

13 July 2015

Disability Employment Taskforce  
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Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the National Disability Employment Framework – Issues Paper. Mind Australia appreciates the openness of the Minister for Aged Care and Disability, and the Department of Social Services, in welcoming input into the future directions of disability employment support services.

Mind Australia (**Mind**) is a leading provider of community-managed mental health services across Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. Mind provides a wide range of mental health and psychosocial support services, including PHaMs employment. While we do not provide any DES or JSA services, we do routinely collaborate and refer clients to providers.

The Draft Framework provides a succinct analysis of the current state of disability employment services in Australia. It also highlights the systemic challenges facing individuals, their families and carers, employers and service providers around workforce participation. Mind wholeheartedly agrees that the outcomes for people with disability are far less than desirable and that there has been little real improvement for a number of years. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (**NDIS**) and this review of disability employment services provide a unique opportunity to fundamentally re-imagine the paradigm of the way in which the employment of people with disability works in Australia. Mind would willingly participate in further consultation or discussions on this issue.

In this submission, Mind would especially like to focus on the following four areas:

- The benefits to, and importance of, employment participation for people with a disability arising from mental health issues, and those with a dual disability (primarily an intellectual disability coupled with a mental health issue).
- The integration of programmes, pathways and incentives to support people with disability throughout their life course, including those who experience disability of an episodic nature.
- The potential risks and issues for those people with disability who fall outside the NDIS eligibility criteria.
- More general opportunities for innovation Mind can see to achieve better employment outcomes for people with a disability.

## **Benefits of employment participation for people with disability**

The draft framework identifies the benefits to employers of diversity in the workplace. Mind believes that it is important that the framework also includes the significant benefits of employment participation for people who have experienced mental ill health. These benefits include:

- employment participation as an important part of the recovery journey – a key intervention to assist with wellness
- social connectedness – for people who are often isolated
- sense of self-worth and confidence – from being an active (valued) participant in society, not only a service recipient
- socially valued identity – for people whose identity may be limited to their mental ill health
- financial independence – rather than DSP dependence
- the positive flow-on impacts to families and carers with the person making a “faster” recovery or not being as dependent on them in their recovery.

The principles outlined in the discussion paper are consistent with the goals and aspirations of the NDIS. There is a unique opportunity for the reconsideration of employment support for participants within the NDIS to ensure that employment related goals are flexible and well integrated with employment pathways.

## **Integration of programmes, pathways and incentives**

The focus on the development of an integrated ‘life course’ model of disability employment is welcomed. Mind believes there are many opportunities to enhance services to people with a mental health issue or dual disability through: early intervention (especially for young people) and re-entry into the workforce, and dealing with behaviours of concern; integrated service delivery (across and within various programmes and services, including personal mental health, daily living support and employment attainment and retention) which draws together the multi-disciplinary expertise of employment and psychosocial support; and shared incentives (for individuals, employers and service providers).

The often episodic nature of mental health issues creates additional demand for a more integrated model of service delivery than is currently available. The integration is well reflected in the Individual Placement Support (IPS) model that focusses on the importance for young people of mental health services and employment providers working together to deliver outcomes. Mind would welcome the opportunity to co-develop the model for cohorts beyond young people with the Department.

## **Potential risks and issues**

### ***The service provision discernment between NDIS and non-NDIS people with disability***

Mind welcomes the introduction of the NDIS, and particularly appreciates the acknowledgement that PhaMs are a highly valued and important component of personalised support to people with a mental health issue and that these services will be transitioning to the NDIS.

However, there are risks that this discernment of eligibility may lead to a more siloed approach to employment support across the broader disability community, and to the ongoing sustainability of services for non-NDIS clients.

From Mind’s perspective, the ongoing provision of PhAMS employment services for people who don’t meet the ‘permanent, or likely-to-be permanent’ criteria for NDIS eligibility is essential. The PHaMS employment program was developed in recognition that some people with mental health issues needed a more integrated approach to employment support. While this can be achieved within NDIS for those people who are eligible, it is important that there continues to be support for others outside the program to ensure an ongoing liability on the welfare system is not unintentionally created. Mind believes this and other disability employment services are important and consideration needs to be given in the development of the Framework to how these fit within the spectrum of employment support.

### **Other general opportunities for consideration**

#### ***Ongoing career and leadership development***

Much of the focus, necessarily, to date has been on employment attainment and retention for people with disability given the poor outcomes that are currently achieved. However, for a truly inclusive society, the framework needs to look at how the lives and careers of people with disability are enhanced – in the same way that organisations look to develop their talent. There are some great examples internationally and in Australia of not-for-profit organisations (such as the Be.Institute in New Zealand) that provide targeted leadership development for people with disability that are achieving great results.

#### ***Peer workforce development***

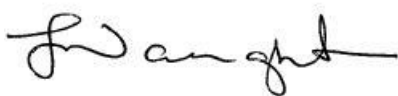
The introduction of the NDIS will see a substantial increase in the workforce required to provide services, and provide greater opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the disability workforce. Within mental health there has been considerable growth in the development of a peer workforce and there is likely to be an increased demand for peer workers over the next few years. There is an opportunity for the government to invest in workforce development activities such as training to provide real job growth for people with a psychosocial disability.

#### ***Promoting partnerships***

Significant opportunity exists for strengthening partnerships across the mental health and employment sectors to promote understanding, facilitate collaborative working relationships and foster innovation. Particularly partnerships where the expertise of employment, psychosocial support and mental health knowledge can work in a coordinated way with the client. This will require an investment from the government and a shift towards rewarding outcomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this feedback. Mind would be very happy to discuss this submission further or to attend any future stakeholder engagement forums you have planned prior to, or following, the release of the Discussion Paper in August/September.

Yours faithfully



Gerry Naughtin  
Chief Executive