



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 23 July, 2014

Hunter disability workers protest against client sell out

Disability care workers in the Newcastle and Hunter Region are stopping work today between 12 and 1pm to protest against State Government plans to privatise Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC), said the Public Service Association of NSW (PSA).

A lunchtime rally of ADHC workers from across the region will be held at the Quadrangle of 670 Hunter Street in Newcastle. The action will not impact upon the delivery of services. 14,500 experienced care providers across the state will be severely affected by the upheaval to make way for the NDIS.

The Government's decision to withdraw from the sector entirely shows it plans to wash its hands of the state's most vulnerable in the largest ever sell-off and sell-out of NSW government services. The PSA strongly supports the principles behind the National Disability Insurance Scheme but the union believes that the NDIS will be far more effective if the Government retains a key role in delivering this vital human service.

Rather than complementing the scheme with the expert services already provided by ADHC, the NSW Government is embarking on a cost-cutting exercise cynically sold to the most disadvantaged in our society as increasing their choice of care. The fact is the total privatisation of ADHC will dramatically cut choice and quality services for clients.

"The Government's rhetoric focuses on increasing choice of care, but the hard reality is that choice and quality services will be dramatically cut by completely removing ADHC - the largest and most experienced disability service provider - from the picture," said Acting PSA General Secretary, Steve Turner.

"The current Government services which provide some of the most high level, expensive care, will not simply continue in the private sector. Instead, they will be based on cost and business models rather than the specialised needs of clients.

"We are already aware that the private sector is talking of employing university students and retrenched workers as casual or temporary workers to support people with disabilities."

The NSW Government has passed a law to force the mass transfer of experienced care providers in Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to private employers.

To make matters worse, the Government so far has failed to make a commitment to protect the job security, conditions, entitlements and pay of the public servants who are to be transferred, like it or not. Many experienced carers, whose pay and conditions are to be slashed under privatisation, can already see this tragedy unfolding for their clients and are leaving the sector."

"The other great concern is that with the proposed privatisation of ADHC, the Government have created a template that it will use to sell off many other public services. This is just the beginning of a totally privatised NSW," said Mr Turner.

Media opportunity – 11.45am, 23 July, 670 Hunter Street, Newcastle