

Submission of Tony Goodfellow, VIC

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

I work in a social community services organisation that runs programs for vulnerable people in our community. We turn up to work because we want to make a difference, we do our job because we care, we make sure those people who seek help are not turned away or turned into consumers but instead are treated as a valuable member of the community. Many people do the job out of love and are genuinely committed to social change. That's what drives me. Our organisation has over 150 years of service to the community and IS part of the community. The trend to privatisation, copying the failed US experiment, is deeply worrying. The stress on staff in the sector is already great because of the pressure to do more with less and also the uncertainty that is creeping in, the lack of long term funding.

The questions are: how can quality be quantified? Will a market response bias quantity over quality. We have already seen a failure in privatising TAFE where providers were churning and burning, a functioning educational system has been compromised leading to poorer education outcomes and wastage of public money on sham educational providers. How can it be different in the community service sector? When there is a market failure people are harmed.

There needs to be transparency and accountability in the sector which for-profit providers won't be able to deliver.