

"Our society abandons its 'sub-class' of carers, making them fight for scraps"

by Kathleen Noonan The Courier Mail (<http://www.couriermail.com.au/>) May 21, 2010

Full Story: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/our-society-abandons-its-sub-class-of-carers-making-them-fight-for-scraps/story-e6frerh6-1225869701700>

Australia, carer-land is a vastly different place from normal society. It's a sub-class. We can't help any more, take them home. You are, essentially, abandoned by the system.

Sure, the federal and state governments provide bits and pieces. But they are scraps. And you have to fight for every scrap!

Jen and Steve Tierney perform the daily 24-hour care of their child and hold down jobs. They are caring, sensible people. This is not their fault. But it is their life sentence. And no one makes it easier!

The deeply flawed system makes accessing funding as difficult as possible. The bureaucracy will choke you! "You feel like crying in frustration every day," says Steve. Even finding a GP willing to do house calls is difficult.

What we are doing to these people is cruel and inhumane and awful. Carers save the country millions. We rely on their love. We exploit it.

The Tierneys are not alone. Across Australia there are about 1.5 million people with a severe disability. Only a small proportion receive any direct physical care from government or charities.

Many claim Australia's is one of the worst disability systems in the rich world. Thirty years ago, governments radically reformed the system, shutting down institutions, sending people back into the community, promising massive support. It sounded wonderful. Instead the whole sector has been starved of funds.

The Rudd Government says it is working on a disability policy shift. Bill Shorten, parliamentary secretary for disabilities, is desperate to not be just another politician who fails to deliver.

Last month the Productivity Commission began its inquiry into the feasibility of a no-fault disability insurance scheme to provide for people born with disabilities or who acquire them before the age of 65. Such a scheme would involve an extra 0.8 per cent to be added to the 1.5 per cent Medicare levy. It would be a big step.

Without support from Shorten's Labor colleagues, it will die in a ditch. So we voters need to tell politicians that this is an issue Australians care about. Tell them we will vote only for parties that support a national disability insurance scheme. And tell them to hurry up.

LISA Comment: State and Federal Governments claim to be doing wonderful things for people with a disability, but those at the sharp-end see and realise little more than smoke and mirrors. Brightly lit government shop windows, with little inside. The little inside, is assertively defended by captive market bureaucrats who have little reason for customers or customer service.

These captive market bureaucrats blame lack of government funding, not their bureaucratic empire building and defense of their empire.

Government group homes for people with a disability in Victoria chew-up heaps of government funding. Whilst non government service providers, providing similar services, are not fully funded, have to charge their residents more, pay their staff less, fund-raise and are expected to provide equal or better services than government.

Like charities are scrutinised over the percentage of public money raised being spent on administration, government direct service provision should be scrutinised over the percentage of government funds not directly benefiting the consumer.

We see constant examples of government services buying, not managing their way, Although the intention of NDIS is rights based services for people with a disability, will it also ensure more service accountability, especially government direct service.

Check-out the full story in "[The Courier Mail](#)" (link above), and make a comment. They need to hear as many views as possible.

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