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For Immediate Release

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Federal Government Payment Scheme set to silence workers on slave pay rates

QAI supports the action taken by Maurice Blackburn Lawyers and AED Legal Centre to protect the interests of workers with intellectual impairment from further discrimination and disadvantage.

We at QAI have maintained that the BSWAT assessment tool is anathema to workers with intellectual impairment. This tool enables discrimination against these workers to be paid at rates that would cause outrage in any other part of our community. "To pay a worker anything less than the going rate is slave labour." said Michelle O'Flynn from Queensland Advocacy Incorporated.

Use of BSWAT has been deemed discrimination by the Federal Court. The Federal Government now seeks an exemption under the discrimination laws to allow the use of the BSWAT pending the implementation of a new wage setting approach.

Maurice Blackburn has lodged a class action to recover underpayments for 10,000 workers with disability. In response, the Government has offered eligible workers what may well be a one-off payment in return for relinquishing the right to take action.

Australian Disability Enterprises (sheltered workshops) are the employers who are most likely to use the BSWAT assessment tool in order to pay workers with intellectual impairment as little as possible. It is time that **all** employers paid award rates to all workers with disability and did not rely on slave wages in order to remain viable. "The action of the federal government is a sad indictment of their treatment of and lack of value for people with intellectual disability. We hope that Minister Fifield will reconsider this plan and deliver equity for all workers." said Ms. O'Flynn

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QAI endorses the objectives, and promotes the principles, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.  
Patron: Her Excellency, Ms Penelope Wensley, AC Governor of Queensland**

