



# **JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES SUBMISSION**

**Competition Policy Review – Draft Report**

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## Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Report*. We acknowledge the challenge *the Panel* faces in framing principles and an approach for the incredibly diverse range of human services that Australian governments invested over \$184 billion (12.1 per cent of GDP) on in 2012-13 (Productivity Commission, 2014).

For over 37 years, Jesuit Social Services has worked to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged young people, families and the community. This submission draws on our experience undertaking this work, including by partnering with governments in the delivery of a wide variety of human services.

In Victoria, where our organisation began, Jesuit Social Services works as part of a vibrant and diverse community services sector that has a long history of a robust working relationship with government, including in the development and implementation of innovative responses to significant issues of social concern.

Human services are vital forms of social investment. They help build capabilities so that people can realise their hopes and aspirations, contribute to more cohesive and inclusive communities, and are often there for people during times of crisis.

This role is also a vital function of the modern state. Strong democracies, like Australia, rely on a dynamic interplay between community service organisations, broader civil society and government to continually develop and improve our collective responses to complex social problems. This inter-relationship is a much deeper and more fundamental function of the state than other more simple purchaser-provider relationships that governments engage in.

While recognising the value of existing human services, the Panel through the *Draft Report* has made clear its view that further commodification of services and exposure to rigours of the market is required.

Jesuit Social Services contends that this view dangerously oversimplifies the role played by human services in creating a strong community and participating in the necessary processes of public debate and co-production of solutions to social problems. In practice, human services often exist as a response to the failures of the market and have a significant social change dimension that is fundamentally at odds with the commodification and competition that the panel endorses.

We believe that genuine diversity, choice and innovation in human service provision are possible and desirable, but require collaboration and partnership between organisations that are driven by a strong sense of civic mission, as well as a genuine commitment to building relationships and networks that empower people and communities. Experience shows that the indiscriminate application of competition principles to human services undermines many of these features. Too often the winners have not been service users, communities, or taxpayers, but for-profit providers who 'game' human services markets to the detriment of those who need services the most.

Our intent is not to discount the value of competition in all contexts, nor to preserve the status quo of service provision. Quite simply we want efficient and effective human services that build capabilities, strengthen the social fabric of our communities, and continue a critical civic dialogue.

We call on *the Panel* to contribute to achieving this by:

- Ensuring that competition policy does not erode the wider role of human services in building individual capabilities, cohesive communities, and a more civil society.
- Reinforcing the important role played by government and human services together in addressing complex and dynamic social problems that rely on robust civic dialogue for continual improvement.
- Recognising that community organisations should not be seen, nor should they view themselves, simply as government service delivery arms, but as co-producers of solutions and key participants in civic dialogue.
- Recognising that the role of government must be greater than that of a service purchasing agency. Indeed, in some circumstances government will be best placed to deliver services.
- Promoting genuine choice as opposed to choice between different services offering the same thing. Within services there must also be a strong focus on promoting agency and empowering service users.
- Taking greater account of the very mixed experience of competition and for-profit provision in human services, including that it has not necessarily improved the quality of human services, and promised gains in efficiency, quality, adaptability and innovation have not been realised.

## **The broader social purpose of human services**

A starting point when thinking of competition principles in relation to human services is to consider what societal benefits are being sought through the provision of these services and what is the most effective means through which to achieve these outcomes. Realistic reflection here must take into account contextual factors that influence the environment in which human services operate.

Unfortunately, these questions are not considered in detail in the *Draft Report*, and instead there is an underlying assumption that applying competitive principles to human services delivery will automatically enhance a wide range of outcomes.

Informed by economic rationalism, Contestability Theory, and New Public Management (Davidson B. , 2011) (MacDermott, 2008), this approach takes a narrow view of human services as commodities that can be broken down into clearly defined components (inputs, outputs and outcomes) and then be put out to market with competition driving improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, and choice. While this analysis may make sense for more discrete functions that were previously delivered by governments, such as waste collection, it shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the complexity of human services or the wider benefits that are achieved through investment in them.

Human services contribute to building individual capabilities, cohesive communities, and a more civil society. They are defined by social mission and values that include citizenship, fairness, justice, representation and participation (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2007). An example is education and the role of schools. While the level of educational attainment of an individual student is something that can be reasonably understood and measured, the role of schools go beyond this. They are civic

institutions that serve a much wider civil purpose. The corrosive effect of competition principles on this civic purpose is noted by Professor Alan Reid AM:

*'Such approaches further entrench a distorted view of the public and the public good by privileging individual self-interest... The public good is greater than the sum of its individual parts, and is arrived at through rational, respectful and critical deliberation among the public. It seeks to maximise the benefits for society as a whole. In education this would result in policies which promote collaboration and a sense of community rather than individual competition.'* (Reid, 2012)

When it comes to people and communities experiencing the most complex and entrenched forms of disadvantage, human services often balance the 'egoism of the market' (Smyth, 2014) or correct its failures (Davidson B. , 2011). A transactional approach to human services simply won't work when it comes to people leaving prison or state care, young people living with mental illness or drug and alcohol issues, refugee or newly arrived migrant communities, or Aboriginal communities. Instead, services are at their best when they comprise longstanding and sophisticated networks made up of people, places and institutions that are grounded in relationships of trust. Many of these elements can at times be a challenge to measure (Davidson B. , 2011) (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013), let alone attach a price to. However, their importance is supported by evidence showing the impact that relationship and community connections can have on people's social and economic wellbeing (Furlong, 2013) (Vinson & Rawsthorne, Lifting our gaze - The community appraisal and strengthening framework, 2013).

Finally, human services work within, and often seek to change, wider community and societal contexts, including to inform the development of new solutions to complex social problems: functions that operate outside of the market. The analysis of services put forward by the *Draft Report* fails to understand this and at its worst risks diminishing the role of human services in tackling wider societal challenges including:

- the entrenched and structural nature of disadvantage (Vinson, 2007), particularly in communities left behind as a result of economic restructuring
- a decline in trust and involvement in many civic institutions including political parties, churches, unions, media and government
- a greater array of voices and interests in public debates and policy processes (MacDermott, 2008), with the voices of the most vulnerable at risk of being marginalised.

**Jesuit Social Services' view:**

*The Draft Report* makes sweeping recommendations for strengthening competition across a diverse range of human services on the basis of a narrow understanding of the nature of human services, that neglects their broader social purpose and significant contextual factors.

There is a fundamental disconnect in drawing on this narrow understanding and applying it to a wide range of services, especially those that exist to address gaps and issues that have been created by the market.

We call on the Panel to ensure that competition policy does not erode the wider role of human services in building individual capabilities, cohesive communities, and a more civil society.

## The role of government

*(Comments on sections 10.1 and 10.2 of the Draft Report)*

The past three decades have seen the role of government in relation to human services delivery change significantly (Smyth, 2014) (Ohlin, 1998). We are concerned that the *Panel's* endorsement of the separation of regulation, funding, and service delivery neglects the experience during this period, and promotes a 'one size fits all' approach in which government's role is reduced to that of a service purchasing agency. This approach would have significant implications when it comes to accountability, complaints, and the ongoing capacity of services to evolve to meet the needs of the community.

Of particular concern is the application of the 'government as purchaser' approach to services where there are serious imbalances in power between government and citizen, such as criminal justice services, child protection, and the administration of social security entitlements. Experience has illustrated the challenges that arise where the role of government in these areas is diminished.

One example of many includes the experience in Victoria, when a market for prison services was created from 1993, and the role of government changed from '*rowing*' (delivering services) to '*steering*' through separate regulation and purchasing functions (Sands, 2004). During this period three private prisons were built which the government regulated through performance based service delivery contracts (English & Baxter, 2010). This process saw the development of new accommodation, changes to performance frameworks across the prison system, and the development of accountability systems for private prison contractors (Kirby, Roche, & Greaves, 2000).

Almost immediately this separation resulted in major performance problems and broader issues related to the process, most notably a series of deaths during the first months of operation of the Port Philip private prison and major safety issues at the Women's Metropolitan Prison that resulted in the prison being taken over by the state. An independent review of the management and operations of private prisons completed in 2000 found significant issues with contracting, leadership and coordination across the system (Kirby, Roche, & Greaves, 2000) that were directly linked to the separate regulation, funding and delivery functions: The review noted that the state's duty of care to prisoners was undermined by the arms-length relationship between the regulator and service providers.

The review called for a '*renewed focus on collaboration rather than competition, and on promoting the notion of a system rather than an industry*' (Kirby, Roche, & Greaves, 2000). In 2003, significant reforms saw the steering/rowing model abolished in favour of a single corrections entity, Corrections Victoria taking much more direct oversight of prison operations, including of the two private prisons remaining as part of the Victorian prison system.

More broadly, the transformation of government from provider to regulator and contractor does not diminish the need for accountability and compliance. Consequently often 'managerialist governance networks' have replaced traditional public service delivery (MacDermott, 2008). In some cases a consequence of this change is that rather than seeing themselves as partners or collaborators in service delivery, '*it fosters hostility between government officials and non-profit providers*' (Lyons,

2000). These issues have the potential to undermine working relationships that would contribute to the gradual improvement of services over time.

This is especially problematic when it comes to services responding to people with a range of complex needs. *Managerialist governance networks* can mean a focus on tightly defined contractual goals or outputs to the exclusion of collaboration and innovation to meet people's needs. An example of this in practice has been employment services, which have been delivered under contract by a range of providers for nearly two decades. An ongoing issue with these services has been their inability to meet the multiple needs of the most disadvantaged jobseekers (Davidson P. , 2011). In the words of the former CEO of one agency that delivered services in this system, '*Often there is no scope for agencies to develop their own unique service approach, because the contract is so specific*' (MacDermott, 2008). Ultimately, the end result has been low levels of performance in achieving positive outcomes for this group and ineffective use of significant government resources.

From our experience, we believe that rather than rigid models outlining what the role of government should be, there needs to be a greater emphasis on the development of relationships of reciprocal value between government, service providers, and the wider community to advance social and economic outcomes. The importance of these types of institutional relationships were recognised by the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the role of the not-for-profit sector (2010) which noted that the type of relationship a funding model fosters between government and service providers was critical. A range of different terms and models offers a way forward here including co-production, participatory public services, multi-stakeholder governance (Angel, 2014), relational contracts, integrated governance (MacDermott, 2008) or 'market stewardship' (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013). However, a challenge remains in moving beyond rhetoric and actually realising meaningful and inclusive relationships across service development and delivery.

We have seen effective examples of this approach in some areas of our work. The Victorian youth justice system shows how relationships between government and stakeholders can be utilised to develop shared approach across the system, with policy and service responses contributing to the realisation of this approach. This has played a part in successes across a range of measures with:

- rates of young people incarcerated in Victoria declining by 75 per cent since 1981 (Cuneen, 2013)
- Victoria maintaining a stable youth offending rate that is the third lowest in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014), and
- Victoria maintaining the lowest rate of expenditure per child on youth justice services in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2014).

In terms of service delivery, roles are played by both government and community services depending on what particular outcome is sought. For young people on custodial or community based orders, supervisory functions are undertaken by the Youth Justice Division of Victoria's Department of Human Services. However a range of services focusing on the wider needs (housing, health, education) are contracted out through competitive tendering to a diversity of community-based organisations with strong track records and linkages across the community sector.

Partnership is embedded in service delivery through consortia and governance mechanisms that include regional and statewide forums of key stakeholders. This feeds into wider partnership and

joint work between government and stakeholders in the community. Government plays a key role in enabling these partnership processes through leadership and the investment of goodwill and resources. Oversight and accountability is enhanced through supervisory and complaints functions exercised by the Youth Parole and Residential Board as well as the Victorian Ombudsman, the Auditor General, and the Commissioner for Children and Young People. A network of community agencies working across the system, Smart Justice for Young people, provides a further community-based accountability mechanism that also works on identifying and then working with government to develop solutions to wider systemic issues.

The Victorian youth justice system exists in an enabling context due to a shared commitment across Victoria Police, the Courts, the Victorian Government, both sides of politics, and the community sector. However it demonstrates many of the features of a successful approach to public policy and service delivery in a highly challenging area. We believe this has been the result of strong leadership and commitment by government to partnership, clear roles and responsibilities across the system, openness and flexibility in service design and delivery, and strong systems for transparency (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013).

**Jesuit Social Services' view:**

Government has a role to play in ensuring that our community has efficient and effective services that contribute to achieving social purposes.

We believe that where these services impact significantly on the rights of people, where power imbalances exist, or duties are owed, that there should be a strong preference for government delivery unless a strong case to the contrary exists, and safeguards and accountability are in place.

More sophisticated models of governance and partnership for service delivery should be developed instead of a 'one-sized fits all' separation of regulation, funding and service provision.

## **The importance of choice and agency for service users**

*(Comments on section 10.3 of the Draft Report)*

We welcome the recognition of the importance of choice for service users. Providing genuine choice and building individual agency lie at the heart of Jesuit Social Services' work and that of many others across human services. It is supported by evidence showing that it can contribute to positive outcomes across a range of domains (MacLeod J & Nelson, 2000) (Nissen, 2006) (Productivity Commission, 2011).

The high level guidance in the *Draft Report* provides a starting point for understanding when and where principles of choice might be applied, and also identifying some of the barriers and limits to introducing choice. However, it contains some gaps particularly when it comes to the manner in which people exercise choice and access quality services. Most importantly, the challenge of achieving genuine choice in service provision must be recognised.

Conflating choice with the ability to choose who provides a particular service is not enough (Angel, 2014). Genuine choice in services is dependent on the level of control accorded to service users by both government and/or service providers (Davidson B. , 2011) and the availability of the right

service types to meet users' needs. We know from experience that real choice is often enhanced more by a smaller set of diverse service options than nominal choice among cookie cutter options.

Recent experience of reform to community mental health services in Victoria has demonstrated the nature of this challenge. A stated aim of reforms was to build a community mental health system that *"improved client and carer experience, with greater choice and meaningful involvement in decision making"* (Department of Health Victoria, 2013). The reality of reform has seen funding cut to a diverse range of services that had built up specialisations over many years and replaced with a less flexible service model with two to three large mainstream mental health providers providing generic options in each region of the state. Specialist services catering to high needs groups such as homeless people and young people with co-morbid mental illness and drug and alcohol issues have been hit the hardest, despite these service models having a strong track record in successfully engaging people who themselves chose not to access more generic service responses. This new approach results in reduced diversity and choice for these groups.

Levels of funding are also crucial to ensuring genuine choice, as major issues arise where resources are not available to provide genuine choices for service users (Davidson B. , 2011). This is a significant issue in employment services with tight financial models and a pressure to reduce costs leading to standardised and often minimal levels of support (Fowkes, 2011). Research into these services shows that the differences between providers has diminished over the past decade, and that there is now a high degree of standardisation in services (Considine, Lewis, & O'Sullivan, 2011). Similarly, in the aged care system providers have been allocated set numbers of support packages for older people through tender processes but the number of people approved for packages exceeded the number. As a result genuine choice was diminished (Davidson B. , 2011).

Beyond the issue of choice between different types of services, it is also important to consider how the approach within a particular service impacts upon people's agency and levels of empowerment. We believe that it is vital, particularly for services working with vulnerable people, that a strengths-based approach be adopted. An integral tenet of all strengths-based practice models is putting the client, their goals and aspirations, at the centre of planning and service delivery. This can then reinforce the development of service delivery approaches that provide genuine choice. These approaches have been shown to produce positive outcomes (MacLeod J & Nelson, 2000) (Nissen, 2006). There must also be adequate resourcing of services to make this a reality, particularly in providing specialist services and higher levels of flexibility for highly disadvantaged people and those with complex needs.

Further issues relating to the manner in which people exercise choice and service quality must also be taken into account. Flexibility needs to be built into services from the outset to ensure that people have the opportunity to exercise choice. This should take into account research into the nature of help-seeking behaviours among particular groups of people, such as young people (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005) or people with alcohol and drug issues (Reavley, Cvetkovski, Jorm, & Lubman, 2010) (Lee, Harney, & Pennay, 2012). The challenge of engagement may require flexible entry points or even assertive forms of outreach to engage people and support them in accessing services where they then exercise a high degree of choice.

In regards to quality, research into self-directed funding models in the United Kingdom revealed that they had the potential to contribute to the development of a poorly regulated market for personal

assistance where training and support are not provided. Cortis, Meagher and Chan et al (2013) conclude that care must be taken with client directed funding models to ensure that they do not threaten the quality and continuity of care provided to service users. These potential impacts are arguably greatest for the most vulnerable who may lack capable networks of support or capacity to advocate for themselves (Productivity Commission, 2011).

**Jesuit Social Services' view:**

Choice should not simply mean being able to choose between different services offering the same thing. Genuine choice requires a diverse range of service options.

Within services there should be a focus on building agency and empowering people, with capacity for the goals and aspirations of service users to influence service development. This requires investment in services with high quality standards and a focus on relationships and the flexibility to engage with service users as and when services are required.

## **The role of community organisations and other providers of human services**

*(Comments on section 10.4 of the Draft Report)*

From our experience, we have seen how carefully crafted partnerships involving a diverse range of government and non-government service providers can contribute to more effective and responsive human services that build people's capabilities and the cohesion of communities. Australia's community sector has a long history of involvement in this type of activity. However, we believe the benefits of introducing for-profit providers into human services, as outlined by proponents (Sturgess, 2012) are often overstated and rarely realised in reality<sup>1</sup>.

Despite *the Panel's* acknowledgement of the value of different service providers, we have strong concerns that the push for this, when coupled with a tight fiscal environment, has favoured large scale for-profit service providers, with poor consequences for quality, diversity and choice. Recent experiences of service contracting in the UK (Angel, 2014), as well as the experience of the employment services in Australia bear this out (Considine, Lewis, & O'Sullivan, 2011).

The panel notes the incentives of for-profit providers to reduce costs and enhance the efficiency of human services. From experience and research we strongly believe that these efficiencies come at the cost of quality. We are not aware of any evidence that demonstrates the innovation that for-profits bring to human services, and instead are aware of countless examples of cost cutting and low levels of investment in services by for-profits that undermine service quality, including in areas such as Vocational Education and Training, Child Care, and employment services.

These issues reflect a broader concern around the impact of profit motives on the social objectives of human services. At one extreme, profit motives have the potential to marginalise subtler forms of social service. There is also strong evidence that it leads to 'gaming'<sup>2</sup> of services to maximise revenue

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<sup>1</sup> This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

<sup>2</sup> 'Gaming' is understood as situations where service providers respond in undesirable ways to reward structures. This often has the effect of 'hitting the target but missing the point' (Bevan & Hood, 2006). A major 'gaming' related issue in human services is failure to service people with more complex issues as they are less profitable (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013).

at the exclusion of more difficult groups, who are often those most in need of assistance (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013).

Community organisations have made a long and significant contribution to Australian society. Historically, our sector has not operated on the basis of market principles for, as Davidson (2011) notes: *“providers are not profit-maximisers, but social maximisers that contend that they have an intrinsic motivation to provide the best possible services”*. For organisations like Jesuit Social Services this intrinsic motivation is underpinned by our mission, our values, and the historical and ethical traditions which we draw from in our work.

Drawing on this, our approach to delivering services focus on building strong relationships with people and communities with a view to promoting their dignity and freedoms so that they can realise their hopes and aspirations. We do this by working with people in their local geographic and cultural communities; and seeking to actively build the strength and cohesion of these communities. There is also a broader transformational aspect to our work, through which we create space for community members to engage in our work and take action in their own communities to tackle the systemic disadvantage and injustices that they face.

Competition, commodification, and the marketisation of human services marks a significant transformation in what Smyth (2014) identifies as the three influences of state, market and the informal sector that have shaped the role of community organisations throughout Australian history. There is a long history of government support and investment in our sector that dates back to colonial times. In recent decades the boundary with government and market has shifted significantly, with community organisations increasingly delivering government funded services in competitive markets. The scale of this is evident in the fact that not-for-profit organisations received \$40.9 billion in government funding in 2012-13 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014) including \$13.5 billion for education and research, \$11.7 billion for social services and \$9.4 billion for health and hospitals.

Where it works well, contracting human services to community organisations can produce benefits for organisations themselves, government and the wider community. Community organisations have the opportunity to further their mission through extended delivery of services as well as increased influence with government partners. Government is able to draw on community organisations' links to and relationships of trust with community (Productivity Commission, 2010), something that can value add to services through access to volunteering, assets, and their capacity to cross subsidise services. Service users and the community can benefit from more responsive approaches to service delivery (Ohlin, 1998), a focus on wider community development and addressing the structural issues that underlie disadvantage.

However, operating in a competitive market for services presents significant challenges for community organisations. It can lead to mission drift as organisations focus on successfully competing in the market for service delivery and increasingly take on the form of bureaucracies or businesses (Davidson B. , 2011). Competition can undermine collaboration which is such a fundamental quality of the sector and its work (Ohlin, 1998). It also raises issues around independence from government, with a sense that by delivering services community organisations can be co-opted into wider agendas (MacDermott, 2008) and lose their independent voice. In

combination, these factors risk undermining the trusting relationship with community that provides legitimacy and support for the work of community organisations (Productivity Commission, 2010).

**Jesuit Social Services' view:**

Diversity in the provision of human services must not simply provide a means to cut costs by contracting these services to for-profit providers. Jesuit Social Services does not believe that the case for for-profit human service provision has been made.

Community organisations should not be seen, nor should they view themselves, simply as government service delivery arms. To do so, risks undermining the unique features from which these organisations derive their legitimacy and strength.

Community organisations can value add to service delivery. Where appropriate, community organisations should work together with government to co-develop and deliver services that meet organisations' mission, add value for government, and improve quality to community.

## **Implementation – Learning from experience of competition in human services**

*(Comments on section 10.5 of the Draft Report)*

We welcome the *Draft Report's* recognition that changes to human services need to be considered and refined over time. Implementation must also draw on the experience of introducing competition in human services in Australia and internationally since the early 1980s. This experience provides practical examples through which to test the claims of proponents of competition in human services that it contributes to greater efficiency, quality, adaptability, and innovation (Le Grand, 2007) (Sturgess, 2012). We are concerned that this evidence was not adequately explored in detail in the *Draft Report*.

Instead a range of examples, particularly those from the United Kingdom were used. We strongly urge caution in drawing on the United Kingdom as an exemplar in introducing competition and choice into human services. Over the past four years, against the backdrop of significant cuts to spending, public service reforms have unleashed a range of unintended consequences that largely work against the aspirations of meaningful choice, improved quality, and more responsive local services (Angel, 2014). Far from achieving a vibrant market for social services, experience has shown government has lacked capacity to effectively 'steward' markets for the provision of human services (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013). As a consequence large private organisations have taken over services at the expense of local providers, problematic contracting arrangements have been implemented (Hunter & Breidenbach-Roe, 2013), gaming of services is commonplace (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013), and, as a consequence, in some areas government has taken back a role in service delivery (Angel, 2014).

When considering implementation, it is important to draw on the learnings from previous experience of implementing competition principles to human services. This includes the impact on:

- **Efficiency** – in the 1980s and 1990s the belief that cost savings of 20 per cent could be achieved by contracting out public services was popularised by studies on waste collection

and health services. However, the reliability and methodology of these studies were later criticised, including that they are “*deceptively optimistic on average and unlikely to apply to many public-sector services*” (Hodge, 1999). Other criticisms include that cost savings diminish over time (Greenwood, 2014), and that the transaction costs of competitive markets for human services are not considered (Davidson B. , 2011). This experience raises serious doubts about using competition as a basis for efficiency gains and cost savings alone.

- **Quality** – there is no definitive data to show that competition and for-profit provision has improved the quality of human services (Angel, 2014). In education, competition and choice has not resulted in improved learning outcomes in Australia (Jenson, Weidmann, & Farmer, 2013), the US, UK and Sweden. Instead they have resulted in huge disparities of resources between schools, that have tended to residualise public education (Reid, 2012). Issues with quality and the structure of contracts have arisen with service providers ‘gaming’ the service delivery system in order to maximize revenue (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013). This can be seen in employment services where the hardest to help clients are ‘parked’ and easier to help clients are assisted to maximize revenue (Rees, Whitworth, & Carter, 2014), and in Vocational Education and Training systems in many Australian states.
- **Adaptability** – Research on personalisation policies in the United Kingdom identified difficulties in accessing creative forms of support through personal budgets (Angel, 2014). Contestability has the potential to marginalise this and other forms of subtler social service which are focused less on effecting short-term change than they are on achieving long term change through building relationships of trust, solidarity and care (Productivity Commission, 2010).
- **Innovation** – The implementation of competition approaches can impact upon the capacity for innovation (Gash, Panchaia, Sims, & Hotson, 2013), with contracting processes and terms and the transfer of risk often acting as impediments to innovation (Crowe, Gash, & Kippin, 2014 ). The experience in Australia with employment services demonstrated that contestability can have a stifling effect on innovation. Research has found that despite a diverse range of for-profit and not-for-profit providers delivering employment services, over time the nature of services provided has actually become more standardized (Considine, Lewis, & O'Sullivan, 2011).

#### **Jesuit Social Services View:**

Where competition has been increased in human services, particularly through the introduction of for-profit service provision, promised gains in efficiency, quality, adaptability and innovation have often not been realised. Implementation is crucial and requires careful and considered planning with high levels of engagement of stakeholders.

## Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services works to build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged people, families, and communities.

Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where it has the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Jesuit Social Services values every person and seeks to engage with them in a respectful way, that acknowledges their experiences and skills and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential.

We do this by intervening directly to address disadvantage and by influencing hearts and minds for social change. We strengthen and build respectful, constructive relationships for:

- **Effective services** – by partnering with people most in need and those who support them to address disadvantage
- **Education** – by providing access to life-long learning and development
- **Capacity building** – by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact
- **Advocacy** – by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research
- **Leadership development** – by partnering across sectors to build expertise and commitment for justice

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by suicide, trauma and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment

Currently our direct services and volunteer programs are located in: Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory. Services include:

- **Brosnan Services:** supporting young people and adults in the justice system, and assisting them to make a successful transition from custody back into the community. Within the suite of services are Perry House, Dillon House and Youth Justice Community Support Services.
- **Jesuit Community College:** increasing opportunities for people constrained by social and economic disadvantage to participate in education, work and community life and reach their full potential.

- **Community Programs:** working with people on public housing estates across metropolitan Melbourne, including the African Australian and Vietnamese communities
- **Connexions:** delivering intensive support and counselling for young people with co-occurring mental health, substance and alcohol misuse problems.
- **Artful Dodgers Studios:** providing pathways to education, training and employment for young people with multiple and complex needs associated with mental health, substance abuse and homelessness.
- **The Outdoor Experience:** offering an alternative treatment service through a range of outdoor intervention programs for young people aged 15 – 25 years, who have or have had issues with alcohol and/or other drugs.
- **Support After Suicide:** supporting people bereaved by suicide, including children and young people.
- **Western Sydney Program:** delivering social enterprise and other community building that provide affordable food, training and employment opportunities to people living in the area of Mount Druitt, Western Sydney.
- **Just Leadership:** Working in partnership with community and corporate enterprises to foster leadership for a just society. This includes the African Australian Inclusion Program, a professional bridging program developed in partnership with the National Australia Bank.
- **Capacity building** activities in Central Australia with Aboriginal communities to improve their situation and to have more control over their lives. This work started in 2006 after local community and church leaders approached us for support.

Research, advocacy and policy are advanced through our Policy Unit, coordinating across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our Learning and Practice Development Unit builds the capacity of our services through staff development and training as well as articulating and disseminating information on best practice approaches to intervening with participants across our programs.

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