



## Children like little Suli need help, insurance panel told

**Koren Helbig**

SCHOOL-aged children with disabilities could fall through the gaps in a proposed national insurance scheme, a Productivity Commission hearing in Brisbane was told yesterday.

Cerebral Palsy League chief executive Angela Tillmanns said failing to provide youngsters with early intervention therapies created disadvantage and increased the cost of care in adulthood.

She raised concerns the proposed insurance scheme would

not extend present state and federal programs that offer subsidised therapy only for children aged up to six. "You then go to school and it's like you're dropped like a hot cake," she said.

Carina father Steve Peek wants the commission to understand the difficulties he faces caring for his daughter Suli, 2, who cannot speak or feed herself, lives in a wheelchair, suffers epileptic fits, is developmentally delayed and has cerebral palsy.

But government funding extends to just one hour a fortnight

of speech therapy and physiotherapy, which will likely drop off when Suli begins school.

"The government is doing not much to give them a life," Mr Peek said. Mr Peek and wife Joyce gave up work to care for Suli round-the-clock and struggle on two \$250-a-week carers' incomes.

The commission will rule on two proposed no-fault disability insurance schemes, one for accident-acquired injury, and one for disability, on July 31.



**PARENTS' PLEA:** Steve and Joyce Peek of Carina were forced to give up work to look after their daughter Suli, 2 full-time. The Peeks are hoping for a positive outcome from a disability insurance ruling in July.