



Disability Action Plan 2014-2018

Submission
to
The Office of
Disability Issues

5 November 2015



For a better working life

New Zealand Public Service Association

Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

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Introduction

Who we are

The New Zealand Public Service Association *Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi* (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 62,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, and the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities, state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors).

In developing this submission we sought the views of

We welcome the opportunity to submit on the draft updated Disability Action Plan. The PSA has an active Deaf and disabled members' network which has nearly 300 members from across the union. The network has reviewed the draft Disability Action Plan and contributed to this submission.

We also have several thousand members providing support to people with disabilities. The largest number are employed in home support, funded through DHBs but a significant proportion work in residential disability support services, funded through the Ministry of Health.

The PSA supports the revised priorities and actions set out in the Action Plan. These goals are worthwhile and important, however our Deaf and disabled members network have raised questions about the resourcing of these actions. While the plan document is not intended to address issues of resourcing there is a natural concern that without extra funding these initiatives will come at the expense of other programmes. Any assurance that the Office can provide on these concerns would be welcome.

This submission addresses some specific points in the DAP.

Shared result: Increase employment and economic opportunities

We support these priorities

Priority 3: Increase the number of disabled people, including long-term unemployed disabled people, in paid employment and self-employment on an equal basis with others.

Priority 4: Increase the number of employers who are confident in employing disabled people, with the public sector taking a lead.

Myth busting is required

The PSA and our Deaf and disabled members' network agree that these priorities are significant. However there was feedback concerned that there needs to be articulation of not simply just assuring employers and growing their confidence to employ disabled people but work done on myth busting around worker productivity and changing the perception of how disabled people are valued so they will not need such assurances.

The role of the public sector

We fully support the public sector taking a lead. Public employers have both a legal duty under the State Sector Act and a moral duty to show leadership in the employment of people with disabilities. We wish to work constructively with public sector employers to make this a reality and it will be important for them to engage with us as they put this priority into action.

We are also fully committed to the removal of the minimum wage exemption and have been involved in discussions about how this might be delivered. We recognise that the issues are complex but look forward to this goal being met earlier rather than later.

Decent work

The commitment under priority 3(a) should not only be to develop guidelines on reasonable accommodation but to promote decent work and good jobs i.e. secure and well-paid. It is important that we set our sights above the minimum. This is very important. We note that the *Australian and New Zealand Consensus Statement on the Health Benefits of Work*¹ developed by the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM), a Faculty of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), has moved beyond just talking about the benefits of work to the need for good/decent and safe work and the DAP should also reflect this.

Shared result: Ensure personal safety

We support these priorities but support services need to be strengthened

We agree with all the priorities in this result area and consider them vital. We are concerned though that there is no mention of educating and working with community organisations that support victims of violence to work better with disabled communities. Learning about your rights is critical but until we have strong support services in place that also cater to disabled communities exiting abusive relationships or rebuilding from them could be a huge barrier.

Priority 6: Reduce the number of disabled children and adults who are victims of violence, abuse or neglect.

We wish to state our particular interest in the new work programme into abuse by non-family members. There have been some high profile cases of abuse of

¹ <http://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/afoem-pos-aus-nz-consensus-statement-health-benefits-work-pack.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

*Professionalisation
of the support
workforce*

disabled people by support workers over recent years and we have an interest in ensuring safety for all involved. The PSA is committed to the professionalization of the support workforce (better training, pay and conditions and the development of an ethical framework for practice) which will make a significant difference, and we want to be involved in this work.

We are also fully committed to the removal of the minimum wage exemption and have been involved in discussions about how this might be delivered on. We recognise that the issues are complex but look forward to this goal being met earlier rather than later.

Shared result: Transform the disability support system

Priority 8: Promote disabled people having choice and control over their supports/services, and make more efficient use of disability support funding.

*Involve the
community and
unions*

The PSA and our Deaf and disabled network agree with these priorities. It will be important to engage the community and unions in ongoing discussion and review of Individualised funding models in this area. We have some concerns about individualised funding its implications for the support workforce and want to be engaged in conversations that balance out the needs of people with disabilities and those who support them.

For further information about this submission contact

Glenn Barclay

E: glenn.barclay@psa.org.nz

T: 027 2955110

www.psa.org.nz