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Work Wanted

Mental health and workforce participation

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Education and Employment

June 2012
Canberra

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Foreword

My committee colleagues and I wish to thank everyone who participated in this inquiry.

Many people with a mental illness, their families and carers relayed their stories throughout the course of the inquiry, describing the limits illness places on educational, training and employment avenues, and the toll taken on people's lives.

The Committee especially appreciated hearing these personal accounts because they illustrate so well the barriers that exist to participation in education, training and employment for people with a mental illness. In listening to them we can start to unpeel what is required to overcome these challenges. Above all, the many individual stories attest to why a national inquiry into mental health and workforce participation is so important.

Most people want to work, and people with a mental illness are no exception.

Government services, be these employment or social services must work closely together with employer associations, employers and educational institutions to help job seekers with a mental illness find meaningful employment and pursue their educational and training goals on the paths towards that employment. Much is already being done in this space and the Committee acknowledges the multitude of community organisations that offer moral and practical support to individuals on a daily basis, to help connect them to the services they need and to find their path.

More broadly, we encourage workplaces to actively promote the mental health and well-being of all employees and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

Ms Amanda Rishworth
Chair

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Ms Amanda Rishworth MP
Deputy Chair	Mr Rowan Ramsey MP
Members	Mrs Karen Andrews MP
	Mrs Yvette D'Ath MP
	Ms Deborah O'Neill MP
	Mr Mike Symon MP
	Mr Alan Tudge MP

Committee Secretariat

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A/g Senior Research Officer	Ms Fiona Gardner
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	Ms Emily Costelloe

Terms of reference

Some Australians with mental ill health continue to encounter difficulties in accessing education, training and employment opportunities, and face barriers in educational institutions and the workplace. The Committee will inquire into and report on:

- barriers to participation in education, training and employment of people with mental ill health;
- ways to enhance access to and participation in education, training and employment of people with mental ill health through improved collaboration between government, health, community, education, training, employment and other services; and
- strategies to improve the capacity of individuals, families, community members, co-workers and employers to respond to the needs of people with mental ill health.

List of abbreviations

ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AHRI	Australian Human Resources Institute
AITC	Australian Industry Trade College
ANU	Australian National University
APS	Australian Public Service
ATAPS	Access to Allied Psychological Services
AYF	Australian Youth Forum
CEDA	Committee for Economic Development of Australia
CCI WA	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia
CDU	Charles Darwin University
CITO	Continuing Inability to Work
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CYPMH	Central Coast Children and Young People's Mental Health
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DES	Disability Employment Services

DHS	Department of Human Services
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
DLO	Disability Liaison Officer
DMS	Disability Management Service
DSL	Dampier Salt Limited
DSP	Disability Service Pension
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
ESS	Employment Support Service
EPF	Employment Pathway Fund
EPPIC	Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre
ESat	Employment Services Assessments
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
HOPE	Health Optimisation Program for Employment
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
IPS	Individual Placement and Support model
JCA	Job Capacity Assessment
JiJ	Jobs in Jeopardy
JSA	Job Services Australia
JSCI	Job Seeker Classification Instrument
LEAP	Local Employment Access Partnerships
LCTW	Local Connection to Work Initiative
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program
MHCT	Mental Health Council of Tasmania

MHFA	Mental Health First Aid
MIFSA	Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia
MIFV	Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Research
NDCO	National Disability Coordination Officer
NDS	National Disability Services
NESA	National Employment Services Association
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NMHDES	National Mental Health Disability Employment Strategy
NWP	Beyond Blue's National Workplace Program
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OT Australia	Occupational Therapy Australia
OYH	Orygen Youth Health
PBS	Place Based Services Program
PHaMs	Personal Helpers and Mentors Service
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
SEDIF	Social Enterprise Development and Investment Fund
SoFA	Social Firms Australia
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
SWS	Supported Wage System
TEAMhealth	Top End Association for Mental Health
VET	Vocational Education and Training

VETE	Vocational Education, Training and Employment Service
YC	Youth Connections

List of recommendations

1 Introduction

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government coordinate a comprehensive and multi-faceted national education campaign to target stigma and reduce discrimination against people with a mental illness in Australian schools, workplaces and communities. The campaign should:

- include involvement from the public, private and community sectors, educational institutions, employers and a range of other stakeholders, including individuals with mental illnesses, families and carers; and
- complement existing government-funded education and awareness campaigns on depression and mood disorders, with an inclusion of psychotic illnesses.

2 Education and training

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government establish a Kidsmatter High School program pilot based on similar principles to the Kidsmatter Australian Primary Schools Mental Health Initiative.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with peak bodies such as Universities Australia and TAFE Directors Australia to coordinate a national approach to ensure that teaching and other relevant staff at universities and vocational education institutions be educated about ways to support students with mental ill health, with access to staff professional development on mental health issues. Disability liaison officers and student services staff should be appropriately skilled to assist students with a mental illness and have access to ongoing professional development in this area.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government encourage more peer support programs on Australian university and TAFE campuses, including those that specifically support students with a mental illness.

3 Employers, employees and workplaces

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government examine ways to further support social enterprises that effectively transition people with mental ill health into the open employment market.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government ensure that the Supported Wage System is sufficiently flexible to accommodate employees with a mental illness by taking into account the episodic and fluctuating nature of their condition.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with employer associations and employers to promote the business case for employing people with a mental illness. This should include:

- showcasing employers' broader workplace strategies for employing and retaining employees with a mental health condition and proactively promoting the mental health and well-being of all their employees as good human resource practice;

- discussion of the range of Commonwealth Government assistance available to employers;
- having employers share stories of successful placements of employees with mental ill health in their workplaces with others in their industry and the broader business community, including having 'business champions' speak about the business case for greater inclusivity; and
- jointly developing national standards for best employer awards that endorse recruiting and retaining employees with a mental illness, and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of all employees.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support and, where necessary, amend the JobAccess, Employment Assistance Fund and Jobs in Jeopardy initiatives to ensure that:

- the scope of eligibility requirements does not prohibit employees and employers who require support; and
- ways of accessing and information about the JobAccess, Employment Assistance Fund and Jobs in Jeopardy programs and their benefits, including for employment of people with a mental illness, be clarified and readily available to employees and employers.

All these programs need to be promoted more widely and their websites kept updated.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government take a lead role in implementing best practice as an employer that looks after the mental health and wellbeing of employees, including the employment and retention of people with a mental illness.

4 Government and other service providers

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with employment service providers to streamline assessment processes for job seekers with a mental illness and ensure that the assessment criteria for and requirements of job seekers with a mental illness are compatible and consistent across the services.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that any future Disability Employment Services tender process require prospective disability employment services providers to provide evidence of expertise in working with people with mental illnesses.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Disability Employment Services Performance Framework be monitored and evaluated on a regular and ongoing basis. DEEWR should continue to consult with a technical reference group of stakeholders to ensure the framework's and star ratings' ongoing relevance and efficacy in achieving qualitative as well as quantitative outcomes for people with mental illnesses.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that DEEWR and Centrelink prioritise the implementation of a clear, effective and timely communication strategy that advises clients of the services and supports available to them, including how changes like the participation requirements and revised impairment tables will affect them.

The Committee expects that any accompanying explanatory guides and commensurate training provided to Centrelink and employment service providers by DEEWR and DHS to assist clients with mental health conditions will similarly be provided in a timely manner and user-friendly format.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that any new communication strategies be developed with input from clients and staff (from both Centrelink and employment service providers) into how best to disseminate information to clients so they can readily understand any changes to their entitlement and participation requirements.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government explore ways, in partnership with the states and territories through COAG, to support Individual Support and Placement (ISP) and other service models that integrate employment services and clinical health services.