

Largest survey of disability workers finds poor workforce conditions

Findings from a survey of more than 2300 disability workers released today shows that the current workforce conditions under the NDIS serve to undermine the capacity of the workforce to provide quality support to people with disability.

Commissioned by the Health Services Union (HSU), United Workers Union (UWU) and Australian Services Union (ASU), the research report by the UNSW Social Policy Research Centre highlights the lived experience of the workforce operating under the NDIS.

Key findings from the report are:

- Many workers expressed concern about the NDIS with only just over a quarter believing it provided quality support for participants. Only 1 in 5 workers agreed the NDIS had been a positive experience for them as a worker.
- Working time arrangements contributed to much concern for workers, over half work less than full time across multiple jobs, most reported doing vital tasks in unpaid time and many report constant shift changes and unstable rostering arrangements.
- Many report dissatisfaction with low pay rates and significant periods of unpaid work. Workers are rarely paid for travel time between clients and many are not reimbursed for out of pocket expenses incurred in the course of their work.
- Workers report a lack of supervision, which was reinforced by respondents who were supervisors advising they have too many people to supervise effectively.
- Many workers report a lack of access to training and training is rarely provided in paid time.

Each of the three unions have provided a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme outlining ways to improve working conditions for the disability workforce.

Quotes attributable to HSU National Secretary, Lloyd Williams

“This sector needs to grow rapidly to keep up with demand, yet the report found 25 per cent of the workforce do not intend to be working in the sector in five years. This highlights the need for urgent action on these workforce issues.”

“We call on the Government to listen to the concerns put forward by the workforce in this report and act quickly on our recommendations.”

Quotes attributable to United Workers Union National Director, Demi Pnevmatikos

“A well-supported worker, with decent working conditions and job security is going to be in a much better place to provide high quality of care for people with disability.”

“It is deeply concerning that the report found many work tasks which should be considered core to quality service delivery are performed during workers’ unpaid time, and workers are under-supported through supervision and training, with many left to make decisions on their own about client care and support.”

Quotes attributable to Australian Services Union National Secretary, Robert Potter

“Current circumstances in the disability sector risk undermining quality of life for people with disability; workers’ prospects for achieving financial security and satisfying careers; and the capacity of the industry to attract and retain a supply of workers.”

“As unions, we will continue to fight for better working conditions for our workers to ensure services are the best that they can be for people with disability, and that the sector under the NDIS is strong and sustainable.”

ENDS

Lloyd Williams is available for further comments.

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