

# TRANSCRIPT

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### **Inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder**

Swan Hill — 14 February 2017

#### Members

Ms Maree Edwards — Chair

Mr Paul Edbrooke

Ms Cindy McLeish — Deputy Chair

Mr Bernie Finn

Ms Chris

#### Witness

Mr Scott Morrison.

**The CHAIR** — Before we wind up, I will just ask if there is anyone in our audience today who wants to make a brief presentation. Yes? Can you just come to the desk and state your name?

**Mr MORRISON** — Scott Morrison.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, Scott. You are from Swan Hill, Scott?

**Mr MORRISON** — No, from Echuca.

**The CHAIR** — Echuca?

**Mr MORRISON** — Yes. I am, firstly and most importantly, the father of a young girl, my daughter Claudia, who is 10 and attends Echuca Specialist School. She has autism and also an intellectual disability. She is non-verbal; she is very well supported at Echuca Specialist School. I just want to point out that, after listening to most of the parents here today, the same themes echo through the conversations about accessing services, the initial confusion as to where to go and the haste with which some of these things need to be attended to, which can lead to further complications.

One other thing I would like to remind people of, especially from services who all have the best intentions in place, is as parents — and you probably witnessed today a couple of very emotional parents — the world you enter when you enter this autism spectrum disorder world is something you potentially have never heard of before, never been involved with before and can be very destructive to a relationship. To have services that lead you through the pathway I think is very, very important rather than assuming that parents are clear thinking, constructive and working together well as a couple. I think the statistics are between 60 and 80 per cent of couples who experience this end up being divorced. It is a very troubled pathway at times and to hear some of the emotional stories here today really reinforced that. For the people here today to have the opportunity to express their opinions I think is very, very important. If I can speak on behalf of the parents at the Echuca Specialist School, given that I am the school council president, they would have really enjoyed hearing the things today and the wonderful way in which this is being conducted.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you so much, Scott. It is much appreciated. It is really good feedback for us, that we are actually hearing the same things that you guys are hearing. We do understand from our experience in the regions and our public hearings that clearly the themes are very similar. We much appreciate your time today. Thank you.

**Ms McLEISH** — And they can read it all in the Hansard transcript. It has all been recorded and it will be publicly available.

**Mr MORRISON** — Very good. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much. That concludes our public hearing for today. Can I thank everyone for their participation and for coming along to support those who presented to us today. I also thank our secretary and support staff, and Peter Walsh for attending today.

**Committee adjourned.**