

My name is Catherine Edwards and I am the mother of a 29 year old Son, Christopher Edwards, who is autistic and has moderate intellectual disability. I feel I have been well supported in many respects in that my son was at a special school and is presently working 9AM-3PM Mon-Fri. in a sheltered workshop and he receives DADHC respite 4-5 weekends a year. He also participates in programs from Lifelinks and Sunnyfield which provide recreational activities on Saturdays.

At present my husband and I transport our son to and from work at the workshop five days a week; we transport him to and from a Special Needs Dancing program on Monday nights; a Special Olympics Swimming program on Tuesday nights and a special needs fellowship on Wednesday nights and the recreational programs on Saturdays.

You will see our whole lives revolve around caring for and transporting our son to and from work and activities. We wonder how long we can keep this up as, like everyone else, we are growing older daily.

When our son was still at school we were led to believe he would be given the opportunity to go into supported accommodation when he was in his twenties. It now transpires that is not the case and there will no such thing until a real crisis arises - meaning we have to drop dead or become vegetables before he can be accommodated in supported accommodation.

Whilst we fully understand there is great pressure for supported accommodation to be of a standard which is way beyond what the budget allows, we would have been very happy with what used to be provided at Crowle Home - a centre based facility with an enormous amount of parent support and dedicated staff. This place to us meant SECURITY and gave us motivation to carry on with what can only be described as "a heavy load".

Most people look forward to a day they can retire; go on holidays and generally slow down a bit. When can carers look forward to retirement?

With no security, my motivation is practically zilch and like many others in similar situations, I see myself reaching crisis point sooner than I technically would expect. I would dearly like to see my son settled into supported accommodation where I can assist in the transition making it easier for him, the staff and my family. The views I am expressing are shared by members of Gladesville Carers all of whom have a son or daughter with intellectual disability.

Catherine Edwards