

## Dara & Ian FRASER

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The Australian Human Rights Commission

### **Support for extension of temporary exemption from Disability Discrimination Act.**

We are writing to you as parents of a 28 year old man with Down syndrome whose hard won independent life would not continue if his current ADE workplace (Sunnyfield Enterprises Chatswood NSW) were to close. Our son Robert would love to write this letter but he cannot write, nor can he read, count money, or tell time. However he can travel independently by public transport and in early 2013 he commenced living away from home (with drop in support) for 4 nights a week in a flat in Chatswood NSW due largely to funding from the Supported Living Fund created by the NSW Government.

Rob has a life-plan that depends on him continuing to work. The loss of his job would both devastate him and put an end to his independent life. Rob is not capable of open employment (he has tried) and with no work he would have to move back to the family home as his budget would not allow him to fund the level of support required once he is stuck all day in his flat.

We know you have been listening to professional disability advocates. Organized advocacy groups are well funded and they have accomplished and motivated legal minds at their disposal. We speak as a mother and father of a young man who cannot speak for himself and, importantly, as parents who have actual life experience raising an intellectually challenged person. We are one of many mums and dads competing for a voice in the disability space that is dominated by social advocates whose main (often well meaning) intent seems to be about social change rather than what is best for the individual with an intellectual disability.

If Sunnyfield were to close, where will our son go – to a day program? The funding of day programs is significantly greater than the present cost of funding an ADE position – (information supplied by Sunnyfield) and there is no guarantee that Government will fund these positions. It is important you understand that even if day programs were made available to all intellectually challenged ADE workers who cannot find open employment (and it will be in excess of 90%), these programs will not provide the same sense of self-worth that our son has every fortnight when he receives his payslip. He knows his siblings have jobs, not 'activity programs'.

Given the Federal Court decision the only option for ADE's that want to continue to provide employment (most lose money) is the adoption of the SWS wage tool approved under the Fair Work Act. We are told that this tool is imperfect in that it was (we believe) primarily designed for workers with a mild intellectual disability wishing to enter open employment.

**We request that you approve the application for a one year extension to allow a new tool, or a compromise to be reached, that would ensure that our son and the many others like him do not lose their jobs.**

Finally - if any commercial business in Australia terminated 20,000 workers, we are sure that this would receive wide coverage and condemnation. We believe that this is what will happen with ADE's and yet those of us affected struggle to be heard – our future is in your hands.

Yours faithfully



Dara Fraser



Ian Fraser