



National Ethnic Disability Alliance

Tel: 02 9687 8933

Freecall: 1800 982 182

Fax: 02 9635 5355

Post: PO Box 9381 Harris Park NSW 2150

Email: office@neda.org.au

Website: www.neda.org.au

ABN: 13 087 510 232

20 August 2009

Submission Number: 154

Date Received 20/08/09

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

ewr.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretariat

**INQUIRY INTO PAY EQUITY AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES RELATED TO
INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE – PERSPECTIVE
OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING
BACKGROUNDS (NESB) WITH DISABILITY**

NEDA understands that the above inquiry is still open and thanks the Committee for encouraging us to submit a response from the perspective of migrant and refugee women with disability, particularly those from a non-English speaking background (NESB).

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non English background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability backgrounds, their families and carers.

NEDA estimates that there are approximately 1 million people from NESB with disability across Australia - a quarter of the total population of Australians with disability.

Yet despite their numbers, people from NESB with disability are largely invisible. They are:

- Approximately half as likely to be in the labour force as English Speaking Background people with disability.
- Are three times less likely to utilise a government funded disability employment support service than a person from an English Speaking Background.
- Of those people from NESB with disability in the labour force, experience a lower rate of employment than those from English Speaking Backgrounds, and an unemployment rate at more than three times that of the general population.

Information specifically on NESB women with disability is very scarce whether it be regarding their employment or other aspects of their lives, except for their experiences/encounters with domestic violence.

In 1994 Lina Pane wrote a report on behalf of the National Women's Consultative Council, which highlighted the neglect of NESB women with disability in the literature of the disability, multicultural and gender movements. The report called for the commissioning of more studies on the lives of NESB women with disability in Australia so that it may help to change the negative attitudes toward disability by NESB women themselves as well as their families and communities.¹

Fifteen years thereafter, NEDA is writing submissions in which we are still lobbying for the provision of opportunities to study the lives of NESB women with disability from their experiences with employment, health, recreation, etc.

Attached to this paper is NEDA's submission to the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy. The submission discusses the barriers for people from NESB with disability and offers some resolutions.

One observation NEDA can offer is that women and girls from NESB with disability may require more intensive support in employment preparation. Women and girls with disability are seen to be easy targets for abuse and violence in many developing countries, leading many migrants and refugees to be protective of female family members with disability. In some cases this translates to migrant and refugee women and girls being housebound and dependent on others. Some women in this situation lose their confidence and self esteem and thus have difficulties entering the workforce. Others seek work but are very limited by the criteria they impose upon themselves – for example the workplace must be close to home so as not to use public transport (where

¹ Lina Pane (1994) 'Triple Disadvantage: Women With Disabilities from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds Living in Australia: <http://wwda.org.au/nesb.htm>

they could come under attack), availability of a family member or trusted friend to accompany her during work, etc. It is thus not only the women and girls from NESB with disability who need better employment support and preparation, but their families also must be educated.

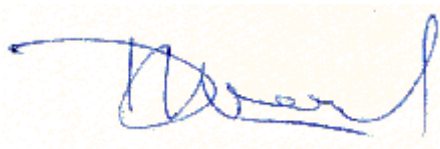
Some people with disability require extensive care, and this creates more hardship for carers from a non-English speaking background. Due to language barriers and sometimes cultural differences, respite and disability accommodation centers do not offer a suitable alternative for people from NESB. Carers, often women, are thus compelled to forego employment opportunities to fulfill their care role. In that role they often have the additional duties of interpreting, filling in forms and providing transport to appointments.

In an inquiry into better support for carers by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth in 2008, the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC), NEDA's WA member, brought this issue to light. EDAC pointed out that culturally sensitive respite and accommodation programs could alleviate carers from their care roles, giving them the opportunity to engage in employment and/or recreation. EDAC took a step further and called for the "recognition of the carer role as employment in its own right."²

If you wish to discuss these issues further, please contact me (details at top of letter) or NEDA's Senior Policy Officer, Zel Iscel.

I thank you in anticipation for your consideration of NESB women with disability in your Inquiry into pay equity and related issues associated with increasing female participation in the workforce.

Yours sincerely



Dinesh Wadiwel
Executive Officer

² Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (July 2008) 'Inquiry into Better Support for Carers')):
<http://www.edac.org.au/publications.php>