

St George Community Services Inc

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Productivity Commission Report Caring for Older Australians Submission 21/3/11

Introduction

St George Community Services Inc. (SGCS) is a community based organisation auspicing services funded through the HACC Program for services to people living in Kogarah, Hurstville, Rockdale and Sutherland LGAs and on one case, South East Sydney region.

HACC Services are:

- Home Modification and Maintenance, Level 1
- Home Modification, Level 2 – covering the South East Sydney Region
 - Process and oversee work for the Home Modification Level 3 state fund holder
- Lead agency for a consortium of 5 Neighbour Aid Services and 2 home modification and maintenance services to provide low level home maintenance.
- Shopping and Social Outings
- Domestic Assistance for people from CALD backgrounds
- One on one social support
- Stroke Support group
- Internet shopping
- Centre Based Day Care – Dementia
- Meals Delivery
- Volunteer Link – recruiting, training and referring volunteers to HACC service providers
- HACC training - for staff of HACC funded organisations.

We also auspice a community information and referral service and we have recently been funded by NSW Community Services to establish a community hub in Rockdale LGA.

As the provider of the largest range of HACC services in St George we are fortunate to be able to offer a wide range of community care services to our clients. To facilitate seamless access to and between services we have a single intake process and one client management system for all of our services. Clients are referred on to other service providers for services that SGCS is unable to provide.

Our range of services as well as our location in a community centre where we can provide a range of activities gives our clients and the local community opportunity for social inclusion and participation eg. Broadband for Seniors, gentle exercise groups, cooking for one etc.

[□ Shopping & Social Outings](#) [□ Stroke Support Group](#) [□ Home Shopping Service](#) [□ Multicultural Domestic Assistance](#)
[□ Meal Delivery Service](#) [□ Home Modification & Maintenance](#) [□ Volunteer Link](#) [□ Information Desk](#) [□ Training Link](#)
[□ Dementia Day Care](#) [□ Social Support](#)

We submit the following comments on the report on Caring for Older Australians:

Consumer Directed Care

- We support clients having the right to choose their own service type and provider, however,
- Without block/recurrent funding, service providers will not have the resources to maintain an infrastructure to:
 - Maintain suitably skilled staff with the capacity for ongoing training and support.
 - Maintain a staffing pool to meet the diverse needs of clients in a culturally diverse area.
 - Facilitate management and administration to ensure accountability and compliance with legislation and funding body requirements.
 - Report statistical data that supports government planning and identifying gaps in services
 - Promote availability of services and keep the Seniors Gateway informed of service capacity.
 - Service co-ordination and regular client reassessment to ensure that clients' changing needs are being met.
- Many clients have no family living nearby and in many cases, no family at all to help them source suitable service providers and make decisions about their individual support needs.
- Access to advocacy/case managers will need to be available in a timely manner and a frequency that supports changing clients' needs.
- Case managers will need to be placed in organisations or regions to provide access as required by clients.

Australian Seniors Gateway

- Given the extensive range of services and service providers across Australia, it is difficult to imagine how information at the Gateway will be kept up to date ie "in real time". Up to date information will be vital to its success and to older people and their carers having timely access to services through accurate information.
- If the client is not happy with the provider they are referred to, will the Gateway system require reassessed before being offered another option?
- Will the client have a choice of providers through the Gateway and a simple process to change providers if they are unhappy with the service? Will they need a reassessment before being given another option?
- Currently the waiting time for an ACAT assessment can be 6 to 8 weeks. Assessment needs to be better resourced so that it's more timely than the current situation.
- Our experience is that often when clients are being released from hospital we receive a call from the hospital for meals to be delivered the next day. How will these people get the service they need via the Gateway?

- Older people who require a low level of service eg. less than \$100 per week, should receive timely assessment and referral as engagement with service provision significantly contributes to ongoing wellness.
- The Gateway will need to be accessible to people from CALD backgrounds and/or have regional access available. In some cultures people won't go to a bureaucracy for services, the service needs to be culturally accommodating.

General

- Where the person in need of a service is under 65 and their carer is over 65, how will the carers' needs be met? Will there be 2 different service providers, state and federal government bodies? Consistency of providers is significant in terms of engagement and social inclusion.

WORKFORCE ISSUES

Volunteers:

St George Community Services Inc is currently funded through the HACC program as a Volunteer Referral Agency. We see approximately 400 people per year who are looking for local volunteer opportunities. The majority of these end up working in the Community Care sector. The sector relies heavily its volunteer work force, in fact many service types are funded by government to be provided with volunteers.

We also provide a comprehensive training program for these and other community volunteers. We offer such appropriate skills-based topics as:

- Working with the elderly
- Duty of care and professional boundaries
- Keeping safe in the work place
- Confidentiality and legal issues

Through a network of Registered Training Organisations, we also offer volunteers the opportunity to gain qualifications such as

- Working with people with Dementia
- Certificate III in Home and Community Care

For Boards and Management Committee members, we provide a suite of "Governance" seminars and workshops.

The report states that "volunteers could be better supported to ensure they are willing to engage and continue to offer their services". The government needs to commit to resourcing organisations to carry out the support role.

With the recommendations of the Productivity Commission into Caring for Older Australians and the proposed changes to HACC seems like a good time to review volunteer programs Australia-wide. A single funding stream incorporating the best elements of volunteer

recruitment, referral and training into a single program would support the service needs of Older Australians and streamline the volunteer sector. Services should be delivered locally for all communities who rely on volunteers for a wide variety of essential tasks.

Volunteering also plays a role in engagement and social inclusion of people who are over 65 not yet in need of care services. Volunteering keeps people engaged in their community and feelings of value and fulfilment. This too can prevent or postpone the need for support services.

Training:

St George Community Services Inc is also currently funded through HACC to provide training to staff of HACC services. As well as the above topics delivered to direct care workers, we offer an additional range of courses for co-ordinators and managers such as

- Dip in Community Service Management
- Common Community Care Standards
- Person-Centred Planning
- Human Resource Management

These are provided locally, at subsidised rates and with trainers skilled in the Community Care industry, making them affordable, relevant and at a level appropriate to the staff attending. Our courses are well-attended and feedback from employers reports that they improve staff performance and therefore, add to the quality of service delivery.

In the draft report the need for a skilled workforce is recognised however, there is no model suggested, nor any recognition of the number of training services currently funded to do just that – improve the skills in the Community Care workforce.

Workforce Development:

We are currently working with other local service providers as a Workforce Development working party to identify ways of improving the local Community Care workforce. Items being addressed include:

- Increasing the number of CALD workers to better enable clients to have a worker from their own language and cultural background
- Encouraging service providers to consider using traineeships to attract young people into the sector

Locally based service providers

St George Community Services (SGCS) is one of a number of community-based, community managed service providers in St George and Sutherland that have a strong commitment to locally based services. Locally based service providers are more easily accessible and service delivery proves to be more flexible and responsive to clients' individual and changing needs. Locally based service providers are generally well networked and can provide information and referral to other local services as required by clients and their carers who are seeking support for their loved ones.

SGCS is a member of an alliance of community based organisations based in St George and Sutherland which is being established to tender for funding and services as a group; to share our expertise and improve the use of resources.

Chris Spackman

General Manager