

Fair Work Commission  
amod@fwc.gov.au

Date:

3 November 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

**Supported Employment Services Award 2010 Matter No AM2014/286**

At the Council meeting of 30 October 2017, Wollongong City Council resolved unanimously to write to the Fair Work Commission to *“express our support of our local Australian Disability Enterprises and object to moving from a skills based wages system to a productivity based wages mechanism”*.

The Illawarra is home to three Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) - Greenacres Disability Services, the Disability Trust and the Flagstaff Group, who provide a much needed service supporting more than 500 people with disabilities in employment.

For people with a disability, work is about more than just receiving a wage. These workers not only earn an income, but they build strong social connections, increase their self-esteem, gain independence and feel valued. Employment also provides their families and carers with access to respite, reduces social isolation and enables them to work or undertake independent activities. Most importantly, for people with disability, work provides a place to make friends and build relationships and provides a purpose, routine and a sense of security.

However, ADE's face a challenging decision from the Fair Work Commission in February 2018, with the proposal to move from a skills based wages system to a productivity based wages mechanism. Changes to the way wages are determined will compromise the capacity of ADEs to offer this type of employment. Requiring an ADE to pay higher wages for a simple task or small job will make their business model unsustainable into the future. This will destroy the economic viability of the system for workers with a disability and have a devastating impact on the Illawarra region, which already has a higher than average unemployment rate.

If an ADE were forced to close, the majority of supported employees would not be able to find work in the open market, as mainstream employers do not provide the additional support required. These workers would see their wages fall and see increased stress on families. Workers would lose access to their supported networks and social networks and the economy would lose productive workers and see an increase in welfare and support payments.

On behalf of Wollongong City Council, I am writing to express our concerns with any changes to the Award by the Fair Work Commission in February 2018. Changes to the award will not only impact on the economic sustainability of ADEs, but result in job losses, economic hardship, increased stress on families, loss of social networks, loss of purpose and identity and an increased cost to tax payers. I urge you to take these issues into consideration during your determinations.

Yours sincerely



Lord Mayor  
Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM  
Wollongong City Council