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 A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
SUBMISSION NUMBER	39
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Mr Steve Doszpot MLA
Submission to the Chair
Standing Committee on Health, Community and Social Services
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

RE: Inquiry into Respite Care Services within the ACT

Dear Mr Doszpot,

I am the primary carer of my 31 year old intellectually disabled daughter with epilepsy. She attended Canberra College up until 1998, and in the following year she had nowhere to go. I had tried desperately to hold onto my employment in the public service, and approached a number of organisations:- Koomarri, Caps(now Lead), Disability ACT, Woden Community Services, Fabric (now Tandem) to fill in at least 3 working days for me - but I was unsuccessful. In 1999 I resigned from work, and from that time onwards respite was non-existent for me.

It has been now 11 years, and I have to say not much has changed in the ACT regarding the range and availability of respite care services. It has been and is a constant battle for me to find suitable services and support worker's for my daughter. Currently, I receive 3½ hrs support per week from Tandem, 3hrs support from Koomarri (since 1999), 9 hrs from Lead and just recently Carer's ACT are proving 4 hrs respite on the weekend once a month on Saturday's. Cancellation of these services are frequent, due to ongoing staff shortages or unavailability of a suitable worker.

There have been some positive changes for us since 2007. I have been successful in applying for an ISP for my daughter, my primary intention was to use the funding for supported work for her and a much needed respite for myself. However, once again my request for supported work has been rejected by Koomarri, and after filling in the weekly hours with various supported activities, there is not much left for financing additional respite. My duties as a carer continues as usual, despite nominating an agency to manage my daughters support and her ISP funding. I conduct constant research for suitable and available services, activities, organise support hours, provide instructions for support worker's and liaise with coordinators of various programs.

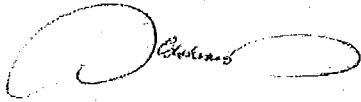
This year I found a few excellent pilot programs for my daughter, and one in particular is ideal because of its location. Communities@Work started a activities based program earlier this year at Cooleman Court, in Weston Creek. **Connection@Cooleman** is designed for people with disabilities aged 25+ is a small group of young adults supervised by the coordinator and assisted by volunteers (no support workers required). It is a HACC funded program managed by Communities@Work, and hopefully will be ongoing. The group activities are based in the centre, and it provides a safe environment where young adults have an opportunity to build friendships, develop living skills, have a choice of leisure activities, and learn to understand personal boundaries. This program is affordable, flexible and provides quality respite if needed.

I think that this pattern of connecting people in small groups can be developed in other areas within the ACT. It can cater for younger groups (eg. school leavers) as temporary respite or for other individuals who can use the service's once or as many times as needed. It can be respite option for some, or it can be an ongoing development for others. I believe that if we want to integrate people with disabilities into our community, we have to create some stepping stones first.

Young people or adults with disabilities are isolated in the ACT, as they have no social networks and they have no friends. We need to develop some supportive based environment's for them first where they can learn to be socially accepted and can cope with the larger scale community in the future.

I wish this group existed 11 years ago.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ildiko Auer', written in dark ink.

MS ILDIKO AUER

