

My name is Fiona and I'm 26 years old. I have a mild Intellectual disability and I live in regional Victoria.

I would like to thank the Productivity Commission and the Government for making this inquiry into a Life-time Disability Care and Support Scheme. I hope it will mean that everyone with a disability is more able to get the supports they need.

Some of the experiences I have had with my supports have been positive, and some, not so great.

Below I have written about some of the issues I have experienced as well as some of the suggestions I have for ways things could be improved under a new Disability Care and Support Scheme.

I have been in discussions with DHS to get a support plan up and running, this has taken a year and I still don't have one! I am having some mental health issues and really need some supports. But the plan was put on hold because of mental health issues – they are saying I am too unwell to take part in the planning I need to do. I need the supports, but I am 'too unwell' to get them. I am going around and around in circles at a cost to my health.

**My comment/suggestion: There should be reasonable timelines to ensure that planning and supports are put in place, we should not have to wait so long for this to happen especially not when it is compromising our wellbeing.**

I have been told by some public-health psychology services that their staff did not have the expertise to deal with someone who had my disability and therefore I can not be seen by those services.

Also, sometimes I feel like I am not taken seriously by mental health services staff when I present issues to them and I often feel like my confidentiality is not respected. In the past, (when I was well over 18) staff have told my parents things when I have asked them not to. I think they feel like they have the right to do this because I have an intellectual disability.

**My comment/suggestion: Professionals who support people with a disability need to maintain that person's privacy, be respectful and take their concerns seriously. Staff in mainstream psychology services need more expertise in supporting young people who have different disabilities and they also need to know more about the specific difficulties that might be related to a person's disability.**

I have had a range of casual work over the last few years, (for example I have worked for the local council and health service) and I have a number of positions on youth committees and advisory groups. I feel like I have a lot to contribute and I want to be able to continue to work, especially have work that is on-going.

It makes a big difference to me if I am able to receive on-the-job supports at work to help me with things like planning and organization. I certainly know I can do a good job and be successful in my position if I have these things.

Some of the support I have received in the past in my employment have been good, for example, being able to negotiate work hours and time off to see my psychologist during the day at one workplace was great and I have also been lucky to have some very supportive supervisors.

However, I have also had some issues with employment supports, especially having supports to find employment withdrawn when I have had mental health issues. I was kicked out of the last employment service I was with, because they said I was too unwell to be supported by them.

At one point, an employment agency also suggested that I should work in supported employment. This is *not* what I want to do. The place that was suggested is not a nice place to work and people working there get about \$2 per hour – it's slave labor! I have been paid \$23 per hour for other admin work I have done at the local Council I'm not about to accept \$2 an hour. I was really discouraged by that suggestion.

People get vulnerable to employment services saying – this is who you are, you have x disability so you fit in this box and can only do this type of job. I have ended up finding jobs on my own, without the help of a disability employment agency because they underestimate me in terms of the type of work they think I can do. But it's an issue because I can't get the supports I need at work. In the workplaces I have found without any assistance from an agency, I have relied on other staff to support me.

Based on my experience as a young person with a disability trying to get supports from disability employment services, I would like to suggest three things:

- **I think there needs to be more generous supports for people with disabilities to maintain employment. These should be on-going for as long as people need them - often supports stop after a year and this is not always enough.**
- **Staff in disability employment agencies need more expertise in supporting people who are experiencing mental health issues. The fact that someone is dealing with mental health problems should not be able to be used as an excuse not to provide supports.**
- **Disability employment agencies should have to find ways to support people to get into meaningful work, something they want to do. Not just 'any job' that is not related to their skill level or interests.**

I really want to move out – maybe with a friend. But I don't have the supports I need because I don't have a support plan.

**My comment/suggestion: I think people with disabilities need to have good supports that suit their individual needs and are *well planned, in advance* to be able to make transitions like moving out of home. I hope that the new scheme can provide this.**

