

# HACSU PRESS RELEASE

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AUTHORISED BY LLOYD WILLIAMS, STATE SECRETARY



THE ONLY SPECIALIST UNION FOR DISABILITY, MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES IN VICTORIA

28/3/17

## **RISK OF ABUSE WILL INCREASE UNDER PRIVATISATION**

*RE: Four Corners "Fighting the System" Monday, 27 March.*

Fifteen months ago the Andrews Government announced the commencement of a process to privatise public sector disability services in Victoria. This announcement was made as several cases of horrific abuse at Yooralla—Victoria's largest non-government disability services provider—were before the courts.

Since that time there has been several State and Federal inquiries into violence, abuse and neglect in disability services, with more cases of abuse now coming to light.

Key recommendations from the various inquiries focused on the need for better workforce screening, better staff training and increased supervision, along with the need for mandatory minimum qualifications. The issue of continuity of care was acknowledged as crucial.

However, the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and its low and capped pricing for key supports has forced many non-government disability service providers to reduce staffing, training and supervision. Many employers are now increasingly relying on casual workers and pushing to slash minimum engagement times down to less than one hour. This is despite the fact that various inquiries pointed to high levels of workforce casualisation as a contributing factor to the prevalence of violence, abuse and neglect.

In recent weeks the much delayed NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework has now been released, with a continuation of light touch regulation for people with high-levels of risk. The Framework, whilst acknowledging many of the issues in the various State and Federal inquiries, ignores most of their major recommendations, particularly the need for mandatory minimum qualifications and the establishment of a "Workforce Registration and Accreditation Scheme".

The end result is that many of the critical risk factors in relation to violence, abuse and neglect—particularly in the private/non-government sector—are more pronounced today than they were fifteen months ago.

Despite the serious shortcomings of the Quality and Safeguarding Framework and low and capped NDIS pricing, the Victorian Government continues with its process to privatise public disability services, which will force people with profound disabilities into an increasingly risky non-government sector.

## KEY FACTS

### Casualisation

- DHHS: 22%
- Average Victorian non-government service provider: 40%

### Qualifications

- DHHS entry-level qualification: Certificate IV in Disability
- Average Victorian non-government service provider: no mandatory minimum qualification

### Supervision

- DHHS: one supervisor per group home
- Average Victorian non-government service provider: one supervisor to four or more group homes

## QUOTES FROM LLOYD WILLIAMS, HACSU STATE SECRETARY

*“State and federal governments must stop pretending the NDIS is the panacea for the scourge of abuse in the disability sector. The fact is that the risk of abuse has increased under the NDIS efficient pricing and low regulation regime.”*

*“The CEOs and Boards of disability service providers must be held to account under the NDIS market and for this reason we are calling for a strengthening of the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework, and we support the Senate’s call for a Royal Commission into abuse in disability services.”*

*“The vast majority of workers in disability services do a great job, working in an environment that takes a great deal of understanding and commitment. But we all acknowledge the extreme vulnerability of many people in residential accommodation who have a limited ability to advocate for themselves. That’s why we need strong regulation, skilled and experienced staff.”*

*“Continuity of support from skilled and experienced staff is essential for many people with profound disabilities living in residential accommodation, but that is being totally undermined by privatisation and NDIS pricing.”*

*“The first NDIS trial sites in Victoria started nearly three years ago and since that time casualisation in the non-government sector has gone through the roof, supervision has been cut, training budgets have been slashed and providers are all saying NDIS pricing for services is inadequate.”*

*“The Government’s assessment of future privatisation has to be showing a wide range of very serious risk factors increasing. If their assessment is genuine it begs the question of why privatise?”*

*“Daniel Andrews said only a few months ago at the Labor State Conference that no one would be worse off under the NDIS. That commitment can’t be kept under privatisation. Everyone knows Governments only privatise to cut costs and if you cuts costs you cut quality services.”*

**HACSU State Secretary Lloyd Williams is available for interview on 0418 542 799**

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