

Employment, disability, inclusion: some personal visions

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Vision #1

- ***An end to segregation in employment and education***
 - sheltered workshops vs. social firms
 - special schools vs. integration into mainstream schools

No Segregation

“Australia has been slow to reduce the number of people in sheltered employment which traditionally has been associated with wages and conditions far below those prevailing in open employment. It is important that the system of sheltered employment be phased out more rapidly as it distracts from society’s responsibility to recognise the right of disabled people to be accepted as equal citizens along side other Australians with proper wages and working conditions” (Brian Howe, Institute of Public Policy, Melbourne University)

Vision #2

- ***A major decrease in the unemployment rate of people with disability***
- Full employment –a job guarantee compact
- How else?
 - better welfare & service delivery co-ordination
 - national awareness campaigns
 - employer-led affirmative action
 - social investment in accessible infrastructure

Disability & Employment

“I certainly agree that there has been a failure of policy when it comes to disability. The solutions will need to see a comprehensive set of policies including changing employer attitudes and practices, investing in training and retraining, and looking at greater flexibility in employer practices” (Brian Howe)

“.....the main disincentives to work lie in inadequate support at the workplace, inaccessible transport and buildings, discriminating community and employer attitudes, inflexible working conditions, and poorly designed means-tested programs” (Disability Coalition, quoted in Mike Clear (ed) Promises Promises: Disability & Terms of Inclusion)

Vision #3

- *Income Adequacy for All*

Why?

- social security disincentives & inequities
- the phenomenon of the working poor

How?

- citizen minimum “social wage”
- “cost of disability” allowance

Disability & Poverty

“Australia over the past 25 years has seen its collective wealth increase dramatically. Compared with OECD countries, people with disability in Australia have average incomes less than half (44%) of the average income of those without disability. This is the lowest in the OECD countries where the average income is over 70% of non-disabled people. While we have a very different income support system to most countries in the OECD it is arguable that...there are real questions concerning the adequacy of income support payments. Social insurance for disability, plus measures to promote employment through training and obligations on employers, will provide a more equitable share of income to people with disability”

(Brian Howe)

Vision #4

- ***The end of disability***

-the human rights “continuum of ability” approach

.....only when an inclusive society exists where flexible workplaces and universal design are the norm

Language & disablement

“.....we are all people first with varying abilities and limitations that develop or change over our lifetimes. The ideal would be to do away altogether with the binary opposition of ‘able/disabled’. But these terms, this ‘normal/ abnormal’ dichotomy, and disputes over correct terminology will continue until a truly inclusive society exists, and it pays to be aware of the various debates and issues surrounding disability discourse or the politics of disability language so that we can interact respectfully with all people, avoiding labels and derogatory language, and recognising the need for ongoing flexibility in workplace practices and fundamental ‘enabling’ improvements in much of the social and institutional infrastructure around us” (Rob Macfarlane, “What is Disability?”, Australian Services Union Victorian Services Branch Disability Action Plan)