



The Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
GPO Box A11
Perth WA 6837

30/07/2014

Dear Chairman

RE: Petition #46

On the 26th of June 2014 a petition was tabled in the Legislative Council on behalf of 2775 signatories. This petition called on the government to:

- Reverse the proposed cuts to DSC Accommodation Services.
- Ensure that individuals currently in DSC Group Homes, their families and guardians are given the choice to stay with their current service provider.
- Recognise and deploy the skills and commitment of the 500 accommodation staff in implementing a National Disability Insurance Scheme into the future.

The petition was made because of concerns raised with the CPSU/CSA by families and advocates of individuals in the care of Disability Services Commission (DSC) Accommodation Services.

The following is a summary of those concerns and a request for the Environment and Public Affairs Committee to initiate an inquiry into the DSC Accommodation Services transition reform.

The CPSU/CSA would be happy to address the committee on the matters outlined in this document and arrange for affected families to speak directly with the Committee.

No real choice

In October 2013 Minister Morton first announced the transition of DSC Accommodation Services places to the not for government sector. One of the reasons given for the transition was a purported increase in choice for DSC residents and their families.

DSC Residents have always had the choice to turn to other providers and many current DSC residents have trialed other providers before selecting DSC. There is a large cohort of DSC residents who are already with their provider of choice; this choice is now to be removed through the forced transition to non-government providers.

Lack of Consultation

The decision to transition 60% of accommodation services to the non-government sector was made in consultation with industry stakeholders. While input from various peak bodies and non-government organisations were sought there has been no evidence presented that community consultation was undertaken.

No individual or advocate that has contacted the CPSU/CSA was aware of any plans to transition or reform DSC Accommodation Services prior to the Minister announcing the transition process. Families have made requests to DSC for the facility to contact other families to discuss the impact of the decision to transition but this has been denied.

DSC has contacted those individual families and family groups that will be immediately affected but have not been proactive in engaging with families outside of the initial transition groups. This has left many families feeling uncertain about the future of their loved ones and in a state of limbo.

Impact on individuals

Parents and advocates who have contacted the CPSU/CSA have expressed their concern that the upheaval caused through transferring out of staff en masse will cause distress for their loved ones.

Some individual residents have had the same staff caring for them for decades and have developed close relationships. Parents feel that the departure of the house staff and quick replacement with people with whom individuals have not yet developed a relationship and deep trust will be a traumatic experience. There are concerns that individuals will regress and suffer behavioural issues.

The Process

Transitioning of individuals between homes within DSC involves strict adherence to process with built in safeguards. Currently where a transition results in major distress for the transferee or for the residents in the new home the transferee can be returned to their original home. The planned transfer to NGO providers will not maintain this safeguard.

At a meeting with DSC on the 16th of July, CPSU/CSA representatives were advised that there were yet no processes developed for the transferring of individuals to the new providers.

Reasoning behind transitioning and the impact on the Disability Sector

On the 20th of May during Estimates questioning in the Legislative Assembly the Director General of DSC was asked whether “any modeling had been done to show that this (transitioning of accommodation services) is the most efficient and effective way to increase capacity? (within the WA Disability Sector).”

The Director General responded that no modeling had been done.

Maintaining DSC Accommodation Service Standards

Parents and advocates have expressed concern that funding for DSC Accommodation Services will be cut and service quality will not be maintained for those individuals who remain in DSC care following the transition process.

Overall Sentiment

Parents and advocates of individuals in DSC Accommodation Services care have raised various concerns around the transition process. The common message received from those Parents and Advocates who have contacted the CPSU/CSA is that they wish to have the choice to stay with DSC as their service provider and retain the current staff.

Parents and advocates respect and welcome the fact that there are alternative care options available. What they do not understand is why they are being denied the right to stay with DSC. They wish for the Government to allow those who wish to stay with DSC the right to do so.

Yours sincerely

Toni Walkington
Branch Secretary