

“Consumer Choice of Service Provider”

The transition from “Telecom” to “Telstra” brought consumer choice!

Prior to the Federal Government breaking Telecom’s captive market, consumers had no choice of who provided their telephone service. There was no need for Telecom to have customer service, as the customer could go nowhere else. They either had a Telecom telephone, or they had no telephone.

Similarly, the DHS have a captive market in respect to most of their services, especially supported accommodation group homes. Although there are alternative supported accommodation group home service providers – Community Service Organisations (CSO)/NGOs/NFP - City Mission, Nadrasca, St John, Wesley, etc, etc, the DHS ensures its total control of consumer access to these services, through its total control of the DSR (Disability Support Register).

The various CSOs cannot fill a vacancy, other than through the DHS controlled DSR. They have to report all vacancies to the DHS, and have to take whoever the DHS sends them from the DSR. The DHS ensures their total control of CSOs, as the CSOs are totally reliant on the DHS for their base-load funding.

DHS group home, or CSO group home? Consumers cannot call CSOs and ask if they have any vacancies. If they do, they will be referred to the DHS.

Consumers therefore have no choice of service provider, as the DHS controls all group home vacancies throughout the state (for which they provide base-load funding) through the DSR.

Where the consumer has no choice of service provider, the service provider has a captive market! So there is no consequential reason for the service provider to practice meaningful customer service!

Although CSOs, like DHS, have a captive market, it is by default they do not compete with each other. Unlike the DHS, they can have a level of customer service through having a board of directors often containing parents who can question services through democratic board room meeting procedures.

CSOs also benefit from having staff who are not public servants. Whereas, DHS services are hamstrung with the public service culture of, “a safe job no matter what we do or don’t do”. And, certainly with no reason for customer service to keep the customers – They can’t go anywhere, anyway!

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