



JFA Purple Orange Newsletter

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Making Sense of Meaningful Employment

In November JFA Purple Orange endorsed the Senate's rejection of the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) urging Australian businesses to look at alternative employment opportunities for people living with disability. This has led to concerns being voiced about the potential loss and the impact should the Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) model no longer exist.



JFA Purple Orange joined 27 other disability advocacy groups calling for Senate rejection of the BSWAT tool that allows the continuation of very low wages being paid to workers living with disability.

Our [media release titled "1 in 100"](#) calls instead for support from mainstream Australian employers to offer more genuine employment chances to people living with disability.

A sustainable future for employees living with disability is possible if just one in one hundred, just one per cent, of Australia's businesses provide proper waged jobs to the 20,000 Australians living with disability currently disadvantaged in very low paid sheltered workshops.

It would be unfair to scare people into thinking the Senate's rejection of the BSWAT would lead to thousands of people being stuck at home with nothing to do because of the consequential demise of the ADE model. We need to instead replace the ADE model with a more effective mechanism.

Subsequently, we have heard some people's concerns that such a shift is not possible, that it is well-intentioned but idealistic and will destroy jobs.

So we thought some additional information would be helpful, and we are indebted to Inclusion Australia (formerly the National Council on Intellectual Disability) as the key source for the following.

Not so long ago two men who work in ADEs and live with intellectual disability went to the Federal Court to claim a fair award wage based on a fair wage assessment that is equitable.

As a result, the Federal and High Courts of Australia determined the BSWAT discriminated against them and others living with intellectual disability.

Additionally, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights said "the scheme does not contain the requisite elements of an effective remedy to the unlawful discrimination found to have taken place [against people living with intellectual disability]."

More than six months later a worker living with intellectual disability chose to lead a class action to seek compensation from the Commonwealth for discrimination in the setting of wages (the class action has no impact on the viability of ADEs or the job security of workers).

In response, the Commonwealth decided to legislate a BSWAT Payment Scheme to bypass the Federal Court process, instead making a payment offer in exchange for workers' rights.

The BSWAT would have denied workers their full entitlement and taken away their legal right to complain about discrimination. However the message was that the BSWAT was important to secure jobs at risk.

Service provider peak body National Disability Services (NDS) in their news statement published 27 November specifically say rejection of the BSWAT would have no direct impact on ADEs, though there is little doubt NDS are very concerned about the rejection of BSWAT because of the practical implications for some of their members who run ADEs.

The original intent of the Disability Services Act 1986 was based on the research and demonstration that people living with intellectual disability, including those with significant intellectual disability, can work in the open labour market when provided skilled support.

The intention was to build this skilled support nationwide. The hope was ADEs would learn these new skills and become experts at delivering open employment outcomes for people living with intellectual disability.

The original demonstration of open employment service (an agency called Jobsupport based in Sydney) for people with significant intellectual disability is 30 years old. It is a program with the highest star rating and employment outcomes in Australia, and by various accounts is very successful in placing people living with intellectual disability into sustainable mainstream employment. It is a program that exclusively assists people with an IQ of less than 60.

The alternative is real and for everyone to see. Inclusion Australia, has been arguing for several years that Australia needs to replicate and expand this model to more labour market regions so that individuals living with intellectual disability can access the skilled support they need to succeed in the open labour market.

Given these circumstances, we don't think it is idealistic to imagine there are viable alternatives to ADEs, because such alternatives already exist; the challenge is not to create but to expand and replicate.

In summary, we think people should have a stronger range of choices in relation to work options, that all such options be anchored on authentic inclusion in mainstream community life, and that all such options involve a fair award wage based on a fair wage assessment that is equitable.

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2014 Wrap Up

2014 was, without a doubt, the busiest year yet for JFA Purple Orange.

Our work throughout the year was underpinned by our vision that people living with disability are living ordinary valued lives, characterised by rich Personhood, active Citizenhood, and personal growth.



We continued to work with government, organisations and individuals on the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, through consultations, the provision of recommendations, research, capacity building and advocacy. We also worked with a range of South Australian local councils to assist them to strengthen access and inclusion for people living with disability in their local community. This included working with the City of Salisbury on the Beyond the Ramp Inclusion Forum, and community consultations and forums with the City of Mitcham, City of Marion and City of Charles Sturt.

For the third year we ran our capacity-building workshop program for people living with disability and their families, based on our publication *The Model of Citizenship Support*. The program assists people to explore how to build life chances towards a good life and is particularly helpful for people taking up individualised funding either in their state/territory or through the NDIS. The workshop program is available for purchase on a license fee basis for agencies to run for their staff and clients.

Also related to *The Model of Citizenship Support* was our work on a Social Audit Initiative. The Audit is based on a set of 20 questions included in the Model that agencies/services can ask themselves to gauge how they are building authentically helpful relationships with their clients. We continue to work with a South Australian service agency to carry out a Social Audit of their organisation.

In April we held our first Julia Farr Youth Conference "Having a Voice". The national conference was a complete success, with more than 120 people and their supporters from around Australia attending to discuss issues and recommendations pertinent to young people getting a fair go at a good life. We have since provided a report to the federal, state and territory governments outlining recommendations collated during the conference for their consideration.

Julia Farr Youth also launched eMentoring in 2014 which provides a forum for young people living with disability to discuss issues with their peers in a safe and secure online chat room. Additionally, Julia Farr Youth ran Mentoring Workshops in 2014 and we hope to run these again next year.

In June the South Australian Attorney-General launched a Disability Justice Plan at JFA Purple Orange. The Plan aims to make the criminal justice system more accessible to people living with disability. During the launch the Attorney-General met with JFA Purple Orange board members living with disability to discuss their experiences.

We are pleased to have launched The User Led Initiatives Project (TULIP) this year. TULIP aims to encourage and assist people living with disability to set-up user led initiatives and organisations. It has been launched to coincide with the NDIS.

We have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with a number of advocacy groups and individuals throughout 2014. Most notably with Norman Kunc and Emma van Der Klift from Canada and Adelaide People First, with whom we sponsored workshops.

In other news we ran our Perspective Art Exhibition again with great success, participated in the DIRC Disability and Lifestyles Expo, and International Wheelchair Day.

We are deeply grateful to all the people living with disability, their families and supporters who shared their stories with us this year and joined us in advocating for the rights of people living with disability.

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Canadian Duo Visit Adelaide

During October we had the pleasure of hosting Canadian presenters Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift.

Norman and Emma are well-known advocates within the disability rights community and regard themselves as modern day storytellers, continuing the long held tradition of using humour and narrative to initiate self-reflection and social change.



During their visit Norman and Emma held workshops at JFA Purple Orange, for people living with disability and their families, and for Support Agency Staff.

The workshop for people living with disability and their families "Being realistic isn't realistic: Creating great lives through unconventional thinking" explored how people can be empowered by accepting they have the right to live with disability, and can have control and choice in their life.

The workshops for Support Agency Staff were "Hell-bent on helping: Respectful support, benevolence and the politics of help" and "Rocking the boat without sinking the ship: Managing conflict in disability support".

We had a great turnout at the workshops and attendees left feeling more knowledgeable and empowered.

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Christmas Closure

JFA Purple Orange will be closed at 5:00pm on Wednesday 24 December 2014 and re-open at 9:00am on Friday 2 January 2015.

On behalf of the staff and board of the Julia Farr group, thank you for your support throughout 2014.



We look forward to your ongoing support as we continue to work towards improving the life chances of people living with disability.

We wish you a very merry Christmas and happy New Year.

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