

# Money for Disability Services : Going, Going; Gone!

*Federal money to States goes walkabout, whilst States fund their bureaucratic government services at the expense of Community Service Organisations*

Quality of life care for those with an intellectual or multiple disability is primarily attitude, attitude and attitude!

It is the attitude of those managing, and those directly providing support services which really determines the difference between Quality of Life Care and Minder Care.

Those providing service funding, have a moral obligation to ensure the funding outcome is Quality of Life Care for those for whom the funding was intended.

Yet we see government funding given out with little or no outcome expectations and little accountability for the money itself, as millions go missing from a federal disability housing grant! And we see the states funding bureaucratic and poorly managed government services at the expense of not-for-profit community service organisations.

Wendy Carlisle from the ABC TV Four Corners, and Kirsty Needham, the Age describe these rorts against those in our community who are already seriously disadvantaged.

Wendy Carlisle says, February 26, 2010:-

## "Millions missing under disability housing grant"

The money was meant to be spent immediately to satisfy the urgent needs of people with disabilities.

- [Video: PM questioned over disability funding \(ABC News\)](#)
- [Related Link: Four Corners: Breaking Point](#)

The New South Wales Government is scrambling to explain how it has spent \$34 million allocated by the Commonwealth nearly two years ago for the construction of housing for people with disabilities.

The money, part of a \$100 million national plan, was meant to be spent immediately to satisfy the urgent needs of people with disabilities, many of whom live with ageing carers.

After providing Four Corners with [a list of housing it said was built with the funds](#), the NSW Government has issued a revised progress report following revelations by the ABC program.

Sent to Bill Shorten, the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, [the revised list](#) deletes seven places it claimed were built, and without explanation adds another 17 completed projects not previously identified.

In one case, housing said to be finished and accommodating people is now "under construction".

A spokesman for NSW Disability Services Minister Paul Lynch admitted last week that some of the houses supposedly built had been "re-badged" as being funded by the Federal Government grant.

Mr Lynch has not returned calls seeking clarification of the two lists.

The Four Corners program [Breaking Point](#) revealed just 40 beds for people with disabilities had been provided nationwide under the \$100 million fund announced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in May 2008. Three hundred beds are to be provided by 2012.

In light of the revelations Mr Shorten asked the states and territories for an "immediate update" and an "assurance that the building of these places is on track".

Four Corners found five states had not completed one bed between them, including South Australia and Victoria, while NSW had apparently double-counted accommodation that had been built under previous state projects, [some finished before Mr Rudd was elected](#) in 2007.

Disability organisations including House With No Steps, Kurrajong Waratah and the Sylvanvale Foundation, all deny their supported accommodation services had been funded by the Federal Government initiative.

They said they had been funded under state initiatives, with some beds approved and funded before the Rudd Government came to power.

Accommodation services previously listed as up and running in Taree, Kempsey, Tweed Heads and Warringah in Sydney appear not to have been built at all.

A spokesman for Mr Shorten said: "We do not know when the beds were tendered for, nor when they were approved, who the providers are, nor where they were."

He could not rule out double-counting by NSW.

"That is why Mr Shorten has asked for reconfirmation that the funding has increased the overall capacity of disability accommodation by the amount promised and has not been absorbed by previous state commitments."

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And, Kirsty Needham, **The Age**, February 12, 2010, says:-

AUSTRALIA'S non-profit organisations need increased government funding to deliver better community services and to pay their staff properly, a key economic adviser has found.

A Productivity Commission report into the \$43 billion sector has called for a broad overhaul of funding and tax arrangements for the nation's 600,000 non-profit organisations, which employ around one in 12 Australian workers.

Governments not paying for the full cost of services made it difficult for organisations to pay staff competitive salaries and offer good-quality services, the report said.

The sector is heavily reliant on 4.6 million volunteers, who provide the equivalent of \$15 billion of work, the commission found. But the rising cost of using volunteers, and Australians volunteering fewer hours, means that many non-profit groups are struggling.

The commission slammed government contracts for "overly prescriptive requirements, increased micro management, requirements to return surplus funds and inappropriately short-term contracts".

Australian Council of Social Service chief executive Clare Martin said yesterday improvements in how government contracts were administered would help agencies retain staff.

"The sector is not trying to be unproductive and we want government to work with us," she said.

The commission found that of 600,000 non-profit organisations, 59,000 were economically significant and contributed \$43 billion to Australia's gross domestic product. It has recommended the federal government set up a one-stop shop to regulate and assess tax-concession status.

Australians give less to charities than Americans, Canadians and Britons. To encourage taxpayers to give

more, the government should promote payroll donations, while gift-deductible status should be extended to all tax-endorsed charities, the report said.

The commission found the use of fringe benefit tax concessions by non-profit hospitals put private operators at a competitive disadvantage. But it warned that if the government decided to remove the exemptions, a long transition period would be needed because so many organisations were dependent on perks such meal allowances and car parking to subsidise low salaries.

Boys Town, Catholic Health Australia and Family Planning NSW said removing the FBT concession would threaten the viability of many agencies.

The report also calls on the government to introduce a statutory definition of charities, as originally recommended in a 2001 inquiry.

But Greenpeace yesterday warned that doing so would potentially exclude fundraisers to support political activity.

"We are disappointed It allows a government to take steps to chill political activity by not-for-profits," said Jeremy Tager, coordinator of Greenpeace's political unit.

**Comment:** We encourage everyone, in all states, to ask their Federal and State Members why Mr Rudd's cash cow appears to have gone walkabout, and why not for profit community service organisations, providing similar service to that of government direct services, are not similarly fully funded.

The result of CSOs not being fully funded, as are government services, is that residents of CSOs (NGO/NFP) pay more, and these services have to fund raise to make up the short fall. Whereas, government services can just call for more money to buy their way, rather than properly manage their resources.

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