



Community Information
& Support Victoria | Advocacy
Support
Research

Submission regarding the Victoria Service Sector Reform

April 2013

Who we are

Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community information and support services representing 60 community-based, not-for-profit agencies, staffed by over 250 paid staff and in excess of 2,500 volunteers.

Our local services assist people experiencing personal and financial difficulties by providing information, referral and support services including Emergency Relief. Our agencies provide free services to an average of 300,000 people every year.

We direct people who need help to local centres for services.

Helping those most in need Our main work is with the vulnerable and disadvantaged, including those on welfare payments, single parents, newly arrived, refugees, those with mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues and those experiencing family violence and family breakdown.

Emergency relief Many of our agencies can provide emergency relief, both financial and practical, by providing food, food vouchers, travel cards, petrol vouchers, assistance with household bills, rent, pharmaceutical supplies and telephone bills.

One voice for many We liaise with all tiers of government and other peak bodies, conduct training and undertake sound, evidence-based research. We are grateful to the State and Federal Governments for their funding support for core and special projects. We also have increasingly strengthening contact and cooperation with a range of peer organisations.

This is a vital interface for not just CISVic and its members but also for the community support sector as a whole, exploring more effective use of resources, skills and funding conduits. This has included partnerships to deliver important training to volunteers and community workers.

We also sit on a number of state & federal government groups including a State Ministerial Advisory Council and Federal Consultative Committee and other relevant peak body advisory groups, including VCOSS (Victorian Council of Social Services), the ultimate state community peak body.

We value partnerships and collaboration

An ability to positively interface with the political and bureaucratic levels of government is essential to us remaining an effective conduit between those in need and policy forums.

CISVic and its members are committed to volunteering and offer a range of opportunities for people to work with us.

And we seek and arrange funding from philanthropic organisations and private donors.

Submission

This submission does not respond to all of Professor Peter Shergold's items in the discussion paper but to those we see as most relevant and priorities for our sector at this time.

We do however endorse the possible pathways to reform which look at improving outcomes, how the system is funded and how the system operates.

Key areas of concern regarding Victorian Service Sector Reform

1. State government region alignment

CISVic is concerned that not all state government departments are aligned in their geographic boundaries and recommend that this is rectified. For example, Department of Human Services have different regions to the Department of Justice. A number of our agencies receive funding from numerous state departments and are allocated funds based on different regions.

Recommendation:

- **That all state government departments align their geographic regions**

2. Client Centred Service Models

The CISVic service model is placed-based and holistic in working with its communities and clients. Our agencies often devise and deliver innovative programs that are in response to local issues. For example, Casey North Information & Support Service, located at Fountain Gate Shopping Complex and in the growth corridor of Casey Cardinia Local Government Area has developed a program *Keeping it Together* which aims to prevent the break-down of relationships and family violence for families who are experiencing financial hardship.

Recommendations:

- **We would welcome state based funding that uses social, economic and community context to develop formulas for funding allocations according region with government facilitating or resourcing the connections between the various service providers to deliver a more holistic approach to client centred practice.**
- **We would welcome state based funding that provides flexibility for agencies to develop and deliver responsive and preventative services for their local community; that is, client centred service delivery.**

3. Data & Contracts

CISVic requires it membership to compile a certain set of data, as do their various funding bodies. This of course is a time intensive process for agencies and many have had to invest significant funds to implement ICT systems that meet their requirements. We have recently been involved in consultancy with the Federal Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) which is looking to develop a

Performance Framework with a common data set for the various programs it funds. Many of our agencies receive funding for different programs from the same government department and currently have various funding agreements and data requirements. They are moving to one agreement for the various programs and towards one set of common data collection. Currently, a number of our members receive various streams of funding from the same state department with differing data sets.

Recommendation:

- **That state government departments look to streamline data collection requirements under various funding agreements implement the collection of key common data.**

4. Roles of government and community sector

CISVic agencies predominantly receive core funding from local government. Many also receive additional funding for specific programs from state and federal government. We see it as a role of peak bodies to enable sub-sectors to share information, innovation and resources. CISVic currently receives funding from the state Department of Human Services under Corporate Services, Concessions and State-wide Contracts Unit.

Recommendation:

That state government adequately fund peak bodies to enhance program delivery, development, resourcing and capacity of their members and use the peaks expertise in seeking relevant data and information for the development of policy.

5. Funding Streams

Traditionally, in the CISVic sector, operational funding comes from local government, specific programs from specific departments (e.g. Financial Counselling programs receive funding from the Department of Justice). The funding of Emergency Relief, the provision of material aid to those experiencing financial hardship, comes to our agencies predominantly from FaHCSIA. The current funding levels are inadequate in meeting increasing demand for individuals and families who are experiencing increasingly complex issues. Many of our agencies seek funding from alternative funding streams, like philanthropics to gain further funds. Philanthropic funding tends to be in the form of direct brokerage for clients with no funding for staff.

Recommendation:

That state government work with the philanthropic sector to encourage and develop a culture which sees re-current funding for staffing programs, rather than just brokerage or pilots.

6. Consortiums and partnerships

A number of CISVic member agencies have developed consortiums and partnerships to deliver services. We understand that at all levels of government, the desire is to reduce the

number of contracts for services. CISVic and its members certainly value partnerships and sharing resources but caution that this kind of working together is time and resource intensive.

Recommendation:

That state government recognise that resources are required for successful consortiums and partnerships to be developed and maintained.