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19 January 2024

Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra, ACT 2601

Email: FWCPolicy@dss.gov.au

Re: Consultation on Disability Royal Commission Response

The Australian Services Union ('ASU') is one of Australia's largest unions, representing approximately 135,000 members. ASU members work as disability support workers, sole traders, caseworkers, social educators, advocates, team leaders, carers, trainers, coordinators, managers, counsellors, CEOs and admin workers at thousands of disability providers across Australia.

NDIS workers provide invaluable support to over 500,000 people living with a disability. But flaws in the system make it difficult to recruit and retain workers due to low rates of pay, insecure and unstable working hours and a lack of professional development and recognition of skills and expertise. We believe we can only achieve the best NDIS when workers are properly valued.

We welcome the Disability Royal Commission's 222 recommendations to strengthen the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Government must act immediately to implement the recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission in consultation with people with disability.

Our members demand urgent action to implement the 33 Recommendations in Volume 10 of the Royal Commission's Final Report and in particular workforce recommendations to build a highly skilled and qualified workforce that can deliver high-quality and individualised services.

Further, the Government must commit to ongoing consultation with people with disability and disability sector workers as it develops its response to the recommendations.

Recommendation 10.8 A national disability support worker registration scheme

We support the establishment of a national disability support worker registration scheme by 1 July 2028. With the design of the scheme to include defining a disability support worker, a code of conduct and minimum standards, mandatory NDIS worker screening, recognition and accreditation of qualifications, experience, capabilities and skills, continued professional development, and portable training and leave entitlements.

For many years, the ASU has been campaigning for an ongoing portable training scheme enabling disability workers to regularly access training opportunities and build credentials in specialised topics and sub-disciplines over the course of their careers and we are pleased to see the Royal Commission support this call to action. An investment such as this will lead to a more highly skilled and engaged

workforce, more successful recruitment and retention by service providers, and much higher-quality service provision to people with disabilities.

We have also been campaigning for a national portable entitlement scheme that would allow workers to carry their leave entitlements with them regardless of how they are employed, where they work, or if they change jobs. A portable entitlement scheme will allow workers to be recognised and valued for their experience and contribution to the sector as well as being able to access well-earned breaks from work to be able to have the time off to recharge.

The recent NDIS Review echoes these recommendations to help attract, retain and train the disability workforce that is responsive to participants needs and delivers high quality supports.¹

Recommendation 10.9 The Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award

There is an urgent need for a review of the Social Community, Home Care and Disability Services (SCHDS) Award to close the loopholes where disability support workers are not properly paid for the work they do. We have a comprehensive plan to close these loopholes, with the recommendation specially tailored to Unions, and we request a meeting with Government to discuss this recommendation in detail.

Recommendation 10.5 Advocacy

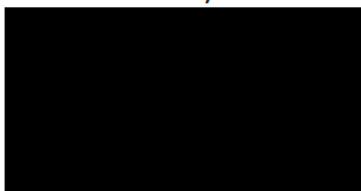
The Royal Commission has also rightly recommended better access to advocacy services for all people with a disability and for that advocacy support to be part of all NDIS plans for people in supported accommodation.

The disability workforce solutions and recommendations in Volume 10 of the Disability Royal Commission's Final Report will lead to a more highly skilled and engaged workforce that has adequate training, pay and recognition.

The ASU continues to stand alongside people with disability in their struggle for a better system that respects and values everyone, and upholds safety, fairness, dignity and human rights.'

We also request a meeting with the DRC Central Secretariat to discuss the Government's implementation of the Disability Royal Commission's recommendations.

Yours faithfully



Emeline Gaske
ASSISTANT NATIONAL SECRETARY

¹ NDIS Review Final Report, Recommendation 15 Attract, retain and train a workforce that is responsive to participant needs and delivers quality supports <https://www.ndisreview.gov.au/resources/reports/working-together-deliver-ndis>