

The Chair
Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
London Circuit
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Chair,

Subject: **Centre-based Respite in the ACT**

We write in relation to Centre-based Respite services for teenagers and young adults with autism in the ACT.

When our son became eligible to access centre-based we respite, we tried the service several times. The service did not meet our needs. We no longer use the service.

The issues we have with the centre-based respite services on offer include:

1. Concerns over our son's safety.
2. Our son was not comfortable in the respite setting as it was unfamiliar to him and he was stressed by some other inmates. This did not seem to improve with experience.
3. We do not know the respite centre staff and staff do not know our son.
4. We have no influence or control of when respite was available. Offers of respite were unilateral ... made purely on a take-it or leave-it basis. The timing of offers was inconvenient and the service was not available when we most wanted it.
5. The facility felt like a disability ghetto ... focussing people with severe disability into an under-resourced centre.
6. The preparation required for a period in respite took a substantial effort and our son's emotional state post-respite meant that sometimes centre-based respite just did not seem worth it.

We made a significant effort to work with the centre. We donated a computer so our son would be more comfortable. But the centre struggled to keep the computer functioning and did not have an internet connection, so the computer was of relatively little use for our son.

We stopped using centre-based respite after Jack Sullivan died while in a respite centre/service in our region.

We hope this information is useful to your inquiry.

Sincerely

Parents whose son has severe disability