

His Honour Justice Hatcher
FAIR WORK COMMISSION
4 Yearly Review Modern Awards
Supported Employment Services Award

Matter Number AM2014/286

Dear Sir,

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) is aware of the very valuable role of disability enterprises across Australia. Our experience derives from our association with organisations like Greenacres and the Flagstaff Group who are based in the Wollongong region. Indeed, the AWU have members and former members around the country whose sons and daughters are supported employees of organisations like Greenacres, who offer employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

For that reason, we are well placed to understand the challenges faced by people with disabilities in the working environment, and by consequence the affect any changes that a wage determination may have on the livelihood of supported

For people with a disability, jobs matter. Employment in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment builds routine, friendship and purpose. Supported employees at places like Greenacres enjoy all of this. When combined with the disability support pension, their take home pay generally exceeds the minimum wage. They develop both life and vocational skills. Their family and carers also receive valuable respite and support.

The AWU is aware that the Fair Work Commission (FWC) is reconsidering the best method for determining wage outcomes for supported employees in disability enterprises. We understand that the FWC will consider whether such wage levels should be determined primarily on productive output (how fast a supported employee works) or the skills, level of support and supervision that a person requires to carry out their work.

We understand a number of advocacy groups and the Department of Social Services want the Fair Work Commission to force all disability enterprises to make a wage determination based on a productive output assessment which may make the jobs of supported employees in Disability Enterprises unsustainable. They want to remove skill based assessment from the Supported Employment Services Award.

The AWU requests the Commission to consider a way of determining wages similar to that of the rest of the workforce. As the union with the widest coverage across the nation, and a depth of experience in dealing with a vast array of Awards including workers with disabilities we believe determining wage levels based on skills is the best way to do this.

We would be concerned if the Fair Work Commission was to make a determination

that people with disabilities should be paid according to their individual productive output as such a determination could be used by employers in the future to validate a move away from a skills-based wage determination for workers without a disability.

Our primary concern in making this submission is for the people with disabilities themselves. We have consulted with many stakeholders and it is obvious to us the social implications on those with disabilities, and their families, will endure if organisations like Greenacres cannot provide support for those in need in the workplace.

Any decision which might jeopardise the jobs of supported employees needs to be a major consideration for the Fair Work Commission.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Walton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Walton

NATIONAL SECRETARY

AUSTRALIAN WORKERS UNION