

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

As a human services professional who has worked in the sector for 23 years and prior to that as a nurse, I am adamantly against community services becoming a money making exercise from not for profit organisations. To have this occur would mean that the most vulnerable in our community are put further at risk of not receiving quality community services and equitable access to the same. There is already enough 'competition' in terms of government funding and the provide more for less mentality that exists. The skills and expertise for community service provision exists in the NGO sector, in the relationships established with community and in the trust built - this cannot be replicated. The program I currently work in (a family support program) is facing an uncertain future due to uncertainty of future funding and as a service of 10 years standing this will have considerable impact on the local community in which we work and in those agencies that refer to us (including government) finding an alternative, if it exists. The NGO community services sector has always been risky for those professionals who choose to work at the coal face, little job security, the stress of not knowing if you'll be employed after a certain date, worrying about clients and what they'll do if your service is closed, all this and knowing that we are always paid less than our government counterparts. We care about the community, that's why we work in it and for it. Not for profit organisations care about profits and that's their bottom line, money not people.