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Public trustee wipes man's savings

Political Reporter Sarah Martin, The Advertiser

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GARY Norris had \$7000 in savings in 2006 when his finances were taken over by the Public Trustee.

Just three years later, his bank account was empty.

The intellectually disabled man from Mt Gambier handed his financial affairs to the Public Trustee after his carer was unable to continue with the responsibility.

Mr Norris's mother, Jan, said her son's savings were chewed up in Public Trustee fees and charges. And Mrs Norris is worried that other disabled pensioners will suffer the same fate when the State Government closes the Disability SA Client Trust management fund, forcing many to use the Public Trustee.

The \$2.2 million savings measure was announced in last year's State Budget, but the Government has delayed the fund's closure by 12 months, to July next year.

The closure has been opposed by the Public Advocate and welfare groups which say pensioners will be slugged \$45 a fortnight in fees if their funds are managed by the Public Trustee.

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financial services or whether they wish to manage their funds themselves, she said.

Mrs Norris said she would take over the management of her son's finances.

"We are not going to chance it again," she said.

Opposition disability spokeswoman Vickie Chapman said the Government was back-pedalling to try to save itself from political embarrassment.

"Delaying it (the fund closure) won't stop us raising the inequity of it," Ms Chapman said.

Dignity for Disability MLC Kelly Vincent said the deferral would not "undo the frustration, worry and panic many of these people have already experienced".

