

**ADVISORY GROUP FOR INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY  
THROUGH SUSTAINABLE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**  
c/o FaHCSIA Secretariat, Disability Participation Programs, GPO Box 9820  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

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Ms Patricia Scott  
Productivity Commissioner  
Inquiry Into a Long Term Disability Care and Support Scheme  
Productivity Commission  
Locked Bag 2, Collins St East  
Melbourne VIC 8003, Australia

Dear Ms Scott

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with the thoughts of the Advisory Group for *Inclusion for People with Disability Through Sustainable Supported Employment*. The Advisory Group was appointed by the former Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, in July 2010 and confirmed by the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, on her appointment in November 2010. The work of the Advisory Group concludes mid-July 2011.

The Advisory Group's Terms of Reference, which includes a list of members, are attached for your information. The development of a ten year Vision for the supported employment sector was a key commitment under the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy, released in 2009. We have now met face to face three times over the past six months and are confident that we have developed a Vision that aligns well with other key initiatives in the disability sphere, including the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Disability Strategy.

We have been working on a more appropriate definition of supported employment than currently exists: that is, employment supports that assist people with disability to find, maintain and retain employment. As you will know, supported employment is currently provided through a network of over 300 Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) employing approximately 20,000 people with disability across the country. The existing cost of supported employment is around \$210 m per annum, and around 70 per cent of the current workforce has intellectual disability. We estimate sector revenues at approximately \$300m per annum. While ADEs have provided good employment support for people with disability over many years, and some excellent practice exists, the Advisory Group acknowledges the need to capitalise on and replicate good practice, and to offer other types of employment support to people with disability who may not want to work in an ADE. We think greater system flexibility is needed, particularly for the young people with disability who will be accessing employment supports in ten years' time, as well as for people with different disability types.

We understand that at the Disability and Carers' Congress in May 2011, you indicated that supported employment is within the scope of the Scheme the Productivity Commission has outlined in the draft paper, while open employment is not. Given the likelihood that our definition of supported employment is likely to be broader, and to encompass other types of employment models as well as ADEs, it is our opinion that there should be less focus on what type of employment is in or out of scope for the Scheme. Instead, if an individual is eligible for the Scheme and is identified as able to participate in employment as part of their assessment, their package should be able to accommodate the supports required for them to be able to participate in the employment type which suits their needs best. We really think that this is the best way to deliver on the person-centred focus that the Scheme represents, while ensuring that the reasonable support needs of people with disability requiring supported employment assistance are met.

We are particularly concerned that including supported employment while excluding open employment to the Scheme will magnify existing barriers to transition into the open labour market. Our work to date has identified program design obstacles to the seamless transition of people with disability from supported to open employment. These obstacles effectively reduce opportunities for people with disability to fully meet their economic potential. We believe that the program separation currently proposed in the draft will create a further barrier to supported workers testing their ability in the open labour market due to perceptions (or the likelihood) of funding or entitlement reduction for employment supports.

Other issues that have arisen through our work we feel are important for the Productivity Commission to consider in their final report include:

- The possibility that, due to the broader definition of supported employment the Group will propose to Government, that the population accessing supported employment is likely to increase to approximately 40,000 (a doubling of existing program numbers). However we believe that this additional cohort is already receiving specialist disability services elsewhere in the system;
- The need for information and referral services, particularly for people with cognitive disability, to assist in making informed choice about services available and to facilitate connection;
- Whether capital funds are available through the Scheme for supported employers: for example, to assist in building additional employment opportunities through new business models (e.g. seed funding), driving innovation to provide better supported work choices, and sector capability development; and
- How whole-of-life transitions will be effectively managed for people with significant disability: from school to work and then to retirement.

It is our opinion that the supported workforce needs to be understood by the Australian Government as a valuable investment. These are people with significant disability earning income and paying tax, and the potential return on investment from assisting them to participate in employment is substantial.

You will also be aware of the considerable cost benefits to the social participation opportunities work affords this group. We are keen to ensure sustainable, appropriately funded options are available to maximise their participation in work and to ensure that any artificial barriers to this goal are removed.

Once again, many thanks for your consideration of the issues we have raised here. We look forward to reading the final report of your important work.

Yours sincerely

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Lesley Chenoweth  
Chair

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20 May 2011



**TERMS OF REFERENCE**  
**ADVISORY GROUP TO SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT**  
**TO ACHIEVE INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**  
**THROUGH SUSTAINABLE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

**ADVISORY GROUP TO SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO  
ACHIEVE INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE  
SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring people with disability have an enhanced quality of life including through meaningful engagement in work.

To improve employment and social inclusion outcomes for people with more severe disabilities, the Australian Government is working to improve supported employment for people with disability, a key commitment under the Federal Government's National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Advisory Group to support the Australian Government to achieve inclusion for People with Disability through sustainable supported employment (the Advisory Group) is to:

- provide strategic advice to Government in its development of Government's new vision;
- provide advice to Government that is innovative and reflects the right of people with more severe disabilities to work and receive a fair pay; and
- provide influential and practical leadership across stakeholder groups to build support for the vision and related reforms.

**ROLE AND FUNCTION**

The Group will provide independent and confidential advice to the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers on supported employment issues, including:

- strengths and weaknesses of the current supported employment services system funded by the Australian Government;
- how to improve the program and better support people with more severe disabilities to achieve economic participation and social inclusion;
- how to improve the long term viability of supported employment services and increase their accessibility and diversity;
- effectiveness of strategies to drive improved linkages between specialist and mainstream services; and
- other issues as requested by the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers.

Advisory Group members will help to support the development of the Australian Government's *vision for people in supported employment* through their networks within government, non-government, business and the community sectors.

## **TERM OF APPOINTMENT**

Members are appointed to the Advisory Group for a period of 1 year from 16 July 2010 to 15 July 2011.

## **LIAISON AND STAKEHOLDERS**

In undertaking its work, the Advisory Group may liaise with governments, peak groups, the services sector, people with disability, their families and carers and other advisory bodies to exchange information and views on the development of the Vision and areas requiring support or reform progressing toward a new Vision.

The Advisory Group will not pre-empt major policy initiatives being considered by Government in its engagement with stakeholders.

## **MEETINGS**

The first meeting of the Advisory Group will be as soon as possible after the appointment of the members.

The Group will meet up to three times during its term.

Secretariat support will be provided by the Disability and Carers Group in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

## **MEMBERS**

The Group comprises nine members.

Appointments to the Advisory Group are made by the Parliamentary Secretary for Disability and Carers, for a one year term.

The Advisory Group is not intended to be a representative group and members are appointed for their individual capacity, skills and experience to guide policy and program development focussed on enhancing the employment opportunities and experiences of people with more severe disabilities.

Members:

- Dr Ken Baker
- Mr David Barbagallo
- Professor Lesley Chenoweth (Chair)
- Ms Ingrid Landau
- Mr Kevin Robbie
- Mr Mark Pattison (resigned 10 March 2011)
- Ms Samantha Jenkinson
- Mr Neil Preston OAM
- Ms Vanessa Morley

## **OFFICIAL DUTIES**

A member will be deemed to be on official Advisory Group duties:

- during travel to and from and while attending meetings of the Group; and

- while undertaking a task at the request of the Chair.

All attendance fees and travel costs incurred during such activities will be met by the Australian Government through the Disability and Carers Group within the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members of the Advisory Group are expected to observe the following standards when dealing with Group-related matters:

1. Members should perform the duties of their office impartially, without fear or favour.
2. Members should be frank and honest in official dealings with colleagues, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Government Ministers, and the officials in the Disability and Carers Group within FaHCSIA.
3. Members should avoid any situation in which their private interests (or those of their immediate family) whether pecuniary or otherwise conflict, or might reasonably be thought to conflict, with their public duty.
4. Members should not use information obtained in the course of official duties to gain directly or indirectly a pecuniary or other advantage for themselves or for any other person or organisation.
5. Members should not:
  - a) Solicit or accept from any person any remuneration or benefit for the discharge of the duties of their office over and above the official remuneration;
  - b) Solicit or accept any benefit, advantage or promise of further advantage, whether for themselves, their immediate family or any business concern or trust with which they are associated from persons who are in, or seek to be in, any contractual or special relationship with government;
  - c) Accept any gift, hospitality or concessional travel offered in connection with the discharge of the duties of the office.
6. Members should be scrupulous in their use of public property and services, and should not permit their misuse by other persons.
7. Members should not allow the pursuit of their private interests to interfere with the proper discharge of their public duties.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Advisory Group members shall not, without prior written approval of the Australian Government, disclose to any person any confidential information contained in Australian Government material or Advisory Group material or any other material gained through the capacity of being an Advisory Group member.

Members will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and other induction paperwork provided by the Disability and Carers Group within FaHCSIA shortly following their appointment.

### **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Intellectual property in all Advisory Group material vests immediately in the Australian Government.