

Wake-up Call!

Happenings in Victoria should be a wake-up to all throughout Australia

The State Minister for Disability Services and Reform covertly budgeted, without notice, to charge the residents of her department's group group homes throughout the state a 50% surcharge to, as she initially said, pay for individual support packages for others.

The rap was beaten by an intensive campaign against the totally unjustified cost hike which was expecting those on a disability support pension to pay for government services which would have had no benefit for them. This was just like asking this select group, who already pay their way for daily living, to contribute towards resurfacing the Hume Highway. *"Who in the community would accept that?"*

Following the state government's back-down, just before the general election, Minister Wooldridge appeared quite angry on the ABC's 7pm News, 6 September 2013, saying: *"We think that litigious process is not in the interests of people with disabilities, and not how we wanted to go forward. We need to resolve the weakness that is there in the legislation, we need to be able to resolve what I believe is inequity and unfairness and a lack of transparency in the way that the fees and charges happen"*.

The Minister repeated her claims of inequity with the non-government sector on the ABC's 7:30 Victoria, 13 September 2013. Whereas, the Minister failed to say why there had been inequity for years as a direct result of her department, the DHS, refusing to fully fund the non-government sector as they do their own direct care services.

DHS direct care group home services have been fully funded for support services (support staff wages and associated overheads) for years before the current state disability act (Disability Act 2006). And, the residents have paid the actual cost (actuals) of their daily living – just like other members of the general community. All costs are very open, transparent and fully accountable through the very efficient and effective CERS (Client Expenditure Recording System).

Whereas, non-government group home services have been forced to charge a form of block-fee, similar to that of aged-care residential facilities. Where there is no breakdown and little transparency of the block-fee structure.

Minister Wooldridge's latest proposal is a backward step in attempting to move a very good system, towards a not so good one.

One of the main intentions of the NDIS/DCA, is "choice". Therefore, a resident of a DHS direct care group home should be able to move to a non-government group

home at similar cost and structure. This being the only fair way where the resident's support needs are fully funded by government by this 'block' or 'ISP' funding. And, where residents pay 'actuals' for their daily living.

The despotic action of this state government should be a wake-up call to people with disabilities and their stakeholders throughout Australia to develop strong, coordinated, legal and professional support to ensure all services for vulnerable people are first class quality of life care, where they and their stakeholders do not have to frequently and personally battle with service providers.

The Productivity Commission (PC) saw little hope of getting block-funded service providers within a mostly captive market to consistently see the person with disabilities and their stakeholders at the centre of entitlement service provision. Whether service provision is entitlement or charity hand-out is mainly determined by supply and demand. There are currently too few services, and too much demand.

With the potential of the NDIS/DCA to put more money on the streets, the PC saw the potential of service providers seeking customers with *Individual Support Package* (ISP) money in their pockets. In time, the captive market, charity hand-out service culture might change towards consumers experiencing a real entitlement to services. Perhaps this is a vain hope we all have.

With this first in a lifetime possibility, comes a trade-off. The ISP process places the consumer in the hot seat, responsible for evaluating service level and quality through having the financial ability to choose their service provider. Rather like looking between supermarkets for the best buy. But, many with disabilities don't move easily.

Many feel the answer to accommodation support is just one option which *Disability Care Australia(DCA)* and governments are throwing their weight behind at the expense of all other options.

This is *Self Directed Approaches* (SDA), because the onus is lifted from government and placed on the person with disabilities, their families, stakeholders and the community. Governments just need to hand-over dollars.

The SDA is a great self-managing process where there is adequate ISP funds, adequate service provider choice and adequate management process to last the lifetime of the person being supported – the person with disabilities.

Where families are managing the SDA support process, they need to accept it can be a lifetime commitment, or they will need to budget for professional assistance.

Obtaining and maintaining quality of life care for anyone with limited capacity is a major operation for their families, no matter which type of support service, as most

people are reliant on government to fund their support costs. Government funding is in great community demand with wheeling and dealing on every street corner of government – as the current happenings in Victoria.

These extremely questionable, out of the blue occurrences by the current state government of Victoria should be a wake-up call for people with disabilities and their families throughout Australia of the need to have a real voice.

Direct care workers in disability services have union support, non-government services have the support of their peak body – NDS, government direct care services have the support of government. Yet, people with disabilities, their families and stakeholders have little or no coordinated and effective support of a body which has adequate membership funding to provide adequate legal and professional support for people with disabilities and their families across Australia.

Extra 1: [State government backs down](#) on despotic slug of select group.

Extra 2: [Group Home Charges and Costs \(Vic\)](#)

Extra 3: [Purpose built houses](#) for people with disabilities in SA

Extra 4: [The Self-Directed Approach](#)

Extra 5: [New Federal Government](#) reveals its portfolio responsibilities

Extra 6: [Relatives of residents of UK care home](#) question health watch-dog

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