

**PRESENTATION BY MR ROBERT FITZGERALD, PRODUCTIVITY
COMMISSIONER AT CLRI(NSW) SOCIAL WELFARE SEMINAR ON
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In the space we are in now

- **CONGREGATIONS NEED TO BE REBELLIOUS**
- We have the ability only to moderate extreme behaviour (eg offshore processing of refugees) not ensure compassionate behaviour
- Media coverage of offshore processing of refugees issue was about the rebels, not the actual legislation
- It's not about changing the minds and hearts of the majority, but making the best use of the minority who support us
- Doing what we have done before won't work anymore

The difficulties we face in NSW

- We are not dealing with robust systems of care being treated as serious long-term systems in the same way the health, education and transport systems are. Those systems are politically important to voters and hence are competent (perhaps in a marginal way depending on your point of view)
- That is not the case with community and disabilities services which are run on the IF ONLY model: if only these people would help themselves
- We need robust, long-term systems
- Putting more money into a dysfunctional system won't alter the system
- Maintaining clarity of mission in a funding-dominated sector
- Governments now recognise the person's own responsibility for their predicament with talk of mutual obligation, apportioning of blame and punishment
- With that comes an opportunity –the community does have some of the answers
- The nature of governments has changed. Government no longer in partnership with anyone. They are here to govern, they know best, ministerial advisers know everything and they have no need to listen to others
- Governments see themselves as dealing with consumers –contracts not outcomes are paramount. There is an obsession with contract processes and the market.
- There is a move to rationalization, what is bigger and better. Want to deal with fewer groups.
- Accountability is growing –organizations are called to be accountable disproportionately to the task at hand and this accountability can be an attack on the sector

One piece of good news in NSW

- FONGA (Forum on Non-government Agencies): *Working Together for NSW* talks about the valuable contribution of non-government agencies. Talks of collaboration: partners, not agents.

NSW Big Issues

- Urban indigenous population –NSW has biggest percentage in Australia- and their ability/inability to access services
- Support of those with mental health problems, especially single people living alone
- People with a disability –their care especially as they age
- Child protection and family support
- Housing affordability
- Preventative and community based health

Challenges

- The needs of clients are becoming more complex
- A single agency in isolation will not survive –unless you can provide integrated services to clients with complex needs you will not survive
- There is a requirement to involve clients in the development of policy which affects them –how is an agency to do this?
- Government is developing the lead agency model, where they deal with only one agency and other (smaller) agencies are providers for the lead agency
- Workforce shortages are about to hit the social welfare sector, affecting the service delivery to older Australians 2030-2040 –this is not only an income problem (staff payments) but a sustained and significant workforce shortage problem. Many current models of care are not and will not be sustainable.
- Need to design models of care and support that take account of this workforce shortage
- Models of care and support will need to go back to relying on community care and support
- Congregational agencies are best placed to utilize and mobilize this group.