

# Poor Support in South Australia

Alice Monfries, Sunday Mail (SA), 9 October 2011 ([Link](#))

In South Australia, untrained support workers are being sent into the homes of the elderly and disabled without police checks, basic first aid and little if any information on the needs of their clients.

In-home care provider agencies are struggling to meet an explosion in demand for their services since the state government funding increased to more than \$300 million, to help more people with disabilities and the elderly remain in their homes for longer.

Instead of providing support and respite to families, in-home care is actually distressing many relatives, they say, with its revolving door of well-meaning but unskilled workers.

Most of them are paid as little as \$16 an hour for what is often physical, confronting and sometimes dangerous work, prompting many to quit the sector.

Almost everyone connected to the home care industry in South Australia except the Government says it is a sector in crisis.

A three-year Employee Ombudsman probe into the sector has revealed untrained workers are being hired by government-accredited care agencies and sent into the homes of the vulnerable without basic police checks or first aid, let alone specialist training to handle quadriplegics, administer medication and perform such tasks as invasive bowel care.

Workers are routinely sent to new clients unprepared and with little information about their special needs and medical condition, leaving them just as vulnerable as those they are helping.

"The industry is poorly paid ... there's not enough effort put into the security of the carer who walks through the front door into someone's home and clients are paying agencies for a service that is not always able to be delivered because of a lack of thought in regards to the resources required to deliver that service," Employee Ombudsman Steve Brennan he said.

Dignity for Disability MLC Kelly Vincent the sector was "broke financially and in terms of structure ... it's so reactionary and crisis-driven".

"I don't think the current checks and balances are adequate," Ms Vincent said.

"It's not just about the amount of funding that goes into the services, it's the way it's allocated and the way the system is managed."

She said the National Disability Insurance Scheme being phased in over the next seven years to allow individuals and families to self-manage their care funding should drive the market to be more competitive and lift standards.