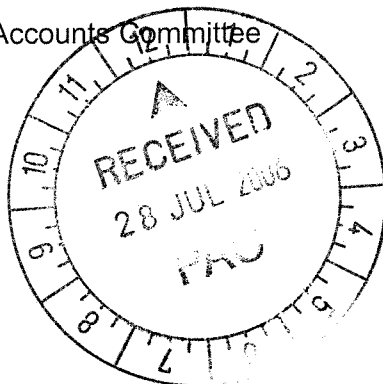


Ms Jackie Ohlin  
Senior Committee Officer  
Legislative Assembly Public Accounts Committee  
Parliament of NSW  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney  
NSW 2000

27 July 2006



REF: PAC 284

Dear Ms Ohlin,

I am pleased to respond to your invitation to submit comments on behalf of the NSW Meals on Wheels Association to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the Home and Community care Programme and the Home Care Service of NSW.

Because I am myself on the Advisory Board of the Home Care Service of NSW, I restrict my comments to the HACCC component of the inquiry.

I do however wish to make several recommendations for improvement to the current deeply unsatisfactory situation of extensive delays in the discharging of grants under the HACCC program. These delays greatly increase the workload of already overstretched service providers, and impact ultimately on the clients whose welfare the program is intended to ensure.

#### 1. Remove dual Commonwealth / State approval process

Approval of the HACCC State Plan should be streamlined so that only one round of sign-off is required for the release of funds each year. This could be achieved by developing a set of Commonwealth / State agreed criteria or guidelines, within which the State had sole authority to approve grants.

Commonwealth and State departments should agree the mechanism which would be employed for approvals. The State would then have responsibility for implementing the process, ensuring compliance with the agreed criteria, and reporting back on the outcomes. Basic indexation covering known increases in ongoing costs (including Award wages) should be automatically included in the State Plan so that there is no uncertainty in this area.

This single level of approval should allow the return to a ten-day Ministerial sign-off process.

#### 2. Create a three-year funding cycle

State plans and discharging of grants should be brought into line with the three-year funding cycles increasingly being employed by the NSW Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care. This would greatly reduce annual administration, and bring governmental funding programs into the same cycle as service provider Acquittals.

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A three-year funding cycle would also allow the HACC State Plan to be signed off and announced without reference to the timing of the annual Commonwealth and State budgets. Core elements of the Plan could easily be agreed in three-year time blocks. In practice, this already occurs: planning and consultation is completed prior to the budget allocation announcements at present, but the sign-off is delayed for political reasons. These delays are at the cost of provision of essential services.

### 3. Priorities should be agreed in advance for the use of additional / unspent funds

Although these first two recommendations should greatly reduce the present situation of accumulation of funds unspent due to late approvals, further efficiencies could be achieved by ensuring that any such funds were allocated to previously approved programs or priorities. This would avoid the present last-minute allocations made principally in order to expend funds, rather than to achieve strategic aims.

Consultation with service providers, peak bodies, and other stakeholders should be undertaken to compile a list, in order of priority, of projects to which any additional or unexpected funds will be applied. The HACC Issues Forum has done some work in this area already and has come up with a series of priorities around training, workforce development, IT support, and service development goals which might form a starting point for such a list.

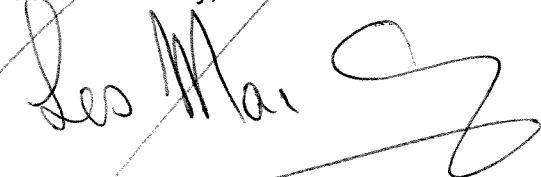
### 4. The HACC State Plan should be made publicly available

This would increase accountability by both government and service providers, as well as facilitating more direct consultation with service consumers. It would also allow services to align their own strategic planning cycles and priorities with those of the State Plan, and to better understand and communicate with their funding body.

In addition, a public State Plan would form an important starting point for the development and communication of benchmarks for the provision of services to the HACC target group. These benchmarks, and the appropriate means of measuring outcomes against them, would be agreed jointly between service providers and government, and would serve as the basis for improving transparency and consistency, as well as timeliness in the discharging of grants.

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry and look forward to discussing these crucial issues further.

Yours sincerely,



Les MacDonald  
CEO, NSW Meals on Wheels Association Inc.