

“Quality Management of Services for People with a Disability”

The DHS publication, “Understanding the Quality Framework for Disability Services in Victoria (2007)” says, *Management must develop a culture of continuous improvement, more efficient and effective work processes and more time and resources spent on planning rather than reacting to problems and crisis.*

With the ever increasing demand for supported accommodation group homes and facility based respite services for people with an intellectual or multiple disability, there is increasing potential of people receiving minder rather than quality of life care.

Group home and respite services in Victoria are provided by both government and non government service providers. As both have a captive market, people with a disability and their families are unable to choose their service provider.

They are especially unable to choose their service provider because, (a) the Department of Human Services, Disability Services, controls the Disability Support Register (DSR) for all group home places in Victoria and, (b) the unmet demand is well in excess of supply.

Nevertheless, the non government, nonprofit community service organisations (CSOs) have many service accountability factors. They have a committee of management on which parents and members of the community frequently sit, and they retain the right, and have the ability and integrity to set, monitor and maintain staff work value expectations within the organisation’s own care policies, standards and values, and those of the Department of Human Services.

CSO management is supported by NDS and VCOSS with management enhancement courses. And each year, the Harvard Club of Australia makes it possible for the CEOs of two nonprofit disability sector organisations to attend the course on *Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management* at the Harvard Business School in the US.

Contrasting this with the DHS, we see little of this management quality motivation, determination and integrity, which is depicted in the department’s care policy publications, being realised and implemented by the department’s regional management.

What we see in DHS group homes is the quality of care being almost totally dependent on direct care staff integrity (and we include the house supervisor in direct care staff), in contrast to consistent quality of care being maintained by regional management direction in setting, monitoring and maintaining staff work values within the direction, intention and spirit of the department's care policies, standards and values.

Certainly it is great to have direct care staff with good integrity, where they naturally treat the residents like their second family, but human nature is not consistent. Good management direction is necessary to ensure consistency of service, and ensure residents have little reason to say, "Gee, we are lucky to be in a good house!"

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