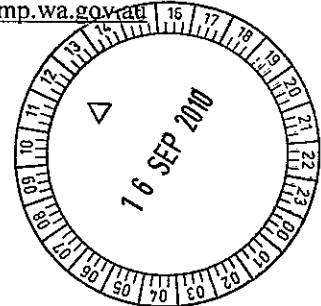


Hon. Adele Farina MLC

Member for South West Region

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13 September 2010

Hon. Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear Brian,

Petition No 90 - Oppose the Closure of ACTIV Business Service Centre in Busselton

I write concerning the abovementioned petition, which I tabled in the Legislative Council on 11 August 2010 and provide the following submission on the matter.

In early June 2010, 26 supported workers with disabilities and three staff members of Activ Business Service Centre in Busselton were told the organisation would close its Busselton workshop in August 2010 because Activ Foundation Inc. was unable to secure adequate levels of employment for its staff. This announcement was met with backlash from the local community, causing workers and their families much angst. A local support group was established in response to the situation and the petition of more than 1500 signatures opposing the closure of the Busselton workshop was collected.

Last week, the organisation announced it would postpone its decision about the future of the workshop for a further six months, giving the local community more time to direct work opportunities and long term work contracts to the organisation. A decision is now expected to be made in March 2011

While I welcome the Activ's decision to provide a further six months to consolidate and secure additional long term work opportunities before making a final decision, additional long term work contracts are needed if it is to remain open.

The petition calls for the State Government to work with Activ management and the Busselton community to keep the business open. The State Government should do everything in its power to work with Activ management and the Busselton community to keep the business open, by facilitating government departments and agencies with offices in the Capes region to identify jobs and tasks that can be contracted out to Busselton Activ, and to enter into contacts with the organisation for the delivery of those services.

After meeting with members of the support group, employees of the organisation and their families and the manager of Activ Business Services for the South West, Mr John McFadyen, I wrote to local businesses, the Shire of Busselton, various local associations and State Government departments with local offices seeking their support for the local workshop.

The community's positive response and its preparedness to support Busselton Activ employees with disabilities by providing employment opportunities in Busselton was encouraging, however ongoing support is needed if Busselton Activ is to remain viable into the future.

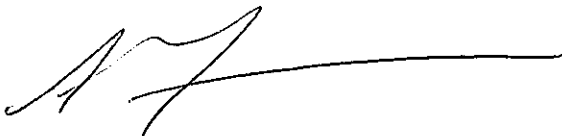
The petition calls for those workers who continue their employment with Activ in Bunbury not to be required to pay their mobility allowance to the organisation as a means of subsidising transport costs between Busselton and the Bunbury workshop.

The possibility of these disabled workers being relocated to the Activ workshop in Bunbury, some 45 minutes away, is deeply distressing. Routine is critical for many of these employees, many of whom find it difficult to adjust to change. The adjustment to working in Bunbury is considered to be a huge change, not only to routine but also to the working environment. Bunbury has a much bigger population than Busselton and this in itself is likely to overwhelm many of the employees. The additional travel time and distance from home is also a big concern and will disrupt the workers' routines. Workers who are forced to travel between Busselton and the Bunbury workshop would already be under significant stress. They should not be burdened with having to pay their mobility allowance to the organisation as a means of subsidising transport costs between Busselton and Bunbury.

Furthermore, a number of the employees are physically incapable of travelling to Bunbury and could be forced to surrender their jobs. This will be a huge upset for these employees because some of them have held their employment with Busselton Activ for more than 20 years. Their employment has given them confidence and a feeling of value in the community, which could be lost as a consequence of the closure of the Busselton workshop. The petition also asks that in the event that the Busselton workshop is closed, employees receive their full entitlements. Workers who are unable to continue their employment in Bunbury should at least receive their full entitlements so they can leave their jobs feeling valued and not exploited.

I have not lodged a complaint with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

Yours sincerely



Hon. Adele Farina MLC
Member for South West Region