

Submission to the New Zealand Productivity Commission:

More effective social services

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. The consultation paper is comprehensive (and very interesting). Most of the questions asked in the paper would require considerable thought to answer cogently. Unfortunately, as a tiny organisation with no spare capacity, it isn't possible to spend the time required to do this. This submission is, therefore, making the points that most matter to us.

Background to Delta

Delta Community Support Trust is a mission of the North Avon Baptist Church in Richmond, Christchurch. We serve Richmond and surrounding areas. This part of Christchurch has large patches of socio economic need (deprivation index 9/10). Services we provide are as follows:

Community Services

- Food store
- Budget advice
- Footprints - a community café
- Craft group
- Delta Inn - provides community meals
- Advocacy and support
- Social English classes – including the Shirley International Playgroup for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds and their pre-school children.
- Empowerment courses
- Delta Community Church (different from North Avon Baptist and serving the same community as our services)
- Gardening – teaching people to grow and prepare vegetables and fruit
- We also get loads of spuds from a kind farmer in Leeston. These are dispensed to other organisations like ours. Local supermarkets give us bread to put out with the spuds at reception for people to come and get. There are also other donations of food for the store and for our Friday lunch.
- Second-hand goods donated to provide very cheap clothing and household kit.

Friendship Link

Friendship Link – provides opportunities for those with intellectual disabilities to form friendships and socialise with their peers.

Evergreen Club

A day club for older people.

These details and more are on our website: www.deltatrust.org.nz.

Funding

Our funding arrangements are: 50.2% (\$331K) contracted, 36.5% (\$241K) grants, 13.3% (\$88K) other monies (from donors largely – but we also have koha or donation arrangements for the services we provide – such as coffee and lunch. We also rent out parts of our building. We have contracts with the CDHB / MoH for Evergreen Club and Friendship Link and TEC and Ministry of

Education for educational activities in Community Services. The bulk of our contracts are those with the MoH and CDHB (c \$300K).

Governance and organisation

We are governed by the Delta Community Support Trust Board. We have a small, competent management team and staff of 20 people (with varying hours) and around 40 volunteers. We could not do what we do without the volunteers – many of whom have been clients of Delta’s community services and who sometimes have ongoing issues and needs of their own. Our staff are experienced and well qualified. We have audited financial processes and collect and report data – although we keep the latter to a minimum because of the time it takes.

Sustainability and certainty of funding

There is no money to be made from what we do here. Although you wouldn’t know it if you walked in off the street, most people who work at Delta have a strong Christian motivation. Those of us who are not Christian are motivated to make a small difference by putting back into our local community.

We have a number of large and small generous benefactors. As with all donor-based funding, we can’t count on it but without it we would not be able to provide a number of the services our community needs. The four government contracts we hold are our key source of funding (see above). From our perspective, useful contracts would be:

- Short contract with well-thought out and only essential non reporting requirements.
- Multi-year contracts.
- Simple reporting requirements.
- Pricing which reflects changes in cost of living (not currently the case – for example Evergreen contracted price per person per day is \$51. We estimate our costs to \$85 per person per day).
- Plain English.

Currently, we find contracts overly complicated, using jargon and technical language and overly generalised so we aren’t always sure what is expected. Payment mechanisms for CDHB contracts are complex and we often need to chase up payment (to our cost) and sometimes spend a fair amount of time getting the correct payment.

We expect to be accountable for public money and to manage it efficiently. Greater certainty in funding and longer term contracts would enable us to maintain a stable, able staff and to manage overhead (including a small fleet of vans used to pick up clients and take people on outings) across our small organisation. Increased stability of funding would strengthen our ability to innovate, improve our effectiveness and respond more readily to peoples’ needs.

Client-directed services

Our services are currently client-directed. It is, in our view, the right way for people to come here. Like our clients, we want minimum bureaucracy entailed in accessing these services.

Local is good

Providing services locally is good for the people in our part of Christchurch. Many people don’t drive. We pick up our Evergreen club members from wherever they live, carers bring people to Friendship Link or they come by taxi if they can. People usually come to Delta House or other

venues to use our community services by bus or bicycle or on foot. If we weren't local, they would probably not come.

There is also the important element in building community. This part of Christchurch was adversely affected by the earthquakes. Many are still living in damaged homes. Delta House gives these people and others somewhere to be – in company.

Commission understanding the social services sector

While the bulk of social services funding will be spent on larger providers in a relatively tidy way, I think it would be great if the Productivity Commission understands what is going on in and how the social services provision world is for the least advantaged in our country. We would be very pleased to host a member of the commission at our place. Come for lunch on Friday (along with around eighty other people from our community). It's a good meal (prepared by a staff member and number of volunteers) and a wonderful experience.

Robbie Thomson

Services Facilitator (CEO) (Interim)
Delta Community Support Trust