

**Submission
No 158**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL
DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME AND THE PROVISION
OF DISABILITY SERVICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the provision of disability services in New South Wales

I am an underemployed job seeker with cerebral palsy. I have a good work history, three degrees and several other qualifications. I use crutches and sometimes a power wheelchair. I have been on the NDIS for about six months and have found it helpful. I have been able to access physiotherapy which I didn't have before and enjoy the fact that I am working with them to set the priorities rather than them taking their instructions from a doctor. I like being the client, rather than the patient. I also enjoy being able to choose who repairs my wheelchair. I am very conscious of living in the city, or where I have many choices.

I have also begun to access some specialist disability employment support through the NDIS. They have assessed my capacity for employment by checking what my work relevant skills are and what kind of support I might need in the workplace. The next step is for them to spend some time reverse marketing on my behalf to see if they can help me find a suitable opening. I have previously worked with Disability Employment Providers who are contacted by the government to support if people with disabilities who are on Newstart. The companies I dealt with did not assess my work capacity and look for strategies we could present to employers to help to overcome any barriers to my employment. They did manage to send me to some inaccessible and unsuitable workplaces. I am pleased to be able to access professional help through the NDIS but wonder what had hope there is for people with disabilities who are not eligible. 25% of people on Newstart have disabilities. They all need access to professionally trained, specialist support.

My disability means I am unable to drive a car. If there is a lot of walking involved in a journey, I am more likely to take my wheelchair. However, that can create its own problems. 167 out of 307 train stations are fully accessible, which seriously restricts my access to jobs. Bad footpaths can also make a location inaccessible. Inaccessible workplaces also restrict my access to employment. The government needs to be working with employers and retailers to make businesses and workplaces accessible. You can't afford to wait until someone with a disability turns up as a customer or a potential employee. As a customer, if I can't get in, I'll look for somewhere else to take my business. As a job applicant, workplaces that need adaptation won't hire me because by the time the employer advertises the job, they need it filled as soon as possible. They don't want to wait around while adjustments are made. They'll take the easy option and employ the person who doesn't need any adjustments.

This week, the Australian government department of social services released the "Building Employer Demand" research paper which makes it clear just how few employers are really committed to employing people with disabilities. Many of them are, apparently, uncertain about employing us because they are not sure how their staff will react or what adjustments they might need to make to accommodate us. If some of those adjustments were already made, it might help.