

To whom it may concern

Disability Services Amendment (QA) Bill 2001

We ask you to accept this submission from E-QUAL about the above Bill. We are disability consultants who specialise in consulting with people with disabilities and their families. We estimate we have collected the views of over 15,000 people with disabilities and their families in recent years, including those who use employment services.

We have seen a submission made by the National Caucus of Disability Consumer Organisations and would make the following comments:

- The Caucus is right to highlight the poor situation of many workers in small business services funded by the Commonwealth.
- The Caucus is not right to characterise the situation as one of exploitation or to focus on the issue of wages alone.
- The Caucus is not right to state that employees with a disability are forced to agree to poor conditions under threats of reprisals. Most employees enjoy good relationships with their employers. They do lack better employment alternatives.
- Numerous surveys (eg National Survey of Client Satisfaction with Disability Services, 2000 published by the Productivity Commission) show that most people with disabilities who are employees of small business services think their wages are fair and are happy with their hours of work and job security. Many families rely on small business services to provide regular occupation for family members.
- These same surveys show that many employees with a disability in open employment are working part time, and would like more hours of work and experience periods of no work.

Any change to the wages system in small business services needs to be backed up with a plan to ensure that the consequences in practice are not the loss of weekday occupation to thousands of people with disabilities, and these same people spending long periods of time at home alone.

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