Presentation to Productivity Commission Hearing

In respect to this hearing (9:40am, 8 June 2010, Richmond, Vic), I (Tony Tregale) represent Tony & Heather Tregale as very caring parents, plenary guardians and administrators. And as the coordinator of the "LISA" Support & Lobby Group (www.lisainc.com.au).

We have two son's. Our eldest, 39, is a corporate business manager, married with two children. Our youngest, Paul, 34, is autistic with very limited intellectual capacity. Paul lived at home until he was 20, when we reluctantly decided we were getting no younger to provide 24/7 care. Since this time, Paul has lived in a DHS (Department of Human Services) supported accommodation group home in the community, 10Km from us. He is with us, for the day, at least once per week. And Heather visits him once per week.

Our extensive experience of disability services is from providing extensive behaviour management and direct care for Paul, being Community Visitors for six years, Heather having worked in group homes for four years, negotiating for quality of life care for Paul with the DHS and assisting other families.

Our very long standing findings are that the current system of support for people with a disability and their families is deeply flawed, with much of the service provision providing little more than basic minder care, which in many cases is as a direct result of captive market service provider attitude, not resources.

Although most of our focus is on Victorian government direct service provision, we are concerned this government, through the DHS, is unable to provide effective and meaningful scrutiny of the non government services it is funding.

Some of our key points are:-

- Government direct care services for people with a disability are run by captive market public servants who have little reason for customers or customer service. These services are like Telecom before Telstra!

- Government services buy, not manage their way! They therefore chew up funding, whilst non government services are under-funded but expected to provide good services.

- Government direct care services rely on the integrity of direct care staff, not the direction of management to provide services within the direction, intention and spirit of their care policies, standards and values. Therefore services fluctuate dramatically! As the Victorian Auditor General said, "Services are inconsistent". With ineffective management, direct care services are by staff lore, staff peer pressure and staff intimidation of management, staff, clients and families.

- Supported Accommodation Group Homes where government is the direct service provider, the residents have few rights in the home for which they pay rent. They cannot choose their service provider or their staff, as they have no residential tenancy rights or right to individualised funding. Direct care staff cannot be moved from the house if they don't wish to be. So the group homes in the community are HOSTELS not HOMES!

- As almost all services in Victoria for people with a disability are government funded through DHS. The DHS has, therefore, total control. There are therefore no rights based services! All people with a disability and their families must have a begging bowl. They must crawl, beg and lick DHS bureaucratic boots for even the most simple things. "We have to bang on their door, they never come to us!" This is why we desperately need the NDIS to allow more service providers to allow choice to achieve customer value and customer service.

- There is no effective complaints process in Victoria! Any complaints process has been biased towards government departments, and against consumers. Nevertheless, no one but the Minister can direct the DHS. So this department can thumb its nose at anyone who questions it, and it does!

- We say the way to an independent complaints process is by having the panel/s from outside industry…… BHP, Motorola, Myer, David Jones, etc, etc. These organisations are usually happy to provide an executive or manager to sit on a complaints panel as a community service.

- Governments should not provide direct services, as traditional public servants see their job as safe and secure no matter what they do or don't do. They see their job as little more than appearance employment.

- The provision of quality of life care for people with a disability requires a real commitment. Direct care staff need to see clients/residents as their second family. Not as, "We are just here for the beer"!

- We have wall to wall documented evidence of the public service take the pay and look the other way attitude. And Heather saw heaps of it when she worked in the field.

- "Not Rocket Science!" The provision of quality of life care for people with a disability is not rocket science, it is mainly common sense.

- The main reason care policies, standards and values are not implemented at service points within their direction, intention and spirit, is service provider management and staff attitude (especially DHS), not lack of training and funding.

- In Conclusion: People with a disability and their families need the NDIS to provide choice. So long as people have no choice of service providers, service providers and their staff will have power over already disadvantaged and vulnerable people – people with a disability and their families

Tony & Heather Tregale
Parents, Plenary Guardians & Administrators