



**MOVING ON PROGRAM
7 July 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I move:

That this house condemns the government for continuing to underfund the `Moving On' program for young disabled people.

In response to public campaigns organised by Dignity for the Disabled, their spokesperson David Holst, and pressure from the opposition, the government has been dragged kicking and screaming to address the plight of those people with disabilities in our community.

I dispute the minister's assertion made in *The Advertiser* this week that Dignity for the Disabled is a front for the Liberal Party. I for one have only ever had contact with campaigner David Holst at the first rally.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PENFOLD: However, I would like to take up the minister's offer to find a solution to the lack of funding for the disabled. I suggest he talk to the Premier about having the significant funding being put towards opening bridges redirected to address the funding shortfall for the disability sector.

Mr Koutsantonis interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PENFOLD: I understand that the Public Works Committee has found that almost \$90 million could be saved by building fixed bridges, and I therefore suggest that the Dignity for the Disabled people should lobby for the funding that has been budgeted for the opening bridges, which are not really needed. The government can instead build fixed bridges and put the \$90 million towards fixing the issues for the disabled that are so desperately needed. The proposed recurrent funding saved by not having opening bridges would go a long way towards helping with recurrent funding requirements for the disabled.

Figures from the Productivity Commission show that South Australia has the lowest per capita disability funding in the country, with just a 7 per cent increase over the past five years compared with 26 per cent nationally. David Holst has said that an immediate \$100 million is needed—an amount most caring people would prefer went to the disabled than to bridges. He estimated that of the 95 000 disabled in South Australia 35 000 have severe and multiple disabilities and about 10 000 require around-the-clock care.

Funding for disability services in this budget has been announced with great fanfare, but it raises questions rather than gives answers. Certainly, everyone is grateful for small mercies, however when the banquet table is loaded it is rather difficult to be grateful for crumbs.

Moving on is a very valuable program for disabled teenagers and young adults as they learn living skills such as preparing meals and shopping and it gives them meaningful activity and social interaction. Importantly, it gives their carers a break and the chance to do the sorts of things the rest of us take for granted. On Eyre Peninsula we have only one Moving On program which is run by LEPSH in Port Lincoln. The program was going to close on 30 June this year because the funds to run the program were insufficient and LEPSH could not continue to bear the cost. I refer to a letter written by the Board of Directors of LEPSH to the Minister for Families and Communities

dated 27 April 2005. It states:

The department's offer of a 6 per cent increase in funding for 2005-06 is acknowledged.

The funding was backdated to 1 January 2005. The letter continues:

That offer brings the total funding to near wages cost for one year at the current rates, but does not recognise that the real cost of running the program with the additional costs of administration, program materials, fuel, vehicles, electricity and building hire and maintenance is much more. It should be obvious that when there is a CPI rise for staff in July then the program funding will fall further behind the real cost.

The \$20 000 additional administrative support announced in the budget will allow the program to continue in 2005-06. However, both this funding and funding for a bus with a lifter are one-off contributions. So, the plight of the Moving on program has been merely staved off. There is no long-term commitment by this government to the needs of people with a disability, their carers and their families. Recipients are grateful for the funding announced in the budget which (with limitations) will enable the Moving on program to continue for a further 12 months. However, it must be emphasised that, since this is one-off funding, the people of LEPSH will have to go through the whole time-consuming process of applying for funding again next year.

I repeat: there is no real commitment by this government to adequately fund the Moving on program. This makes it very hard for LEPSH to plan for the future, and gives no certainty for those employed in the program or for their clients and their families. Unexpected costs are a fact of life. A recent cost that organisations like LEPSH now face is the cost of having police checks for the volunteers who work with our disabled people. LEPSH have been advised that their volunteers do not qualify for free SAPOL checks because the organisation receives some government funds. This is an anomaly that needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. When large sporting clubs which turn over large sums of money can get a free service and when a small charity in receipt of some government funds cannot get support from this government for its volunteers something is very wrong.

The Moving on program was a Liberal government initiative set in place in 1997 in response to the need to provide alternatives to employment for young disabled people leaving school. It is one of the many effective programs introduced by the Liberal government to assist the underprivileged, the poor, those unable to care for themselves—in fact, all vulnerable members of our state. We achieved this despite the state's financial bankruptcy left to us by Labor in 1993. Due to good financial management by the Liberal state government and sound economic policy by the Liberal federal government, state finances are now healthy. There is no impediment to the government to adequately fund disability services, in particular, the Moving on program.

I understand that the original program was indexed to inflation with an additional amount added annually in recognition of the additional numbers expected to come into the program each year. Now we have a state government rolling in funds from a number of sources. The reduction in debt brought about by the previous Liberal government made available millions of dollars formerly spent on interest payments, resulting in the state's credit rating being lifted and again cutting the interest bill.

Revenue from the GST which, incidentally, Labor strongly opposed—but I have not heard any Labor governments refuse to accept—is much greater than the funding they would have received under former financial arrangements with a provisional \$3 449 million—that's \$3.449 billion—in 2005-06 coming to our state alone. There are also windfall gains from land tax, stamp duty and other state government levies and charges. Labor ministers are just having difficulty in planning constructively for the long term.

An amount of \$64 000 for a bus equipped with a lifter sounds good until one looks at coping with the operational and associated costs. Moving on in Port Lincoln has hired buses for outings as it is imperative for the sound mental health of clients that they go out into the wider community and attend events. So, the money for a bus is welcomed, but who is going to pay the running costs? Does this mean another battle or further fund-raising efforts by parents and other carers who are already stretched physically, mentally and emotionally by the demands of looking after a mentally disabled person?

Disability programs need to be planned on a permanent basis and funded adequately so that parents, carers and all involved can give their time and energies to their charges. As one parent said, 'We need recurrent funding.' A meagre amount of only an extra \$9 million per year for recurrent funding was approved in the last budget. The Moving on program has been of immense benefit to participants and their carers as it enables them to cope with

the almost unrelenting demands of caring for disabled children.

However, it is not just the Moving On program that needs improved funding. There is also an urgent need for respite care, more supported accommodation and at-home support for families. These are some of the issues being pushed by David Holst. I congratulate him on his continuing campaign for more funding for the disabled and their families. I will continue to support him and disabled people and their carers whenever I can and I suggest that closing the unnecessary opening bridges that are already in the budget would help the government to find the desperately needed \$100 million in funds and recurrent funding for the disabled. I move this motion for the disabled, their families and carers.

Moving On Program 25 May 2005

A petition signed by 580 residents of South Australia, requesting the house to urge the government to increase funding for disability services in South Australia to at least the Australian national average expenditure and in particular to fully fund the Moving On Program to a five day full time service for all disabled people, was presented by Mrs Penfold.

Petition received.

MOVING ON PROGRAM 11 November 2004

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I move:

That this house calls on the government to provide funding for the Moving On initiative to assist the disabled and their carers in enjoying a more fulfilling life.

Today, as members would have already noted, is Remembrance Day. It is a day when we set aside time to remember the service and sacrifices made by our men and women who have served—and are currently serving—in our Defense Forces so that we can all enjoy life in this democratic, prosperous and caring country of Australia. I deliberately put this motion today, because it seemed to be an appropriate time also to remember a hidden army whom our Defense Forces also fought for: those who serve and sacrifice to look after the most needy in our community—the disabled—who often, through no thought of their own, cannot cope by themselves.

The Moving On program particularly cares for young disabled people as they move into adulthood. The number of these young people is increasing, with improved technology and treatment meaning that many more survive birth and childhood than ever before, and drugs, alcohol and motor vehicle accidents are adding to the numbers.

The program was put in place under the former Liberal Government in 1997. In the words of the report of the minister's working party for Moving On, the initiative is 'in response to the need to provide alternatives to employment for young people with severe intellectual disabilities leaving school,' as identified by their families, teachers and the Intellectual Disability Services Council (IDSC). At the time, I understand that the funding was indexed to inflation. An additional amount was to be allocated each year in recognition of the extra numbers that would be eligible for assistance coming into the program each succeeding year.

The program has been highly successful and greatly appreciated by both the young disabled and their carers. However, it has become under-funded over the years, and I was very disturbed to find that there is a huge unmet need in the community. For the first time in my life, I drew up a placard and marched down King William Street. When the minister did not appear on the steps of Parliament House to speak to the rally, I was angry enough to take the microphone and tell those present to start telling their stories. As Sir Winston Churchill said, 'Never give up. Never, never, never.'

Like most people, I have little idea of what it must be like to look after someone who is disabled 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When I was in Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, I would go after work to the Cheshire Home to help the nuns care for some severely disabled young people. I am sad to say that I did not last for long before looking after these young people for a few hours became too traumatic for me. I decided that

I would instead teach English to the local people and put in my apologies.

I sincerely thank—and greatly admire—those who take on these responsibilities, and I recognise the huge emotional, physical and financial price they pay. It would be easy for the carers to give up. As David Holst said in a media interview:

They are too busy surviving day to day. . . couples with severely handicapped children, you know, their care, their attention, their focus, they're exhausted, they're emotionally drained and the last thing they need to do is go and fight someone. When you have broken sleep for 20 years ago because you've got a child that won't sleep and when you're working split shifts and one of the parents has to be home 24 hours a day because there's someone that needs special care and attention, you haven't got time. . . one lady at Reynella was telling me. . . she's got a 22 year old son and he's a big fella and he's got spastic quadriplegia. It takes her 45 minutes to load him into the family car. . . so if she wants to go to the shops for half an hour it's 45 minutes to get him in the car. . . you certainly don't drive to your local MP's office to complain.

In another interview, he gives several other examples. He says:
A 60 odd year old man rang me last week to say he and his wife had taken custody of their granddaughter because their mother simply couldn't cope any longer. . . the child has serious disabilities. And another lady rang me last week to say that she's going into hospital to have reasonably major surgery. She needs respite for her autistic son for about a month and she's been offered three days help. He went on to say:

Eighty-eight per cent of families, or thereabouts, are single mother families. . . the father leaves, it just gets too hard to go to work and go home to such misery every night. The AMA recently said that the incidence of depression and nervous breakdowns and the treatment of these families is just crushing.

On Tuesday this week, the minister announced that on Monday the government had received the final report of the working party set up in August to look into the Moving On program and had accepted the report's central recommendation, which was 'the provision of full-time day options for young people with multiple severe disabilities' and the 'allocation of additional resources for next year'. It sounded like he had heeded the call and had rectified the situation until I listened to the rest of his ministerial statement, which went on to say that there were 22 recommendations. It begs the question: what about the rest, minister? He also said:

The state government will reconfigure the \$7.572 million a year program to create new centre-based places through Minda and Intellectual Disability Services Council Incorporated. These two organisations will provide a full-time service for up to 40 new school leavers in south and north of Adelaide as from the beginning of the school year, 1 February, next year.

He later said:
By changing the way in which services are provided, we can cater for the growing demand for this program, and the needs of families for much needed respite while retaining high quality services.

There are two points in this statement that I query. The first is the figure of only 40 new school leavers in the south and north of Adelaide being funded by the reconfigured \$7.572 million. I ask: what about all the rest of the school leavers in Adelaide and the country regions of the state and those who are receiving much less time than the five days or who are not aware of the program or who have no access to it at present? Will they be funded as well and, if so, from where? Coincidentally, David Holst said that 40 disabled children will be taken into Parliament House for the day on 24 November, when we are sitting. He said that it is symbolic and stated:

This represents the number of children in South Australia, young, adult and older, who are simply abandoned every year. Every year about 30 to 40 severely disabled people are taken to some sort of centre, left with a bag and no-one goes and picks them up.

Secondly, how will they reconfigure this small amount of \$7.572 million funding, which is already not enough for the Moving On program, when the government is proposing to increase the costs of providing the services by using more unionised/award government services? I quote from a letter from a manager who provides the kind of services that will be required, to which I referred on Tuesday this week, when speaking strongly against the government's new union sponsored fair work bill:

The average hourly rate is \$17.70. After clients contribute to the cost, the final hourly rate to the organisation is \$15.58 per hour. If we had to deem these contractors as employees then the additional cost and conditions of service would change considerably. Certainly not to the clients' benefit and certainly would raise the hourly cost thereby reduce the number of clients that could be receiving a service with the same amount of government

funding.

At a time when governments are being pressured to find increasing funds for a whole range of human services this proposal would either reduce the number of clients able to be serviced or would require an increase in funding. . . additional cost would amount to. . . a 25 per cent increase in funding and this does not include costs such as staff development, insurance, travel and motor vehicles. If contractors became casual employees penalty rates would also apply. For example, a half hour service would have to be paid at a minimum call out of three hours!

I suggest that the government withdraw this union sponsored, incorrectly labelled, fair work bill immediately before it hurts these people even more, and reconsider its proposal to push services back into institutions, unless that is where the disabled and their carers prefer them to go. In these institutions the disabled will be subject to a unionised work force that will be forced to work to rule instead of being able to be flexible with people who need the greatest flexibility to deal with circumstances that can change regularly and swiftly, depending on what is happening to the disabled person and their carers. This is definitely an industry where one size does not fit all: it is more likely to fit only one. I ask: who will lose their funding in this reconfiguring, or how are increased costs going to be paid otherwise?

In his ministerial statement, the minister said that the report by the working party would be available to any interested member. However, the 22 recommendations resulting from the four terms of reference were not put on the record, and in the time I have left I want to put as many on the record as I can. It is a pity that the time will be inadequate to place on the record the very interesting accompanying notes to the recommendations. However, I will place the whole report on my web site for those who are interested. The recommendations are as follows:

Terms of reference.

1. The current model of service provision for Moving On clients.

1.1. Transition from school to post school options.

Recommendation 1: Transition from school to day options must commence for all students with a disability at least two years prior to the student completing school. IDSC and DECS should work together to develop formal monitoring which will ensure that students with a disability have a transition plan in place at least two years prior to the final year of school. Schools and IDSC must involve parents in the transition process. A three year growth cycle for government funding and planning would support this process.

1.2. Information to parents and students regarding post school options.

Recommendation 2: IDSC should consider the timing of the Expo and announcement of funding allocations to ensure that parents can attend the Expo with knowledge of their child's funding allocation.

Recommendation 3: IDSC to consider establishing an advisory service for families needing assistance on making a decision on day services.

Recommendation 4: IDSC should develop additional ways through which forums for the exchange of information between parents, students and day options providers can take place in all country regions.

1.3. Portability.

Recommendation 5: The capacity of a person to choose to move between services which exist within the current program is to be maintained under any reconfiguring of the Moving On program. Information is to be provided to parents about this capacity as well as the option to use Community Support Incorporated (CSI) to develop their own service.

1.4. Level of service and a development focus within community and centre based services.

Recommendation 6: That any consideration to the future development of day options services, which will enable a 5 day a week/48week a year service, with clients being provided with a service 9 a.m.-3.30 p.m. must consider the merits of both community and centre based programs. Balancing safety, along with the ability to

provide a developmental program in ways which will maximise the available funding needs to be the focus.

Recommendation 7: That the DSO and IDSC work collaboratively with a broad range of service providers in the country to ensure improvement in the provision of day options services for young people in rural and remote communities.

1.5. Transport.

Recommendation 8: That Moving On funding be maintained exclusively for the provision of day services and not supplement the transporting of clients. The DSO and IDSC to examine transport issues for clients/families of the Moving On program. There is a need to advocate for greater client accessibility to current community transport services, e.g. council community transport, as well as voucher systems which exist for other groups of people with a disability, e.g. those who attend university. Transport in rural areas requires special consideration. The Minister for Transport be required to, as part of the Disability Action Plan, action transport in country areas for young people to post school options.

2. The criteria for needs assessment by IDSC.

Recommendation 9: Needs assessment for Moving On should occur at the beginning of a student's final year of school, or at the end of their second to last year. This will enable the earlier announcement of funding allocation and aid in transition processes.

Recommendation 10: That all parents are provided with information on when their child is to be assessed for Moving On and be provided with the opportunity to be present at the assessment. Parents are to be informed as to how the assessment process is used during the allocation of funds.

Recommendation 11: That eligible individuals should have access to a full-time service.

Recommendation 12: An improved needs assessment tool should be developed to better determinate needs and eligibility. It is understood that this work is currently work in progress.

Recommendation 13: Individuals with severe multiple disabilities or displaying challenging behaviours may require additional support.

3. The extent to which school leavers access commonwealth funded employment services.

Recommendation 14: Whilst acknowledging that Moving On is a program for those with severe intellectual disabilities who require constant support, wherever possible clients within the program are to be provided with support and training to move into employment. This will be assisted through stronger collaboration between the state and commonwealth governments within South Australia.

Recommendation 15: Mechanisms need to be established to ensure that individuals who seek employment from the Moving On program do not jeopardise their moving on funding or placement and can return to the program if employment is unsuitable.