



Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC
Minister for Disability Services;
Environment; Electoral Affairs
12th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

4 April 2019

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S DISABILITY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Dear Minister

The Youth Disability Advocacy Network Inc. (YDAN) is Western Australia's peak representative organisation for young people with disabilities. YDAN operates primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people with disability in a rapidly changing society.

YDAN is becoming widely acknowledged as a leader in the field of current youth participation and advocacy and has received awards to this effect – namely a 2018 WA Youth Award and the 2018 Senses Australia Teresa Way Award.

In line with our ongoing commitment to advancing the rights of young people with disabilities in WA, YDAN maintains an online network for our members for the purposes of socialisation, mentorship and advice. An ongoing concern expressed by young people with disabilities is their prospects of finding meaningful employment.

As a generation, young people are facing diminishing secure employment opportunities, being subject to inequitable industrial relation provisions, cuts to penalty rates, erosion of protections, and a changing labour market, all of which they are disproportionately affected by. Meaningful employment is essential to positive mental, physical and economic health. Sadly, too few people with disabilities are able to access meaningful employment.

I am proud to inform you that through continued growth as an organisation, YDAN has been able to develop a Social Enterprise Strategy, where we now train and employ young people with disabilities to deliver our services, providing a much needed start for their professional endeavours.

With the full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) roll out in Western Australia by 2020, there will be significant gaps in the labour market and opportunities for employment in the disability and social services sector. This potentially provides access to employment for people with disabilities.

We are also aware that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program has targeted outcomes to provide employment opportunities for people with disability and build the capacity of employers to

be more inclusive and reduce the myths and conceptions around employing people with disability.

I was pleased to recently read the State Training Plan 2018–2021 published by the State Training Board, and see the inclusion of the support to increase participation of underrepresented groups, including disability, in vocational education and training (VET) and the labour market.

There is some concern that within the plan there is not more specific targets or detail included regarding the inclusion of people with disability in filling the employment opportunities and pending gap in the sector. From our conversations, it is clear that many people with disability are seeing the NDIS market growth for WA as a unique opportunity to find meaningful employment, recognising that with lived experience and applying the social understanding “nothing about us without us”, people with disabilities would make valuable employees working in the sector.

The last strategy for people with disability in Western Australia was Count Me In (2013). While I am sure employment will be a key focus in the State Disability Plan, could you please provide further information:

1. What are the targets or initiatives for people with disabilities as part of the State Training Plan, including for young people with disability, to ensure they are not missed out of the significant opportunities for employment provided through the full roll out of NDIS in the sector? If there are none, why not?
2. What is the State Government doing to address the inequities in income for people with disabilities in relation to the issues highlighted by those under sheltered workshops or supported employment?

The Youth Disability Advocacy Network Inc. appreciates your efforts as Minister for Disability Services working with the Department of Communities in improving the experiences of young people with disability in Western Australia. It is our hope that your continued commitment increases the participation and opportunities for meaningful employment.

Yours faithfully



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YDAN Executive Chair

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