

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 2009-10**

Outcome 4

DEEWR Question No. EW688_10

Senator Humphries asked on 21 October 2009, EEW Hansard page 137.

Question

Disability Employment Network

Senator HUMPHRIES—What I might do is send you a copy of the fact sheet that (the National Council on Intellectual Disability) are distributing at the moment, which argues that there has been a 3.9 per cent decline in people with intellectual disability being offered employment under the open employment program and that the number of people—

I am happy for you to address the issues they raise there about what they say is a decline in employment for people with intellectual disability and a dramatic difference between the rate of employment of people with intellectual disability between Sydney and Melbourne. It is half the rate in Melbourne that it is in Sydney.

Answer

The National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) claim that ‘The trend data for people with intellectual disability participating in the open employment program from 2000/01 - 2006/07 is down 3.9% (Disability Service Census 2007)’.

Care needs to be exercised in looking at historical data from the Disability Services Census on the participation of people with an intellectual disability in the Disability Employment Network (DEN).

In 1996, disability groupings changed as part of the then Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement Minimum Data Set definitions. The previous intellectual/learning classification in the National Minimum Data Set was replaced with three new definitions for autism, intellectual disability and specific learning/attention deficit disorder. These changes were implemented in the Disability Services Census in 1997.

Most clients recorded against the old classification moved across into the new ‘intellectual disability’ classification in disability services census data, with only new entrants using the other new categories. As a result, a large pool of job seekers classed as intellectual disability in open employment data for previous years would more correctly be classed as having a learning disability or autism if they entered assistance today.

As a result, comparison over time of figures in these three categories can be misleading because previous year intellectual disability figures contain a large number of job seekers who nowadays would fall into a different category.

The proportion of open employment clients that are more correctly attributed to the new learning disability and autism categories has been gradually increasing—1.4 per cent in 1997, 21.3 per cent in 2000–01, and 42.4 per cent in 2006–07.

DEEWR administrative data indicates that the total number of clients in the broader combined intellectual/learning/autism disability grouping that have been assisted annually in open employment services increased by 34 per cent between 2000–01 and 2006–07—the latest year for which published figures are available.

NCID are also concerned that:

- 'There are poor participation rates in particular cities. In Sydney, there are currently 1705 people with intellectual disability getting a service, yet only 805 in Melbourne. (DEN data 30 June 2009). We believe this difference is due to the lack of services in Melbourne, which target or specialise in assisting jobseekers with intellectual disability!'

Differences in the number of job seekers assisted by DEN providers in different cities occur across all disability types and generally reflect longstanding historical trends in the local demand for and availability of services. For example, at 30 June 2009 Melbourne Labour Market Region (LMR) providers were assisting twice as many job seekers with psychiatric conditions as Sydney LMR providers and about three times as many with physical conditions. Overall, at 30 June 2009, Melbourne LMR DEN providers were assisting about 34 per cent more job seekers with disability (6165) than those in the Sydney LMR (4600).

From 1 March 2010, Disability Employment Services will be uncapped so all eligible people with disability will be able to have rapid access to a provider to help them get and keep a job.