# Welfare Review Submission Template

## Pillar One: Simpler and sustainable income support system

Changes to Australia’s income support system over time have resulted in unintended complexities, inconsistencies and disincentives for some people to work. Achieving a simpler and sustainable income support system should involve a simpler architecture, a fair rate structure, a common approach to adjusting payments, a new approach to support for families with children and young people, effective rent assistance, and rewards for work and targeting assistance to need.

### Simpler architecture

**Page 42 to 52** of the Interim Report considers the need for a simpler architecture for the income support system. The Reference Group proposes four primary payment types and fewer supplements. The primary payment types proposed are: a Disability Support Pension for people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work; a tiered working age payment for people with some capacity to work now or in the future, including independent young people; a child payment for dependent children and young people; and an age pension for people above the age at which they are generally expected to work.

In shaping the future directions for a simpler architecture the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* What is the preferred architecture of the payment system?
* Should people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work receive a separate payment from other working age recipients?
* How could supplements be simplified? What should they be?
* What are the incremental steps to a new architecture?

| * Whilst a more “simplistic” model may make administrative processes easier to navigate, the complexity of people’s needs, as noted in the report, will fast disband attempts for simplicity. A more effective system would surely be, therefore, to provide training and information to people within the welfare workforce as well as provide an increase of information for the recipients of welfare. If changes are necessary to the current system, it will still need to be more complex than a simple “four pillar” model. If any changes are to be made, training remains of the utmost importance to be able to navigate through such changes effectively and fairly. The tiered payment model that is proposed will also likely unravel as an equally complicated system to the current welfare composition. I therefore advocate for an increase of information and training of the welfare sector, which will not seek to simplify, rather, seek to understand the complexity of people’s needs. The Government needs to deliver tailored and sympathetic welfare payments from this position. * As the report notes, many of the people currently on, or seeking welfare payments, have intersecting disadvantages; all of which must be considered in the provision of payments. People with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work should absolutely receive a separate payment from other working age recipients, as their disadvantages are likely to be multiple and highly complex. There is a concern that with the proposed “simplifying” of payments, people who need financial assistance based on complex needs will be disadvantaged. Therefore, the model needs to be specific and vast, rather than general, to properly account for the disadvantages that different people face. |
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### Fair rate structure

**Page 55 to 60** of the Interim Report considers changes that could be considered to rates of payment for different groups. In shaping the future directions for a fairer rate structure the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How should rates be set, taking into account circumstances such as age, capacity to work, single/couple status, living arrangements and/or parental responsibilities?

| * Again, the model for fair welfare must account for all disadvantages that people face, and financial support needs to properly assist people’s needs. Here is where an individualised approach should be taken, to assist people, rather than to generalise payments and then individualise their responsibilities of labour, as this report suggests (see article: <http://theconversation.com/when-job-seekers-outnumber-jobs-5-to-1-punitive-policy-is-harmful-28839>). The opposite approach must be taken. Targeted assistance must be given with a focus on equity, to achieve a decent standard of living for people who need assistance. This will require advanced training for the welfare sector, so that workers can appreciate people’s individual circumstances, and help accordingly. * The government should be aiming for a decent standard of living with everybody’s basic and fundamental needs covered (food, shelter, protection, healthcare, education). If we take into account Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, these must be addressed before people can build their personal and public skills to enter the workforce. Therefore, the government must maintain a safety net for everybody by keeping people on payments to achieve an equitable standard of living. Only from this point, can we begin a discussion about struggling and socioeconomically disadvantaged people participating in the already challenging labour market. |
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### Common approach to adjusting payments

**Page 60 to 64** of the Interim Report considers a common approach to adjusting payments to ensure a more coherent social support system over time. In shaping the future directions for a common approach to maintaining adequacy the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* What might be the basis for a common approach to adjusting payments for changes in costs of living and community living standards?

| * As discussed above, payments need to be made according to individual needs of people to make an equitable standard of living for everybody. Accordingly, some people may need more assistance than others. The “common approach” must consider that the needs of food, shelter, protection, healthcare and education are accounted for within the scope of government financial assistance. |
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### Support for families with children and young people

**Page 65 to 68** of the Interim Report considers how the payments could be changed to improve support to families with children and young people. In shaping the future directions for support for families with children and young people the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can we better support families with the costs of children and young people to ensure they complete their education and transition to work?
* In what circumstances should young people be able to access income support in their own right?

| * This speaks to the essential need for increased funding to public education. This report cannot and will not achieve its education and training goals for people within the current political climate of cuts and the privatising of TAFEs and universities. In addition, public schools are losing their funding. The groups who need government assistance are the people who are affected by these measures, and as such, they are being further removed from the benefits that education brings, including class mobility and socioeconomic improvements. Furthermore, specialised schools that focus on alternative education, essential for young people who do not fit into the dominant model, are under threat. (See link below regarding the Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth Service)   <http://www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/tony-abbott-please-don-t-stop-the-9-girls-studying-at-rosemount-from-finishing-their-schooling?share_id=yiIyYYzQam&utm_campaign=share_button_action_box&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=share_petition>  Such models of education must be funded, and must be made available to struggling young people to ensure their educational development, and subsequently, their positive involvement in our community. Whilst the report acknowledges the need for education and training, it makes no mention of the government’s intentions to minimise funding to such integral educational institutions. These are the institutions where many people on government assistance are coming from, and as such, funding must be generously allocated to public education in order to achieve this report’s goals; to equip disadvantaged people with the necessary skills to transition to work.   * Furthermore, the current public education system is already far behind the private sector, in terms of what it can offer its students. The report itself limits people on payments towards vocational training. This depicts the limitations also of the public education system, recognised in the report *Transforming Education:* *The New South Wales Reform Journey*, (<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/documents/15060385/15385042/world_edu_forum_paper_minister.pdf>) comprised by the NSW Government. Both the public education system and this report must give more options to students, rather than confine them to vocational employment based on their socioeconomic background. Many of the people targeted within this report fall victim to this. Education should be fair and equitable and enable options for everybody, and this report severely limits the variation of pathways for young people, in particular through the focus on “job-specific” training. This limits people’s educational options, and deters them from University study, and the associated benefits that are set aside for the private sector. The report hides behind a ‘self-empowering’ rhetoric whilst actually confining people into forced conformity, less choice, and ultimately, discrimination. Effectively, this report is funnelling, at a policy level, these members of our society into less privileged social and public arenas. If we are going to focus on education and the workforce, there must, at the very minimum, be a flexible and fair approach to education; not this confining model which only works within the classed and social disadvantages of the targeted groups, rather than seeking to transcend them. * There are certainly instances where young people need access to income support in their own right. The LGBTIQ community is one to consider here. Whilst, on the whole, our societal attitudes towards non-heterosexual people are improving, this group remains a highly vulnerable one. As mentioned in the Growing Up Queer(2014) Report:   *Rejection by families, resulting from homophobia and transphobia, exacerbated the isolation and despair felt by many of the young participants. This often led to homelessness, economic instability and/or destitution for some of the young people* (page 5).  <http://www.youngandwellcrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Robinson_2014_GrowingUpQueer.pdf>  This is one such instance where young people must have income support in their own right. The LGBTIQ community remains a highly vulnerable one, and the government must ensure that they are provided with adequate support, with homelessness looming as a risk. Whilst this is one essential example to consider, there are many other cases where young people will need access to income support, including but not limited to domestic abuse. This will include any situation where the young person feels they must, for whatever reason, leave their family, and not have access to their own funds. |
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### Effective rent assistance

**Page 68 to 71** of the Interim Report considers Rent Assistance and suggests a review to determine the appropriate level of assistance and the best mechanism for adjusting assistance levels over time. In shaping the future directions for Rent Assistance the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How could Rent Assistance be better targeted to meet the needs of people in public or private rental housing?

| * Rental assistance needs to be substantial enough to never cause unwanted stress or anxiety to a person or household, and needs to be re-assessed under changing circumstances. This would include instances of increases in the private and or public rental market, where government payments should subsidise any additional financial burden.   This is particularly true of public housing tenants wanting to transition to other forms of housing. Rental assistance should also always be balanced with the person or people’s income, so that they are paying no more than 25-35% of their income. The report must also consider that between 2001-2013 “median rents have grown at least one and a half times faster than rent assistance and for some groups more than doubled” (<http://www.crikey.com.au/2014/06/30/mcclure-report-fails-on-key-issue-of-low-income-housing/?wpmp_switcher=mobile>). Again, I emphasise that rental assistance must reflect the rising cost of housing, and provide people with the appropriate financial backing to recognise this. |
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### Rewards for work and targeting assistance to need

**Page 72 to 78** of the Interim Report considers changes to means testing for improved targeting to need and better integration of the administration of the tax and transfers systems to improve incentives to work. In shaping the future directions for rewards for work and targeting assistance to need the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How should means testing be designed to allow an appropriate reward for work?
* At what income should income support cease?
* What would be a simpler, more consistent approach to means testing income and assets?

| * This report is individualising a social issue, and in doing so, amplifying the “lifters and leaners” rhetoric that is so detrimental to people with disabilities and other marginalised members of our society. This social issue I refer to is the difficulty for people with disabilities to secure employment, due to the attitudes of employers, not the attitude of employees (See article on Julia Gilchrist <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/high-achiever-stuck-in-a-world-where-success-comes-at-a-cost-20140701-zsrc8.html>). As such, the incentive that people need should be no more than to know that they can secure a job that they desire. This means that the primary focus needs to be on employers. Whilst this report does recognise their role, it does not seem to acknowledge that many people with disabilities would like to work, as stated by the former Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes (<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/outgoing-disability-discrimination-commissioner-graeme-innes-fires-parting-shots-at-abbott-government-20140702-3b83a.html>). There is by no means, an equal responsibility between employers and employees, and it is the labour market which needs to change to be able to accommodate these members of our society. * Means testing must emphasise the assistance needed for people on the waiting list for public housing. These people should have their payments adjusted so that they are only paying one-third of their income to the private market. Rental assistance must not be used to drive people into the private market; as suggested by 6 month targets that need to be met, followed by a review and possible expulsion from public housing after 5 years. Such demands are unrealistic and unfair expectations to people within the low socio-economic demographic (<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/news/government-considers-proposal-to-force-ivanhoe-public-housing-tenants-to-pay-market-rent/story-fngr8gwi-1226981832712>). Again, this demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding the challenges for people in need of assistance. Punitive measures such as these will only amplify financial hardship and leave many people in dangerously desperate situations. * Incentives for working would be beneficial only in so far as they are not punitive measures (such as cuts to payments); this dismisses the discrimination that people with a disability face. If this were to unfold, there is the likelihood of stigmatisation and blame to take place for this group, as Mental Health Council of Australia chief executive Frank Quinlan says “(people with a mental illness) are hampered by enormous stigma” (<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/spending-controls-a-waste-say-welfare-groups-20140630-3b4cc.html>). Welfare groups are also concerned for the increased demonization of people with disabilities <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/call-for-radical-pension-change-for-disabled-20140629-3b21f.html>). With these concerns in mind, the government could instead prove its genuine desire to assist disadvantaged people by making available the financial assistance for training and studying, in the field of the individual’s choosing. This would make for an equitable incentive, and would equip people with the skills that they desire. This, rather than cuts, will not only further inspire people with disabilities to enter the workforce, it will make it achievable through equitable means. Whilst this will be an investment, it will achieve desirable long term outcomes for all communities. * Income ceasing is not a simple matter and there can be no ‘blanket’ approach to this. Again, I urge the government to take an equitable and fair approach in assessing individual and household needs, which will likely vary across households and time periods. |
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## Pillar Two: Strengthening individual and family capability

Reforms are needed to improve lifetime wellbeing by equipping people with skills for employment and increasing their self-reliance. To strengthen individual and family capability changes are proposed in the areas of mutual obligation, early intervention, education and training, improving individual and family functioning and evaluating outcomes.

### Mutual obligation

**Page 80 to 85** of the Interim Report considers more tailored and broadening of mutual obligation and the role of income management. In shaping the future directions for mutual obligation the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How should participation requirements be better matched to individual circumstances?
* How can carers be better supported to maintain labour market attachment and access employment?
* What is the best way of ensuring that people on income support meet their obligations?
* In what circumstances should income management be applied?

| * The responsibility to increase employment for people with disabilities, carers, people with mental health issues and other disadvantaged groups lies with our employers. Whilst everybody’s financial situations should be individually assessed to tailor differing needs, these members of our society do not need to be bullied into employment through threats and paternalistic measures, as this report advocates, through its cuts and income management strategies. The effects of this, as outlined in an article in The Conversation, will not be increased employment and increased independence for people currently on payments, rather, they will likely be prey to “hostile public responses…reinforcing their lack of self-worth” (See article <http://theconversation.com/when-job-seekers-outnumber-jobs-5-to-1-punitive-policy-is-harmful-28839>). Positive motivation, in the way of maintaining funds, and offering free or subsidised training and education (of the person’s choosing) will be a much more sustainable approach. * The detrimental impact that this report would have on carers also needs to be rectified. As Carers Australia has outlined, the assumption of work that will be generated for carers through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) remains an “untested assumption”, which is of great concern (<http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/media-centre/carers-national-news/article/?id=mcclure-welfare-review-a-mixed-bag-for-carers>). This report needs to be grounded in empirical research, not hypothetical assumptions, particularly given that this report is targeting our most vulnerable members of society. They do not have the luxury to cope with being tested on by unproven Government assumptions, and they will likely end up further disadvantaged and poverty-stricken, and possibly putting their carer roles in risk. This report must give more consideration to the substantial number of people affected, given that fact that 11.7% of the population of NSW are carers (as stated in the City of Sydney Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2014-2017). With such a significant amount of carers in NSW alone, this report demonstrates an alarming lack of understanding over the challenges of caring and the financial affliction of holding such a position. The government needs to alleviate the situation for these people who fill an essential carer role, rather than create a further financial burden. * Income management has no concrete evidence of success to date (see article above). Given its extensive costs (as stated in above article, an estimated cost of up to $1 billion in 2014-15), the Government should be exploring alternative methods that promote self-empowerment rather than the presumed inability of people to be able to control their own income. This method is keeping people dependent on the Government, and is highly conflicting with the aims of the report itself. As the report aims to move people off welfare and into the workforce, it would follow that Government payments should mimic the nature of employment. This would create a smooth transition, as the report outlines it is aiming for, from welfare to the workforce. Initiating income management is not only a costly, humiliating, disciplinary and evidence-lacking method, it will also create an additional barrier to successfully enter the workforce; the government needs to mimic the earning income that a job would provide, to create a fluid transition.   In light of this, income management should never be enforced. Instead, if desired by the individual, the Government should have budgeting assistance readily available, such as free information or sessions on how to properly budget. I emphasise however, this should be a service only for those who request it. Government should also promote healthy lifestyles and provide free and unbiased information on proper eating and exercise, including free and easy recipes. These are methods that encourage healthy spending, rather than denying people their autonomy based on, often times, unavoidable disadvantages. |
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### Early intervention

**Page 85 to 88** of the Interim Report considers risked based analysis to target early intervention and investment and targeting policies and programmes to children at risk. In shaping the future directions for early intervention the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can programmes similar to the New Zealand investment model be adapted and implemented in Australia?
* How can the social support system better deliver early intervention for children at risk?

| * The only sustainable approach to early intervention is to properly increase funding to the public education system. At the moment, with Government cuts to public education, we are creating two different, unequal tiers of education, which favours those who are of a high socioeconomic status (see article <http://theconversation.com/unfair-funding-is-turning-public-schools-into-sinks-of-disadvantage-751>). For families who do rely on the government due to lack of finances, the government has a responsibility, in the interest of early intervention, to create a system which does not further disadvantage these students. This can only come from proper funding to the public school sector, and this is not being addressed under our government. The Gonski Review is an earnest attempt to tackle this issue and it must be nationally implemented to properly influence equity, regardless of wealth, and access to education. Instead, the Abbott Government is only reluctantly and temporarily holding onto this important initiative, and cutting massive amounts to the sector:   *By the Abbott Government's own projections, this (changes of the Gonski Report) will result in a $30 billion cut to the education sector over the medium term. Such significant cuts jeopardise the widespread improvements in student outcomes that were to flow from a strategically funded needs-based model. As a result, the quality of education provided to those Australian school children most in need of additional support will remain inferior, and we will continue to fail to realise the full potential of our latent human capital.*  (<http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/School_Funding/School_Funding/Report/~/media/Committees/Senate/committee/schoolfund_ctte/report/report.pdf> page 12)  The government cannot hope to change this disadvantaged system through early intervention without properly funding fragile public education systems.   * If the Report seeks to copy New Zealand’s model, it is again pointed back towards increased funding to public education. As stated through the New Zealand Government’s web page, the OECD reported New Zealand as having the highest percentage of public expenditure to education out of 32 developed countries <http://www.newzealandnow.govt.nz/living-in-nz/education>). If Australia wishes to mimic the New Zealand system, it cannot overlook the essential funding of public education in the goal for early intervention. |
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### Education and Training

**Page 89 to 90** of the Interim Report considers the need for a stronger focus on foundation skills in both schools and vocational education and training, and on transitions from school to work. In shaping the future directions for education and training the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* What can be done to improve access to literacy, numeracy and job relevant training for young people at risk of unemployment?
* How can early intervention and prevention programmes more effectively improve skills for young people?
* How can a focus on ‘earn or learn’ for young Australians be enhanced?

| * Again, widespread access to good public education is vital to addressing youth unemployment. As stated in the Guardian:   *Private schools implicitly reject any student without the financial luxury to attend them - they admit scholarships only subjectively, and all of their intake is screened. The troubled, the hopeless, the poor, the deprived, the rural and the damned are of greater educational need, yet the public system that is obligated to school them is provided lesser resources with which to do so. The unequal situations of students admitted to both systems is actually structurally enhanced by the present funding arrangements.*  <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/27/illiteracy-rates-australias-national-shame>   * This indicates that there is a growing gap between the public and private education systems, where the public education recipients are unfairly falling behind. The lack of resources and funding to public education institutes is undoubtedly a substantial cause of poor literacy and numeracy skills. This is likely to see youth dropping out of education systems, and is also likely to dissuade them from seeking relevant job training because of negative experiences in the public education system. Youth will therefore be more likely to end up relying on government payments, due to a dissatisfying experience in public education which failed to meet their needs, and failed to equip them with these necessary skills. Youth unemployment rates, from October 2013 are as high as 12.70% <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/australia/youth-unemployment-rate>). These numbers indicate that there is not an attitude-based, individualised problem, rather, a larger social problem at play. Government policies must therefore target the social issues, rather than blaming the individual. * For Aboriginal rural communities, youth illiteracy is a particularly high deficit. (See article: <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/aboriginal-literacy-rates>) Due to historical struggles of white settlement and the Stolen Generation, this situation must be dealt with sensitively. This may involve funding organisations with Aboriginal people, which have an understanding of the Aboriginal culture and heritage of the area, to work with the education model to improve illiteracy rates. Note that this should not involve Government threats and paternalistic authority which applies no understanding of the culture, as seen extensively through the Northern Territory Intervention (for example, giving funds only to families whose children do not truant). The Government must, in these instances, relinquish its control to the community’s interest, and allow the community to take charge of their own matters, with assisted funding as necessary. Organisations such as Show Me The Way are one such example of the targeted educational assistance that these communities could benefit from (<http://www.showmetheway.org.au/our-vision.html>).   Early intervention and prevention programmes must not only be achieved through advancements in our public education; the government must also fund specialised education institutes, as discussed in answer to “Page 65-68”. This will ensure that different learning styles are catered for, and give more elasticity to the rigid education system that currently presides over Australia.   * ‘Earn or learn’ is a prominent example of Government intimidation, that is, in giving youth an ultimatum. This is an example of putting the responsibility holistically on the individual, and completely negates underlying social disadvantages, which are undebatable given the numbers of youth unemployment. A more encouraging approach is necessary, especially for youth who have been crestfallen from a fractured and failing public education system (due to matters out of their control such as class and socioeconomic background). The government must recognise how public education has failed too many youth, and encourage, rather than threaten people to engage back into the system. This must be achieved through financial incentives, rather than stripping people of their funds if they do not abide by the ‘earn or learn’ model. |
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### Improving individual and family functioning

**Page 90 to 93** of the Interim Report considers cost effective approaches that support employment outcomes by improving family functioning and the provision of services especially to people with mental health conditions to assist them to stabilise their lives and engage in education, work and social activities. In shaping the future directions for improving individual and family functioning, the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can services enhance family functioning to improve employment outcomes?
* How can services be improved to achieve employment and social participation for people with complex needs?

| * Employment outcomes are best achieved through education and training. See answer to “Page 65-68” * A model based on simplicity will not encompass people’s complex needs; therefore, this report is inconsistent and contradictory. As mentioned in the answer to “Page 55-60”, people within the welfare sector must undergo advanced training to understand the complex needs for disadvantaged people, and offer payments accordingly. |
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### Evaluating outcomes

**Page 93** of the Interim Report considers improved monitoring and evaluation of programmes aimed at increasing individual and family capability to focus on whether outcomes are being achieved for the most disadvantaged. In shaping the future directions for evaluating outcomes the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can government funding of programmes developing individual and family capabilities be more effectively evaluated to determine outcomes?

| * Government’s most powerful enabler of families and individuals will be to financially support the public education system, and to provide adequate financial support to adults in learning institutions including both universities and TAFEs. These will provide the Government with measurable results, as more families and individuals will be able to obtain formal qualifications. Regarding the importance of this measure, please refer to answer for “Page 65-68”. |
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## Pillar Three: Engaging with employers

Employers play a key role in improving outcomes for people on income support by providing jobs. Reforms are needed to ensure that the social support system effectively engages with employers and has an employment focus. These reforms include making jobs available, improving pathways to employment and supporting employers.

### Employment focus – making jobs available

**Page 95 to 100** of the Interim Report considers what initiatives result in businesses employing more disadvantaged job seekers. In shaping the future directions for making jobs available the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can business-led covenants be developed to generate employment for people with disability and mental health conditions?
* How can successful demand-led employment initiatives be replicated, such as those of social enterprises?

| * Business employers should undergo training in the needs and requirements of people with disabilities and mental health conditions to ensure a better understanding of their prospective employees. This may also create a more supportive work environment and ensure that vulnerable people such as those with disability of mental health conditions are not subject to discrimination. Training may also exemplify where the business could benefit from particular skills that a person with a disability or mental health condition has to offer. Inclusive practices must begin by equipping businesses with the understanding of not only where their business can employ and benefit from employing such workers, but also by fully understanding and providing for flexibility and additional resources.   The government should cover the cost for any additional costs endured through the employment of a person with disability or mental health condition. The government need also provide proper legislation to ensure a safe work environment from discrimination and to ensure that people are not taken advantage of. A person with disabilities or a mental health condition should also be given a government wage for necessary costs to enable them to perform their job. This should include funding for technological devices, including iPads, which are known to have benefits for people with disabilities (<http://mashable.com/2011/07/25/ipads-disabilities/>). Again, it is essential that businesses and companies are properly trained in the needs and requirements of people with disabilities and mental health conditions, to ensure their proper integration into the working environment. People with disabilities and mental health conditions must be thought of as more than merely ‘cheap labour’. This will be more likely to occur through changes in employer attitudes as well as better education systems, which enable such people with a diverse range of skills and aptitude.   * Business-led covenants must also address the previous cases of discrimination and exploitation surrounding the Business Service Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) (<http://www.daru.org.au/resource/temporary-exemption-sought-for-sheltered-workshop-wages>). As such, a new arrangement is necessary, to ensure that people with disabilities are being valued as workers, rather than exploited for cheap labor (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-21/young-its-hard-to-feel-dignified-in-underpaid-work/5211154>). As highlighted in the above article, under the Australian Disability Enterprise (ADS) formerly known as “sheltered workshops”, employees with a disability have been known to work for wages under $2 an hour. Under a system as preposterous as this (which goes unmentioned in the report), there is certainly no incentive for people to work, and nor is it reasonable that the Federal Government should push anybody into such an abhorrent and exploitative system. * More funding should also be allocated to social enterprises to ensure the report’s goals of integrating people with disabilities and mental health conditions into working life. |
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### Improving pathways to employment

**Page 101 to 107** of the Interim Report considers the different pathways to employment for disadvantaged job seekers such as vocational education and training and mental health support models. In shaping the future directions for improving pathways to employment the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can transition pathways for disadvantaged job seekers, including young people, be enhanced?
* How can vocational education and training into real jobs be better targeted?
* How can approaches like Individual Placement and Support that combine vocational rehabilitation and personal support for people with mental health conditions be adapted and expanded?

| * The TAFE institution within Australia equips people with job-ready skills, including work placements and practical knowledge of the targeted workforce. Whilst this report seeks to give these skills to people, TAFE represents the goals of this report. However, as mentioned previously, the Government is drastically cutting funds to TAFE, meaning the loss of teachers and resources, and subsequently, quality education (<http://www.nswtf.org.au/news/2014/04/01/tafe-under-threat-funding-cuts.html>). Again, this is a contradictory measure of the report. It cannot hope to achieve its goals under the current Government’s desire to privatise and cut essential funding to education institutions. These cuts also have a disproportionately high impact on students with disabilities. As stated in the article link above:   *Under the new system, as will attract a 15 per cent loading. Disability groups have calculated this amounts to $1547 extra for a deaf student enrolled in a three-year course in ceiling lining, covering just 23 hours of sign interpreting. The full cost of interpreting is $19,000 a year.*  *Deaf Society of NSW chief executive Sharon Everson said the situation is ‘‘very sad’’.*  *‘‘The government isn’t listening. I don’t think they understand the ramifications. If people train and get jobs, they are paying taxes, not sitting at home on the disability support pension, ’’ she said.*  *South West Sydney Institute is the latest to tell disability co-ordinators they will have less money to support students. Northern Sydney Institute has forecast an 89 per cent drop in funding, while Illawarra TAFE has already cut some notetakers.*  This report is completely out of touch with the direction of the government, and as such, I urge the government to align its goals of quality, free public education. This is the most obvious answer to many of the questions that this report poses. However, as discussed in the answer to “Page 65-68”, universities must also be an encouraged and affordable option for people with disabilities and mental health conditions.   * Individual Placement and Support is a positive approach because it works as a tailored model to the individual’s needs. Our education model at large must, wherever possible, use the flexibility of such initiatives. This again indicates the need for funding for specialised schools and educational institutions which can better cater for wider learning styles (See answer to “Page 65-68”). |
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### Supporting employers

**Page 108 to 110** of the Interim Report considers what can be done to support employers employ more people that are on income support including better job matching, wage subsidies and less red tape. In shaping the future directions for supporting employers the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can an employment focus be embedded across all employment and support services?
* How can the job services system be improved to enhance job matching and effective assessment of income support recipients?
* How can the administrative burden on employers and job service providers be reduced?

| * Please see answer for “Page 95-100” * Also, regarding point 3, this is where the government can be of assistance. The government should fund an extra position for companies which employ people with disabilities and mental health conditions, to take care of any added administrative burdens. |
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## Pillar Four: Building community capacity

Vibrant communities create employment and social participation for individuals, families and groups. Investments by government, business and civil society play an important role in strengthening communities. Also, access to technology and community resilience helps communities build capacity. Building community capacity is an effective force for positive change, especially for disadvantaged communities.

### Role of civil society

**Page 112 to 116** of the Interim Report considers the role of civil society in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of civil society the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can the expertise and resources of corporates and philanthropic investors drive innovative solutions for disadvantaged communities?
* How can the Community Business Partnership be leveraged to increase the rate of philanthropic giving of individuals and corporates?
* How can disadvantaged job seekers be encouraged to participate in their community to improve their employment outcomes?

| * Corporate and philanthropic investors must consult with disadvantaged communities to gather information on the needs of the community. For example, an Aboriginal community will require different assistance to a community with a high proportion of people from a CALD community. Community needs must be assessed and met. At the same time, corporate and philanthropic investors must advocate for the needs of the community on a larger scale. If such investors are in a position to provide assistance to communities, this may be done through practical measures, such as assistance with technological devices that assist learning and development, including iPads (as discussed in the answer to “Page 95-100”). * Areas such as sport, music and art have the potential to draw in the community to a common focus, create community drive, and a sense of cohesion. Community Business Partnerships would best involve themselves in these positive activities, and to sponsor them as events for the community. These events could have information targeted for the community’s challenges (for example, providing information on assistance for depression, or how to begin a career in various areas, or volunteering opportunities in the local area). * Recognising that disadvantaged job seekers will often come from disadvantaged family backgrounds, Community Business Partnerships can play a part in providing role models (perhaps through stories of successful employees who came from similar backgrounds). They are also in a position to assist with such things as direction, and guidance to people who may be otherwise unsure or overwhelmed in the job market. Giving disadvantaged job seekers tips and guidance to securing employment may also be useful. Businesses that are in a position to hire, should focus on the community they work with, and offer employment opportunities where possible, or training, to interested members of the community.      * Please refer to previous answer regarding income management (regarding page 120). |
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### Role of government

**Page 116 to 120** of the Interim Report considers the role of government in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of government the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can community capacity building initiatives be evaluated to ensure they achieve desired outcomes?
* How can the income management model be developed to build community capacity?

| * Please see above, regarding sport, music and art events. Community interaction at these events will be essential to gage desired outcomes by the community * Income management hinders community capacity. Please see answer to “Page 80-85” |
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### Role of local business

**Page 121 to 123** of the Interim Report considers the role of local business in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of local business the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can communities generate opportunities for micro business to drive employment outcomes?
* How can mutuals and co-operatives assist in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged communities?

| * Community consultation is always the tool needed to identify community desires and needs, and it is from here that micro businesses should develop. To generate opportunities, the community needs should be addressed by the micro business, as identified by the community. The micro-businesses that operate in such communities must receive affordable or subsidised training for successful operation of a business in order to survive as a business. Hiring local employees will also be helpful for the community. Government funding may be necessary for start-up costs for such businesses which have a targeted approach to their community’s improvement. * Mutuals and co-operatives must continue to play a primary role in supporting those who wish to operate businesses, by providing them with the knowledge and tools, wherever possible, to do so. However, mutuals and co-operatives should not replace necessary government assistance, including the allocation of resources and finances that are needed to build communities. |
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### Access to technology

**Page 124 to 125** of the Interim Report considers access to affordable technology and its role in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for access to technology the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* How can disadvantaged job seekers’ access to information and communication technology be improved?

| * All communities, particularly those with a low socioeconomic standing, must have a way to access technology. Given the necessity for mobile phones for job contacts, government funding should include a wage for phone use and purchase to ensure that disadvantaged job seekers are able to be contacted by job prospects. Apps on phones are also an undeniable asset to many who are able to afford data and devices that enable this advantage. Apps such as AJS (Australian Job Search), Seek, GovJobs for iPad and Pocket Resume, all assist in the finding and securing of a job, yet this again disadvantages those who cannot afford such expenses. Government should subsidise the purchase and usage of these devices, given the advantages and immediacy that they offer, which benefits the jobseeker. At the very least, government needs to ensure that wifi is available in a variety of areas, including places such as the library and public areas. This will at least give disadvantaged job seekers a better opportunity to access the levels of technology that many other job seekers from advantaged socioeconomic background take for granted. |
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### Community Resilience

**Page 125 to 126** of the Interim Report considers how community resilience can play a role in helping disadvantaged communities. In shaping the future directions for community resilience the Reference Group would like feedback on:

* What strategies help build community resilience, particularly in disadvantaged communities?
* How can innovative community models create incentives for self-sufficiency and employment?

| * Community resilience must be built through the consultation of the community, and goals and outcomes must reflect those which are outlined by the community itself. A disadvantaged community must build upon its own identity; this is not achieved by government authority crackdowns, as demonstrated through the extreme measures adopted through the Northern Territory Intervention. A government must create opportunities for social mobilisation, networks, partnerships and coordination with positive ventures (as outlined by the World Health Organisation, see <http://www.who.int/tb/dots/comm_hss.pdf>). Government can assist in areas such as transport, to ensure that disadvantaged communities have access to proper public transport lines. Communities must also have reasonable access to affordable healthcare, vets, educational institutions and facilities (including libraries) and healthy eating options. Infrastructure must therefore be properly maintained in disadvantaged areas. As per Broken Glass Theory (See <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2013/aug/06/antisocial-behaviour-broken-window-theory>), maintenance of public spaces (buildings and green spaces) is essential, and any degrading buildings must be properly fixed. This also includes any public housing maintenance issues, which need to be addressed (whether this is building, plumbing, landscape or other issues). The government must be passive in the decision-making process, and active in its assistance to help the community achieve the goals that it has identified.   Further, Government may encourage healthy outlets for communities by building the space for it, including art and sport spaces for youth (for example, a skateboard ring or graffiti mural). Again, this must be achieved through consulting with the community, and enabling them to make the decisions for their living area. Public spaces must also include disability access, to ensure all members of the community can engage in public life. Public green spaces must also recognise the importance of pet ownership and the many advantages it brings communities, and provide adequate off-leash parks and spaces.   * Innovative creative models will recognise the need for subtle changes (for example, graffiti murals and spaces for pets as mentioned above) to foster positive community change. As the World Health Organisation states:   *They (governments and other agencies) also have a key role in communication and social mobilisation to engage communities at local level. For example, they may advocate to change discriminatory practices, policies and laws, work for social changes that support better prevention and care‐seeking, and participate in public campaigns for improved quality and reach of services.*  (<http://www.who.int/tb/dots/comm_hss.pdf>) Page 24.  The government should be enabling the community goals, rather than enforcing its own agenda. As a flexible approach, innovative creative models will be born from the ideas of the people, not from the iron will of the government. |
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