

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

Not for profit organisation should not have to compete with the private sector for funding. Already in the sector of Alcohol and other Drugs that I work in we have seen numerous cuts to funding over the recent years resulting in increased workload, and stress for workers and a loss of programs for consumers. This would only be increased if there was competition for funding with private sector businesses that are out to make a profit.

Community not for profit organisations work on a daily basis with some of the most marginalised people in our community who already have barriers in accessing health care that is available to them. They do not need private sector businesses trying to make a profit from services they need to access that should be free and accessible, not working on a fee for service system.

Not for profit organisations are embedded in the communities they service and are best situated to provide the programs and projects that the community members need. They also work at empowering the communities they serve in order to help community members be better informed to make their own choices in regard to their own health care without issues of money becoming a barrier.

Community not for profit services and organisations have been hit hard over the years with massive funding cuts while the expectations remain that they can still provide the same services for less funding. This is not true and in having to compete with private businesses this situation will only worsen. This in itself creates huge stresses for workers in community services with more and more people deciding to leave community services because of uncertainty to their positions because of this decrease in funding.

In this climate of global financial uncertainty people need to have assurance that their positions are not subject to 12 months to 3 year funding rounds. In inviting private businesses to also submit for this funding more and more people are going to be left without the security of on-going employment.

This in itself can create a position where the very people that are helping those in the community in need become one of these people in need when the funding to their positions is not re-funded due to it being issued to a private sector business.

This is just not equitable. Private business have capacity in that, being a business founded on making a profit, can then fund their own programs and services to provide to the community if they wish to.

Community not for profit organisations have no other options but to rely on government funding and the occasional grant to be able to keep providing services that are much needed and relied on by the community.

The government needs to listen to these concerns and make the not for profit sector free from the every increasing threat of more funding cuts by allowing private businesses to be allegeable for this some pool of funding. These concerns are real and affect real people and real communities every day.

People who work in community and social services do not do so because they want to become rich. They do so because they want to make a change to the community they work with. Most community organisations have their history in being community led and created services, established by people with a common interest and seeing a common cause. The organisation I work for was once the Meat Worker Union Health Service which served to provide health services to people working at the Meat works and abattoirs in the western suburbs of Melbourne. These were people who being paid a minimum wage and working in horrendous conditions did not necessarily have the money to access health care when required. This health service has since grown in numbers and the communities they serve to now being one of the largest not for profit community health services in the state.

This organisation still has the community at its foremost and engage with the community in numerous ways from having community members sit on job interview panels, to having a consumer group who provides information to the board members. Community is the reason this organisation exists and by engaging with the community is best able to provide service, programs and projects that are designed to achieve positive and beneficial outcomes for these communities.

Private business have no right to be able to apply for government funding that is becoming increasingly harder for community services to apply for as more and more requirements and criteria for eligibility is attached to this funding that some smaller community service organisations just cannot meet.

Funding rounds need to be made at least for 5 years to reduce the stress placed on workers who have to resubmit for funding taking time away from the consumers they serve. Community organisations should be the only type of service able to submit applications for government funding. Private sector business are able to fund services with profits from their fee for service structure.