



Meals on Wheels Queensland

RED TAPE BURDEN IN MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICES IN QUEENSLAND

Tuesday, 25 February 2014

Submission on behalf of 147 Member Meals on Wheels Services – Queensland.

Background

It has long been vocalised by Meals on Wheels Volunteer Management Committees of the need to reduce their Red Tape burden.

Queensland Meals on Wheels supports the concern of volunteers that they are drowning in paperwork, however also supports the need for accountability. This could be however reduced to one level of Risk Management.

Meals on Wheels Services In Queensland receive a Meal Subsidy of \$2.64 per meal for clients who are under 65 (under 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) who have a disability funded by the State Government and \$2.64 for clients who are over 65 (over 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Peoples) from the Federal Government.

Meals on Wheels Services in Queensland receive absolutely no funding from Government to support administrative functions in their services. To maintain the administration burdens they fundraise and charge meal fees to the clients. From time to time Government have given financial assistance to implement legislative requirements but not to maintain them. (The notification letter to services from State Government regarding an increase from \$2.55 to \$2.64 did state that the increase was to assist with administrative costs. In a service that delivers 40 meals per day that would be \$25.20 per week for administration.

All current reporting requirements were introduced individually with no money to assist with the added burden.

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Current Areas of Concern affecting Meals on Wheels volunteers

Community Care Standards – State and Federal

Financial Reporting – State and Federal

Incorporated Association Reporting – State and Federal (ACNC AND Fair Trading QLD)

Police Checks – State and Federal

Food Safety Legislation – State (underpinned by Federal Legislation)

Data Collection and reporting – State and Federal (MDS)

Output variation reporting to the Federal Government

Work Health and Safety changes to include volunteers

Requirements of the Community Care Guidelines

Requirements of the HACCC Program Guidelines

Issues

- Operationally red tape can be created by new legislative and regulatory compliance created by each Government level.
- Compliance obligations continue to increase even though Government continue to promise red tape reduction. Meals on Wheels have no opportunity to pass on the costs of these changes as it would lead to exorbitant meal costs to clients.
- Volunteers in some services lack expertise to complete the required red tape paperwork but do not have funds to pay for a qualified person to complete the tasks on their behalf. The Volunteer committees are overwhelmed and resigning as a result of the increasing requirements.
- Volunteers are often very willing but have been unable to recruit the required expertise to assist them on their committees. (New volunteers are difficult to recruit as they do not want to deal with the red tape requirements particularly treasurers and secretaries)
- Very little training is given to the Volunteer sector when a new system is introduced eg during the recent split of Aged and Disability their reporting requirements changed from a subsidy report to two entirely different reporting systems. No training was offered nor was there expertise to assist the volunteers through the changes.
- Interestingly we measure the number of meals and that's how we are funded but no one measures the quality of a meal.

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- Signing two agreements with Federal and State Government leads to confusion and double expectations.
- Political changes can impact heavily on Meals on Wheels eg the split of money promised one contract however after only 1 year of the split services were given two contracts due to a breakdown in Government discussions. Introduction of the ACNC and its reporting requirements on top of the current State requirements.
- Contracts are a strain on the Meals on Wheels Services who have no idea of what they will be funded after 2015. During the split of aged care and disability care some Meals on Wheels Services in Queensland accepted no State funds for the under 65's. This is of huge concern that our under 65's in some areas are not being given the opportunity to source meals through Meals on Wheels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Single contract for all Meals on Wheels services.

Single audited financial statements should suffice for financial acquittals.

Proportionate risk based expectations "burden of proof" to demonstrate legislative compliance.

Accept that Governance standards are assessed by the ACNC and remove from the Common Care Standards, if a Meals on Wheels service is registered with the ACNC.

Measure and understand the Risks of the Meals on Wheels services.

Measure and understand the work of the Meals on Wheels Services to appropriately implement red tape eg Food Safety is one area that no leniency should be applied but Auditing of Common Care Standards is far too complex.

Accept the current certifications ie Food Safety Programs are audited by Local Government why do they need to prove auditing during the Standards reviews.

Set up a state volunteering passport ie once a volunteer has received a police check, undergone induction training, WH&S training, Food Safety training program so a volunteer can attend a Meals on Wheels Service with a training passport in hand, holding all that should be required.

Allow carryover of unspent funds after 3 years without onerous application and approval process within a short time frame.

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Negotiation of an increase of meal outputs while an existing contract is in place. Meals on Wheels services clients should not have to be placed on a waiting list for the \$2.64 subsidy.

Red Tape is being seen as a way to “force” small services out of the industry which would work in the metropolitan regions but could lead to failure of Meals on Wheels services in rural and remote communities who have not alternative suppliers. Recently Injune Meals on Wheels closed stating the Red Tape burden was just too much to cope with for very few clients. As a result there is now no Meal delivery service in Injune.

Understand what is really is that we need to measure in Meals on Wheels. Queensland Meals on Wheels agree that we need to measure the quality of the meal, social justice impact, client impact, Food Safety measures and reasonably assess the accountability of the Meals on Wheels Service and the impact on the community in general.

That Government initiate ways to work with Queensland Meals on Wheels to find ways that we can support Meals on Wheels Services from a State perspective. eg we currently collect, collate and transmit the MDS (Minimum Data Set) on behalf of the 145 services. Perhaps there are back office operations that would allow Meals on Wheels to continue to operate in their community but to alleviate some of the red tape burden. Eg fund Queensland Meals on Wheels to police check all Meals on Wheels volunteers.

For further clarification or information please contact Debra Tape – CEO

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