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We're fed up with talking, say mums

CHARIS CHANG

WHEN her son was a toddler, Jenny Rollo refused to put him into care – more than 20 years later she is still fighting for him and the rights of other intellectually disabled people.

Ms Rollo, 54, has spent most of her life caring for her son David, 26, expecting that when she could no longer do so, the state would take over.

“But as the children started ageing and we were ageing, it became obvious to us that he would have nowhere to live,” Ms Rollo said.

“We realised we would probably die without knowing how he would be cared for.”

Ms Rollo is a member of the group Ryde Area Supported Accommodation for Intellectually Disabled. It was formed six years ago to lobby for more supported accommodation.

The group drew up innovative plans for a home consisting of five houses, clustered together, with 20 beds that they hoped the government would build in Ryde.

“We met various ministers and bureaucrats who encouraged us and told us we were doing something innovative and worthwhile. They told us it was do-able.”

She said the sticking point came when the group was told recently that even if the home were built, there was no guarantee that the group’s children would be able to use it.



Jenny Rollo, with her son David (26), Estelle Shields, Marilyn Jones and Megan Poole have arranged a rally on Friday to call for supported accommodation for their adult children who are intellectually disabled.
Picture: BRAD HUNTER

“We are fed up talking with the government about what we need,” Mrs Rollo said. “We don’t want any more empty promises.”

The group hoped the community would support their campaign to build the cluster home by attending a rally this Friday, November 13.

It will be held at the Ryde Park rotunda, starting at 4.30pm.

Ms Rollo said the point of the group home was to create a place where the children could live close to family and with their friends.

Ryde resident Marilyn Jones, 59, said she wanted to be on hand to help her son Robbie, 35, settle into

the new home, because he only had the mental age of a primary school student.

“It will take a long time for him to settle in and if we are too far away, the family ties that we have spent years creating, will be wrecked,” Ms Jones said.

“Most of us were told to leave

our kids at a home and walk away but we said no, we brought them home and looked after them for 20 to 40 years.

“We have loved and cared for them for so long, we can’t sit by and let this happen.”

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Justine Schofield



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