



DANA Disability Advocacy
Network Australia

**Safeguarding and Promoting Articles 27 & 28 of the CRPD:
the human rights of Australians with disability to work and
an adequate standard of living**

**Submission to Review of Australia's Welfare System Interim Report
– A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes**

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Introduction

This submission is focused on some of the human rights issues that have emerged in the Interim Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform, as they relate to people with disability in Australia.

About Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd

DANA is the national peak body for disability advocacy and represents the collective voice of over 70 disability advocacy organisations across Australia. Our goal is to advance the rights and interests of people with disabilities by supporting our members in their targeted advocacy as well as engaging in systemic advocacy on a national level to further these objectives. DANA works to a vision of a nation that includes and values persons with disabilities and respects human rights for all.

Collectively, advocacy organisations each year provide advocacy for more than 20,000 Australians with disability. They support people to self-advocate and provide advocacy support "to give a voice to those who may have difficulty speaking on their own behalf". Their client base includes people who have moderate to profound intellectual disability,



those who have significant communication barriers; people who are powerless to stand up for themselves in situations where there is an imbalance of power; people whose issue has reached crisis point; who are about to become homeless, go to prison; have their child removed. These marginalised people often confront unfamiliar and complex systems that they find impossible to navigate, without someone on their side. A few have willing advocates within their own family and friendship circle (although families often need support, training and resources to advocate effectively). Many of the individuals who access advocacy have no family to support them, and their friends are equally powerless and voiceless. DANA was created to represent the views and experiences of this significant cohort of people with disability, who are not represented collectively by any other national organisation.

About the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or the CRPD, in 2008. The CRPD reflects the view that disability is an ordinary and accepted part of human diversity and recognises that socially constructed barriers disadvantage and hinder people with disabilities in fully enjoying the rights that each person should have by virtue of being human. The articles of the CRPD apply rights recognised in general human rights treaties to the context faced by people with disabilities. They provide for special measures or supports to enable all people with disabilities to access and exercise those rights.

About the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020

In 2011, the COAG endorsed the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. The vision and principles of the Strategy rightly reflect the aspirations of the CRPD. DANA and other disability peaks and advocacy organisations have applauded Australian Governments for recognising the social, economic and human rights imperatives and committing to a unified, national approach. In September 2013, the UN Committee commended Australia for its adoption of the Strategy. It provides a framework for Australia to address its CRPD obligations, particularly in establishing a coordination mechanism (as recommended in Article 33) to facilitate implementation in different sectors and at different levels. Having expressed a vision for “an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens”, the challenge now facing Australian governments is planning and taking effective action to make this a reality.

Disability rights and welfare reform

Within the time frame set for submission and resourcing constraints, DANA has not had opportunity to specifically consult in detail with its members, advocacy organisations, and people with disability about the themes contained in the interim report. However, DANA has become keenly aware that media coverage of the current review and the Federal Budget announcements of Disability Support Pension (DSP) reassessments, along with political indications of potential changes, have alarmed many DSP recipients and disability advocates. A number of advocates and members of the public have communicated to DANA their grave fears that marginalised individuals will be pushed from the DSP to a lower



payment, and predicted that this measure would only further reduce opportunities for employment and increase homelessness among people with disabilities. This would undermine the achievement of the welfare system's intended economic and social outcomes. Like ACOSS, DANA calls for government to "allay the legitimate fears many people (with disability) hold... that payment 'reform' will leave them worse off".¹

A human rights analysis of the issues is illuminating. In Article 28 of the CRPD, the Australian government, as a signatory to the Convention, is required to:

"recognise the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions".

Yet, the economic security of Australians with disability is arguably diminishing. Employment opportunities for people with disability have failed to increase, and housing is a bigger issue than ever before, with only limited affordable and accessible accommodation available. Basic costs such as utilities, transport and food, have been increasing, which has made the lives of people on the DSP, who already face myriad forms of disadvantage, increasingly difficult.

Article 27 of the CRPD requires Australia to:

"recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities."

Australian employment rates among people with disability continue to be shamefully low for a prosperous nation, and have fallen in the public sector. Last year the UN Committee noted the "underlying structural barriers to workforce participation" that exist. There is very little access to full-time equal paid job opportunities.

Pillar One - Improving the income support system

Consistent with community consultations conducted by Mental Health Council of Australia, People with Disability Australia, National Welfare Rights Network and Inclusion Australia (NCID), DANA understands from its constituents that most people with disability relying on income support would prefer to be working, if circumstances allowed. DSP recipients often struggle to make ends meet when living on the payment. One advocate has noted the huge challenges people face gaining access to supports, expensive health aids and assistive technology, when living in poverty "and trying keep a roof over their head and food in their mouth."² Besides the insufficient level of the DSP payment rate, DANA survey respondents identified problems in its administration: "Equity is not assured in the application of the DSP at present and there are too many disruptive examples of one set of impairments being more readily supported than others."

¹ Australian Council of Social Service (2014) *Submission to Review of Australia Welfare System*. p.7.

² Survey response. Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2014) "A long way to go": *Progress on the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* p.38.



Some people with disability face great challenges in effectively accessing, and communicating with, Centrelink.³ For instance, in surveys DANA conducted earlier this year advocates indicated that their clients have problems understanding the Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) and find themselves unsupported during this process. One advocate explains:

“The JCA process expects that a person can clearly articulate themselves, communicate verbally, do not have an intellectual disability, and will not need a support person to assist them during the interview. The process makes most people feel very nervous because they know that their future financial position could be decided by one meeting with a person they have never met before. The process does not assist people to feel confident to seek out work.... Most people with disabilities who attend a JCA are unprepared and many are entirely unsupported to meet the requirements set by the JCA (e.g. factors including transport, personal care, proximity to employers, are not dealt with).”

Survey respondents indicated that people are not always assigned to the most suitable service:⁴ “Sometimes the client's conditions do not seem to line up with the program recommended.”⁵ In a DANA survey on the operation of DES, respondents gave examples: “multiple significant conditions and a DMS referral”; Some raised concern as to whether disability always identified and considered: “.... was allocated as *mainstream client* without consideration of whether (it was) an appropriate service for his particular needs.”

DANA strongly agrees with many of the principles articulated in Pillar One. A properly functioning income support system would provide adequate payments based on need, be individualised to build capability and be easy to access and understand. However, little evidence can be found of people seeking to maximise perceptions of their incapacity in order to qualify for the DSP. Furthermore, reserving the DSP for “people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work” is highly problematic. As Mental Health Council of Australia argued in their submission, this

“would perpetuate the current (and highly inequitable) scenario, in which some people with disabilities receive a higher payment but little support to enter the workforce, while others (who are assessed as having a lower level of disability as a particular point in time receive a lower payment and must meet stringent work participation conditions.”⁶

³ See below, feedback of self-advocates on DSP and working. p. 13.

⁴ In 2011, Neville and Lohmann recommended the Job Capacity Assessment process be improved as inappropriate assessments will require further administrative work to resolve, affecting DES program efficiency. Ann Neville and Rosemary Lohmann, (2011) *“It Is Like They Just Don’t Trust Us”: Balancing Trust and Control in the Provision of Disability Employment Services*, Social Policy Action Research Centre, Crawford School of Economics and Government. x-xi.

⁵ Survey response. Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2014) *Improving outcomes and enhancing choice, control and respect for the individual in Disability Employment Services: Perspectives and insights from advocates*.

⁶ Mental Health Council of Australia & National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum (2014) *Making the welfare system work for mental health consumers & carers: Submission to the Interim Report by the Reference Group on Welfare Reform*.



Regardless of the structure of payments, people with disability should be able to rely on income support system that provides “an adequate standard of living” and the right support to participate socially and economically.

In reforming the welfare system, the Australian government must endeavour to achieve its Article 28 obligations to ensure access by persons with disabilities “to appropriate and affordable services, devices and other assistance for disability-related needs” and “to social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes”. Furthermore the government must: “ensure access by persons with disabilities and their families living in situations of poverty to assistance...with disability-related expenses, including adequate training, counselling, financial assistance and respite care”.

The need for rent assistance

The provision of Commonwealth Rent Assistance can have a substantial effect on the social inclusion of people with a disability, contributing to stability and reducing their exposure to high housing costs, the risk of eviction, and vulnerability to homelessness.⁷ People with disabilities, especially those with complex needs, are often priced out of the private rental market.⁸ Contributing to the financial barriers are attitudinal ones. Discrimination may be practiced by landlords and real estate agents, for instance the dismissal of applicants with disability as “risky” tenants. Furthermore, people who have previously been housed in institutions will lack the references often required in rental applications. Systemic discrimination has therefore increased the pressure on public housing.⁹

The current housing affordability crisis disproportionately affects people with disability, who often find themselves practically excluded from owning or renting a home, vulnerable to homelessness, and reliant on public or social housing, which may be unavailable or inadequate. Difficulties in finding secure, stable accommodation may be compounded by the shortage of accessible or appropriate housing or housing located in easy proximity to public transport, amenities and services. Modifying accommodation to be accessible and responsive to individual needs is often problematic or costly, due to the limited use of universal housing design principles.

To be effective, the rent assistance available must be more substantial, and combined with increased access to affordable accessible housing. As researchers have concluded, increased supply of social housing and rental assistance targeted to people with disabilities would lead to positive social outcomes.¹⁰

⁷ Selina Tually, Andrew Beer and Pauline McLoughlin (2013) ‘What effect does housing assistance have on social inclusion for people living with a disability?’ *AHURI Research & Policy Bulletin* Issue 159. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

⁸ Michael Bleasdale (2007) *Supporting the housing needs of people with complex needs*, AHURI Final Report No. 104. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

⁹ People with Disability Australia (2014) *Submission to Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing* p. 6.

¹⁰ Above n 6, p. 4.



Pillar Two - Strengthening capability

Article 26 of the CRPD, requires Australia to: “take effective and appropriate measures... to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.” To that end the government is required to “organise, strengthen and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education and social services, in such a way that these services and programmes:

- Begin at the earliest possible stage, and are based on the multidisciplinary assessment of individual needs and strengths;
- Support participation and inclusion in the community and all aspects of society, are voluntary, and are available to persons with disabilities as close as possible to their own communities, including in rural areas.”

Education and Training

A new report from the Ticket to Work initiative evidences that: “the current transition to employment support systems are, by and large, failing Australian young people with disability and condemning these young people to a marginalised and dependent life with reduced opportunity for social and economic participation.”¹¹

This conclusion is consistent with the findings of DANA’s survey on the progress being made on the “learning and skills” outcome area of the National Disability Strategy. Poor employment prospects offer little incentive for people with disability to pursue vocational training or tertiary qualifications. Expectations that high school students will go on to acquire a higher education are commonly not extended to students with disabilities. Room for improvement is also noted in apprenticeship programs and in curricula at TAFE colleges. There is concern about the validity of some TAFE or vocational courses that do not set specific educational outcomes, and may be used as merely “day programs” for people with intellectual impairments, rather than providing real, relevant training and genuine opportunities for students to learn and get skills.

Last year the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that Australia “conduct research into the effectiveness of current education inclusion policies and the extent to which Disability Standards in Education are being implemented in each state and territory.” Prioritising the inclusion of student with disabilities across all Australian education providers is vital in maximising participation and skills development of people with disabilities and closely linked to the task of enhancing employment opportunities. Mandatory measures need to be explored to prevent the segregation and separation of students with disabilities, for instance the expansion of vocational education and training programs “that are suitable for all students to work and learn alongside each other”.¹²

¹¹ Michelle Wakeford and Fiona Waugh, National Ticket to Work Network (2014) *Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Disability and the Ticket to Work Initiative*.

¹² Survey response. Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2014) “A long way to go”: *Progress on the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, p.35.



Pillar Three: Engaging with Employers

The 2012 Federal Government Discussion Paper recognised that taking new and additional steps to improve employment for people with disability is important for the country's future productivity.¹³ Bold, innovative measures are necessary to raise disability employment rates. The public sector should aspire to employ representative levels of people with disabilities in real jobs with real pay, and government should develop incentives for the private sector to do the same.

DANA strongly supports the propositions contained in Pillar Three that:

- a well-functioning social support system recognises the benefits of work and has an employment focus
- employers should be encouraged to make jobs available for disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities.
- tailored support services are important to sustain employment outcomes for vulnerable groups, including people with disability and mental health conditions.

In recent surveys by DANA, respondents noted the frustration of endless 'fitness for duty' or the 'return to work' rehabilitation assessments. Many disadvantaged job seekers with disability are referred to Disability Employment Services (or DES) but do not find effective support to seek and apply for jobs, and to secure employment that is a good match for the person. The Department of Social Services is endeavouring to improve the outcomes achieved by the DES programme, but these services are often under-resourced, inflexible or failing to deliver the individualised support necessary to find employment, and "people with disabilities who are already employed have no access to employment supports to advance their career or find a more fulfilling/better paid job. They can only access support to remain in the same job, even if they dislike the job, it pays poorly with poor conditions, and they wish to move on to a new job."¹⁴ The DES system must be improved to flexibly respond to the person's individual needs, preferences and abilities when providing support and job matching. Employment supports should not be restricted to people who are presently unemployed:

"DES should provide services to people with disabilities who are currently employed and want new work. People with disabilities want careers too and they don't want to be stuck in the same job forever. This will help them to transition into new work before reaching crisis point, when they feel the need to quit without first securing a new job, resulting in long-term unemployment"¹⁵

DANA received a grant from the Australian Government for this project, enabling DANA to engage with the advocacy sector to provide advice about the service needs of people with disability and potential future improvements to Disability Employment Services. DANA

¹³ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012) *Improving the employment participation of people with disability: Discussion Paper* p.9. See further: Deloitte Access Economics (2011) *The economic benefits of increasing employment for people with disability*, commission by the Australian Network on Disability.

¹⁴ Survey response. Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2014) *Improving outcomes and enhancing choice, control and respect for the individual in Disability Employment Services: Perspectives and insights from advocates*.

¹⁵ Ibid.



consequently published a report: “Improving outcomes and enhancing choice, control and respect for the individual in Disability Employment Services: Perspectives and insights from advocates”. Some of the relevant feedback and recommendations DANA gathered from engaging with the advocacy sector have been included below. For the full report on DANA’s engagement please refer to the DANA website: www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions

Improving pathways to employment

Article 27 of the CRPD requires Australia to “safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work by taking appropriate steps... to:

- (d) Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programs, placement services and vocational and continuing training;
- (e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;
- (i) Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workforce;
- (j) Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market;
- (k) Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities....” *(edited excerpt)*

Engaging with disability advocates and advocacy organisations, DANA found that the majority of the clients of advocacy services (which is a group of consumers that are particularly reliant on clear information, access and effective support) are not satisfied with how Disability Employment Services (DES) operate or with the outcomes the DES program delivers. Some people with disabilities lack awareness and understanding of DES. More effort is needed to ensure access to clear information and explanation of the support available to people; the service standards; their responsibilities and rights as DES users, including the right to choose which DES they use, and influence how they receive employment supports. DES users need support to effectively communicate and engage with DES consultants, express their preferences, needs and aspirations, and assume more control over directing and evaluating the jobseeking support they receive. DES consultants need to be more responsive to and respectful of the individual’s needs, and focused on delivering person-centred supports and innovative solutions to the person’s employment barriers.

The experience of advocates highlights that greater skills and expertise in job matching, workplace accommodation, and disability employment and supports would provide better outcomes for DES clients. Inflexible program rules and incentives narrowly focused on employment outcomes at certain points in time, do not encourage best practice in DES, as DES user satisfaction and longer term employment outcomes and career development is compromised in the pursuit of the “13 week and 26 week outcomes.” More integration and



linkages with other service systems including income support and education, and supported employment providers, would enhance collaboration and efficiency.

Employment focus – making jobs available

Advocates' feedback indicated that there is more potential for DES to develop stronger awareness and connections with employers, and proactively work with them to create more jobs for people with disabilities. DES are failing to sufficiently engage with private enterprise to provide timely access to supports, such as workplace equipment, to ensure that people with disability have equal access to the workplace.

To maximise employment opportunities for all people with disabilities, advocates asserted that the DES program should “invest in educating employers and marketing the reasons why employers should engage people with disability.” DES should further develop their “relationships with employer groups in their geographical areas across a range of businesses and industries and use evidence-based job search strategies that have been proven effective in the US and Canada”.

As noted in the Interim Report, the proportion of people with disability employed in the Australian Public Sector has been declining since 2004.¹⁶ DANA agrees that there is a significant role for all levels of government in improving employment outcomes for people with disability. To raise employment rate in public service, one advocate has suggested reviewing “the 'essential requirements' of government positions e.g. often license identified as essential but in reality is rarely needed.”

Supporting employers

Survey respondents identified some of the damaging attitudes and misconceptions that limit the employment opportunities available to people with disability:

- “very big stigma in the community and among prospective employers that an employee with disability will be a liability through workplace injury.”
- “perception that OHS laws have become so tough and penalties so high that employers and managers, who may also be personally liable will not take the risk, as they see it, of employing a person with a disability”.

DES and other government programmes could do more to “job create” with employers and organisations, and raise awareness of the supports that are available. The extent to which employers know about DES and other supports is questionable. DES should “work collaboratively with people with disabilities and employer groups regarding opportunities, training etc.” Welfare reform measures must be accompanied by policy measures that “improve the incentives for businesses to hire, train and retain people with disability.”

Pillar Four - Building community capacity

DANA agrees that a well functioning social support system recognises the contribution of vibrant communities to employment and social participation. Capacity building and investment in civil society is needed to strengthen communities and build resilience and vibrancy. Indeed, “innovative solutions rely on partnerships that draw on the expertise,

¹⁶ *Interim Report*, p.99



experience and resources of the broader community.”¹⁷ DANA and many disability advocates are deeply concerned that the short time frame placed on the current McClure review compromises opportunities for the reference group to consult with disadvantaged communities and people with disability in fulfilling its broad reform objectives and advisory function.

In developing the National Disability Strategy, all Australian governments have committed to ensuring that people with disability remain actively engaged during its implementation and that their views are reflected in the two-yearly progress reports on the Strategy to COAG. This commitment reflects Australia’s undertaking, when ratifying the CRPD, to “closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations” in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the Convention.¹⁸ DANA believes this ongoing obligation to listen to the voices of people with disabilities in Australia, and enable their participation, is vital.

Last year, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed regret at the lack of mechanisms for consultation and engagement between Government and persons with disabilities and their organisations in all matters of Convention policy development and legislative reform. The UN Committee recommended Australia establish, in partnership with people with disabilities through their representative organisations, engagement mechanisms for ensuring meaningful participation in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the CRPD.

Role of civil society

People with disabilities, through their representative organisations, including independent advocacy agencies, must be adequately resourced to participate in consultative engagement.¹⁹ Processes that inadequately involve people with disabilities, and that fail to equip DPOs (Disabled People’s Organisations) and advocacy agencies with the resources necessary to engage and consult widely, do not align with National Disability Strategy²⁰ or Australia’s obligations under the CRPD. Disability peaks are already stretched to capacity on current levels of funding.²¹ Providing such bodies with limited time to perform engagement, or failing to give sufficient attention or credence to their input, risks “only tokenistic consultation of people with disability, their representative and advocacy organisations”.²²

Advocacy organisations often play a role in the achievement of economic security for their clients. In some cases an advocate can link the person with disability to training or

¹⁷ *Interim Report*, p112.

¹⁸ UNCRPD Article 4 paragraph 3.

¹⁹ Recommendation made in DANA’s Submission to *Laying the Groundwork (2011-2014)* at p4.

²⁰ *2010-2020 National Disability Strategy* at p10.

²¹ The UN Committee recommended “initiatives to increase the resources available for independent organisations of persons with disabilities”, expressing concern that their operations were inadequately resourced.

²² *Disability Rights Now: Civil Society Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Person with Disabilities* (2012), p215.



employment supports, or assist them to access housing or income support, through sustained advocacy efforts. Advocates are often adept at aiding and supporting effective communication between the person and government agencies, not-for-profit bodies or commercial enterprises, especially when the advocate has developed a strong relationship with the client. Advocacy develops sophisticated problem-solving skills, which are often valuable in supporting jobseekers and employees with disabilities to find or sustain employment. For instance, advocates may assist clients to engage with DES consultants on job-matching, or with employers on workplace accommodations or role adjustment. Advocates commonly draw on knowledge of the person's needs and abilities to creatively eliminate barriers and identify solutions. Yet opportunities for advocates to take part in such contexts may be limited by the resistance of others to have an advocate involved or by the significantly constrained capacity of advocacy agencies. Funding constraints require organisations to prioritise demand from clients in urgent situations, for instance people at risk of homelessness, unsafe living environments, abuse, neglect or serious legal problems.

Many advocacy organisations (particularly citizen advocacy) train, support and resource volunteers to assist people with disability in traversing pathways to greater economic and social participation and inclusion.

Access to technology

DANA commends the Interim Report's recognition that disadvantaged communities may have "limited access to the Internet and computers". People with disability are sometimes practically excluded from online information and technology. Many websites are not accessible, and use devices such as CAPTCHA that excludes users with no sight or impaired vision. Many people with disabilities, including those living in institutions, do not have independent access to the internet or ways of communicating with the outside world that are private and easily accessible.²³ People with intellectual disability often find significant barriers when accessing government and other services. One survey respondent observed the:

"reliance on complex, dense written documents, poor signage for people with low literacy, the need to conduct more and more transactions online and the increasing reliance on automated phone systems, complicating access to a real person to communicate with."²⁴

Often no support is made available to assist people to navigate complex processes or to access technology, which may lead to the exclusion of people with cognitive impairment: "There is very little understanding or at times willingness to understand the needs of the person in regard to how a person might process or respond to information and processes."²⁵ DANA interviewed self-advocates on their experiences of accessing and reporting to Centrelink and their feedback is included below.

²³ Advocacy for Inclusion (2013) *Ask me. I make my own decisions: Report on the findings of a study into the experience of control and choice of people with disabilities in the ACT*.

²⁴ Survey response. Disability Advocacy Network Australia (2014) *"A long way to go": Progress on the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, p.16.

²⁵ Ibid.



Article 9 of the CRPD requires Australia to “take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to ... information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas.” These measures should identify and eliminate barriers to information and communications. Access for persons with disabilities to the internet should be promoted.

Article 21 of the CRPD requires Australia to take measures to ensure persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on equal basis with others by “providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost.”

Therefore, a strong human rights imperative compels the provision of all government information in the full range of accessible formats including Auslan and Easy English. Greater support should be available to assist people to locate, access and comprehend information, and understand relevant rules and options.

Article 26 of the CRPD requires Australia to take effective and appropriate measures in its employment education and social services programmes to “promote the availability, knowledge and use of assistive devices and technologies, designed for persons with disabilities, as they relate to habilitation and rehabilitation”. DANA agrees that the “use of information and communications technology is vital in developing the skills of disadvantaged job seekers” and an important pathway to employment. There is substantial room for improvement in ensuring access to technology-related services for people with disability.

Feedback from two self advocates, both people with Intellectual Disability, both receiving the DSP and working part-time in Open (mainstream) employment.

“Centrelink is really hard. We’ve had real trouble using the computers at Centrelink.”

“We’ve had heaps of trouble; we couldn’t get on, we couldn’t access the passwords, and if you tried three times it would boot you off.”

“I had to ask to be taken off the Online Reporting and now do it face to face. You just go into the office and give them your books. We record how many hours we do, and how much money we’ve earned and say how much per hour it was. It works much better for us than over the phone or the computer. They do really well face to face because you actually get to sit down and talk to someone. They have your details and you can do your reporting. That’s a lot better.”

“On the phone it’s confusing. You have to press 1 for here and so on. It’s hard if you’re not really sure what they’re talking about. You have to give Yes or No answers but you don’t understand the questions. You have to sit on the phone for about half an hour and you get lovely music but you run out of credit and can’t talk to them anyway. They just expect you to wait but if you haven’t got much credit it’s hard.”