

## Illawarra Disabilities Workplace Group – Meeting on the impact of privatisation

The CPSU NSW (PSA) Illawarra Disabilities Workplace Group met at Berkeley Sports Club this week along with concerned family members of clients with disability to discuss recent developments at the privatised House with No Steps.

The primary concern discussed was the impact on staff and clients of job cuts through significant reduction in rostered hours across the board. Many group homes were reporting cuts to rosters of more than 100 hour a month, with some group homes facing cuts of more than 300 hours a month. Family members reported that their loved ones were receiving – and would receive – less support and were seriously concerned about their safety and wellbeing.

You can read about the meeting, which was attended by more than 50 staff and family members, in the *Illawarra Mercury* [HERE](#).

A group of family members discussed how they were involved in the original campaigns to get the services their loved ones living with disability required many years ago. It was through the lobbying, advocacy and public campaigns that these services were first introduced. Another primary concern by family members was the potential for high-needs clients being locked in a house overnight without any staff overseeing their care, resulting in serious physical and mental harm. Family members provided examples of private providers doing this in the past.

More recently, some clients have seen significant increases in mental and emotional distress as their regular support workers are replaced by

inexperienced casuals who are regularly changed. As clients with disability have some major issues with the stress of facing strangers providing them with personal care, the casualisation and constant new facings of support staff is making their day-to-day lives stressful, anxious and, in some cases, prone to increased violence. One family member reported her brother experienced a broken bone in his hand that the staff didn't know about, nor had any idea how it happened.

Staff are not being blamed for these incidents, as the family members know that with fewer staff being rostered the care and support required just isn't available.

So why is this happening?

### **Privatisation profiting off the NDIS.**

There was no requirement for the NSW Government to privatise ADHC, as the Government could maintain their previous level of quality support for people living with disabilities while sharing the funding load with income from the NDIS. The privatisation has seen not only the additional funding stripped back, but the private providers trying to structure their business model on profiting off the NDIS funding.

Some members reported that they've been told that their group homes were operating on a 12 per cent profit margin and they needed to move to a minimum of 18 per cent profit margin. Some members even reported they were required to have a 36 per cent profit margin from their total NDIS funding.



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These profits from the funding provided for the care and wellbeing of people with disability could then be redirected into senior management, marketing, advertising and potentially building a larger private sector business. This is in spite of NDIS funding provided specifically for administrative and overhead costs of implementing clients support plans.

The people of NSW who live with disability should not be 'customers' whose primary function is to provide a profit for the private providers. The welfare, support and of members of our community should remain as a key public service, not one constrained by profiteering. To be able to 'change the rules' against public services being driven by profit margins, disability support workers, family members and people with disabilities need to work together to ensure the government acknowledges their responsibility to support the people of NSW living with disabilities and ensure these public services are appropriate and adequate without profiteering off the Federal Government's NDIS funding.

### What else is happening in the disabilities sector?

Members across a number of providers have reported they are being threatened by managers that their jobs are at risk, that they will have to apply for their own job when the two-year employment guarantee ends and, in some cases, are being 'asked' to apply for jobs removing them from the employment guarantee and their copied state award entirely. Much of what members are being told is just plainly incorrect.

Permanent employees continue with their permanent position, with their current salary and award conditions years beyond the two-year employment guarantee. These protections last up to five years, and, if new instrument is not made to replace hour copied state award, the CPSU NSW (PSA) can apply to the Fair Work Commission to protect and maintain your current take-home wages. This includes your weekly or hourly rate and penalty rates.

The employment guarantee and copied state award can only be removed if you agree to remove them. Members who 'accept' a new position with your employer outside of the work that transferred from ADHC, this may be used by your employer to void the employment guarantee, and move you off your copied state award. While you remain in your current position, or working in areas related to the transferred work form ADHC, your salary and conditions in your copied state award can only be changed within the first five years through a majority of employees voting to approve an enterprise agreement negotiated with your employer.

CPSU NSW (PSA) will be publishing some general FAQ booklets covering these issues that affect all members who transferred from ADHC to ensure that you know exactly what your rights at work currently are.

