



ATTENDANT CARE COALITION INC.

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*Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Parliament House
Canberra*

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To Whom It May Concern:

Action for Community Living is an advocacy organisation federally funded under the Commonwealth Disability Services Act. Our primary focus is advocating for systemic change in relation to support services for people with disabilities. This is undertaken in the recognition that it is the inadequacy of support services that prevent vast numbers of people with disabilities from equally participating in Australian society.

Action for Community Living is a consumer-controlled organisation and advocates on behalf of people with disabilities, including people with psychiatric, intellectual, acquired brain injury, physical and sensory disabilities.

We are writing in relation to the Disability Services Amendment (Improved Quality Assurance) Bill 2001. We write in full support of the position of The National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations.

In its current form, we do not support the Bill.

For the bill to become acceptable section 5A must be changed to have the Standards and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included together in a disallowable instrument.

The current bill makes the Minister the sole determiner of the KPIs. This means that they are non-reviewable by the community and the Parliament.

The KPIs for standard nine (employment conditions) currently allow a host of loopholes for discrimination and exploitation in employment to continue.

We are seeking that wages below the federal minimum wage are determined by the Supported Wage System. This provides people with disability with the only available protection against exploitation.

Currently, many thousands of employees with disability are paid appallingly low wages that are determined by the employers. Employers use a range of assessment methods from 'pick a number' to 'convoluted schemes' that guarantee low wages. Wages as little as 50 cents per hour.

Many employees with disability are forced to agree to poor employment conditions for they are fearful of reprisals. Many employees are expected to negotiate employment contracts and agreements without either the capacity to understand or negotiate. The Commonwealth is aware of this and is not doing anything about it.

We want these practices of exploitation to stop!"

The proposed legislation provides for a valid QA structure, in terms of administration, but will not address fundamental issues of exploitation.

Unless the key performance indicators address current and long standing non compliance, the proposed QA system will give approval to employer and service practices that are in breach of the principles and objectives of the Disability Services Act.

WE HOPE YOU WILL NOT ALLOW THIS BILL THROUGH PARLIAMENT WITHOUT MAKING THE APPROPRIATE CHANGES

Yours faithfully,

Maree Ireland
Systemic Advocate
Action for Community Living