




Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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DISABILITY SERVICES

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (9.13 pm): Times are tough, there is no doubt about it. But it has come to my attention that there is a small group of families in my electorate and from across the Sunshine Coast that are doing it far tougher than the rest of us. Late last year I was contacted by three families from Glass House. Each of these families has the challenging but rewarding responsibility of raising a young person with a disability.

Jude and David Mannix's son Levi is typical of these young people. I had the opportunity to meet Levi last week. He is a great kid. We shared stories of shaving mishaps. Until the age of 18 Levi received wonderful care through the education system. He attended a Sunshine Coast special school and did so five days a week—like any kid his age. The education was not only a positive for Levi but for his parents who could use the respite offered by the schooling to pursue careers and earn the wages required to continue caring for Levi.

But all that changed when Levi graduated, as it did for the children of the other families. Suddenly their parents had to apply for post school funding through Disability Services Queensland. After talking up their children's progress for the previous 12 years, parents like Jude and David had to talk down Levi's abilities. They had to prove, again, Levi's disability in the hope of securing some post school funding. The application process was distressing and lengthy, and in the case of all of these families ultimately unsuccessful.

So in one fell swoop Levi has gone from five days a week support through the education system to zero support through the disability system. His disability pension of less than \$10,000 per year does not even offset the lost income his parents have incurred through now having to care for him full time.

Levi had hoped to attend a life skills and Get Set for Work program offered through a local disability service provider, Compass in Palmwoods. The program is offered three days a week at a cost of \$15,000 per participant per year. So rather than dash his hopes, Jude and David are covering the cost out of their own pockets. Not all families with a young disabled adult are so fortunate.

The really distressing element to this story is that when I wrote to the disability minister I was told the investment in post school funding would be increasing through budget announcements later in the year, but that it would not be applied retrospectively. So families like the Mannix family would continue to miss out. It is distressing because all these families are looking for is \$15,000 per year. For the 24 young people who graduated from special schools on the coast last year that would amount to a paltry \$360,000. When we consider this government has wasted \$400 million on a pipeline to nowhere, our heart breaks.

Even Labor's basket case, New South Wales, has got this one right. It offers banded community participation funding ranging from \$21,000 for young people with moderate disability needs up to \$54,000 for exceptional needs. They also offer \$18,000 for transition to work programs. Minister, I know you are new to the position; here is an opportunity to get some runs on the board.