

Myth Buster!

**We must 'work-with' the DHS, they say!
What they mean is, their word must not be
questioned or their actions/decisions challenged!**

The third report by the Victorian Ombudsman in the past year, slammed the Department of Human Services handling of vulnerable youth. Yet these guys have the intellectual capacity to speak-out! The vulnerable residents of DHS services for people with an intellectual or multiple disability have little or no effective voice. And, their families are intimidated by this despotic bureaucrat, if they dare to speak at all - let alone speak-out.

The Department of Human Services in Victoria uses its huge government budget to wield enormous power over people with a disability, their families and service agencies who take funding from them.

This government department has a degree of direct and indirect control of most services for people with a disability in Victoria. Few people have a choice of service provider, and most are intimidated by this despotic Victorian government agency who has become more powerful than the government itself.

Although the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) should help to break this government department strangle-hold, people with a disability and their families must dispel the common myth that they must beg, crawl and lick bureaucratic boots - Known as, "work-with"!

Each year government hands over a large amount of public money, with few safeguards, to a contractor for the provision of services to people with a disability. Traditionally this contractor is the Department of Human Services. The department both subcontracts services, and directly provides services in a captive market.

This government departments direct service philosophy is two faced. Its window to the public shows a massive array of wonderful care policies, standards and values. Whereas behind that window is a mentality that the service they are providing is a charity handout... The people they are intended to serve have no right of expectation for service level and quality.

With guaranteed general government revenue, the department has little reason to consider those they are intended to serve as customers, or that they have any reason to provide real customer service. So a large percentage of their funding provides a despotic and bureaucratic defence against any person with a disability or their family asking for the service level and quality depicted by the departments window to the public.

Telecom was the classic example of a public funded captive market. Their service was guaranteed by government funding to be what ever it liked. If subscribers did not like the service, the service provider was happy to withdraw the service. There was no alternative

service!

The Federal Government, under pressure from big business, finally raised enough courage to directly challenge Telecom's total control infrastructure, to get Optus a nose into that which had been a very captive market since the advent of the telephone.

With this national power over people door broken down, other traditional captive market services were opened to allow consumers to have choice. We can now even choose our electricity and gas provider.

Choice of service provider is not however the forte of those in our society who are disadvantaged by disability. This is despite the lip service by the Department of Human Services here in Victoria.

This government department says that in most fields of service provision, customers are able to purchase from those providers who are offering high quality service. In order to protect consumers rights and interests, the processes and activities of service providers must be open to scrutiny by key stakeholders, particularly consumers and their representatives.

With almost all the direct care services for people with a disability here in Victoria significantly controlled by the Department of Human Services, there is little opportunity for consumers to realise the departments theory of services being open to effective scrutiny, especially the departments own direct service provision.

With nowhere else to go, no choice, people with a disability and their families are very vulnerable to intimidation if they dare to question service level and quality. This is especially true for those with limited intellectual capacity to speak effectively for themselves.

So what is the answer to achieving pro-active services, accountability, transparency and real customer service from public funded, public service, captive market services? "No one owns the company, so who cares!" Unlike the Telecom example, there is no big business motivation for change. People with a disability are generally unvalued in our John Wayne country.

In this country, people with a disability and their families are victims of a public service philosophy of, "No one owns the company, but everyone owns the liability!"

Public sector managers and staff, unlike the private sector, have nothing to fear from the company owner or the stock market. Those who claim to manage this public liability, spend a large percentage of their time playing issue avoidance, rather than issue address.

There would be few tax payers who have not suffered the royal-run-around by various government departments, public sector agencies, and received a written response which just seeks to use a play-on-words to avoid the issue in the hope it will go away.

The hip-pocket nerve has always been the most basic incentive of the private sector. The public sector has always protected itself from such accountability drivers through involved rules and regulations. There appears no way the public sector can parallel the private sector for accountability because - No one owns the company!

The present government is attempting to encourage accountability of the public sector through a performance monitoring system, coupled to staff contracts. A contract may be terminated if the performance targets are not met. The question is, "Who monitors what, when no one owns the company"?

Naturally, no one suggests for one moment the private sector should be providing core services for vulnerable people... Compromise between government and the private sector is the not-for-profit sector - the community service organisations. These community service organisations can be held accountable, whereas government services cannot!

Governments world wide are coming to realise they can no longer afford to use public funds to support direct service provision where there is little or no accountability.

NOTE: The hyperlinks above are in Violet.

LISA Comment: "The buck is passed around and around the revolving door of government and pseudo government departments!"

Extra 1: [Workforce Gap Analysis - Victoria](#) Submissions Close **30/10/10.**

Extra 2: [Bureaucratic Power over People goes on and on!](#)

Extra 4: The UK "[Directory of Social Change](#)" - What we need here in Australia!

Extra 3: Note: The next LISA General Meeting is **Saturday 30 October 2010** at 10am, at Watsonia. Please forward any constructive proposals for discussion at this meeting.

Extra 4: There are a number of issues listed on the LISA Website "Opinion" Forum. We are interested in opinion on these. To make a "reply", click on "Opinion" and "Post a Reply" to the Topic. You will be prompted to "Log-In" or "Register" Keep your "Log-On" name very anonymous!

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