

3 December 2009

Mr Terry Moran AO,  
Chair, Advisory Group on Reform of  
Australian Government Administration  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
PO Box 6500  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Moran

I am pleased to provide you UnitingCare Australia's submission, on behalf of the UnitingCare network, on the Reform of Australian Government Administration.

UnitingCare Australia is an agency of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). UnitingCare Australia represents the views of agencies in the UnitingCare network to the Government, advocating for those policies and practices that enhance the dignity of people, especially those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable. The agency represents the UCA's network of UnitingCare social services operating across some 1500 sites nationwide. The UnitingCare network is one of the largest providers of social services in Australia providing supports and services to over 2 million Australians each year, and employing 35,000 staff and 24,000 volunteers nationally. UnitingCare provides services to children, young people and families, people dealing with deprivation and hardship, people with disabilities, and Indigenous and older Australians living in urban, rural and remote communities.

This review provides an opportunity for significant and meaningful reform of Government administration which we believe is well overdue. The consultation paper has identified a number of critical issues for consideration which we endorse. While we recognise the task of the Advisory Committee is to deliver a blueprint for reform, we believe that any blueprint must focus on all aspects of government administration and in particular its efficiency and effectiveness. We would like to see recommendations which drive genuine efficiency of government processes and practices (not merely outsourcing current practices to lower cost sources) which support and indeed enhance both government and non-government service delivery to vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians.

In Australia, the social services sector plays an integral role assisting vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians to improve their lives and capacity to participate fully in society. UnitingCare and other, especially faith-based, NGOs are uniquely placed to assist policy makers in identifying appropriate solutions to address social disadvantage and program reform priorities. This is because not-for-profit social service NGOs have an organisational

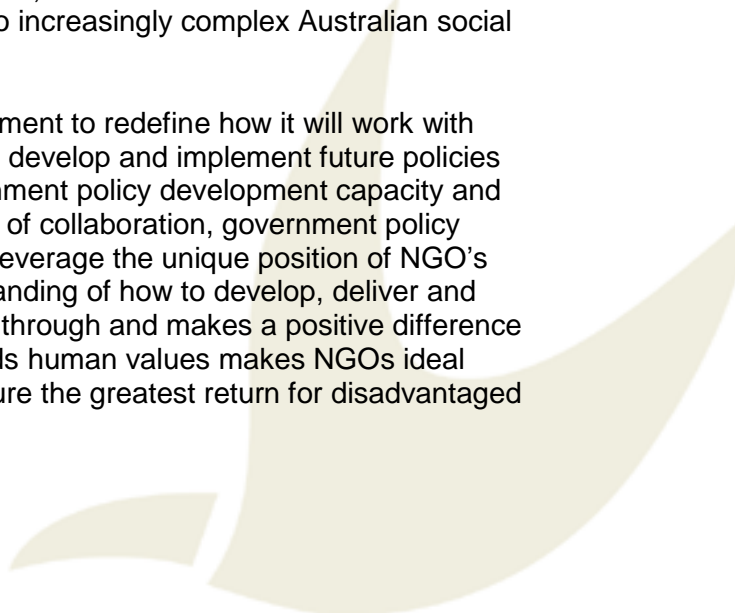
orientation towards human values and the common good. This orientation gives us the capacity to work with highly disadvantaged people and assist them to address their needs and become more resilient through the delivery of services and supports that recognise strengths and explicitly value 'quality of life' activities and experiences. We work out of a strengths based approach; one that recognises the inherent dignity of each person, understands that people are always located in webs of relationship, and that strives to journey together in solidarity toward wholeness. We work with citizens in communities, not consumers in marketplaces. We seek fundamental social transformation – sustainable communities in which every person belongs, can contribute and is valued - and see our service delivery as a means to that end rather than an end in itself.

The ability of social service providers to work with vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians is in part facilitated by government funding for services through which government partners with NGOs to address shared priorities. NGOs fulfil this role through self generated funding, labour (both volunteer and paid) and assets. Our capacity to deliver services that recognise and build upon the importance of 'quality of life' activities and experiences have been somewhat stifled because of a failure of the APS to recognise the value that our orientation towards human values and our embeddedness in community brings to the partnership between the sector and government. Rather than reflecting a partnership of equals, over the past decade or so the relationship between service providers and APS departments has been defined by and large through a fairly reductive contractual management lens, in which bureaucrats have a primary focus on compliance and risk minimisation.

This contractual management lens shapes the APS's engagement with the sector and encourages interactions that are formulaic and limited in scope, leading to poor and disconnected policy development, which in turn has failed to address the deep and growing complexity of needs of disadvantaged Australians. Even when policy directions have been appropriate, implementation has fallen short primarily because after many years of outsourcing service delivery, there is diminished expertise within the APS in identifying program responses and implementation approaches that are most likely to ensure practical, effective and sustained outcomes.

While recently there has been a Government led and positive shift in the relationship between parts of the APS and social service providers, the APS is yet to accept that the outsourcing of service provision to NGOs has, in social services, weakened its capacity to develop strategic but practical approaches to address social disadvantage in Australia. Our view is that working with us on policy development is no longer an optional add on, but an essential element of developing strong and sustained Australian solutions to increasingly complex Australian social problems.

This review is an opportunity for the Australian Government to redefine how it will work with other social stakeholders through the APS to prioritise, develop and implement future policies and programs; and address the serious gaps in government policy development capacity and real partnerships on the ground. If done in a true spirit of collaboration, government policy makers and program developers will be able to better leverage the unique position of NGO's embeddedness in communities, and their deep understanding of how to develop, deliver and evaluate life transforming services into policy that cuts through and makes a positive difference in people's lives. Our organisational orientation towards human values makes NGOs ideal strategic partners for governments to work with to ensure the greatest return for disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians.



Attached for your consideration is a paper developed for the Deputy Prime Minister's Community Response Taskforce which discusses in detail specific issues of social services sustainability and highlights a number of impediments to sustainable social services, many of which relate to much needed reforms to APS administration.

While the paper is self explanatory I thought it prudent to highlight a number of its key points, the first of which is the Government's relationship with the sector. We believe that the relationship between the APS and the sector must move from a contractual purchaser-provider model to a partnership model. For the development and delivery of strong social services and to ensure services sustainability the relationship between the APS and social service providers needs to be one where solutions and implementation frameworks are developed jointly with mutual accountability. There are any number of practical ways this objective could be achieved but at the heart of them all is a fundamental re-think by APS departments about how they conceptualise their role in developing and enhancing the relationships with the sector. It is our hope that an Australian Compact might provide a vehicle for delivering on this new approach.

Another fundamental reform, touched on in the consultation paper, is a move to a citizen-centred service model. A citizen-centred model requires a holistic assessment of and response to the critical issues that limit the capacity of disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians to participate fully in society. For the APS this means that it is no longer sufficient to think of issues in a linear (portfolio-based and program based) manner. Instead the APS must be sufficiently agile to consider issues in a holistic manner whilst ensuring that the burden of system integration and accountability processes are not shifted to the citizen or service provider. The challenge for the APS and service providers alike will be developing funding models to support such an approach. We would suggest that this be jointly determined as part of any shift toward citizen-centred service delivery models.

We strongly advocate the continuation of the Government's Regulation Reform agenda. Over-regulation in the form of formal regulations and regulation by contract clause has permeated the culture of the APS. The proliferation of this has been driven in part by an ideology that requires the state to operate out of a command and control paradigm, but is also due to the lack of capacity to appropriately manage risk within the APS. There has been a progressive increase in the number of clauses, and pseudo regulations within contracts and funding agreements which seek to mitigate risk and liability of the relevant department. The associated administrative burden has been shifted to the provider by way of increased compliance costs which in turn diverts resources from services to administration.

We believe that this Committee must face up to and address the burden that multiple compliance imposes on service providers. If this issue is not accorded the appropriate level of priority then it is difficult to imagine how a new and innovative APS will be realised.

No reform, however important, will be achieved without the drive and commitment of those within the APS charged with its implementation. While arguably this can be achieved in part by improvement in the training and development of staff, this alone will not be sufficient. Despite the advances in the relationship between the Government and social services sector and the genuine desire of a number of Ministers to implement reform, that commitment has not been demonstrated in the actions of many APS agencies. Genuine reform will only be achieved when those subject to the reform are rewarded for its implementation. We encourage the Committee to make recommendations which will enable the APS leadership to deliver on the reforms and to

be held to account for them. The task of the Advisory Committee is challenging but essential. We hope that the blueprint meets the needs of the government and community at large and will enable Australia to benefit from it for years to come.

If you require any further details about this submission please contact Joe Zabar, Director of Organisational Development on ph:6249 6717 or email [joe@nat.unitingcare.org.au](mailto:joe@nat.unitingcare.org.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lin Hatfield Dodds', written in a cursive style.

Lin Hatfield Dodds  
National Director  
UnitingCare Australia





## **SOCIAL SERVICE SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Regulation, compliance, and administrative process reform**

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UnitingCare Australia is the national body for community services in the Uniting Church supporting service delivery and advocacy for children, young people, families, people with disabilities and older people

## **Social Service Sustainability**

In a recent issues paper<sup>1</sup> commissioned by the four Major Church Providers, Access Economics noted that social services were operating substantially above capacity during 2006-07 in a period of sustained economic growth in Australia. Despite Australia's strong economic situation, there remained a chronic shortfall in expenditure in the area of social services resulting in more than 77 000 eligible people being unable to access a range of social services from aged care through to financial and material support. In the current global financial crisis there is a danger that the focus will be on dealing with the immediacy of new people entering the social services system to the exclusion of serious consideration of the long-term sustainability of social services themselves.

Access Economics<sup>2</sup> concluded that "the impacts of the global financial crisis on the Australian economy are already being witnessed and ...as a consequence, the demands on the nation's already overstretched social services sector will significantly increase." The report<sup>3</sup> also noted that even beyond the current global recession investment in social services will be important because such investment "...reduces long term social costs and enhances the overall productivity of the economy. Investment in social services, and social infrastructure, should therefore be considered as an essential part of further fiscal stimulus measures." Recovery from a recession can be significantly held back if long term unemployment and disadvantage are not addressed. The recently released Budget, while making positive movements in the areas of infrastructure and employment, has not provided enough additional support toward building the capacity of social services to meet the entrenched needs of long-term disadvantaged Australians.

Ensuring the viability of social services that support vulnerable Australians is a moral imperative as well as an economic one. Sir William Deane famously said on leaving the office of Governor General "The ultimate test of our worth as a nation is how we treat the most vulnerable and disadvantaged of our people". His words continue to resonate across our communities because they encapsulate the vision of a fair nation that treats all its peoples decently – a vision picked up by the Rudd Government in its social inclusion framework. Social service providers are a key partner with government in realising this vision.

The challenge for the Community Response Taskforce is to develop a road map that strengthens the capacity of social service providers, government and the private sector to work in partnership to enable disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians to belong, contribute and be valued in our society. Such enabling will require attention to and reform of the current regulatory, compliance and administrative processes that tie up so much capacity of government and social service providers.

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<sup>1</sup> The impact of the global financial crisis on social services in Australia, Access Economics, November 2008 p19

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p31

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p31

This paper was prepared by UnitingCare Australia and carries the endorsement of the Major Church Providers.

### **Vision for effective and sustainable social services**

Our vision for regulation, compliance and administrative process reform is for government regulations and processes to support the implementation of quality social services in a cost effective manner, while outcome measures are used to ensure and evaluate the effectiveness of services in increasing quality of life outcomes for citizens.

Any reform agenda must maintain appropriate transparency and address the current culture of process compliance; improve current inefficient and ineffective government processes; and ensure that new and existing regulations are managed in a manner that considers their impact on social service systems, processes and resources prior to implementation. We seek a systematic approach to the reform of regulation and its impact on social services.

One key deliverable of the reform agenda would be the reinvestment of resources currently allocated to unnecessary regulation and compliance administration to service delivery. This would be a major outcome for Australian communities and is consistent with the Government's productivity objective for the regulation reform agenda.

### **Sustainability**

The sustainability of social services is impacted by four interrelated issues:

- financial models;
- business models;
- regulation, compliance and administrative processes; and
- a suite of workforce issues.

Each of these requires attention in its own right but none can be addressed effectively in isolation from the other. Tackling any one issue without due regard to the others will potentially undermine social service sustainability overall. Table 1 below identifies some of the key elements of the four interrelated issues which impact upon social services sustainability.

**Table 1**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Key elements</b>
<i>Financial models</i>	<p>Government funding models are function/silo based rather than person/community focussed; difficult for providers to negotiate the funding maze and citizens to negotiate the service maze.</p> <p>Inadequate funding. Lack of access to capital funding. Recurrent funding does not keep up with changes in the costs of inputs – wages, electricity, petrol, hotel supplies (in residential care facilities) or the significant changes in complexity of client/household need.</p> <p>Indexation has not reflected the cost increases of the specific “basket of goods” that social service providers purchase to deliver</p>

	<p>services - wages, electricity, petrol, hotel supplies (in residential care facilities).</p> <p>Fundraising – the increasing costs of fundraising, and diminishing rates of return for effort in an economic downturn.</p>
<i>Regulation, compliance and administrative processes</i>	<p>Regulatory burden is not commensurate with benefits to citizens or accountability to government. Accreditation systems do not promote continuous improvement, and in fact divert staff from delivery of care and supervision.</p> <p>Inadequate focus on quality of life outcomes (eg nurturing and support, meaningful choices, connection and belonging) in accreditation and regulatory systems.</p> <p>Continuous focus on governance and process compliance signal a lack of agreed outcome performance indicators – too much interest in demonstrating process rather than delivery of quality of life outcomes.</p>
<i>Workforce issues</i>	<p>Workforce – low wage industry, unable to compete for staff against other industries, especially in areas impacted by commodities boom. Staff facing increasing financial hardship in context of low wages and increasing costs of living, so difficult to retain staff, especially professionally trained staff and managers.</p> <p>While remuneration is one critical issue in workforce attraction and retention, the demands of government regulatory, compliance and administrative requirements are another. Care staff work in non-profit social services at lower salary points than other sectors because they want to provide care to people. When care staff are required to spend one third to one half of their time on administration, often in hostile compliance or accreditation environments, it is difficult to retain them.</p> <p>Volunteers –rising cost of training, maintaining and supporting volunteers, and a radically changing and in many places reducing pool of volunteers as a result of changing family and community structures.</p>
<i>Business models</i>	<p>Funding models do not adequately compensate/support those organisations that support people with highest and most complex needs, or who operate in areas of locational disadvantage. For-profit providers often “cherry pick” clients who are most able to contribute to the costs of care or have lowest level of support needs, reducing the capacity of non-profit agencies to operate in those spaces and therefore be able to direct surpluses generated to people with high or complex need, or locations in which a surplus cannot be generated e.g. rural and remote Australia.</p> <p>Funding arrangements and accreditation requirements distort risk assessment and management. Staff and management are the best placed to identify and manage risk, but feel constrained not to take commonsense approaches due to accreditation disincentives.</p> <p>This risk aversion impacts negatively on models of care, costs of service delivery and quality of care.</p>

Government focuses on management of small day to day risk but outsources financial risk at the organisational level. This represents an inversion of an effective funding and service system.

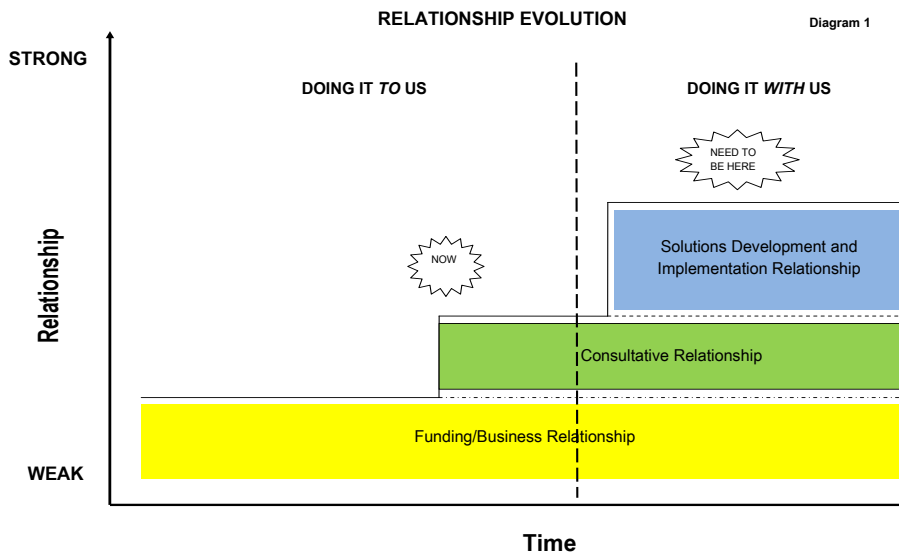
Economic downturn – for profit providers have failed (eg child-care providers), and there is an increased need for community support services on the ground as people experience increased hardship. These services must be flexible and portable, requiring commensurate funder flexibility.

While regulatory reform is essential, government and service providers will also need also to ensure that relevant and timely action is being taken to address the other sustainability criteria. The key action will be the development and execution of a genuine partnership between the government and its agencies and social service providers to drive fundamental system reform.

### Government relationship with social services

The Rudd government has taken some positive steps to improve its engagement with social services. Of these commitments, the Community Response Taskforce is providing needed impetus to genuinely address social service sustainability. The following chart (Diagram 1) represents the relationship model between the government and social services. The diagram demonstrates a progression in the relationship from a contractual purchaser-provider model through to a partnership model.

Diagram 1: Relationship evolution



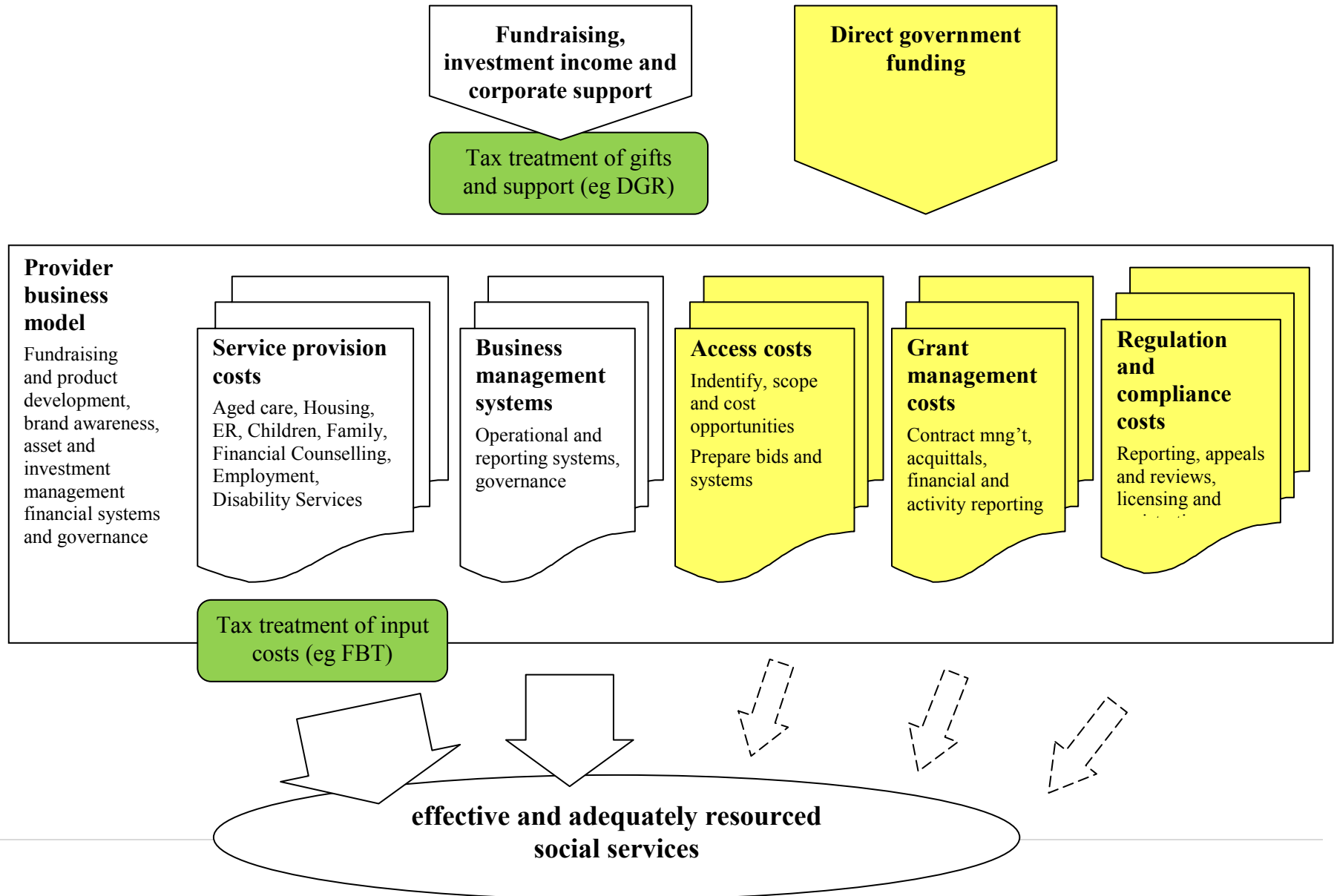
In order for services sustainability to be realised the relationship between the government and social service providers needs to be one which is within the Solutions Development and Implementation level. This is where government and social services work together to develop and implement appropriate responses to deprivation, exclusion and service need. Inputs from the non-profit sector are treated as contributions to be respected. Reform in this model occurs *with* social services rather than *to* them. This type of relationship is not without its challenges but one

that needs to be explored if we want to achieve service sustainability, particularly in these current difficult financial times.

### **Financial Sustainability**

The diagram below (Diagram 2) shows the interrelationship between government funding and private funding as well as the regulatory, compliance and administrative relationships social services must navigate to access government funding.

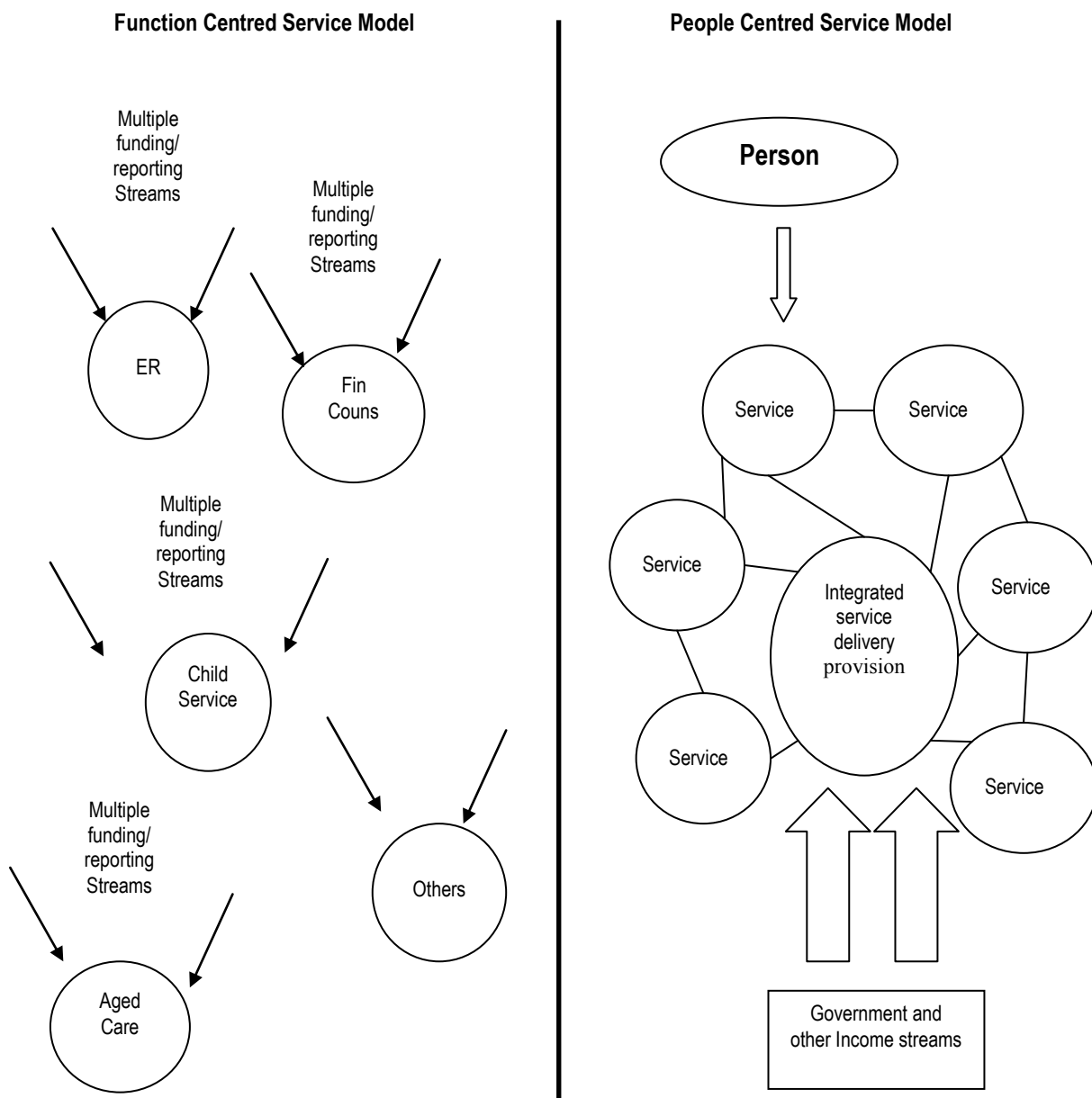
Diagram 2: Costs involved in service provision and access to government funding



Funding adequacy is seen by most service providers as the key issue to be addressed by any debate about service sustainability. However, as Diagram 2 shows, funding adequacy is linked to closely to the effectiveness of providers' business models and systems. It is also linked more critically to the conditionality around which government funds are accessed and managed. It is within this area that the regulatory and administrative compliance agenda sits.

Another fundamental issue that must be tackled if service sustainability is to be effectively addressed relates to the function-based model used by governments to fund services. Diagram 3 shows two service models, one based on function and the other people centred, or client-based. Service sustainability and the demands of a social inclusion approach will require government and service providers to work together to develop people and community focussed service frameworks in order to move to an integrated approach to poverty alleviation, and achieving social inclusion. Ideally, funders and services on the ground would sort all the 'back of house' operational detail out and the citizen at the point of engagement with the social services system experiences seamless wrap around service delivery.

Diagram 3: Contrasting service models



A people-centred service model enables a more holistic assessment of and response to the critical issues that limit the capacity of disadvantaged and marginalised Australians to participate fully in society. Marginalised Australians increasingly experience multiple and complex disadvantage. A single function-based approach has limited success in addressing a person's holistic needs. People experiencing multiple disadvantage such as long term unemployment, homelessness, a lack of education or illness struggle to get and keep a job, and so remain trapped in a cycle of disadvantage unless service providers have the capacity and flexibility to provide people-centred services that can address multiple disadvantages simultaneously. A person who has been unemployed long term may well need life skills development, family crisis support, housing assistance, mental health support, job readiness training, placement and then flexible and meaningful post placement support both in a job and in the broader community. Meeting these needs requires significant marshalling of a diverse range of service expertise and competencies.

### **Workforce and Business model**

Workforce issues have been identified as important in the service sustainability agenda. The relative impact of workforce attraction and retention is most acute in the area of aged care, but is a pressing issue across all service areas. Some larger agencies are in the process of developing more strategic approaches to the issue of staff attraction and retention by investing heavily in “people-focussed” management activities.

The continuing devaluing of the FBT concession, together with increasing competition from the government sector through comparatively better salary and conditions has put further pressure on agency capacity to meet workforce needs. In a recent submission to the Henry Tax Review, UnitingCare Australia flagged the need for government to consider measures such as indexation of the FBT concession as a means of assisting non-profit agencies attract and retain essential staffing resources.

While remuneration is one critical issue in workforce attraction and retention, the demands of government regulatory, compliance and administrative requirements are another. Care staff work in non-profit social services at lower salary points than other sectors because they want to provide care to people. When care staff are required to spend one third to one half of their time on administration, often in hostile compliance or accreditation environments, it is difficult to retain them.

The business model used by non-profit (or “for-people”) agencies as compared the for-profit service providers will continue to place pressure on scarce resources. The values of our organisations are such that we will continue provide services in areas where profit driven providers do not, and indeed provide services that are neither sustainable nor economically viable without cross subsidisation from other activities or direct fundraising.

### **Regulation Compliance and Administrative Process Reform**

The Government has stated that it is committed to reducing the regulatory burden on Australian businesses, non-profit organisations and consumers. This is welcome news.

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According to Government<sup>4</sup> this agenda is “consistent with larger commitments to address impediments to Australia’s long-term productivity growth. The Government has signalled the importance of deregulation by giving it Cabinet-level status and two Ministers (The Minister for Finance and Deregulation, the Hon Lindsay Tanner MP and the Minister Assisting, the Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP).”

Clearly the impetus for regulatory reform in the non-profit sector is linked to productivity. While this is an important objective it does not adequately reflect the potential this agenda has in shaping the effectiveness of service delivery. In order to realise the full potential of this agenda we believe that there needs to be a new vision for the relationship between government and service providers; one that delivers agreed and sustainable outcomes that improve the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised Australians. In this vision the responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of services is shared and between government and social services.

Because the regulation, compliance and administrative process reform element of the sustainability agenda can deliver positive outcomes for both government and social services at a system level relatively quickly, we recommend that it be the major initial focus of a service sustainability agenda.

There are a range of issues in this space that can be tackled directly and immediately.

Both service providers and government agencies are aware of the inefficiencies that plague the government systems that interface with social services. Below is a list of examples of the problems that service providers experience on the ground. The list is not exhaustive but is indicative of some fundamental regulatory and administrative process failures. While addressing these symptomatic problems on their own would not deliver the productivity outcomes necessary to ensure the long term sustainability of social services, it would make a significant difference in parts of the service system and send a strong signal of Government’s willingness to reform inefficient and ineffective practice.

### **Examples of current problems and practical responses**

1. Various regulations/legislation and administrative requirements appear to ignore or underestimate the financial implications relating to the implementation of new regulations and rarely consider the cumulative impact of regulation on social services. Regulation Impact Statements (RIS) were designed to be part of the regulation/legislative development process but have not been utilised for social services. The Office of Best Practice Regulation advised that they do not keep a central Register of RIS and that they are published at the time of tabling in the explanatory materials accompanying documentation to Parliament. We propose:
  - That the functionality of the RIS process is improved to ensure that the information contained in them explicitly considers the implementation costs on providers (or those being regulated)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.finance.gov.au/deregulation/index.html>

- That the cumulative impact of new Administrative and Regulatory processes is addressed by:
    - creating a central home for Regulation Impact Statements
    - sanctioning of government agencies who fail to comply with the requirements of the RIS system
  - That the RIS system be employed as part of the development of new administrative processes before changes those processes are introduced.
2. The demand on providers in preparing tenders for government business continues to increase. These costs are becoming significant in terms of time and the cost of the skills needed to prepare tenders and proposals. Agencies with portfolios of \$25 to \$50 million hold 100-150 contracts across portfolios and levels of government, and develop around 30 new proposals each year. Minimising the duplication of information and standardising the financial and programmatic reporting requirements would be a significant step in the right direction.
  3. Remove the requirement to maintain separate bank accounts for each funding agreement. Many agencies hold 50 to 100 agreements, many of which have differential compliance and reporting requirements. The administration required to comply with reporting and compliance across so many agreements is burdensome financially and in terms of human resources.
  4. Increase the asset approval amount from \$5000 to \$20 000 or 10% of the program value, whichever is the higher.
  5. Standardise audit requirements. Currently some government agencies require project specific auditing to be done regardless of the funding level for that activity. Others have been willing to accept organisational end of year audits as sufficient to meet requirements
  6. Streamline acquittal processes. Develop a uniform acquittal procedure, including agreed definitions and standardised information requirements.
  7. Deliver 'life of project funding flexibility' by freeing up carry over restrictions – good example of practice over purpose. The opportunity is to focus on what was achieved rather than what was spent.
  8. Ensure that contract timelines more effectively adhered to by government agencies. Delays between start date and contracts being issued, as well as money being slow to come requires agencies to make commitments to staff and suppliers using their own funds. A minimum period be given to wind up projects – we suggest six months.
  9. Adequately fund program reporting – more is being asked but little if any data is returned to social services. Data sets are best developed with service providers and others, and aggregated data must be available to providers to assist in understanding and responding to demand.
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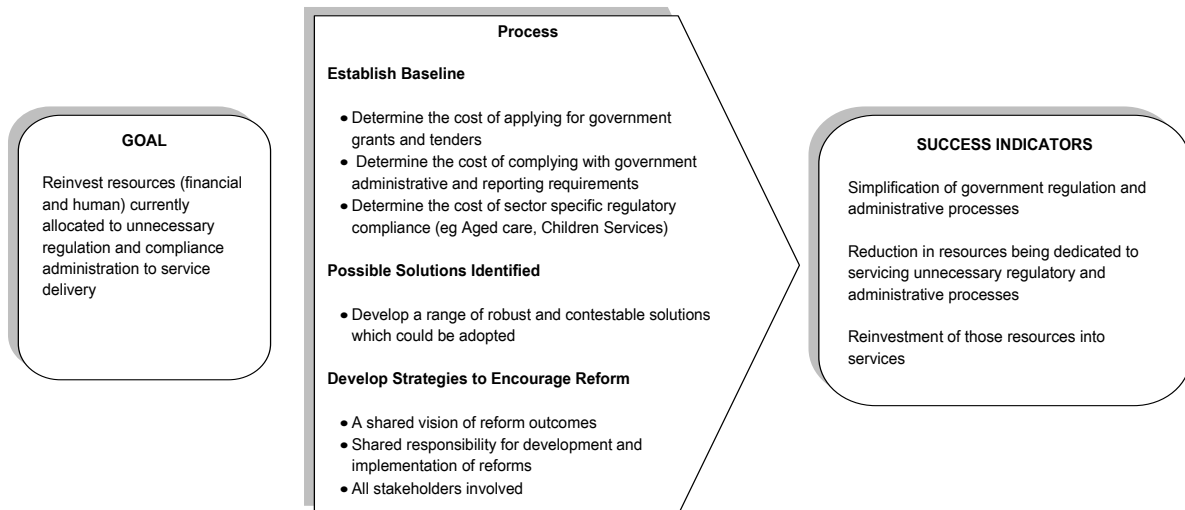
10. Develop a uniform acquittal report format. These vary from funder to funder including within the same department. We think it would be useful to develop a best practice standard acquittal template for the industry to use.
11. Where government subsidy remains unspent at the end of a financial year, deliver flexibility to automatically roll forward any unspent subsidy amounts to future financial years as long as it is within the life of the current funding agreement - without having to seek specific approval each year. Develop a standard "unspent subsidy roll-forward within the life of the contract" clause for all funding agreements. This would assist where it takes time to establish a new program and/or recruit/retain staff in any particular financial year - as long as the objectives of the program were being met. It might be that activity establishing new clients is less in the earlier years than the latter.

Diagram 4 below outlines the key processes to be undertaken to achieve the productivity objective of a regulatory reform agenda. While productivity should be the primary outcome from the regulatory reform agenda it nonetheless remains opportune to utilise this agenda to forge a new relationship with the social services; one that adopts the principles outlined early in this paper. This could be a significant focus for a compact.

For this agenda to be successful it will be essential that all key government agencies participate and share a common vision and purpose. We propose that Prime Minister and Cabinet and Finance and Deregulation be the lead agencies responsible for the Government's policy agenda and that FaHCSIA, DEEWR and DOHA (Aged Care group) participate as the primary agencies that interact with social services.

We propose that each department is requested to develop and present to the Taskforce an update on any regulatory and reform activities currently underway, the timing of these and what if any consultation has occurred with social services. A coordinated approach to the reform agenda is vital if to achieve sustainable system outcomes. The danger in allowing an uncoordinated approach to this agenda is that service providers will simply have multiple new and disconnected systems to manage as each APS agency or portfolio embarks on separate reform activities.

**Diagram 4: Key reform processes**



## Concluding comments

Australian social services face immediate and long-term challenges. Both sustainability — the capability to plan and deliver services in the future — and equity — the ability to provide high quality services to all Australians, regardless of means — are under threat.

The long term challenges include the changing face of the family and community, an ageing population, an ageing workforce, a more diverse population requiring more specialised and targeted services, the decline in informal care and secure, and sustainable funding. Immediate challenges include the recent and rapid increase in multiple and complex need services must respond to, workforce pressures, the burden of regulation, and funding adequacy.

Sustainable regulation compliance and administrative process reform will require:

- political will and commitment;
- a shared vision of reform outcomes;
- a shared responsibility for development and implementation of solutions where government does it “with us” and not “to us”;
- all relevant government agencies involved and in step with the reform agenda; and
- a strategy to take the reform agenda forward.

Meeting these short and long term challenges requires coordinated and concerted action by both service providers and government. By working together on a national reform agenda we can deliver on our shared vision that every Australian has access to the means and opportunity for a decent life.