

Productivity Commission Inquiry into the increased application of competition, contestability and informed user choice to human services

I have worked in the NFP community sector for over 20 years in various positions and at various agencies. Community agencies have a unique and strong bond with their local communities and workers feel a link to and a commitment to bettering the opportunities of those people within their local communities. These relationships are rarely replicated by non community agencies who do not have grass roots origins in the communities they care for. Ongoing tendering and a lack of knowledge by funding bodies have however eroded community agencies ability to deliver essential services and programs and to form strong partnerships with other providers to ensure a collaborative approach to care. How do you partner with an agency you are competing for funds against? Reform in the sector - particularly mental health has meant a loss in essential services for clients. Closure of day programs is leading to a more visible street presence, less support and referral pathways and less engagement with programs. Niche programs formally funded have been de-funded and/or do not fit the current reform - NDIS models. This includes many of the assertive outreach programs to people sleeping rough. A number of demographics (i.e) indigenous are no longer receiving services. Community organisations are hamstrung in supporting their community . This in turn affects the morale and retention of workers who no longer have the available resources to effectively fulfil their job roles. This along with reform and upcoming NDIS where the community sector face the burden of poor pricing and therefor job uncertainty places a huge amount of pressure on workers. With many looking outside of the community sector for alternative employment. This will lead to a largely ill equipped, unqualified workforce in the sector . This will impact significantly on outcomes for clients and increase the burden of care for non community services to pick up the slack. A competitive market also raises concerns re quality of care for clients and ability to impact whole communities. The experience re non NFP employment agencies entering the market should be a warning sign re corrupt practices and exploitation of already disadvantaged people.