

Community Living Association Inc

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Senator Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Moore,

Re: Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 Schedule 3 (Disability Support Pension Impairment Tables)

Community Living Association Inc welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on Schedule 3 of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 regarding the revised impairment tables which were released on 30th July 2011 as well as related issues.

We have been reassured by information from National Council of Intellectual Disability that the introduction to the table and the table itself would make it clear that people with an IQ score of 69 and less would be manifest, that is, they have an entitlement to the DSP. CLA would seek reassurance on this point as Intellectual Disability as measured by IQ score of less than seventy (70) and defects in adaptive behaviour is a serious usually extremely limiting condition. However even this reassurance that people with an IQ score of less than 70 would be manifest does not allay all our concerns.

There are substantial numbers of people with IQ scores of between 70-79 who will equally if not more than people with an IQ less than 70 struggles to obtain and retain employment.

Family and social support or the lack of it is a significant factor in whether a person can obtain and retain employment. Issues such as social isolation, mental health, addictions, exploitation from others, criminal conviction, managing on own or with support are significant. Persons with an IQ of between 70 and 79 who experience these additional issues can find it equally or not more difficult than people with an IQ of less than 70 to gain and retain employment. The fact that people in the IQ range 70-79 are over represented on all of these disadvantage factors is a further pointer to the difficulties they will face in gaining employment.

Furthermore many people with IQ between 70 and 79 have a long history of unsuccessfully seeking employment even though they have had years of extensive support from disability employment and other employment agencies to prepare and search for employment.

It is our observation that few of the people that CLA is in contact with who have IQ of either less than 70 or 70-79 have had success in gaining employment through disability or other employment services.



This leads us to posit whether existing employment supports are going to be able to support this group into employment which causes belief that the amendment to Pension Impairment Tables is purely a cynical ploy to move a group of very marginalised people from a higher benefit to a lower benefit.

Case Study

Mr.X is thirty two. He would not assess with an IQ of less than seventy (70) even though he went to Special School. He has never worked in employment of any type although he engages in many projects of his own. He is very fearful and deals with his fear by aggressive posturing towards others. Even standing in line in a shop can lead to aggressive posturing and conflict with others. The only employment like activity that has worked for him is support to develop a garden from which he sells herbs to a local café. For a person such as Mr.X reliance on Newstart rather than DSP would most likely mean poverty, homelessness, fear, social outburst, harm to others and imprisonment.

Case Study

Mr.Y is aged in late twenties. He would not assess with an IQ less than 70. He has Epilepsy (well controlled) and some fine motor skill issues. He went to mainstream school and has reasonably good literacy. When he left school his parents who were locally well connected managed to connect him with several jobs. None of these lasted beyond two weeks and he entered a long period of unemployment. Unemployment was broken with periods of training where he did very well receiving many certificates. However each work placement ended quickly. A Social Enterprise called Nundah Community Enterprises Co-op employed Mr.Y and he works for them and has moved from supported wage to open wage to complement his DSP. However it is very clear that no other employer would employ him even at supported wage. This is due to his anger outbursts which he is continually regretful of but seems unable to control. The Social Enterprise has organised extensive counselling with three of the leading anger management specialists in QLD. The Social Enterprise has also responded with time off work, ending shifts and a range of other responses. None of these interventions has helped. In any other workplace he would have been dismissed.

Morrie O'Connor
Co-ordinator
CLA Inc