



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

Editorial

AUSTRALIA GETS IT RIGHT ON HOME CARE

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Home Care That is Client-Directed Not Client-Centered

Much is made of “client-centered” approaches in the provision of long-term care services in Ontario and Canada, but what does this really mean? It means these are still staff-controlled services with a supposed focus on the client. It raises the question of what staff were “centered” on before shifting to a “client-centered” approach.

Enter Australia, which got it right. It introduced a Home Care Package program that is consumer-directed. In other words the service user, not staff, are in charge. Great care is taken to describe exactly what this means for those receiving the services. It means “you give people choice, flexibility and control over the types of services they receive; how you provide the services; who provides the services; when you provide the services.”

And there is a Code of Conduct for providers under the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Rules (2018) (Federal Register of Legislation, 2018).

What a concept! It no doubt sounds like heaven to those who have to navigate the confusing, inaccessible, unreliable, rationed mish mash we call Home Care in Ontario where staff may show up or they may not, where you may be eligible for assistance or you may not, and where service users feel utterly powerless.

Australia’s “consumer-directed” home care approach requires that staff work with individuals to create a home care agreement, care plan, and individualized budget, and allows people to decide for themselves how involved they plan to be in managing their services.

It requires ongoing discussions to ensure services are being delivered, and are of a quality that the service user expects. Consumers are assisted with access to information so that their decisions can be informed. Transparency about funding and how it is spent is paramount, and if they are to pay any fees, they are given clear information about this (Australian government, 2022).

So why is Ontario still fiddling around with yet another revamp of Home Care “modernization”? Why reinvent the wheel when Australia has already provided a great client-directed model of how Home Care should be done complete with a Code of Conduct for providers?

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