

Dear Sir

I wish to make a response the DSA amendment (Improved Quality Assurance )Bill 2001

I am a manager of an open employment service in a rural and remote area of Tasmania which also has a work crew operation, employing 10 people with disabilities on a award based pay system using the Supported Wages System.

I have had 11 years in the disability industry and was assistant manager of a business service from 1990 to 1996. I have been an registered SWS assessor since 1995.

It is my strong belief that the QA system hold great promise as a measurement tool to ensure services are providing adequate service provision.. However to enable this to occur it is imperative that the KPI's reflect fair outcomes, especially around the issue of wages and conditions.

I understand the QA working party was split on this issue with ACROD representing the business services calling for the KPI's to allow a variety of tools while ACED representing open employment services were looking for a single tool. I understand Caucus, representing consumers were looking for the only tool to be the Supported Wages System. (SWS) and refused to continue with the process.

I would like to strongly recommend that the Committee make a quick response to the terms of the issues for consideration and view a single tool, (be that the SWS or something that uses it as the basis) as the only recognised assessment tool for the following reasons.

**The length of time since the DSA came into force.**

Business services have had 15 years to make changes to their services since the introduction of the DSA and move to more profitable services. From their response to QA and the many other deadlines over the years they have not made significant changes, despite the rhetoric. Whenever the issue of wages and conditions comes to the fore the clients of the services are used as pawns with services scaring them and their parents as to what would happen. We have anecdotal evidence that this is occurring again.

**The system needs to be universal.**

That is, an assessment tool linked to the award system that can be applied to any work setting so transparency and fairness are ensured. The linking to the award would set a benchmark of fairness and provide the same IR framework as exists for all Australians.

**A single tool can work**

Despite claims from Business services, the SWS or any single tool can work effectively. I have done many assessments in a wide variety of businesses and employ 10 people using a single assessment tool. The tool works well within the limitations **all** tools would have. My concern is business services don't like the SWS because of the productivity outcome it gives people, not because of any concerns with the process. Their argument of it not be suitable for business services is shown to be empty as a number of business services use the tool.

A number of spurious arguments are being floated as being insurmountable impediments to the use of a single tool such as cost. I believe a number of options could be created with safeguards that could overcome these issues quite easily

### **The multiple tools already used are denying fair wages.**

We have reviewed a number of the wage determination schemes already in place in some business services and note that they appear to be based on legitimising the existing pay arrangements. members of this service attended a workshop co hosted by the Department and Greenacres which began with the manager noting that it was important that any new system did not cost them any additional money in terms of wages to employees. working from such a premise means that the people need to fit into an already established wages ceiling and therefore the tool has to be set up to meet this need as opposed to assessing the true productivity of the clients.

### **A Business or Not?**

The Business Review outlined how the industry should see Business services. That is in the same light as any other business within the community. This service will not support or assist any service that uses a wages system that denies people a fair wage and will attempt where ever possible to avoid services that congregate and isolate people with disabilities. If services are not able to run a business on commercial grounds then they should not be considered businesses.

The government should be supported in its goal to ensure people with disabilities are able to access quality services that give fair employment conditions and wages. This agency is concerned that for 15 years the business services have dodged this issue, using emotional blackmail with clients and families to avoid making any significant changes. They have perpetuated the old charity model of service provision. We are concerned that if the QA system endorses this approach, against the advice of its own consultants, then it will have little validity within either the sector or the wider community.

Given the short time frame, this is a very short overview of this services concerns.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries

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