

From: s47F
To: s47F
Subject: RE: Miles Morgan Australia / Meals on Wheels [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 5 February 2025 2:10:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi mate, as discussed – see below.

Attributable to Minister Wells:

The Government expects Departments to meet all obligations under the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.

The ANAO is currently conducting an audit of the contract between Miles Morgan Australia and the Department of Health and Aged Care to deliver the Future Fit program.

The Government awaits the outcomes of this audit.

s47F

Deputy Chief of Staff

Office of The Hon Anika Wells MP

Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Sport

Member for Lilley

M: s47F | E: s47F@health.gov.au

From: s47F@thesaturdaypaper.com.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 4 February 2025 12:24 PM

To: s47F s47F@Health.gov.au>

Subject: Fwd: Miles Morgan Australia / Meals on Wheels

Hi mate,

An unpleasant one for you. No doubt the below will wind its way up to you, but I wanted a response from the Minister in addition to the Department. In brief:

1. What steps did Minister Wells take to ensure the concerns she heard directly about Miles Morgan Australia / the Future Fit program were acted on?
2. Is the Minister confident she was getting the right advice from her department about the state of the MMA engagement? Why, why not?
3. Does the Minister have faith that her department is capable of managing even a 'modest' contract engagement given the honestly farcical saga of MMA, now in liquidation and paid taxpayer funds while it was trading insolvent?
4. Has the Minister asked for anyone, or been advised of anyone, in her department

to be / having been referred to the APSC, NACC or other investigatory body regarding the Future Fit program and/or Miles Morgan Australia contracts?

Thanks, deadline COB tomorrow.

s47F

s47F

----- Forwarded message -----

From: s47F <s47F@thesaturdaypaper.com.au>

Date: Tue, Feb 4, 2025 at 12:13 PM

Subject: Miles Morgan Australia / Meals on Wheels

To: News <news@health.gov.au>

Hi all,

I am working on a piece for this weekend's *The Saturday Paper* that relies on an extensive documentary evidence trail regarding the contracts between the DoHAC and Miles Morgan Australia and the Future Fit program. I have detailed questions, which I have kept as brief as possible.

1. Did the Department of Health and Aged Care issue a \$1.6 million transition / close-out contract to Miles Morgan Australia while it was trading insolvent?

2. Was the DoHAC aware that within days of its last milestone payment to MMA (almost \$287,000) the private company registered a tax default with the ATO of more than \$700,000?

3. Reading the MMA contract for that final close-out, I think many people would be surprised to learn it met its milestones and therefore earned the \$1.6 million paid. Why was money never withheld from MMA in accordance with the contractual levers available to the Department to manage its conduct in the Future Fit program?

4. I understand that despite the CHSP contract sitting with Newcastle Meals on Wheels, this site was run by MMA (presumably this explains some of the \$1.6 million 'transition' funding to hand it back to NMoW) and that this was meant to be an under the table arrangement. I have evidence the Department not only knew about this arrangement, but endorsed it and at least tacitly approved of the subsequent strategy to stage a visit with Victorian senator Janet Rice that deliberately misled her about the operations at the Whitehorse site. Why did the department participate in

this cover-up?

5. I also have evidence that MMA engaged its subcontractor Cowell Clarke, a law firm, with what looks like taxpayer funds to provide advice to the then NMoW CEO in his dealings with the board of Meals on Wheels NSW. I also know the Department was told about this. Did the department do anything with this information?

6. Is the Department aware of attempts by MMA to have its subcontractor Cowell Clarke advise on possibility of reconstituting Meals on Wheels Australia and/or Meals on Wheels NSW and retaining the trademark? What was the purpose of this work?

7. The former Newcastle Meals on Wheels CEO Damien Isaacs was very close with MMA's director Lakshman Gunaratnam and, it seems, the then assistant secretary in DoHAC Russell Herald. I have emails between Isaacs and Gunaratnam declaring they are "getting Rusty smashed" for his birthday and that he was warned, for fun, that "the Brown Bros were in town". Were any of these relationships or apparent hospitality events declared?

8. Did the DoHAC know that Damien Isaacs was being paid extra as a "Future Fit Ambassador" despite being the Newcastle MoW chief executive, and that these funds were initially paid by NMoW before being reimbursed by MMA, presumably from taxpayer funds. Is this an acceptable use of funding?

9. Were other Newcastle Meals on Wheels representatives (including its chair and new CEO post Isaacs) told not to put their concerns about the MMA conduct and contracts in writing to the Department?

10. Did the Department ever condone the establishment of the Future Fit Collective?

11. Did this Future Fit Collective, initially with Gunaratnam as a director, use material, data, operational intel and software IP obtained through the base Whitehorse contract and proposed study, to establish itself as as a company with the primary object of "providing professional services and digital solutions to not-for-profit service providers who support and provide services to older and/or vulnerable people".

12. Was the Department aware of the establishment of the Meals Marketplace and was this contemplated in the almost \$10 million in contracts awarded to MMA for its work? Why, why not?

13. No doubt those in charge of this project now know MMA went into liquidation in September last year with many creditors. Did the apparently unchecked nature of the

Department's relationship with MMA, despite documented warnings of potential fraud, corruption and misconduct going back at least to 2023, end up prolonging the life of a business that was incapable of being sustained?

14. The involvement of MMA at the Whitehorse site descended into farce and the transition, for which it received that \$1.6 million, was a woeful undertaking that put the future of the service at risk. The number of clients at Whitehorse actually went backwards by 60 per cent. It seems that this funding was only made necessary (essentially as a buy-out to 'force' MMA to do the bare minimum and not endanger Whitehorse anymore than it was) by the previous sustained mismanagement of the MMA contracts under Future Fit. Can I get a response to this?

15. Has Russell Herald faced any APSC Code of Conduct process?

16. Has Russell Herald been demoted or otherwise reassigned?

17. Is the DoHAC assisting the National Anti Corruption Commission with its inquiries?

18. Have there been any other disciplinary processes, of any character, against officials involved in the MMA contracting? If so, what and when?

19. Has the Department referred any matters relating to the MMA contracts, whether by its own officials or people connected to MMA, to law enforcement? If so, can you please provide a summary or the details.

20. In sum, this is how things land: the Department of Health and Aged Care devises a scheme to purportedly make Meals on Wheels services more efficient for the coming contest of market models on meal delivery but refuses to fund any meals on wheels providers directly, thinking them untrustworthy, and instead shells out almost \$10 million on a private consulting firm with close ties to some department employees, MMA, which proceeds to -- on a generous assessment -- mismanage that funding, engage in bullying and aggressive behaviour and possibly even an attempted hostile takeover of meals on wheels services and governing bodies using taxpayer funds for legal firepower, spends a small fortune on ancillary costs like fancy volunteer jackets and ridiculous menus, installs its own staff in the service, hijacks the ERP/CRM tech rollout by ineptitude or subterfuge it matters not, oversees the massive decline in said service while setting up other businesses and "not-for-profits" related to the contract but not expressly authorised by it, presumably with a view to establishing itself as a market leader in the coming meals boom, **and is so inefficient about all of it that it becomes insolvent and is sent into liquidation.** At no stage did the Department of Health and Aged Care seek to use the levers available

to it to rein in this contract and, indeed, seems to have participated in at least a partial cover-up of just how wildly things had spun out of control and likely paid some \$4 million in funds to MMA while it was insolvent and swiftly unravelling. My final question: was this departmental incompetence or something worse?

Thanks, my deadline is COB Wednesday (tomorrow).

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