

Firstly I am Lynette Overton and coordinate a local Neighbour aid service in the local Council area of Rockdale. This is a small community organisation that has a forty year history in the local area. Supporting a very culturally diverse client group, for what is at present social support funding. Our service provides a social network for clients in the area and is a central port of call when information and circumstances may change and clients need additional support. We provide direct care and have close relations between staff, volunteers and clients.

After reading the productivity Commission report it was very clear a high percentage was related to residential care and support of clients with high needs. With the little information that related to Home and Community Care a section that was easy to identify with for our local community service is consumer advocacy and to create informed client choice is what local services try to provide daily. Consumer advocacy is very important to provide clients with choice to have an open door that family and clients can come for information. These services now are provided by phone or in person.

Neighbour Aid / Social support services are flexible and have a long history in local areas supporting clients. Social activities reduce the consequence of suicide, depression and the most tragic of a death alone and not found for days. Many of our local community services have simple programs in place that are friendly calls to contact people and check on wellbeing.

The concept of the Gateway is very good and will have great benefits as long as it is not restricted to complex needs and aged clients with primarily physical needs. Many clients receive great benefits from early assessment and entry to social programs that kept them not only physically active but mentally aware. Social programs are often different in many local areas and have been established by recognising the strengths of local clients and building on them. Many social groups assist with education and information on falls prevention and aspects of good healthy lifestyle. A concern of the Gateway is that it needs a local presence and is available to have direct contact for clients. That a system is not created similar to the Home Care's Referral and Assessment Centre (RAC) the experience that service providers and clients have had since the establishment of the RAC has been overwhelmingly negative. The RAC acts as a gatekeeper for Home Care services and is a long system to get through.

Many Neighbour Aids like ours that are small and local are often related to council or have an affiliation with council this could be of great benefit that reach individual outlet is a small flexible business without complex administration but have the support of big business councils. It would be a great detriment to aged care services if large organisations only are the only avenue for service provision and the local not for profit services are lost. If aged like child care opens itself to corporate business another ABC franchise collapse could happen in aged services.

The social capital of local services are hard to measure however it is a vital element which is welcoming and accessible to all. Neighbour Aids and local community services have a prominent presence in their community and should be supported to continue.

Thank You

Lynette Overton