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## **Media release**

### **'A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes' or 'Protecting the Bottom Line'?**

'Patrick McClure's interim report into Commonwealth income support is of great concern to people with disabilities, their families and supporters, said QAI Director Michelle O'Flynn today. 'It purports to present government a solution for a perceived problem, but it will only create much more serious issues,' she said.

The interim report proposes that government take radical measures to slash billions of dollars from Federal payments such as the Disability Support Pension, put people of working age who have *any* capacity to work onto a new (and lower) payment and at the same time raise the bar on eligibility. It proposes excising people from income support altogether if they cannot prove that they have been actively looking for work.

'The message is clear', said Ms O'Flynn. 'This report implies that people with disabilities need a radical incentive to overcome an alleged aversion to employment'.

'The interim report fails to place appropriate emphasis on exploring the means by which the government can stimulate the supply-side: how they'll create new jobs', said Ms O'Flynn. 'We have a strong and growing economy, but we'll need a lot of additional employment for all these new job-seekers, all of them with disabilities. We know that there are significant economic advantages that flow from increasing the proportion of the population actively involved in the labour market. The Reference Group should specifically call for creative input from interested parties on ways to create real employment opportunities for people with disability, so that the discussion moves beyond the rhetoric of opportunity to create real opportunities', said Ms O'Flynn.

'The Department of Employment's jobs growth projection of 7.2% to 2018 will not match job seeker growth over the same period'.

'But there is a bigger problem' said Ms O'Flynn. 'We need a revolution in public relations with employer attitudes to people with disability who are proven to be highly productive, loyal and flexible workers.'

'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'.

'A message to the Prime Minister - are you up to the challenge?'

'Australia has one of the lowest employment participation rates for people with a disability. We rank 21<sup>st</sup> 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'.

'My daughter has an intellectual disability. She also has ability and a desire to work. She doesn't need punishment; she needs an employer with an open mind and a supportive work environment. I challenge Tony Abbott to find my daughter and other people with disabilities a job. It's a matter of mutual obligation.'

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**Patron: Her Excellency, Ms Penelope Wensley, AC Governor of Queensland**