



Robert Fitzgerald
Productivity Commissioner
National Disability Agreement Review
Productivity Commission
Via email

23 August 2018

Dear Commissioner Fitzgerald

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) empowers and connects employers to be actively inclusive of customers and employees with disability. We are driven by our belief that people with disability are skilled and capable social and economic contributors, entitled to equitable opportunities in society. Our membership is made up of more than 240 private, public and for-purpose organisations who are investing in building an accessible and inclusive Australia. We support our members to build disability confidence and capability, connect with others and check progress.

AND contributes to policy-making by giving voice to the experience of employers who want to (and do) access the talents of people with disability. We strongly support evidence-based policy making which draws on what has and has not worked over the past 30 years in Australia and internationally. We also value the lived experience of people with disability including research which captures this. Please visit the [AND website](#) for more on our members and our activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the National Disability Agreement Review you are undertaking. Our focus is in relation to the labour force participation rate of working age people with disability. It is extremely concerning that this rate has not improved over the 25 years since the Disability Discrimination Act has been in operation. [Research we commissioned in 2011](#) showed that increasing workforce participation for people with disability by just ten percent would result in a cumulative boost to Australia's GDP of \$40 billion in the next decade.

I also draw your attention to two relevant submissions we have made to Federal Government related to employment. In March 2018 [we responded to the Department of Social Services Discussion Paper on Supported Employment](#). Our response included three principles that we believe should be considered in future policy directions for the employment of people with disability, including those eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme:

Fairness – reduce the correlation between disability and poverty. Most people with disability can participate in the labour market with the right level of supports. AND has seen firsthand people with very significant disability take their place in inclusive employment and sustain their roles successfully for many years.

'Leave no-one behind' – consider the evidence for high quality inclusive employment and sustainable jobs by providing high quality employment support services that support jobseekers and employers.

Increased employment for people with disability; rather than ensuring a strong future for Australian Disability Enterprises which currently provide services to 20,000



people with disability, we assert that the focus should be on enhancing the choices and economic participation of people with disability.

We have also recently [expressed our concerns in a joint statement](#) with representative groups of people with disability with the Federal Government's new Disability Employment Service which commenced on 1 July 2018. Since November 2015 we participated in numerous advisory groups and made two detailed [submissions](#) seeking to improve outcomes for both jobseekers with disability and employers. We are extremely disappointed our views were overlooked.

It is also of interest that a number of States are now funding special projects to support the employment of people with disability, in recognition of the disappointing results of Federal Government interventions to date.

The Australian Network on Disability would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our views.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Colbert, AM
Chief Executive Officer