

JOHN HARDIE

21 SEPTEMBER 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to you in the sincere hope that you will give some consideration and thought to the reason that a person like myself uses a disability employment service like SensWide and the enormous impact it will have on me if you either decide that you for some unknown reason want them to take up valuable time in writing a tender when they could be assisting clients to either gain employment or people like me retain employment. I am a legally blind or vision impaired person and had no vision at all until the age of 5 as the result of my mother having rebella. I went through 37 operations between my birth and the age of 5 which has given me approximately 1% vision so I use a seeing eye dog to move around and am a client of Vision Australia for several services for which I pay.

I made a decision when at school to try and work in the normal community when I gained employment rather than opting for a sheltered workshop type of role and for a number of years I used the R.V.I.B employment services to try and secure and keep a job however they found that I was too demanding because I did not just want to register with them and then on occasion come in to chat and have a look for a job or two but rather I wanted to put all of my efforts into finding a position where I would not be a drain on the taxpayer by sitting at home, when I could contribute in some way and I did not want to just apply for a job or a couple of jobs when I really needed to apply for 100 jobs or more to have a good chance at being successful in gaining a position because employers can be nervous about employing a person who is blind or who has a disability. The only services I was able to get from the R.V.I.B was the provision of a phone and a cctv to read newspapers with but I could not get intensive support or assistance at that time and I then was told by a friend of the services available through SensWide who I then contacted and was able to move to. This was a great opportunity for me because there were only a couple of disability employment service providers who were very much aware of the needs of a person with a vision impairment and apart from the R.V.I.B as far as I knew SensWide was the only other service.

As soon as I became a client of SensWide I discovered a very real and positive difference between the employment service I had used and that of SensWide because instead of me having to wait until they had time to meet me and instead of me having to reduce my expectations of what I could achieve and when the person who worked with me both came out to see me and encouraged me to do all I wanted to in seeking employment and not only did they help with preparing my resume but they also did a lot of research for me so that as a new computer user I could confidently approach large companies and local government and see what was available. When I was successful in being chosen for an interview I will never forget being scared of what would happen and calling the person at SensWide to tell them I had an interview but was not sure how to get to the office of the employer and without a moments

hesitation I was offered a lift in the car of the person and she took me right to the door and more over she introduced herself to the interviewing officer and explained some of the benefits of employing a vision impaired person because of the loyalty they would show and the desire they would have to do a good job. I had NEVER been offered this with any other provider and I will never (if given the choice) move to another provider.

Thanks only to the quick work of SensWide I am now employed in the federal government but amusingly I nearly did not get the opportunity to work here because of the slow way in which some things happen in the public service. I was placed in the situation just before Christmas in 2006 of having to continually go between Centrelink in Fountain Gate and SensWide in the City because Centrelink said I did not have to work and could just get the D.S.P Blind without having to try to get work and I had to repeat a number of times that although I may not have to try and get work to qualify for a pension that was not why I was doing it but that I wanted to work and pay my taxes and I also asked that SensWide be my Disability employment service provider but this was too hard for even my own department close to Christmas and so I ended up going into SensWide who then called Centrelink for me and managed to convey the fact that I genuinely did not want to be a burden to anyone and they took me on as a client and were approved by Centrelink.

I am very upset and concerned that if you expect SensWide to tender for something that they are already doing better than ANY other provider that you may not just be wasting money and time which can be better spent in supporting the clients like myself who need their assistance or my job could well disappear. Further I can not understand why it is necessary because an independent auditor has asked me about their services and a person has visited me to ensure I am happy and getting the right level of assistance. I am not sure how many times or ways you want to check on the good service providers but with great respect could I give a suggestion that you look at the bottom of the list instead of the top because I know there are services that do not do half of what SensWide does and it upsets me to think that you need them to tender for what they already do better than any other service. Further if you did expect staff there to toss people like me aside so they could work on your tender process please consider that to you it may be easy to go and get another job but for me if I do not get the support I will not retain my job as I am needing high level support as I have to absorb enormous amounts of information and legislation and if you take my person away and I lose my job through lack of support it is not like it may be for you where you just look at the next ad and apply to that company because a lot of companies are nervous about employing blind people. So you could be punishing me by asking them to re tender as it may cost me my job and I stress that I would have and still would complain if I did not get the service I thought was appropriate and if I have no complaint and if they already do more than the other provider in the field of sensory disability and if I am presently successfully keeping a very demanding job with their assistance I would suggest that if it isn't broke don't fix it. I do not just speak, out of wanting to keep my own job but because I am not selfish and would like other vision impaired people to be able to gain the benefits out of the services they provide rather than having to use a service that provides less support and backup and if my case manager is taken away from her duties to write a tender how will I survive or is that not of any concern?

I am sorry if this is not very well written but I definitely will fight for the right to stay in the workforce and I believe my management at work would also support me in that endeavour and if I lose the intensive support I receive then my performance and perhaps entire job may go down the tubes and if you want that please at least call me on either                      or                      so you can tell me directly.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter of my concern.

Yours sincerely

JOHN HARDIE