

Member Update – PDRSS Recommissioning

14 March 2014

Dear Member,

This morning the VHA met with Minister Wooldridge's office to discuss the process regarding the recommissioning of PDRSS.

The VHA emphasised a number of points of concern regarding the process, including:

- The structural implications to community health services who are faced with a reduction in revenue, some as high as 7%;
- That the disconnect between the announcement of phase 2 applicants and the final selection of preferred providers has resulted in avoidable uncertainty for both clients and workers;
- That the DH fact sheets distributed to unsuccessful applicants must be redrafted as the subtext of the expression used is that unsuccessful applicants had been providing a sub-standard service to their clients;
- The lack of detailed explanation to unsuccessful applicants as to why their service was unsuccessful;
- The risk associated with potential loss of student placement within the system if private providers assume a greater proportion of service delivery and do not take on students.

In response to our queries and concerns, the Minister's office clarified/acknowledged a number of points:

- That the Department cannot make funding available to assist with any redundancies. It was however noted that the Government is open to assisting in other ways. While the Minister would need to fully consider all possibilities, the Government welcomes suggestions. Examples may include:
 - Assistance with access to legal resources to inform the transfer of leases and contracts;
 - Devising methods to assist staff to transfer to new employment within the recommissioned MHCSS sector;
- That feedback on rewording Department of Health fact sheets that are to be distributed to staff and clients will be welcomed;
- That further feedback from the Department will be provided to those unsuccessful bidders once probity restrictions have been resolved. This feedback is likely to come from regional directors and will be possible once the recommissioned service providers are announced;
- That the service level available in each catchment is being retained, and that the workforce requirements should provide opportunity for current staff to fulfil a similar role for the same client group, albeit with a different employer.

While the Minister's office has not offered funding to assist in this transition, they are requesting that the sector provide input via the VHA to develop products and approaches that aid staff and clients in the transition period.

This can be executed in the following areas:

- Staff and client fact sheets

- Please send suggestions for amendments, which may include altered emphases on existing providers, clarification on the likely process for clients who may be concerned with the transition, options for staff who want to transition to the preferred provider in the catchment;
- Options to assist staff in transitioning to new employment. This may include a 'pool' of available staff and employers requiring the workforce, and a mechanism through which they can be connected.

The VHA is disappointed that some community health services will not be providing community mental health in the future, and will continue to work with Minister Wooldridge to ensure that the transition is implemented as smoothly as possible. This is crucial for community health services and their staff but most importantly for clients.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss ways that this can be expedited, either by phone or email, and your suggestions will be passed to Minister Wooldridge's office.

Please note, the VHA is also working with Minister Davis to raise our concerns about the Government's approach to community health in the future, and the implications that funding decisions such as this may have for the sector as a whole.

Attached to this Bulletin are copies of the letters sent to Minister Davis and Minister Wooldridge.

Kind regards,
Chris

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