

Australians Marginalised From Decent Work

Workers with Disability

Policy

ACTU CONGRESS 2003

1. This policy is a statement of commitment by the ACTU and its affiliated unions in regard to the rights of workers with disability.
2. Congress recognises that people with disability have been marginalised and continue to suffer extensive systemic discrimination. This results in serious obstacles to obtaining and holding employment, and in securing opportunities to lead a full life through access to education and training.
3. The ACTU and unions will work to improve employment outcomes for workers with disability.
4. In consultation with workers with disability and their advocates, the ACTU, labour councils and unions will develop specific policies and action plans to improve outcomes for people with disability.
5. Many workers with disability work at full award wages. Congress accepts that for workers with disability in part-time work or receiving low earnings, employment plus access to income support payments is important to individuals with disability and that actions should enhance, not reduce, these entitlements.
6. Workers with disability are entitled to ongoing government support to allow them to achieve full participation in community life. The community has a clear responsibility to support people with disability.
7. Congress states that workers with disability are entitled to:
 - (a) jobs which offer fair wages, job security and prospects for advancement,
 - (b) safe and healthy workplaces,
 - (c) education and training and skill development to maximise individual potential,

- (d) employment which is free from exploitation, harassment and discrimination,
 - (e) appropriate resources to facilitate their full participation in the workplace environment and in the broader community, and
 - (f) the right to join, be active in and be represented by a union, both on an individual and collective basis, without fear of victimisation.
8. Unions and employers need to work together to generate more open employment opportunities for people with disability.
9. The ACTU will collate and disseminate to unions information on the progressive positions being taken towards delivering positive programs of assistance to workers with disability in other countries.
10. In seeking to satisfy these commitments, the ACTU will undertake work to achieve, amongst other things:
- (a) encouragement for individual unions to develop disability action plans, and provision of model plans;
 - (b) targeted assistance to labour councils and unions to assist them in organising and representing the interests of workers with disability;
 - (c) use the organising role to utilise the talents of workers with disability wherever practicable;
 - (d) establishment of a pilot project working with large corporations and major employer organisations to develop disability action plans designed to increase access to and participation in employment for workers with disability;
 - (e) participation in national campaigns to enhance individual and collective rights, and improve working conditions for workers with disability;
 - (f) participation in public education to raise awareness of the needs and rights of workers with disability, including a "fair wages" campaign to alert business and the wider community to unethical contracting practices;
 - (g) further exploration of possible industrial relations solutions to wage injustice and exploitation in Business Services and Supported Employment enterprises, including responsiveness to generic awards or the development of a single National Award;

- (h) ongoing examination of the overall approach to wage fixing for workers with disability to ensure it is fair to the workers concerned;
- (i) ongoing examination of innovative international systems of support for people with disability to assist them undertake employment;
- (j) encouragement for unions to establish affordable membership fees for workers with disability where they have lower levels of remuneration;
- (k) support for the current process to develop a United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability and support for its application to workers with disability in Australia; and
- (l) support for the development and implementation of standards under the *Disability Discrimination Act* and the *Disability Services Act*, and facilitation of discussion and negotiation between Unions and people with disability and Disability Advocacy Groups regarding the development of these standards.

Vocational Education and Training

11. Congress acknowledges the importance of education and training, and skill development opportunities being made available to workers with disability and expresses support for further action to overcome the continuing under-representation of people with disability in the VET system.
12. Training and skill development are integral in creating greater job security, higher wage rates and personal satisfaction to workers with disability. There needs to be a higher priority for the policies which will allow greater numbers of workers with disability to access skill development.