**Ray Williams MP**
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Multiculturalism

## MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 19 April 2017

# NEW OPERATORS ANNOUNCED FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES

Today Minister for Disability Services, Ray Williams, announced the successful providers to take over the operation of state supported accommodation services in regions across the State, following an extensive consultation with people with disability, their families, carers and guardians.

These services are being transferred to the non-government sector to support the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Minister for Disability Services, Ray Williams, said the successful providers, LiveBetter Community Services, Hunter Valley Disability Services and Mid North Coast Disability Services had strong histories of supporting people with disability and proven track records in rural and regional areas.

“It’s important that people with disability living in regional, rural and remote locations can access effective, appropriate supports regardless of where they live,” said Mr Williams.

“Continuity of support for residents remains our highest priority. These operators already have a local presence and experience delivering accommodation services to people with disability.”

LiveBetter, formerly known as CareWest, Hunter Valley Disability Services and Mid North Coast Disability Services have also been selected for their capacity and vision to support the day-to-day and professional development needs of the dedicated staff who will transfer.

“The retention of experienced staff who carry out irreplaceable work with residents in group homes is critical to the success of the NDIS,” Mr Williams said.

The new operators will take on services in the following locations:

- LiveBetter Community Services - Bathurst, Blayney, Dubbo, Kelso, and Orange
- Hunter Valley Disability Services - Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens area
- Mid North Coast Disability Services - Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Wauchope

LiveBetter CEO, Tim Curran, said his organisation is well positioned to support people with disabilities, families and employees through the transition period and beyond.

“We are thrilled to be working collaboratively with our new customers and staff to provide high quality, client-centred services,” Mr Curran said.

Both the Hunter Valley and Mid North Coast Disability Services consortiums have more than 100 years combined experience in providing local people with disability a full range of support services. This includes the management of multiple group and respite accommodation homes.

Fred Van Steel, CEO at Ability Options and Chair for both consortiums, said his organisation was honoured to be selected as the lead disability service provider to manage the supported accommodation in the Hunter and the Mid North Coast regions.

“We look forward to ensuring people with disabilities live inclusively in their communities, assisted by support services delivered with integrity, respect and compassion,” Mr Van Steel said.

Hunter Valley Disability Services Ltd is a consortium of providers including Ability Options, ConnectAbility Australia, Finding Yellow and accommodation partner Evolve Housing.

Mid North Coast Disability Services is a consortium including Nambucca Valley disAbility Services, Kempsey Regional Support, About Inclusion, Booroongen Djugun and Ability Options and accommodation partner Evolve Housing.

The transfers to LiveBetter and Mid North Coast Disability Services will start from September 2017. Hunter Valley Disability Services transfer will begin from December 2017.

Today’s announcement represents another three of the 18 geographic service groupings for disability supported accommodation that will transfer to the non-government sector.

Northcott and House with No Steps were selected last month to run 10 of the groupings.

All NSW specialist disability services will transfer to the non-government sector by June 2018, as agreed by State and Federal government in 2012.