

16<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dr Richard Grant

Secretary

Standing Committee on Education and Employment

Dear Dr Grant,

**Submission on Problems Faced by Disability Job Seekers (Professional Categories)**

I refer to my submission forwarded your Committee through federal MP of my electorate Ms. Anna Burke and subsequent discussion had with yourself.

I have some thoughts to forward you, in relation to Disability Employment Services and Discriminatory Selection Processes of Employers. The statistics show that there are around 200,000 or more professional job seekers affected in the job market as a result of Discriminatory Selection Processes. There is no whatsoever Government support or intervention to place these people in meaningful jobs. As a result these people would not be able to participate in the economy effectively. They become poor in their entire life, and their next generation too become poorer. They end up as welfare recipients straining the Government welfare budget.

My experience with Disability Employment Service within last eight years is the basis of making this submission. In addition to that I include the experience I gathered by participating in job application process.

**Deficiencies of Disability Employment Services (DES)**

1. **Overall DES Design** -The DES is the first point of contact for Disabled Professional job seekers. The DES has not designed to cater the needs of Professional Job Seekers. The professional categories are (not limited to) engineers, doctors, accountants, project managers, policy specialists, IT specialists etcetera. The DES clients fall to above categories are not assisted at all.
2. **Linking the Job Seeker to Employers** -DES case workers cannot establish relationships with companies employ professional job seekers. As a result DES cannot place candidates in professional jobs. This has been an ongoing problem, no one has paid attention to this problem.
3. **Help with Application Key Selection Criteria**-An application with professional outlook is the key to winning a job interview. The DES case workers cannot develop this for the job applicant. In Government jobs the applicant has to forward a Key Selection Criteria in addition to the cover letter and the resume. If these documents are not properly linked together, the selection panels would not

short list the application. When applying for jobs in private sector the candidate has to focus the resume and cover letter for the position he/she is applying for. It is difficult to job seekers with mental illness to participate in such a process. The DES help is minimal with job applications and they would not help with multiple applications. I won several job interviews but the DES did not involve in scheduling the interviews resulting relapse and losing all opportunities.

4. **Retraining and Work Experience** -Retraining the job seekers to alternative jobs is a problem for the DES with its current operating model. The professional job seekers have higher level of qualifications such as University degrees or above. The Government funding cannot be obtained to retrain them in Certificate Level courses. Even, organising work experience is difficult because job seeker has not been supported by Government work cover insurance. So, the policy makers should consider this problem when funding the DES service.
5. **Immunity from Discrimination in Selection Process**- In the way our DES model has designed the DES case worker cannot make any representation to the employer on behalf of the candidate. In my situation, I want the case worker to contact the employer and explain my difficulties with application process. But the DES case worker do not involve in this instead advises me not to disclose the disability. In fact, the case worker recognises the fact that discrimination happens in selection process.
6. **Level of Service of DES Providers**- I made a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2008, regarding the deficiencies of the services of DES case work. Ombudsman investigation revealed certain deficiencies in the service. However, the DEEWR responded that the DES is a limited service and cannot expect the services I was looking for. A copy of the response of DEEWR was sent to Dr Grant in a previous correspondence.

### **Discrimination in Selection Processes**

1. **Discrimination based on Application** -My experience in applying for jobs has indicated me certain discriminatory practices carried out by selection panels. I have a problem of drafting a perfect Key Selection Criteria since I have had past relapses in similar attempts. In applying for Government jobs, I declare the disability and express my difficulties of forwarding a Key Selection Criteria, based on past relapses. Normally the Human Resource managers advise me to forward whatever the alternative documents available.

But, when the application has been taken to the selection panel they disregard candidate's disability which is linked to producing a job application. They identify carrier gaps and poor links between Key Selection Criteria and resume. Then they say my application is not competitive "on paper". The selection panels are not trained on the issues of Disabled candidates. The Human Resource Manager who should represent the selection panel is a mere administrative stamp and does not participate in the decision. Since

DES service cannot help the candidate, I cannot find a solution to this problem.

2. **Competition created by Career Consultants**-Recently, I have received feedback from Victorian State Government agency on my job application. The Human Resource Manager's advice was to approach professional application writers and career consultants. It is a known fact that professional job seekers receive the support of career consultants before forwarding applications. Disadvantaged candidates do not have access to this support. But still, the disadvantaged candidate should compete with an application which is drafted by able bodied candidate with the support of career consultants. This is an unfair practice and at least Government employers do not have a mechanism to stop this discriminatory practice.
3. **Disregarding Qualification**- Another unfair treatment is disregarding the qualification. For me as a disadvantaged job seeker, the only asset available is my highest Engineering Qualification (Australian Charter). The selection panels disregard this. They want a perfect job application nicely written and linked to the resume. Otherwise the application will be put into trash bin. This kind of practices cannot be stopped unless we have a proper monitoring framework.
4. **Government Schemes**-Some years ago, Federal Government introduced scheme/ schemes to fill up certain federal Government positions with people having disabilities. According to the scheme, the process should initiate by managers of departments who should contact case managers when a suitable role is in vacant. These schemes have never come to exist our DES sites or helped to get me a job.
5. **Recruitability Scheme**- Recruitability Scheme is another federal initiative, but it does not recognise the fact that the disabled candidates inability to write a winning application. The selection panels are not trained on disability issues. All my applications (except one) was rejected based on "paper based" competition.

### **My Request to the Parliamentary Committee**

Future of the disabled job applicants is bleak. They are not supported. I want to bring this problem to your attention. Considering my submission, I request the opportunity of making an oral submission to the Committee. I have more information present with evidence and want to explain the discriminatory practices taking place in Employment Market.

