not happy with their chosen service provider then they can change to another provider. This is an overly simplistic solution for a cohort of people who do not handle change well and where stress can result in serious behavioural issues. It is not realistic for individuals and their families to simply shop around when their needs change.

¹NDS ACT Submission Supported Accommodation for People with Disability Futures Paper