

The Take-Away Menu – A Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services

Abstract: This submission is made via a set of Information Sheets. These sheets provide a set menu detailing the ingredients necessary to be sandwiched between the right of people with disabilities to be able to live free of abuse, neglect and exploitation and the reasonable expectation that the services they receive will be of the highest quality – no matter where delivered or by whom.

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THE TAKE-AWAY MENU

INFORMATION SHEET NO: 1 - KEY WORDS

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”
Edmund Burke

More inquiries, more committees, more platitudes are not the answer to the abuse, neglect and exploitation occurring in the disability sector. Acting on the known failures as well as accepting the descriptors of what should be the key drivers must be significant in guiding the Committee’s deliberations.

- People not systems
- Families
- Legislation = Law = Mandated obligations
- Responsibilities
- Ownership
- Consequences
- Leadership
- Transparency
- Rights
- Doing your job

INFORMATION SHEET NO: 2 - KEY PEOPLE FAILURES

“Hypocrisy can afford to be magnificent in its promises, for never intending to go beyond promises, it costs nothing.” Edmund Burke

It has become too convenient to blame ‘*the system.*’ We must go beyond the rhetoric and promises made by those in positions of power and influence and then conveniently ignore their failures. The disability sector is more than the system; the system is controlled, managed and delivered by people. When failures occur they are not systems failures, they are people failures. Each of the following people has failed to a lesser or greater degree to check the quality of the product delivered.

- DHHS - Secretary
- DHHS – Director of Disability
- DHHS – Managers
- DHHS – Direct Care Staff
- The Disability Services Commissioner
- The Public Advocate
- Community Visitors
- Boards and Chief Executive Officers

INFORMATION SHEET NO: 3 - KEY TRUTHS

"The most useful thing about principle is that it can always be sacrificed to expediency." William Somerset Maugham

The statement of principles is not enough. No matter how some may want to characterise abuse, neglect and exploitation and minimise the extent and impact of each, the following truths must be confronted.

- Wrong is wrong
- Abuse, neglect and exploitation are wrong
- Wrong must be punished
- Consequence must fit the 'crime'
- Duty of care starts at the top and applies to the full range of employees in all organisations
- The expenditure of Public Funds must be open to scrutiny
- Those who are paid through the public purse must fully meet their position requirements – not to do so places them in the situation of misusing public funds

INFORMATION SHEET NO: 4 - MULTIPLE OUTLETS & BRANDS - SINGLE QUALITY

"The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse." Edmund Burke

The disability sector operates as a multitude of little kingdoms where each has established its own rules and laws and each considers they are beyond the laws of the land. Each kingdom must instead operate as a franchise of the company and follow the company's laws.

- No outlet is free to ignore the rules – the rules equals the LAW
- All outlets, regardless of the type of services delivered, are required to deliver a quality product
- Quality is not subject to the available funds
- Quality is subject to the commitment, skills and honesty of those who manage the outlet and those who deliver the product
- The brand must be characterised as being the quality of services provided within the a duty of care and legislative framework
- Loyalty must be to the customer
- Blind loyalty to the business and its staff at the expense of the customer is not loyalty – It is a dereliction of responsibility to the customer

"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little." Edmund Burke.

The needle is not somewhere in the haystack it is in our hand. Not to use it because we say we need more cotton is a great mistake and is unacceptable.

- The primary solutions already exist. They simply need to be applied consistently
- The first part of the solution is – PREVENTION
- This is achieved by good recruitment, uncompromising management, effective supervision, delivery in accordance with the rules
- The second part of the solution is – REPORTING
- If the rules are breached – reporting of the breaches must be immediate, accurate and directed to the right person
- The third part of the solution is – INVESTIGATION
- All breaches must be investigated as a 'here and now' action
- All investigations must be transparent
- If the investigations identify process gaps the gaps must be fixed
- The fourth part of the solution is – CONSEQUENCES
- If the investigations uncover rule breaches, incompetence, people failures those people must be brought to account