

**27 June 2007**

## **ACCESS TO HOME-BASED SERVICES CAN BE CONFUSING AND DIFFICULT FOR MANY, SAYS AUDITOR GENERAL**

A report from WA Auditor General Colin Murphy has highlighted what a struggle it can be for members of the community, especially those who have profound or severe disabilities, are frail aged or have medical conditions, to access home-based services.

Mr Murphy's report, tabled in Parliament today, examined the efficiency and effectiveness of five home-based services administered by the Disability Services Commission and the Department of Health.

Primarily the report found that for many, accessing the right home-based service can be confusing and difficult – different services had different eligibility requirements, different application and referral processes, different assessment processes, and offered varying levels of benefit.

The onus was on people needing assistance, such as the disabled, elderly or ill, to identify and research the services that best met their needs and then decide, in instances where accessing one service precludes access to others, which mix of services provides them with the greatest total benefit.

Further, Mr Murphy found that whilst home-based services can significantly improve the quality of life, neither the Department of Health nor the Disability Services Commission could show that their home-based services were in fact doing that for their clients – both agencies needed to develop better measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of their services.

One service, Supported Community Living, was found to be lacking in openness and accountability in giving clients the reasons for the rejection of an application for assistance and assurance that the application had been appropriately considered.

Specifically, the services scrutinised were:

- Home and Community Care
- Hospital in the Home
- Chronic Disease Management Teams
- Community Aids and Equipment Program
- Supported Community Living

Key findings in the reports were:

- Information about home-based services is widely available and there are many opportunities to apply for, or be referred to, individual home-based services.
- People who need home-based services face multiple State government agencies with different application, referral and assessment processes – this can be confusing for many people.
- People who acquire a disability after 60 years of age have fewer home-based service options than those in other age groups.
- Four of the five home-based services examined have assessment processes which are open and accountable.
- DSC is trialling a new assessment process for its Supported Community Living service that if introduced should provide consistency in assessment and greater accountability for the funding decisions.
- DSC's new assessment process will continue to lack the transparency about decisions that are normally provided by government assistance programs. DSC has agreed to consider alternative feedback mechanisms that will reduce the current frustration that exists amongst

- applicants.
- Only two of the five home-based services examined have processes that govern the quality of service provided:
    - the two services for people with medical conditions have quality of care accreditation processes
    - the other three services have standards that govern service administration but not the quality of service provided. However, developments are underway to bring a greater focus on quality of service
  - The five home-based services need better effectiveness measures.
  - All five home-based services have adequate cost and demand information.

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