

**Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Inquiry into Aged Care**

Submission from Cardinia Shire Council

(d) The adequacy of Home and Community Care programs in meeting the current and projected needs of the elderly

Some 10 years ago at the time of forced council amalgamation and the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering, Cardinia Shire Council relinquished responsibility for HACC service provision to Malvern Elderly Citizens Welfare Association (MECWA), with whom the Department of Human Services (DHS) has a Funding and Service Agreement. However, the Shire continues to support the service by contributing \$350,000 annually to top up the program.

Whilst Council makes a considerable financial investment to HACC services in Cardinia Shire we lack hard data concerning:

- Services offered to our HACC clients.
- The actual number of eligible HACC clients residing in our Shire.
- Access, or inability to access, HACC services.
- The standard and quality of service provided.
- The demand for aged care facilities and services in Cardinia Shire.

This lack of detailed information greatly hampers Council's ability to strategically plan for future community need. The ability to forward plan for increased expenditure on HACC services to cope with the growth in our ageing population is of paramount importance.

As MECWA is the main provider of HACC services in Cardinia Shire DHS negotiates directly with the agency about its capacity to grow the service. In recognition of its under funding in relation to other regions, Southern Metropolitan Region has been allocated an additional \$371,000 for the funding period 2003-06 (Southern Metropolitan Region Draft Regional Plan Section 1.6). Cardinia Shire Council has no input into, or information about, how additional funds are allocated by DHS to Cardinia's HACC clients.

Additionally, no regard for geographical issues is considered when allocating funding. For instance, many HACC clients receiving the *Meals on Wheels* service in Cardinia tend to be widely dispersed because we cover both rural and metropolitan areas. The cost to deliver this service is therefore much higher for Cardinia than it is for councils in the metropolitan area.

A lack of information sharing is greatly hampering our ability to forward plan. This is of particular concern as Cardinia Shire Council is currently experiencing very rapid population growth as we are on the edge of a growth corridor. Any information we can glean on future needs will greatly help our social planning for better infrastructure and service provision in the future.

A further concern for Cardinia Shire Council about the current arrangement relates to the outsourcing of business by MECWA, whereas the Shire would prefer to conduct its business locally. Currently, MECWA purchases its Meals on Wheels service for

all its clients from a catering firm located in South Melbourne. Whilst we appreciate that this practice allows for economies of scale the Shire would naturally prefer the catering contract for Cardinia HACC clients be given to a local catering service. As a funding provider for MECWA we would like some return for our local businesses from our considerable investment in HACC services to Cardinia clients.

The *Victorian HACC Program Manual*, published in February 2003, stresses the importance of HACC agencies coordinating and integrating service planning and delivery to enable people to be more independent at home and in the community thereby enhancing their quality of life. Complaints received from HACC clients in our Shire would seem to indicate that the current service provision is not meeting all needs. However, under the current arrangement and despite the funding the Shire contributes we are excluded from input into service delivery plans except through the annual joint HACC Planning Forum. Having no role in service provision we can feel excluded from participation in the aged care networks, which further hampers the Shire in planning for the future needs of the community.

This lack of transparency concerns Cardinia Shire Council. A review of how funding and service agreements are allocated would address this issue. Such a review should also address the current practice of automatic rolling over of service agreements every three years.

(e) The effectiveness of current arrangements for the transition of the elderly from acute hospital settings to aged care settings or back to the community

Again, Cardinia Shire Council is hampered in its ability to plan for future needs as we are unaware of the demand for aged care, hostel or residential care places. We are, however, concerned about the fragmentation of services whilst service provision is shared between the Commonwealth, State and Local governments and that there is often no fluid transition from hospital to aged care centre for elderly clients who are forced to take up a hospital bed until a place in an aged care setting is found.

Cardinia Shire Council wishes to support and enhance the quality of life of people with complex care and support needs, and those of their families /carers, through advocating for choice and responsiveness to client needs and individual perspectives. The Shire wishes to achieve this through the provision of well planned, efficient and accountable service management responsive to their specific needs but again, cannot plan properly without adequate knowledge of existing client needs.

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