Markets, Social Services and Religion: What is the Future of Service Delivery through Church Organisations?

Paul Oslington
Introduction

Background

ARC Linkage Application
How Big?

Social Services

Most charities have religious roots (Judd).

Church related social services over half (Swain)

Lack of data.

Church Life

Growing service delivery and declining congregations
What do the Contracts Look Like?

Agency Relationships

Government

- Welfare Organisation
- Church

- Welfare Organisation
- Church

- Welfare Organisation

Unemployed
Why do governments want to deliver services this way?

Budget Savings
Lower wages due to de-unionization (but equal pay case?)
Volunteers
Client trust
Government monopsony power
Risk transfer without adequate compensation
Free riding on infrastructure
Free riding on innovation and training

……….but are these transfers or efficiency gains?
Why do governments want to deliver services this way?

Politics

Political buck passing

Reduced transparency

Co-option of agencies
Why have the church agencies embraced it?

Growth

“We are doing good work – do more of it”
Current Situation

• On the whole church organisations have grown and been financially successful
• Erosion of quality (Considine, Besser *SMH*)
• Reduced collaboration between agencies
• Problems integrated service delivery.
• Workforce crisis, including declining volunteering and need for next generation of leaders.
• Loss of Christian identity. (Cf Glenn on US religious schools, Marsden on US universities, Wuthnow on US social services, Ormerod, Judd/Robinson, Haire, Cleary on Australian social services)
Future Prospects

• Questions about effectiveness of programs. ……but difficulty of evaluation. (Heckman)

• Questions about how contracts can be structured to maintain quality, encourage collaboration, integrated services etc. (Dixit)

• Questions about sustainability (Shergold), which depend on health of the religious roots of the organisations.
Imperatives

1. How do these organisations relate to the church?


4. Importance of properly formed religious leaders. Anti-Discrimination?
REFERENCES


Donahue, John D and Richard Zeckhauser (2011). *Collaborative Governance*, PUP.


