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The Department of Social Services
Lodged via: engage.dss.gov.au

To the Department

My Pathway is a social and economic development organisation delivering services from the Top End and Torres Strait to Tasmania. We have been developing people, connecting them to opportunities and helping communities to grow since 2007. We are committed to supporting people with a disability into meaningful employment and helping employers to create more inclusive workplaces.

My Pathway delivers a range of employment, social and economic development programs, including Disability Employment Services (DES), ParentsNext, Self-Employment Assistance and the Community Development Program. We offer apprenticeships, training through our Registered Training Organisation and facilitate community projects (including Skilling Queenslanders for Work) to build local skills and deliver important cultural and community infrastructure.

Since commencing the DES contract in 2018, My Pathway has supported the take up of more than 750 jobs that interest our participants and appeal to their needs, skills and abilities. Our participants (87%) say that finding a job is one of the most important aspects of DES, but they want to be better understood and receive ongoing assistance to do the things they want.

We recognise and expect the changes to the Disability Services Act 1986 (the Act) will aim to improve the lives of, and support, people with a disability, their families and carers. It will set the legislative framework for Australian disability services including DES.

Regards,

National Business Partner – Capacity & Performance
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Enterprise Management Group Pty Ltd (ABN 54 123 371 022) trading as My Pathway
My Pathway acknowledges First Nation peoples of Australia and pays respect to the Traditional Owner elders, tribes and communities on whose land and seas we do business. Always was, always will be.

Social & Economic Development | Project Management | Business Systems | Facility Services

QUESTION 1: DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PROPOSED OBJECTS FOR THE NEW ACT? WHAT OTHER OBJECTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW ACT?

The proposed objectives of the Act appear a reasonable starting point with a key focus being to increase social and economic participation by people with a disability. Greater emphasis could be placed on ensuring that where supports and services are reviewed in conjunction with people with a disability, they understand and have access to ways they can participate.

QUESTION 2: DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PROPOSED APPROACH TO THE TARGET GROUP? HOW DO YOU THINK THE TARGET GROUP SHOULD BE DEFINED?

It would be sensible to adopt a description of disability that aligns with a contemporary and broadly understood definition such as that used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

The new Act should recognise groups who experience multiple and intensified forms of disadvantage or discrimination, including a reference to other applicable legislations that would apply.

QUESTION 3: DO YOU AGREE WITH OUR SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES FOR AVOIDING DUPLICATION AND REQUIRING COORDINATION? WHAT OTHER PRINCIPLES DO YOU THINK SHOULD APPLY?

A minimum standard and/ or level of service should be expected regardless of the State or Territory where an eligible person resides. This would assist in promoting national awareness for services that support people with a disability and avoid confusion where a person chooses to relocate interstate.

A simple and secure process for providers to share information, with consent, should be established to avoid the participant having to provide the same details multiple times.

QUESTION 4: DO YOU THINK THE NEW ACT SHOULD INCLUDE A DEFINITION FOR DISABILITY? DO YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS?

The UN CRPD provides a clear and meaningful social definition of disability that is broadly understood. The Act could support the definition with more specific eligibility requirements based on common scenarios and/ or circumstances for people with disability in Australia.

QUESTION 5: HOW DO YOU THINK THAT QUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MANAGED BY THE NEW ACT?

The quality and safeguarding arrangements of the Act should simplify operations for providers who offer multiple disability services, however a minimum level of quality should be set to protect participants. Quality standards should focus on supporting people with a disability regardless of service type and it would be expected that industry specific regulations would complement and safeguard the participant experience.

QUESTION 6: DO YOU AGREE WITH THE SUPPORTS AND SERVICES LISTED ABOVE? WHAT OTHER KINDS OF SUPPORTS AND SERVICES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW ACT?

The types of services funded under the new Act are relevant for a point in time. Some flexibility should be enabled to accommodate emerging needs as identified by people with a disability. The Act should be designed to respond to any future changes in the socio-political environment that may impact participants to the extent where adjustments to supports are required.

QUESTION 7: DO YOU CONSIDER IT NECESSARY TO RETAIN SEPARATE PROVISIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND REHABILITATION EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, OR COULD THEY BE COMBINED?

We welcome combining programs if it reduces complication, enables fit-for-purpose services and allows providers to spend more time supporting participants.

Whether a participant enters DMS or ESS is not the most important factor. The priority should be providing a scalable program that aligns funding to individual support needs, which vary in duration, intensity and cost.