

CHAPTER 5

EMPLOYMENT – PART 1

1. GENERAL ISSUES

5.1 Employment for people with disabilities is often seen as a solution to a number of problems and particularly as a means of visibly demonstrating access to mainstream life. Employment, in the abstract, represents money, independence, choice, greater responsibility, and power to make decisions.¹ It is part of the transition from child to adult, a necessary rite of passage.²

The right to work, to contribute, is basic and if it is to be realised by those who are disabled then access and equity must be made possible by those who control the economic structures.³

5.2 The Queensland Government Department of Family Services noted:

The involvement of people with disabilities in the workforce benefits them in various ways – personally, socially, economically and educationally. Working promotes individual growth, raises self-image and self-esteem, enhances one's social circle and social skills, provides economic independence, permits normalisation and integration, and develops vocational and living skills.⁴

Another witness stated to the Committee:

The significance of employment in our society cannot be overestimated. It is frequently viewed as the primary measure of an individual's personal and social worth. For those who have the opportunity to participate, paid work can be an important source of self-esteem and economic independence. Given these benefits, it is not surprising that

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1. For most people, employment provides income, companionship, a sense of self-worth, stability of routine, skill development and challenge. See McConnell and Pretty, *Wage Determination in Sheltered Employment* (1987) p. 2; *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 431 (The Spastic Centre of New South Wales), p. 453 (Messrs Rothwell & Smith, Cumberland College of Health Sciences), p. 4813 (Disability Advisory Council of Australia), p. 5712 (The Brotherhood of St Laurence), p. 5744 (Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria).
 2. See Submission No. 84, p. 1 (Ms B. Saxby).
 3. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5328 (Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd (Tasmanian Branch)).
 4. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4317 (Department of Family Services, Queensland).

many people with disabilities have expressed the desire, common to most people in our community, for a paid job.⁵

5.3 Employment is not simply work, unrelated to other issues. In any evaluation of current and possible future employment or work options available to people with disabilities, the benefits to be achieved will include benefits to others and the less tangible cost-effectiveness of providing options which meet some of the needs of those who might otherwise be marginalised.⁶

5.4 Many submissions and witnesses noted the importance of work or employment to the self-esteem of people with disabilities and as an indication of their membership of the community.

A strong commitment to the work ethic has been demonstrated again and again by many of our clients and their families and many [attempts] will be made to work despite setbacks.⁷

5.5 Nonetheless, employment means different things to people with disabilities, depending partly on type and level of disability, and partly on whether they are seeking to join the workforce (including at different levels, for example, from sheltered to less supported or to open employment)⁸ or rejoin the workforce after an accident or injury or disease. Employment also has a number of implications for those most involved with people with disabilities, such as families, carers, government departments, service-providing organisations, and actual or potential employers.

5.6 For some, employment is seen as a form of respite care where the benefits for the employed person are at least matched by increased freedom for the carer. In discussing this issue ACROD stated to the Committee:

While it may be ideologically correct to insist that the disabled client is the only service user, again it is unrealistic, and can even be threatening, not to acknowledge that many parents' first appreciation of sheltered employment services is because they provide respite for them and the rest of the family.⁹

5.7 In referring to the benefits of a slow worker's permit, Epic Employment Service stated that at least a permit might mean the person was occupied.

5. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5328 (Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd (Tasmanian Branch)).

6. See above, Paragraphs 3.129-3.133.

7. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5144 (Health Department of Western Australia).

8. See Glossary.

9. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4895 (ACROD Limited).

I think probably it is better to have somebody doing something and providing some form of quality of life to that person rather than their sitting at home and doing nothing and maybe having no real quality to life.¹⁰

5.8 In some instances, the employment undertaken may be a means of filling in time, and the major concern may not be the quality of work available but the opportunity for carers to obtain relief from care. Even time-filling work or employment, however, can have benefits to the employee through the provision of security, peer support and socialisation. Nor is there any necessary correlation between employment providing an opportunity for respite and its being a 'time filling' job, or one which has limited commercial value. All forms of employment, insofar as they provide a place where a person with a disability is occupied and receiving various levels of support from people other than the primary carer, are a type of respite for the carer.

5.9 Employment may also represent an opportunity for independence for the person with a disability as well as greater freedom for carers, and be welcomed on both grounds. Again, these benefits are not necessarily related to the type of employment offered. Other carers/families, however, may be influenced in their attitudes to employment by factors which are closely related to the environment in which the employment is offered. Employment itself, and the move to new types of employment, can be seen as threatening or as requiring changes of a whole family or support network, not just one member.¹¹ As indicated above, there are many fears held by parents especially about non-sheltered employment, or about the readiness of adult children for work in a more open environment.¹² Concerns about a person's dependence or about their capacity to manage when parents have died also affect attitudes towards employment, with reservations about more open employment sometimes giving way when the benefits have become obvious, or becoming less relevant when the person with a disability leaves a family or other situation which is seen as limiting choice.¹³

5.10 These influences are sufficiently important for many organisations to require the support of family/carers when seeking to move a person with a disability into other than sheltered employment.¹⁴ Similarly, organisations providing sheltered

10. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4204 (Epic Employment Service, M.O.R.E. Inc.).

11. See above, paragraph 2.46.

12. See paragraphs 2.47, 2.50-2.52. See also *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5338 (JobMatch), p. 5389 (Summit Industries).

13. See J. Cooper, *A Survey of the New Vocational Services in Australia*, DCSH, 1989.

14. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5207-8 (PE Personnel).

employment also see those persons central to people with disabilities as having to be taken into consideration in determining employment options.¹⁵

5.11 As indicated above, the attitudes of employers/potential employers (including government) to employment for people with disabilities, can vary considerably. To some, the employment of people with disabilities is a duty owed to the unfortunate, a form of charity; to others, regrettably, people with disabilities have been seen as a source of cheap labour. Others have seen them as reliable employees, although this attitude is not universal. Some employers believe people with disabilities should be provided with a job as an expression of social responsibility. Others appear to believe that they are too expensive to employ in terms of insurance, are limited in what they can do, will take too much sick leave, and will not be able to work as effectively as others.¹⁶

5.12 Employment therefore represents a number of options to people with disabilities and to those with whom they live or work, and not all of these options are seen in positive terms. For some employers in particular, the acceptance of people with disabilities as effective and productive employees is difficult. The existence of new employment options, then, is by itself not a solution to the employment needs of people with disabilities. Attitudes continue to influence the effectiveness of these options.

Different meanings of employment

5.13 The word 'employment' also holds different meanings and this range of meanings has to be understood in order for an evaluation of current employment options to be carried out.

5.14 Employment is generally considered to be a paid full-time occupation (unless otherwise qualified in terms of time), whereby labour is expended to produce a (usually) tangible outcome. Levels of productivity, skills, qualifications and experience are measured and rewarded in terms of money and other benefits. It is the financial return, and the independence this allows, which makes employment meaningful for many people.

5.15 However, employment in itself is also considered important by some groups separate from the financial return it provides – which in some cases may be quite limited. Social interaction, a sense of belonging, a role as worker or provider, may all be valued elements. These benefits have to be taken into account, and are often the reason why people with disabilities want to be in the workforce. Insofar as a number of people employed in sheltered workshops obtain company and peer support in the workplace, these benefits may mean more to them now and in the future than the higher wages available in other types of employment. Consequently, the type of employment (that is, sheltered as opposed to supported or open) is not

15. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4259 (Endeavour Foundation).

16. See Paragraphs 3.50, 3.53-3.54, 3.67.

always an indicator of its value to the individual. The choice must remain as much as possible with the person with a disability.¹⁷

5.16 For most persons, employed or otherwise, paid work is the only meaningful form of employment and the issues which have been of most concern have been levels of remuneration and access to work or to different types of work. The first point, levels of remuneration, while often referred to in this chapter, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7. As far as the second point is concerned the relevant issues are both access to employment itself and the availability of (or access to) types of work or work arrangements which can meet different needs.

Access

5.17 In Chapter 2 and also in Chapter 4, several factors which may adversely influence the capacities of people with disabilities to obtain access to services and successful employment were outlined, such as location and cultural background, and it was noted that services which could not be flexible enough to meet these needs could continue to limit access. The same types of factors are also important in determining outcomes of training programs and employment options, and in many instances may not be easily accommodated in general or 'generic' programs.

5.18 These 'generic' programs are directed to numbers of different groups where long-term unemployment or limited work experience may be the only factor which members have in common, although the completion rate of programs such as SkillShare indicates that generic programs can offer services which meet a range of highly individual needs.¹⁸ In common with others in the wider community, the failure of participants (including people with disabilities) to obtain or retain a job may result from the general economic climate rather than be attributed to the individual or the program itself. The retention rate of people with disabilities who have obtained employment through CETPs, or in supported employment, discussed below, suggests that specialised employment and support services can have good outcomes in terms of retention, although market forces will affect these jobs also. However, the number of persons obtaining employment through such services is still quite low overall and the extent of access thereby limited. This issue is discussed in further detail below.¹⁹

5.19 Much of the research on the access needs of people with disabilities has focussed on the support services which directly impact on work itself (as opposed to getting to work, etc.²⁰). For people with an intellectual disability, this has often meant having assistance in learning a job or in learning new parts of a job; for those with physical disabilities, physical assistance (for example, attendant care) or aids

17. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1350 (Disabled Peoples' International (Australia)).

18. See above, Paragraph 2.63-2.66. See also below, Paragraphs 5.95-5.138.

19. See Paragraphs 5.174-5.177, 5.193 and Recommendations following Paragraph 5.193.

20. Issues such as transport are discussed in Chapter 7.

(for example, computers, etc.) may be the most effective assistance enabling employment to be possible. The ability to meet such needs is essential, and it is clear that the variety of support services, and the acceptance of a gradual learning curve and/or the need for increasing support at particular periods is a feature of a number of employment initiatives operated both by new and established services.²¹

5.20 However, if 'employment' is to become a viable option for a number of other people with disabilities, there is a need for departments and organisations to accept alternatives to traditional employment models. Access must therefore also be measured in terms of availability of variable periods of employment. A number of submissions have suggested that there should be different types of employment levels, equivalent in some ways to 'amounts of employment time' to accommodate the widely varying needs of people with disabilities, including those who are seeking to return to work.

5.21 There is also the need to consider different types of employment patterns which more directly meet the needs of people with particular types of disability. The prevailing concept of employment as centre-based, regular, full-time and increasing in productivity, skill level and remuneration (or at the least, not decreasing in these areas) can be seen as discriminatory in that it is a means of attempting to impose restrictive models on those who cannot benefit from them. In a society which is attempting to restructure the work place, and which has successfully introduced many flexible employment arrangements in the public and private sector, it is surprising that the needs of some of the most disadvantaged appear difficult to accept and meet. Some radical rethinking is needed as to what is regarded as work and the ways in which it may be done.²²

Variable needs

5.22 Features of the work patterns of a number of people with disabilities include:

- an inability to work full-time;
- an inability to work in a regular pattern due to fatigue (for example, Multiple Sclerosis) or unpredictable behaviour (for example, head injury or psychiatric disabilities)²³;

21. See below, especially Paragraphs 5.166-5.168, 6.3.

22. Submission No. 84, p. 81 (Ms B. Saxby). See below, Paragraphs 6.333-6.348.

23. Problems for people with psychiatric disabilities are listed at *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4381-2, 4391 (Queensland Association for Mental Health), pp. 4416-17, 4429-30 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

- the need for regular support because of behaviour and judgement problems including difficulty in assessing and evaluating one's current capacities (for example, people with traumatic head injury)²⁴; and
- a deteriorating or decreasing capacity for work²⁵, including an inability to maintain an increased amount of time worked or the level of skills acquired (to be seen in some degenerative diseases, for example).²⁶

5.23 Working full-time is often difficult for people with physical and with intellectual disabilities, and those who for a period of time at least have emotional or other²⁷ problems which affect their stamina. The actual physical and emotional effort required for an ordinary day's work can be excessive for people with physical disabilities; for people with intellectual disabilities, the stress of concentration, the need to continually 'adapt', the learning of new tasks, can be overwhelming and upsetting²⁸, and result in the individual being unable to cope. For many people with disabilities previous life experience or the actual work environment²⁹ has made it difficult for them to develop self-confidence.

One of the employees with severe physical disabilities who started with us was very reluctant initially to start work because she was scared that she was going to fail. We did not discover this until afterwards. It took her about three months to tell me that she really did not want to start work with us because she was scared that she would do a task wrong and that we would tell her that she was no good and that she could not work with us. She had had so many unpleasant experiences of that nature in her life that she just emotionally could not cope with another one.³⁰

5.24 Similarly, physical tiredness, resulting from physical disability or stress, may also affect the individual's capacity to work on a regular basis (that is, for a certain practicable number of hours per day or days per week). People with specific types of disability also are affected by fatigue – for example, people with multiple sclerosis

24. THI symptoms are listed at *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4087 (Headway (NSW) Inc.); see also *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5139-40 (Health Department of Western Australia).

25. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5129 (Health Department of Western Australia).

26. Submission No. 95, p. 2 (Arthritis Foundation of Australia). See *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5578 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia) where the main difficulties of people with MS are listed.

27. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4108 (Headway (NSW) Inc.), p. 5139 (Health Department of Western Australia).

28. See below, Paragraph 6.29.

29. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4424 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

30. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4424 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

– and this will have some effect on the capacity to work. While to a degree this symptom can be managed by a series of strategies³¹, the major need is for job flexibility that can cope with fluctuating ability.

5.25 People with head injuries, and people with certain psychiatric disabilities, also require work which can accommodate special needs, including the need to avoid stress. There is a need for ‘flexible work hours to be allowed for people who suffer a mental illness’.³² ‘Often the stressful situation of a nine to five job, five days a week, is just too much for a person who suffers mental illness, whereas a job with shorter hours, perhaps three days a week, might be quite suitable for that person’.³³ That work is important to people with some psychiatric disabilities for rehabilitative (including social) purposes, appears to be accepted³⁴, but the number of options available have also been limited.³⁵ Some of the most distinctive features of the more severe psychiatric disabilities often limit the individual’s capacity to obtain and maintain employment where motivation, punctuality and regular attendance are major ‘success’ factors.³⁶

If the rehabilitees have psychiatric disability, there is a likelihood that some of them will have a relapse of the acute condition sometime during that 12-month period. This severely disadvantages them, not only from their personal point of view but from the employer’s point of view too. I think the episodic nature of the illness has to be acknowledged in service provision.³⁷

5.26 A conflicting factor can also be that available work for some people with psychiatric disabilities is not sufficiently challenging³⁸, although more appropriate work might also create problems, including additional stress. Particular features of some psychiatric disabilities may mean that the nature of the employment itself is not so much the problem; the area where support is required is more on a social or interaction level.

... our people need less on-the-job skills training. They will pick up the job very quickly. What they really require is help with some of the

31. See for example, the management strategies of some people with MS – *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5567 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia).

32. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 569 (Mental Health Co-ordinating Council).

33. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 570 (Mental Health Co-ordinating Council).

34. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4411 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

35. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4412 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

36. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4379 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

37. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4417 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

38. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4419 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

associated difficulties of working in employment, for example how to cope with good-natured ribbing from their work mates and not take it too badly.³⁹

5.27 Hence, aside from particular types of work, and work patterns, people with psychiatric disabilities may also need the assistance of support to help them adjust to the workplace⁴⁰; such support would need to be sufficiently flexible to meet the episodic demands of clients, hence it could be different in nature from other types of support services.⁴¹

5.28 Departmental officers demonstrated an awareness of the particular needs of people with certain psychiatric disabilities.

The peaks and troughs with people who have psychiatric disabilities is the recurrence of a psychiatric episode and that certainly provides, in the employment context, many difficulties for both employers and for services engaged in supporting people with psychiatric disabilities. In the Budget announcements, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service will be establishing a number of special rehabilitation units for people with psychiatric disabilities.⁴²

5.29 The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services believed that the 1990-91 Budget announcement that the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service would be establishing special rehabilitation units for people with psychiatric disabilities would 'give us the opportunity to test the kinds of resources, different options and models that we might pursue in the effectiveness of rehabilitation for people with psychiatric disabilities'.⁴³

5.30 People with head injury could display quite different needs to those of people with certain psychiatric disabilities, but might also need support and a flexible work environment.

5.31 People with traumatic head injury (THI)⁴⁴ and their representatives also feel (along with a number of other groups)⁴⁵ that their specific needs have not been appropriately addressed by departments which provide general programs that

39. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4421 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

40. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4428-9 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

41. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4430-1 (Queensland Association for Mental Health).

42. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4765-6 (DHH&CS).

43. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4766 (DHH&CS).

44. As opposed to those with acquired brain injury – although there are some similar effects.

45. Including those with neurological disorders, and people with psychiatric disabilities.

exclude certain types of disability.⁴⁶ The specific employment related needs of people with THI are related to the fact that, with a low average age of people with this disability (23 years)⁴⁷, there is a limited work experience and an interruption to training/education, with often a need to readjust expectations.

People with head injuries differ from other people with physical disabilities in that their major problems are in cognition and behaviour. These deficits affect the individual's ability to make informed decisions, to manipulate their personal environment, to form new relationships, and to learn new skills. They are 'different', as they frequently do not think and behave 'normally', and therefore are not accepted by people with physical disability.⁴⁸

5.32 It has been suggested that these problems affect the capacity of people with THI to work effectively in sheltered workshops.⁴⁹ Behavioural problems, inability to relate to others, and capacity to do the same task for a period of time may all affect employability, at least in the traditional, if not necessarily in a 'transitional' sheltered workshop. Similar problems would make employment in less 'protected' environments less likely.

Often they want to get a job and they sound like they are motivated. However, when they actually do get the job, they have problems turning up on time, they have problems organising themselves and getting themselves to the workplace. In the job itself, they have problems concentrating, learning the task, sticking with the task, maintaining their performance over a period of time and getting on with their work mates. So all those things combined often mean that even if they do get the job, they lose it very quickly. With regard to the type of job, lots of our clients have little insight into the nature of their disabilities and the impact these have on their lives. They are actually trying to get jobs that are way beyond their new level of performance ability. Somebody who used to work in a business now wants a job in a business, but his levels of ability are really at the level of a clerk or for a very basic, repetitive task.⁵⁰

46. See *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4084, 4103 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

47. *ibid.*

48. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4090 (Headway (NSW) Inc.). Obviously, there is also a larger income support period (up to 50 or more years) if the individual has no access to paid employment. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4097 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

49. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4093 (Headway (NSW) Inc.), p. 5133 (2.1.2) (Health Department of Western Australia).

50. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4109 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

5.33 Memory loss, reduced ability to learn new skills, difficulties in beginning a task without reminders, slow processing of information and responses, being easily distracted, suffering frustration and irritability, and sometimes aggression⁵¹, are all characteristic of people with head injuries (though not necessarily all at once) and would clearly affect employability. The situation is complicated further by the fact that people with such injuries believe they can work at high level jobs, but in reality are not capable of doing so.⁵² Hence, as stated above, they do not fit into sheltered workshops or supported employment but cannot easily be accommodated by competitive employment programs.⁵³

5.34 The decrease of work capacity may be accepted in theory, but is usually considered applicable to older people; the deterioration in skills of younger people is a process which needs to be recognised, just as much as does the difference between the apparent and real abilities of persons with THI.

5.35 In respect of people with MS, access to services has been considered limited⁵⁴ because of the way programs have been structured. However, given the usual age of onset of MS, it is also likely that most people with this disability will be established in jobs and have had a reasonable, if not considerable, work experience prior to the symptoms of illness. Consequently, for people with MS and some other degenerative conditions:

The three major problems are firstly, job retention for those in employment at risk of losing their positions due to loss of function; secondly, job redesign and the renegotiation of jobs after the effect of MS on ability; and, thirdly, issues surrounding the relinquishment of full time employment, and later, perhaps, part time employment. It is our view that these issues are swept under the carpet and are not the subject of major attention, but certainly are major issues for people with degenerative conditions, including multiple sclerosis.⁵⁵

5.36 To a degree, the issues are of being able to manage known work; to gradually accept a different level of work; and, if required to relinquish employment. This all requires both an acceptance of the disability and skilled negotiation with employers⁵⁶; it also can require the availability of part-time work.⁵⁷

51. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5140, 5152 (Health Department of Western Australia). Aggression especially can limit employability because of the risk to other workers.

52. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5151 (Health Department of Western Australia).

53. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5141 (Health Department of Western Australia).

54. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5571-2 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia).

55. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5571-2 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia).

56. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5574-5 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia).

57. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5576 (National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia).

5.37 The issue of inflexible working hours (and the basis of pay) was one raised by the Spastic Society of New South Wales, which was both aware of the amount of time its employees took to produce goods, and concerned with the quality of work available.

In Australian society, the accepted “norm” is to work a full week of five days and thirty eight hours. Despite unemployment levels throughout the 80's, it is believed that attitudes of society in general have not changed to accept the need for more part time work and shared jobs. This appears to carry over into the field of disabled employees who are pressured to work a full week instead of working the amount of time that quality work is available.⁵⁸

5.38 The Society went on to recommend that a ‘general community education program is needed on what is a realistic concept of working hours for people with disabilities’ and that ‘training and education programs be made available for people with disabilities to help them take advantage of reduced working hours with quality of life improvements’.⁵⁹

5.39 The variations in employment ‘time’ were noted by the Frankston College of TAFE submission, which stated that while many people with mild intellectual disabilities were potentially capable of full-time open employment, others were capable of a variety of employment levels, such as:

- full-time open employment with occasional on-the-job support;
- full-time open employment but with significantly reduced productivity/output;
- permanent part-time employment (varying degrees of productivity);
- sheltered/supported employment; and
- irregular/occasional employment – often due to associated disabilities/illnesses.

If we are going to provide effective programs that lead towards “full” and “quality” outcomes then it is necessary for both the Federal and State government, employers and unions to re-structure the current Social Security, union, wages/conditions arrangements otherwise we will be making great gains in the short term with no long term realistic benefits.⁶⁰

58. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 383 (The Spastic Centre of New South Wales).

59. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 384 (The Spastic Centre of New South Wales). This point is also developed by DACA – see below Paragraph 5.41.

60. Submission No. 94, p. 2 (Frankston College of Technical and Further Education).

5.40 A further submission also noted that 'shorter working hours' (plus additional benefits) were part of the provisions available in some other countries.⁶¹ The workforce in general has often been able to accommodate such needs and the restructured workforce in particular, which offers a range of part-time employment, and which is developing further options in home-based employment, has the capacity to meet the special needs of some people with disabilities.

5.41 In noting the limited options available to people with disabilities the Disability Advisory Council of Australia (DACA) developed the argument further by commenting not only on the limited number of employment options, but on the emphasis on employment as opposed to 'further education, leisure or retirement activities'.⁶²

Very few avenues exist for people with disabilities who wish to access further education. Still fewer opportunities exist for individuals who wish to access a combination of options (for example, part time work and part time study, part time work interspersed with leisure).⁶³

5.42 This reflects the awareness of some groups that the issue of employment is one which is broader than just paid work.⁶⁴ This argument is one which has been considered both in Australia and overseas, particularly in terms of technology change and the effects this can have on general employment rates.⁶⁵

5.43 In the current economic climate and the employment structure of Australian society, the opportunities for employment for a number of individuals and groups are extremely limited. As has been the case in other societies, consideration has been given to the ways in which long-term disadvantage can be overcome through extending the concept of employment to cover unpaid work or occupation, or bringing aspects of hitherto unpaid or 'voluntary' work into a recognised scheme of 'employment'.⁶⁶

61. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 455 (Messrs Rothwell and Smith, Cumberland College of Health Sciences).

62. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4867 (Disability Advisory Council of Australia).

63. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4868 (Disability Advisory Council of Australia).

64. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 46, 48-9 (South Australian Government).

65. Louise Crossley, *Children and the Future of Work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence Child Poverty Policy Review 3, 1990, especially p. 21. See the discussion on problems with 'voluntary' work as it is currently structured, especially the failure of labour market programs to address real issues, in Veronica Sheen *Community Work for Unemployed Young People*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence Social Policy and Research Department, I, 1987.

66. James Robertson, *Future Work*, New York, 1985. See also R.W. Rumberger and H.M. Levin *Forecasting the Impact of New Technologies on the Future Job Market* *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 27 (1985) 399. See also ACOSS Paper No. 18 (1988) *Return to Full Employment: A Discussion of Employment and Training Strategies*, especially pp. 3-4.

“*Employment*”, in a paid capacity, would not be the only recognised form of work. Instead, *work* would encompass many kinds of self-organised activity or own work, which would become an increasingly central focus of interest and of individual and community production.⁶⁷

5.44 With a decrease in the number of jobs in major industrial sectors, and with office automation and multi-skilling creating substantial reductions in a number of administrative/clerical positions, it is possible that ‘full employment’ in the traditional sense will not be part of future economic and employment strategies. For both long-term disadvantaged and for numbers of recently educated/trained but inexperienced ‘workers’ in particular, there may need to be different types of ‘employment’ or ‘occupation’. People with disabilities, or some groups within this broad category, may well be employed only in terms of this wider concept of employment.⁶⁸

5.45 Much of the discussion on alternatives to employment or work options were based on the belief that, as individuals were so badly paid for their work (in sheltered workshops) and could not earn a higher wage without losing benefits⁶⁹, it could be useful to develop a more extensive program which could occupy them more meaningfully.

5.46 Some of this evidence was taken prior to the introduction of proposed changes to income support measures, and in general there is a lack of understanding of the income test and income taper rules.⁷⁰ However, the most important aspect – being free to enjoy other activities in life – must remain an important part of any discussion on work and employment options for people with disabilities.

5.47 For people with virtually no access to formal services – including people with severe disabilities – there is no doubt a need to ensure some access to activities which are enjoyed, although this is also true for those who are involved in open or other forms of employment.

5.48 In some parts of the evidence presented, the grounds on which there should be an encouragement to participate in society, including through employment, was unclear. One witness suggested that people with disabilities with limited access to

67. Crossley, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

68. See also *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5712 – the Brotherhood of St Laurence referred to the importance of ‘social, recreational and leisure’ pursuits, though as an addition to employment, rather than part of it. Later, representatives of the organisation did suggest that ‘other life pursuits’ (other than work) were ‘valid and viable as well’ – *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5719 (The Brotherhood of St. Laurence).

69. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 106 (S.A. Group Enterprises Incorporated).

70. See Chapter 7, Paragraphs 7.25-7.27, 7.31-7.38.

more formal services, could nonetheless occupy themselves, although this may be in ways which did not increase their employment prospects.

Mr Sarre: I think some of them may stay at home. Some of them may participate in some leisure programs. Some of them may watch television. Some of them may do some WEA.⁷¹

Miss Slattery: Most find things themselves to do.⁷²

The point which another witness made was the need for people with disabilities to have the freedom to accept or reject the work ethic – especially when work was so poorly compensated.⁷³

5.49 In some cases, the work ethic was considered to be inappropriately applied to all people.

We are looking at a work ethic and we have to question whether that ethic is applicable to all people with a disability.⁷⁴

5.50 The representatives of a CETP service pointed out that a number of assumptions about employment needed to be examined in the context of Australian society. If social security or income support would continue to be paid, there was no point in trying to get some people with disabilities into the workforce.

There are clearly some people for whom employment is not an option and providing resources to get them to that level, in 15 years' time, may not be doing that individual a service. We have to look at other alternatives to the employment options. That may be outside the scope of this Committee, but it seems to me that we should not only look towards putting all people with disabilities towards an employment related future.⁷⁵

5.51 Overall, there was a general belief that the need to feel worthwhile and productive was shared by people with disabilities. In some instances, this awareness was further developed to consider the importance of having a variety of options, given not only the level of disability but also of age.

71. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 114 (S.A. Group Enterprises Incorporated). Note: WEA – Workers' Education Association classes.

72. *ibid.*

73. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 48-9 (South Australian Government).

74. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 702 (Centacare).

75. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 701 (Centacare).

There is a need for more graduated and varied options to be developed to cater for ageing and severely disabled people with intellectual disability. A mix and blend of services which can be accessed on the basis of whatever time is most appropriate and desirable for the individual concerned are essential.⁷⁶

5.52 Some witnesses indicated that this variety could be extended across the spectrum of people with disabilities, although there was some suggestion that people with more severe disabilities might particularly benefit from a more flexible approach to the mixture of services. The suggestions that have been made reveal both an awareness that some disabilities require a long confidence recovery phase; and a belief that the effects of some disabilities are such that only a mixture of services could be an appropriate 'service'.

5.53 The first aspect was especially referred to in the context of psychiatric disability, although it is already catered for to some extent by the high levels of support available to people in some supported employment services assisting people with a range of disabilities.

... the increasing emphasis on employment programs in Skillshare means that there is less drop-in centre activity going on. We know that a number of people with psychiatric illnesses have been displaced from the CYSS-type of centres that they used to go to and get company and feel comfortable. Maybe, after a few years of sitting around having cups of coffee, they felt safe enough to try something, to try doing a bit of a training course or something else.⁷⁷

5.54 The same organisation also pointed out the need to recognise that work was not the only outcome, and that this was not a matter of choice for individuals.

... as well as looking for people who are going to make it through to jobs ... there also should be recognition that some people are not going to. There is a role for social rehabilitation, for living skills centres, with more basic sorts of outcome measures than actual employment measures.⁷⁸

5.55 The concept of a wider system of employment was perhaps most clearly expressed by Headway NSW which put forward an argument for what it considered an 'avocational' service.

Headway NSW takes the view that employment includes all activities utilising time, skills, and personal potential, irrespective of income

76. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5272-3 (Developmental Disability Council of Western Australia (Inc.)).

77. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 572-3 (Mental Health Co-ordinating Council Inc.).

78. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 573 (Mental Health Co-ordinating Council Inc.).

derived from that employment: there are many gains to be made from employment other than financial benefit.

To enable the psychological, social, and personal benefits of employment to be achieved by the large number of THI persons who are unable to enter the competitive employment market, it is essential that programs of avocational employment are available.⁷⁹

5.56 The organisation believed that the separation of program funding arrangements inhibited the development of a service of this nature, which could be seen as pre-vocational in nature. Components included recreation and voluntary work, and the support of the family was an important element, as it is for a number of successful employment programs.

from clinical experience, it is usually people who have the support of family networks who organise for them to be doing a range of activities. That is usually how the majority get into volunteer work. The reason they do it is that they can do volunteer work for a short period of time. Part of a lot of people's problems is that they cannot work a nine to five day. So you can do voluntary work which you can choose to do on the basis of your previous experience.⁸⁰

5.57 To see the development of this wider concept of employment as an undesirable situation would be to ignore some current social problems such as unemployment rates and the particular access problems of some people with disabilities. Because of its terms of reference the Committee is not able to investigate in detail at this time the development of alternative employment or work structures of this type. However, the development of a concept of employment as work which provides a meaningful occupation to substantial numbers of people with disabilities, does offer the opportunity of expanding current employment and training programs, linking these with other types of related and non-related work experience. For people with severe physical disabilities in particular such options may be of special benefit, as many people in this category have limited access to the benefits traditionally associated with paid employment.

5.58 Full-time work (though not necessarily standard productivity) may be both appropriate for and available to some people with disabilities.⁸¹ For persons not able to obtain full-time employment, or unable to undertake it, a range of other types of occupation or employment with specific training and experience outcomes could be developed beyond those currently offered. In this way, the labour market

79. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4096 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

80. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 4108-9 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

81. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 534 & 535 (JobSupport Inc.). JobSupport noted that Slow Worker Permits were sometimes useful in that they allowed a person to work at their own rate and perhaps build on skills, over time. Workers, including those in full-time employment, often needed time to reach full productivity.

is able to utilise broader resources in order to meet the needs of substantial numbers of people of working age.

Recommendations

The Committee acknowledges that most people with profound disabilities will never be able to participate in paid employment, or in programs which combine work and other activities such as study or recreation.

The Committee believes that people with profound disabilities require services which meet their particular needs.

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

1. That funding be provided to ensure that care services and stimulating programs are provided to meet the needs of people with profound disabilities. Such programs could include physiotherapy, music, colour and light programs.

The Committee acknowledges that full-time employment is not appropriate for, or may not be achievable by, all people with disabilities.

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

2. That programs be established that combine work, study, recreation and other meaningful activities – depending on the needs of each individual. These programs are to be readily accessible by people with disabilities and these ‘full life’ programs must ensure that people receive an acceptable income at least equivalent to the pension.
3. That part-time employment options be developed for people with disabilities unable to work full-time.

2. TRAINING

Labour Market Training Programs and Other Assistance

5.59 Appropriate training and support is a key factor in achieving the employment opportunities for people with disabilities foreshadowed in the *DSA*. While DHH&CS funds specialised support and training through the CETP and Supported Employment programs, there is also scope for mainstream training programs to facilitate employment opportunities for people with disabilities as is indicated in the evidence from these services discussed below. Subsidies and other types of assistance provided by generic labour market programs are used by many *DSA* service providers to complement their specialist training strategies.

Employment opportunities can be expanded by training, both on and off the job. This is a key factor in opening up employment opportunities and can have a substantial effect on improving the

capacities of people with disabilities to perform the duties of the job in an efficient manner. This is particularly relevant for people with moderate to severe disabilities.

On the job training is essential for people with intellectual disabilities to obtain and maintain a job, while off the job training has limited value for that group. Both types of training can provide opportunities for people with physical disabilities.⁸²

5.60 The Ronalds Report noted in 1990 that mainstream training programs, to date, had 'not provided many opportunities for people with disabilities'.⁸³ The Disability Employment Action Centre (DEAC) also expressed concern about the current limitations of some mainstream programs:

Some programs are literally not accessible. There has been a recent review of SkillShare which has identified that there is a need to make SkillShare programs physically accessible. We have attempted to refer people to SkillShare programs and they have not been able to get in the front door. . . . currently there are inadequate training opportunities throughout the system, throughout State and Commonwealth funded programs, for people with more severe disabilities. It needs to be recognised – as it has been.⁸⁴

5.61 The limited opportunities for people with disabilities in mainstream programs, were highlighted by representatives of the South Australian Government, who appeared at the first hearing of this inquiry in 1989. They believed that the emphasis by CES offices on courses to meet local, short-term labour market needs was not seen as the most effective medium for the provision of training for people with disabilities. Short-term, job specific training courses provided in isolation were not able to take into account factors which 'have proven to be critical to job retention and promotion in the longer term' for people with disabilities, such as appropriate socialisation, work attitude, job satisfaction, ongoing support and training:

Programs whose major focus is on the short term goal of reducing the numbers of recipients on the Unemployment Benefit do not necessarily meet the real training needs of people with disabilities. Such programs clearly give higher priority to short-term local labour market needs and to CES statistics than they give to the longer term vocational needs of persons with disabilities.⁸⁵

82. *Ronalds Report*, p.11, (1.5.7).

83. *ibid.*

84. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5604 (DEAC (Disability Employment Action Centre)).

85. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 15 (South Australian Government).

5.62 Another perspective on the suitability of generic programs was advanced by the ACT Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Disability which perceived the Government's emphasis on training rather than job creation schemes as discriminating against people with disabilities:

As most training programs focus on the more job ready individuals within the community, people with disabilities are less likely to be included or able to compete equally.⁸⁶

5.63 The Commonwealth and State governments already have in place a wide range of pre-vocational and vocational programs and provide funding for the development and ongoing support of other training programs. Such programs generally focus on the development of specific employment skills or employment readiness. In addition training programs are provided by some private groups, such as charitable organisations or community groups, such as NADOW⁸⁷ or the Sydney City Mission. However, private organisations may also receive funding from the Commonwealth (via SkillShare) or State government funding. Most programs are targeted at the unemployed and, within this group, sub-groups which are regarded as particularly disadvantaged such as the long-term unemployed, sole parents or people with disabilities. Some organisations may receive funding to meet the training needs of people with specific disabilities. The involvement of both Commonwealth and State governments in the training field has contributed to diversity in the responses to training needs. However, the Committee believes that the current array of programs lacks an overall strategy and rationale and this may have the effect of limiting access to training programs for people with disabilities.

Commonwealth involvement – Department of Employment, Education & Training (DEET)

5.64 DEET provides and oversees a range of training and related labour market activities of relevance to people with disabilities, including:

- CES services for job-seekers;
- the Skills Formation program, which includes funding and support for TAFE, apprenticeship and traineeship programs;⁸⁸ and
- the Special Employment Education and Income Support Program⁸⁹, which includes employment and training assistance for disadvantaged clients (such as

86. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1645 (The Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Disability (A.C.T.)).

87. NADOW – National Association for Training the Disabled in Office Work.

88. See DEET Annual Report 1990-91, pp. 59-68. TAFE provision for people with disabilities was discussed above in chapter 4.

89. DEET Annual Report 1990-91, pp. 69-95.

wage subsidies), community based strategies (such as SkillShare) and the provision of income support for people in education and training, such as Austudy and the Formal Training Allowance.

5.65 The Commonwealth Government also plays a key role in the training sphere through the National Board for Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) which provides advice to the Minister, and through the enactment of the Training Guarantee and the establishment of the National Training Board.

5.66 In addition DEET was a key participant in the Active Employment Strategy (reform of unemployment entitlements) and the reforms of disability services which came into effect on 12 November 1991, and which can greatly expand opportunities for people with disabilities:

To provide services to people with disabilities and in the context of the Active Employment Strategy, DEET, in conjunction with the Departments of Social Security and of Community Services and Health⁹⁰, has been developing strategies to improve both the co-ordination and the range of services.⁹¹

5.67 The Office of Disability within DHH&CS provides policy advice to the Government on the needs of people with disabilities and analyses the effectiveness of government programs in the delivery of services. It is clear that liaison between DEET and DHH&CS concerning the employment, education and training needs of people with disabilities has improved as a result of the work of the interdepartmental Disability Task Force. However, there is still scope for DEET to continue to monitor and analyse trends in participation in its programs by people with disabilities and liaise with other areas in policy development with regard to the special needs of people with disabilities. This will be facilitated through the program of evaluation developed as part of the Disability Reform Package.⁹²

5.68 Specialist units exist within the DEET structure which focus attention on women's and youth affairs at a national level with an emphasis on employment, education and training issues⁹³, and the Disability Access Support Units (DASUs) have been devised to help Skillshare projects provide appropriate services to people with disabilities.⁹⁴ DEET introduced Post Placement Support (July 1991) for clients who were formerly unemployed for 12 months or more. As part of the implementation of the Disability Reform package, Post Placement Support will be

90. Now Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.

91. DEET Annual Report 1989-90, pp. 100-102.

92. See Appendix 7, pp. 9-10.

93. *DEET Annual Report* 1989-90, p. 130. *DEET Annual Report* 1990-91, pp. 131-2.

94. *DEET Annual Report* 1990-91, p. 76, and see also Paragraphs 5.137-5.138. However, see also Paragraphs 5.112, 5.135.

extended to people with disabilities during 1991-92, and some 4,300 people are expected to receive assistance, at a cost of \$4.3 million.⁹⁵

5.69 Paid Work Experience for People with Disabilities is part of the active employment strategy for people with disabilities. It will provide fully subsidised work experience placements in the private sector for people with 'a high level of disability'. Placements will run for a maximum of 12 weeks full-time or equivalent part-time and will pay the award wage or equivalent up to a maximum of \$3,600. \$500,000 has been set aside for lease of essential special equipment and hire of specialist services.⁹⁶

5.70 The establishment of Disability Panels, in conjunction with DHH&CS and DSS, will allow DEET to assist people with disabilities further.⁹⁷ The CES will provide a case management approach to assisting clients with the help of Disability Jobseeker Advisers (DJAs), who will be members of the Disability Panel.⁹⁸

5.71 DEET's submission of March 1989 to this inquiry included data on the numbers of people assisted by DEET client services and labour market programs during 1987-88⁹⁹, and these tables are reproduced in Appendix 15:1. Updated figures for 1990-91 were provided in February 1992. These are reproduced at Appendix 15:2 and key points noted at Paragraph 5.77. In both cases, the figures are based on self-identification by people with disabilities and can therefore represent an under-estimate of the numbers of job seekers with disabilities. In addition, as several categories of disadvantaged job seekers are recognised by DEET, people with disabilities may be counted under one of the other 'disadvantaged' categories, depending on their personal characteristics and whether their disability is regarded as a primary or secondary characteristic. For example, people with disabilities may experience other labour market disadvantages as a result of their being long-term unemployed, of ATSI origin or a sole parent, and could be included in one of these categories rather than in the 'disability' category.

5.72 With the development and implementation of the Disability Reform Package, DEET drafted guidelines which include definitions adopted from the WHO International Classifications.¹⁰⁰ The terminology previously used by DEET was not sufficiently precise to identify levels of disability and thereby to indicate the extent to which various labour market programs could meet the needs of people with

95. DEET Program Performance Statement 1991-92, p. 117.

96. *ibid.* See below, Paragraph 5.113.

97. Disability Panels are discussed further at Paragraph 5.82.

98. DEET Program Performance Statement 1991-92, p. 151. See also below, Paragraph 5.82.

99. Submission No. 205 (Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services). DEET provided a supplementary submission to the Committee on 29 May 1991, and provided further information to the Committee in January and February 1992.

100. See Appendix 6.