

Submission
No 40

**INQUIRY INTO SERVICES PROVIDED OR FUNDED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY AND
HOME CARE**

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 30/07/2010

Partially Confidential

**Submission to the Inquiry into services provided or funded by the
NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC)**

Date: 30 July 2010

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Director and Standing Committee on Social Issues,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to make this submission into the inquiry of services provided or funded by the NSW Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

I am a wheelchair user with a spinal cord injury, and I have been receiving Home Care services since an accident several years ago. The majority of my care workers have been lovely, with a genuine desire to help people, backed up with an ability to do so. One such care worker changed my life in very positive way.

As I'm largely independent, the service I receive only includes cleaning. As I work 4-5 days a week and lead a busy extra-curricular life (volunteering, training and contesting parking fines, among other things), I need a cleaner to be able to come while I am not at home. Where I was living previously, this was arranged without issue. When I moved to another suburb, I changed ADHC areas, and was told that only under exceptional circumstances could a care worker be given a house key, and my circumstances were not exceptional. I then raised this with the manager of the unit, who said the same thing. Imagine telling people, week after week, that you can't make a meeting, training, a dinner or other event because the cleaner was coming. Interestingly, I found my friends and associates blaming me for the situation, for not being assertive enough.

I then wrote to the Minister, who made it happen, and there hasn't been an issue since. When Government policies at both Federal and State level are focussing on getting people with disabilities off the pension and into paid employment, other programs need to support this, and they need to do it consistently across geographical areas.

A further source of frustration is the clear delineation that care workers can't do anything outside the house. I have a small back deck, which is level with the kitchen, and it gets covered in leaf litter. Every week, the house is cleaned, and the back deck can't be swept. This is ridiculous. Taking this further, my garden is generally unkempt, as there are no services available to assist with this. When making enquiries to an Eastern Sydney service, I was informed that they were no longer accepting people on the waiting list.

The windows don't get washed, there are cobwebs on the ceiling, the grout on the bathroom floor is black. I hate to think about what's living under my lounge. Anything extra simply doesn't happen.

While I have never had an issue with the attitude of care workers, the attitudes of office staff, on occasion, have been disturbing. I'm a professional, I have a professional phone manner, and the office staff who answer the phone don't immediately know that I am a client. There have been a few occasions (fortunately rare, but memorable) where upon being informed that I was a client, there was an abrupt and cutting change of attitude by the staff member, changing from positive and helpful, to something that sounded like they thought I was opportunistic and complaining scum. Having worked for a similar State Government Department, I know this kind of attitude is rife amongst the corporate staff. I had never thought to be on the receiving end of it, and it was eye opening. Nothing but exposure will change attitudes like this, and education needs to be driven from the top.

Again, thank you for providing the opportunity to make a submission to this very important and timely inquiry and I trust that the committee will make appropriate recommendations to address any issues. I would also be happy to appear as a witness in person to answer questions and/or provide further details to clarify the content of my submission.