

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

I formerly worked in NGOs supporting refugees and people seeking asylum. Due to competitive tendering services to these vulnerable people was divided between numerous organizations in a totally illogical way. Despite sharing similar aims, these NGOs were forced to compete in a 'race to the bottom' which had a negative impact on both service quality and working conditions. As funds were constantly being shifted between NGOs there was no job security, I was made redundant twice and there was a clear trend towards casual and contract staff. This had a huge impact on morale, consistency, opportunities for professional development, retention of staff with expertise, and ultimately quality of services to vulnerable people. Allowing for-profits to tender would have had a devastating impact on an already deeply flawed system.

At least in a community based NGO you knew that management supported humanitarian values over profit. If this had not been the case I could not have stayed in the job, and the most vulnerable clients would have been left to fend for themselves (because it takes so much more time and resources to obtain a measurable 'outcome' a for-profit would just not see the value in helping the most vulnerable client group). In the NGOs I worked for, some funds/resources, often those obtained from donations or the community itself were used to fill the gaps in services for these most vulnerable people. This was entirely due to the ethos and community support for community NGOs which does not exist in the private sector.