



nothing
about us
WITHOUT US

10 March 2015

Joint media release

People with disability locked out of work

“The *Courier Mail* printed two articles today that grossly misrepresent people with disabilities”, said the Directors of Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI) and Queenslanders with Disabilities Network (QDN) in a joint statement.

“The articles ‘Jobless welfare figures reveal we’re living in the slacker state’ (CM 10 March 2015, p 1) and ‘Pole position for dole is right here’ (CM 10 March 2015, p 2) suggest that DSP recipients could be out working but that they choose not to do so.”

“The editorial message is clear”, said Michelle O’Flynn (QAI) and Paige Armstrong (QDN). “The *Courier Mail* implies that people with disabilities need a radical incentive to overcome an alleged aversion to employment”.

“In fact, the opposite is true”, they said. “It’s a supply-side problem”.

“**While some employers are positive**, many others consistently deny people with disability who apply to work because of outright prejudice or because of a mistaken perception that workplace adjustments will be too difficult or expensive”.

“Australia has one of the lowest employment participation rates for people with a disability. We rank 21st out of 29 OECD countries, with an employment rate of 39.8% for people with a disability compared to 79.4% for people without a disability”.¹

“This is not the fault of people with disability. Targeting under-35 year old DSP recipients with another review is just more witch-hunting. “We do not need another review to look into issues on which McClure has already reported” they said. “We need a revolution in employer attitudes to people with disability, who are proven to be highly productive, loyal and flexible workers. And we need employers with open minds and a supportive work environment”.

“Tony Abbot and his government must lead the way. If Mr Abbott plans to punish people with disability for not having a job, he must do all that he can to create jobs. We have a message to the Prime Minister - are you up to the challenge of creating more jobs?”

“And we have a message to the *Courier Mail*. Are you up to reporting these issues fairly, rather than buying into a Federal Government witch-hunt?”

“**We urge employers to contact disability employment services for assistance**, and we call for creative input from all interested parties on ways to create real employment opportunities for people with disability, so that the discussion moves beyond the rhetoric of blaming to the creation of real opportunities”, they said.

Michelle O’Flynn 0481 381528 Paige Armstrong 0408 720099

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2010). *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers – A Synthesis of Findings across OECD Countries*.