

## The Department of Human Services say - “DO WHAT WE SAY, NOT WHAT WE DO!”

The Head Office of the Department of Human Services, Disability Services, publishes and promotes extensive care policies, standards and values for all disability service providers throughout Victoria – at least those who take government funding. It is intended that the department’s direct care services, such as its supported accommodation group home services, shall be included.

The Department of Human Services, Disability Services, supported by Division 3 (“Standards and Monitoring of Performance”) of the Disability Act 2006, expects Non Government Organisations/Not for Profit Services/Community Service Organisations (NGO/NFP/CSO), to which they provide funding, to be compliant with the department’s service quality standards as outlined in its publication, “Understanding the Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria (2007)”.

The Disability Act 2006 requires that all DHS, DS direct care services, and all NGO/NFP/CSO services meet the standards. As part of the Quality Framework for Disability Services, the standards now include both "Industry" and "Outcome" standards, for which compliance will, from this year (2009), be monitored. It is claimed that both DHS, DS and NGO/NFP/CSOs will be subjected to independent monitoring, generally called “Accreditation”.

Very recently, National Disability Services (NDS) ran a “Passport to Quality” Seminar and Workshop for its members from around Victoria, to help ready them for the independent accreditation process starting this year. The accreditation process will be undertaken by independent agencies working within JAZ- ANZ monitoring standards of FaCS. Naturally, one can appreciate the concern NGO/NFP/CSOs have, when their DHS funding is totally dependent on the findings of the accreditation agency.

In total contrast, we see little interest or concern being shown by the department’s direct care services in having real practical adherence with the quality standards. Why should they be at all concerned? They are the captive market public service, with funding not dependent on performance! The department’s direct care services for people with a disability and their families are reactive, inconsistent, in-denial and crises driven. We do not, therefore, envisage these care services suddenly turning around because of some head office expectations!

Where NGO/NFP/CSOs have to face truly independent accreditation every year, the department's head office covertly employed a person in mid 2008 to head its so called independent service monitoring as defined under "Independent Quality Monitoring – 3.3" of its publication "Understanding the Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria (2007). Nevertheless, It is hard to believe this will be more than a gesture, when it is well known that the department's regions throughout Victoria absolutely resent any direct interference by their head office in their direct service operations.

Rather like the Office of the Senior Practitioner, we see little potential for truly independent monitoring of the department's services. What we see is –

**“Do what we say, not what we do!”**

**Tony & Heather Tregale**

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