

Monday, 2 May 2011

Ms Patricia Scott
Commissioner
Productivity Commissioner

Dear Ms Scott

"To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent human dignity."

UN Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities

The National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) is concerned that the Productivity Commission Draft Report - Disability Care and Support - limits the possibility of employment participation to only people with mild intellectual disabilities, and not the full range of people with intellectual disabilities.

In 4.25 of the draft report it states:

Reforms would aim to encourage the view that the norm for many people should not be the long-term use of the Disability Support Pension (unlike the current 'until death or aged pension us do part'). Those changes would be mainly orientated to people with typically non-permanent conditions, like anxiety and depression, and at people who could have much higher hopes for employment participation (for example, those with sensory impairments or mild intellectual disabilities).

This statement gives the false impression that people with greater levels of intellectual disability are unable to work in the open labour market. People with moderate levels of intellectual disability have demonstrated that they have the capacity to work in the open labour market in Australia for the past 25 years. Internationally this demonstration has been occurring for more than 34 years.

One of the first demonstration projects funded by the Disability Services Act 1986, was *Jobsupport* in Sydney, NSW. Jobsupport is an employment service that specialises in placing and supporting people with moderate intellectual disability in the open labour market. This service has been operating for 25 years and has regularly achieved placement and retention rates well above national performance averages.

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Jobsupport recently held its 25th anniversary where the Minister for Employment Participation, the Hon. Kate Ellis MP, handed out awards to employees and employers for 10 and 20 year career achievements. We have attached a video of this presentation so that you may see what can be achieved when people with moderate intellectual disability are provided with evidence based employment support.

Mark Bagshaw, an Australian businessman, comments in the video that:

"This is a no brainer. It makes good economic sense because the nation saves pension and has people contributing to our nation's gross domestic product. Why are we not doing this on a greater scale"

What this means is that long term reliance on the disability support pension does not need to be the norm for people with significant intellectual disability.

This issue was set out in detail in our submission to the Productivity Commission, *It's my job*.

We ask that the Productivity Commission make a correction to its draft ensuring that it states that open employment is a real possibility and expectation for people with intellectual disability, including those with moderate levels of intellectual disability.

We also ask that the Productivity Commission provide an expectation that all people with intellectual disability under the NDIS will have the capacity to choose open employment, have access to disability services with the competency to provide this support, and that funding is sufficient for this to happen.

Yours sincerely

Mark Pattison
Executive Director

Attachment: Job Support - celebrating 25 years employing people with an intellectual disability. <http://vimeo.com/22969710>