



Supporting independence and growth within the home and community

26 May 2011

Mary Porter MLA
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601



Dear Ms Porter

Tandem is pleased to provide you with our response to the Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services. We apologise for the tardiness of our reply, however we felt the response was a significant measure in the assessment of respite care services in the ACT, and wished to present our response for your consideration.

Tandem Respite Inc. provides a vital community service to the ACT's most vulnerable individuals and families, and affords services that most families would not otherwise be in a position to access. Tandem House represents the future of this capability, and is the physical base from which we seek to expand our current in home and community based services to overnight respite care.

Unfortunately, Tandem was not successful in our budget submission to fund affordable overnight and weekend short breaks at Tandem House for children and young people with a disability or mental illness. However we will continue to provide after school and holiday care for teens, with the support of HACC funding, until alternative suitable funding opportunities arise.

I am pleased that Tandem has been asked to be involved in the Disability Respite Services Stakeholder Group, and the Courage Partners scoping study into after school care and holiday programs for children over 12 with disabilities. Tandem's high quality resources and capabilities reflect a unique insight and capacity to play a part in the further development of respite services in the ACT.

I look forward to contributing, through participation and consultation, with the ACT government to improve and expand respite services in the Territory.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Pollard".

CHERYL POLLARD
Chief Executive Officer



RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

LOVE HAS ITS LIMITS: RESPITE CARE SERVICES IN THE ACT

Tandem welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recommendations outlined in the Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services *Love Has Its Limits: Respite Care Services in the ACT*.

Recommendation

1 – 2.20 The Committee recommends that the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) and ACT Health develop a common definition of respite that includes the role, purpose and benefits of respite care for the carer and care recipient and promote the information on their websites and in relevant policy documents.

2 – 3.28 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide more information about how the aims and objectives of all ACT Government policies, strategies and action plans relating to carers and respite care services will be met, and to ensure that there are adequate services to fulfil the intended goals of all such documents.

3 – 3.39 The Committee recommends that Disability ACT conduct a review of the programs and activities of the four ACT Government centre based respite houses with a view to engaging external expertise to provide therapeutic and creative outlets for the residents.

4 – 3.60 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government seek to establish after-school care programs at the four ACT Government special schools to ease the pressure on respite care services and working carers.

Our Response

Agreed. It would be beneficial for all parties to have a commonly accepted, clear definition of respite.

Agreed. This would allow greater opportunity for individuals and their families to better plan for their needs in line with available resources and future requirements.

Agreed. Research and evidence from other jurisdictions highlights the short and long term benefits of providing therapeutic and creative outlets for guests of short break services (the use of the word "residents" suggests a long term client).

Agreed. Tandem acknowledges the need for after school programs at all four special needs schools. In addition Tandem recognises the need for alternative after school care and holiday options for teenagers and is currently engaged in establishing an after school care and holiday program for teenagers with a disability at Tandem House, Kambah, which can accommodate up to 8 guests at any one time. As Tandem was unsuccessful in securing funding from the ACT Government budget 2011-12, we are facilitating after school care and holiday care with part of the HACC funding allocation for our Children/Young People's Program.

5 – 3.76 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government determine the level of need for young carers and provide additional funding as required to young carers program to ensure that young carers have access to appropriate support when required.

Agreed. The role of young carers often goes unrecognised and is under reported. It is a role that without adequate support can have detrimental outcomes for both young carers and the people for whom they care.

6 – 3.87 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government determine the number of older carers, over the age of 60, providing primary care for an adult child with a disability and/or a mental illness in the ACT, and based on the findings increase the capacity of the Stepping Stones for Life Programs or establish a similar service.

Agreed. The role of older carers is also often unrecognised and under supported and creates an enormous physical, emotional and financial burden on this part of the ageing population, impacting significantly on a natural expectation of enjoyment in retirement.

7 – 3.103 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services table, in the Assembly, by March 2011, the Government's response to the recommendations made by the Echidna Group in its Feasibility Study for Respite Care for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Peoples and state the Government's intention in relation to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island specific respite facility in the ACT and the timeframe intended to complete this.

Agreed. There is a strong need for an appropriate response to meet the respite needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the ACT Government as a priority must fund suitable options.

8 – 3.111 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government develop bilingual programs for new and emerging communities in the ACT aimed at de-stigmatising disability and mental illness and raising awareness about respite care services and other support services, with a particular emphasis on the benefits for both carer and care recipient.

Agreed. Practice learnings from services in other jurisdictions demonstrates that service users benefit most when service provision is in their identified first language.

9 – 4.10 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government continue to support Tandem to ensure that the provision of weekend respite for people with a disability and those living with a mental illness is sustainable in the long term.

Agreed. Tandem acknowledges current and ongoing funding from the ACT and Federal Governments to provide in home and community respite, personal care and social support to 600 vulnerable Canberrans. Tandem also highlights the continual and growing costs of maintaining quality of service, sustainability of the organisation, challenges of low unemployment in the ACT to attract, recruit and retain staff, future impact of the fair remuneration case, cost implications for implementing portable long service leave, complexity of clients' needs, legal compliance, and introduction of new quality frameworks including quality, efficiencies and effectiveness of service delivery. Annual growth of 3.4% indexation will go some way to ensuring client needs and quality assurance are addressed, as well as continuation of usual weekend respite. There was however no new funding allocated for 2011-12 to support overnight respite or other programs at Tandem House, seriously

jeopardising the future operation of an alternative respite option for families who care for a young person with a disability.

10 – 4.19 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government give serious consideration to organisations such as the Community Living Project's proposed "urban village" model of supported accommodation for people with a disability, given the shortage of supported accommodation options in the ACT and the significant support this model has among families caring for a child/adult with a disability.

11 – 4.24 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government identify the number of people that require supported accommodation and take appropriate action to meet the current and future housing needs for people with a disability and/or mental illness including the identification of alternative housing models.

12 – 4.37 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government investigate flexible respite options to meet the diversity of needs, with a view to establishing new models of respite services in the ACT that are truly responsive to the needs of carers and care recipients.

13 – 4.50 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services table in the Assembly, by the last sitting day in March 2011: 1) the outcomes of the internal review assessing Disability ACT services compliance with the National Disability Service Standards; and 2) details of the communication and compliance strategy for community service providers.

14 – 4.51 The Committee recommends that DHCS increase its current capacity of conducting five service audits per year, by engaging an external auditor to review all ACT Government funded organisations providing respite care services by the end of 2011, to ensure they are in compliance with the National Disability Service Standards, as many services have not had an external review since 2006.

15 – 4.55 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services report to the Assembly how the external monitoring for compliance against the National Quality Framework for Disability Services in Australia will be conducted and what additional resources will be required and the timeframe for implementation.

Acknowledged. Tandem recognises that for carers, supported accommodation is one of the greatest concerns they have in regard to the future living requirements for their children with a disability. Tandem also acknowledges that there are a variety of models of accommodation and lifestyle choices that demonstrate best practice and suggest effort be placed in assisting families to select their preferred option.

Agreed. Future planning is critical to meet the growing need for accommodation options, case planning and case management. Tandem suggests that if appropriate timely actions were taken, there may be less need for respite to fill gaps in service delivery.

Agreed. Over recent years Tandem has provided a number of alternative responses to meet the respite needs of families, individuals and their carers.

Agreed. All service providers, including government and non-government agencies, should be required to comply with relevant standards to ensure transparency and equity of service provision.

Acknowledged. Caution needs to be applied in over-auditing agencies with multiple funding streams, using valuable resources that could otherwise be directed towards service delivery. In addition when an audit is conducted, feedback should be provided in a timely manner to enable organisations to respond pro-actively to recommendations and incorporate same into continuous quality improvement programs.

Agreed. In addition, agencies need to be fully informed of the changes to the external monitoring for compliance against the National Quality Framework, how compliance will be conducted, in what timeframe and what resources will be allocated to support implementation.

16 – 4.67 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government establish an Official Visitor Scheme for disability services located within the Office of the Public Advocate of the ACT.

Agreed. It is anticipated that increased transparency will support the argument for more and different respite and accommodation options. In addition there is strong evidence within the ACT and other jurisdictions to show this type of scheme is highly successful.

17 – 4.75 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government promote the role of the Commissioner for Disability and Community Services in handling complaints through websites and community outlets.

Agreed. It would be worthwhile investigating the established and beneficial practices of other jurisdictions such as Victoria on how the role of the Commissioner for Disability and Community Services is promoted.

18 – 4.78 The Committee recommends that community organisations funded by the ACT Government to provide respite care services be required to promote their complaints policy and procedures on their websites with a direct link to the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services' Compliments and Complaints webpage.

Agreed. As a service provider Tandem ensures through a variety of media that all service users have information on Grievance Policy and Procedures. Tandem's ethos is to encourage client feedback to inform ongoing high quality service provision.

19 – 5.28 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expands its funding program to enable a greater number of government and non-government workers to complete the Certificate IV in Disability Work and to include Certificate III in Community Studies for mental health workers.

Agreed. An emphasis on training assists in the professionalisation and recognition of workers in all positions within the sector. Tandem provides ongoing in-house training and actively encourages and supports workers to study Certificate III, IV and Diploma in Disability Studies; and Home and Community Care.

20 – 5.41 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with the disability sector to establish a minimum mandatory qualification for all paid disability support workers in government and non government services and develop a framework to ensure that all volunteers be appropriately trained.

Noted. Whilst we acknowledge the value in minimum mandatory qualifications for workers in this sector, there is a risk associated in reducing workforce numbers from those employees currently working who have strong life experiences and skills, rather than formal qualifications.

21 – 5.48 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government factor the cost of the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme into service funding agreements to ensure that community organisations are not financially disadvantaged.

Agreed. Tandem and many other agencies have identified a significant financial impact on implementing the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme.

22 – 5.49 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government conduct an education campaign detailing the provisions and requirements of the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme for the community sector to ensure that community services are aware of their obligations under the scheme.

Noted. A task force should be established to determine viability, impact and effectiveness of the Portable Long Service Leave Scheme.

23 – 6.14 The Committee recommends that DHCS work with ACT Health to extend its disability marketing and communication plan to promote information access points in the

Agreed. Our understanding is that this will be addressed as part of the COAG reform process, possible introduction of the NDIS, Fair Wage Case and the Not-For-Profit Sector review, and the Pre-Qualification framework being

community sector, to people with a mental illness and the frail aged and their carers. introduced by DHCS.

24 – 6.23 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government increase its capacity to provide case management and/or case coordination for people of all ages whose needs require them to access and negotiate a complex range of health and other services.

Agreed. Tandem's submission identified this as a current priority. Evidence suggests this will continue to grow given the increased number of complex health and disability related needs of people who require a wide range of support.

25 – 6.29 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government examine the community partnership model developed by Dr Leanne Craze as part of the Building Capacity in Community Mental Health Family Support and Carer Recognition project with a view to supporting its implementation across government and non-government service providers.

Agreed. The community sector must be fully included in discussion on implementation across government and non-government agencies.

26 – 6.31 The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health, table in the Assembly, by the last sitting day in March 2011, the results of the community sector mental health services review.

Agreed. The outcome of the Mental Health Services Review needs to be made available to service providers to allow for timely comment.

27 – 6.41 The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that the development of the "no wrong door" model of service delivery is well planned and fully resourced and extends across the disability and mental health sectors.

Agreed. This is imperative to ensure the best outcomes for clients. Resource implications of its implementation must be considered in line with the COAG reform process, possible introduction of the NDIS, Fair Wage Case and the not-for-profit review, and the Pre-Qualification framework being introduced by DHCS.

28 – 7.21 The Committee recommends that a formula for growth funding be developed for disability services, as per health funding, and that this formula be applied to the 2011-2012 Budget process, as recommended by the Select Committee on Estimates 2010-2011.

Agreed. Again, this is tied up with the impact of the COAG reforms, the possible implementation of the NDIS and the Fair Wage Case.

CHERYL POLLARD
Chief Executive Officer

LISA GRANT
Operations Manager

12 May 2011