

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

2.46 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services publish its recent analysis of service delivery gaps, to promote transparency and to encourage informed discussion of a strategy that ensures vulnerable people are properly supported right across Australia with no gaps.

Recommendation 2

2.47 The committee recommends that future tendering processes should be planned strategically, with a clear sense of the service gaps and areas of geographic need, and be based on an assessment of how the tendering process would enhance the capacity of the sector to meet these needs. The committee acknowledges that in some circumstances, competitive tendering processes may not meet the needs of the community sector, and recommends the adoption of alternative processes to ensure there are no gaps in service provision in the future.

Recommendation 3

2.75 The committee recommends that the selection criteria for future tender rounds should consider a mechanism such as a weighting on the contribution small, community-based organisations provide to their community beyond the service they are directly funded to provide.

Recommendation 4

2.76 The committee recommends that the Department of Social Services ensure that if organisations are not awarded a grant, any subcontract or consortium arrangement offered for the same service must be on comparable terms to those which would have been offered in a funding agreement.

Recommendation 5

2.128 The committee recommends that where possible, five-year contracts should be awarded to ensure stability so the sector can plan and deliver sustainable services.

Recommendation 6

2.129 The committee recommends that the privacy concerns raised in relation to the department's data exchange protocols should be resolved as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 7

2.130 The committee recommends that advocacy support be considered a vital component of community services in future funding arrangements and is given appropriate weighting in funding assessments.

Recommendation 8

2.131 The committee recommends that community sector funding should include consistent and adequate indexation of funding (to wage price index).

Recommendation 9

2.149 The committee recommends that the Minister authorise publication of the final report of the NOUS review on the Department of Social Services website.

Recommendation 10

2.150 The committee recommends that an urgent review is conducted of where critical service gaps continue to exist, that this review is made public and that these gaps be filled immediately to make sure that very vulnerable people get the support they need.

Recommendation 11

2.151 The committee recommends that after 18 months of operation, an independent evaluation be undertaken to determine if the outcome of the tender process has been an improvement of services, and that this review is made public.

Recommendation 12

2.158 The committee recommends that the Auditor-General conduct its own review into the tendering process, including examining:

- The Department of Social Services' work pre-tender in identifying service needs by region;
- The extent to which successful tenderers have sub-contracted their work to local and regional providers, job losses that have resulted from the tendering process and outcomes, and the extent to which Department of Social Services has oversight over these subcontracts;
- The extent to which the capacity for community-based service delivery (particularly the capacity to provide services to CALD and indigenous communities) was factored into the tender selection process;
- The impact on service delivery, advocacy and the support available to vulnerable people and communities.