

I am a DES Training & Placement Consultant at Break Thru People Solutions on the Central Coast, NSW. For me as a consultant, the tendering process means I have to weigh up the possible instability of my position as a DES TPC, against moving to another industry, where my job may have more stability. The fact that this may happen every 3 years adds to my concern. Working on the ground I see every day the good work that we, and other DES providers are doing, fighting for our clients rights, and fighting for people with a disability to be recognised as an integral and equal member of our community.

For me to then have to fight for my job, means that more time is spent worrying about the future of Break Thru on the Central Coast, and less time “breaking thru barriers, and creating futures”.

I enjoy working in this industry, and have learnt a lot about people with a disability/disabilities. My first thought when the news of the tendering process came out was “how will this affect our clients???!?” The possibility of Break Thru not continuing in DES on the Central Coast is something that I think would be a tragedy.

The effect on our current, and indeed previous clients would be potentially disastrous. For many of our clients living with a range of disabilities, the relationships that are built here can be some of the most important in their lives. A colleague told me yesterday that one of his clients who has been diagnosed with severe social anxiety had advised him that the only people he speaks to are his own parents, and my colleague.

The trust and relationships we have built with our clients over the years is part of what makes me keen to stay in this job.

I have seen several clients that were registered before my time, come back to Break Thru when they are looking for assistance. Or just to drop in to say hello. I have seen this time and time again.

One girl in particular I remember. This girl was a youth client back when DES first started on the Central Coast. This girl used to attend Job Action Group (JAG) appointments and disappear. She would be found hiding under tables, and was not confident even mixing with her peers. BTPS supported her into a job at Woolworths, and kept up post placement support, until she was exited as an independent worker. I was here when, years later this girl dropped back in to say hello to staff, and to ask if she can come back on the books to look for a new job, as her skills had increased, and Woolworths was getting “boring”.

To see someone who had obviously built up such a relationship with her DES provider was amazing and inspiring for me, who at the time was relatively new in the position. And for her to feel that she could come back at any time to say hello, and tell staff what her new goals are – this is the sort of thing I work here for.

To see our clients affected in a negative way by the takeover of another provider is not something I feel that this industry is about. We support some of the most disadvantaged members of our community, many of whom have minimal or no sense of stability in their lives, sometimes struggling to pay for food and accommodation. I feel that we as a DES provider should be able to offer our clients – at the very least – that sense of stability and regularity.

I want to be able to concentrate on helping our clients, and spend my energy on assisting people to overcome their barriers to employment. To build relationships and create awareness in the community of the value of people with a disability.

Not worrying about the future of my clients, the future of Break Thru, and my own job.