

Services backflip

Diamond Valley Leader –September 18, 2013

FEE INCREASES WITHDRAWN

Watsonia parents and disability advocates Tony and Heather Tregale have welcomed a State Government decision to withdraw proposed fee hikes for state-run disability care services.

The couple - and thousands of Victorians - decided to fight a decision that would have seen board and lodging fees increase by 50 per cent.

The hike meant their son Paul, 36, would pay an extra \$360 a month out of his disability pension from December.

"It's a win in some respects ... but there is a hole in the budget," Mr Tregale said. "If you read between the lines, going forward it could come up again. I don't think we are out of the woods yet."

On September 6, Disability Services Minister Mary Wooldridge said the Department of Human Services decided to withdraw the fee increase proposal. A VCAT panel said it expected each resident to present their circumstances to the tribunal.

Ms Wooldridge did not say whether a similar fee increase would be introduced in the next 12 months or what would happen to the support packages that were due to be funded.

"The Victorian Government remains concerned the current fee structure is unfair, inequitable and lacks transparency for people with a disability," she said.

Opposition disability spokeswoman Danielle Green said Labor would watch carefully to make sure that the 720 planned individual support packages linked to the fee increase would still go ahead.

"The backflip has blown a \$107 million hole in this commitment. Ms Wooldridge needs to explain how these packages will be funded."