

24 February 2022

Survey shows a third of disability workers planning to leave the sector

Almost one-third (31%) of nearly 2500 disability support workers surveyed said they wanted to be in a different job in twelve months' time.

Nearly a third (31%) wanted to leave their jobs because of negative workplace culture, and nearly one quarter (21%) wanted to leave for more pay.

The survey of disability support workers by the unions representing disability workers - ASU, HSU, UWU and AWU - comes on the back of the last week's report by [Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS](#) which found there is a shortfall of 83,000 full time workers and further highlights the Morrison Government's neglect of the sector and the need to urgently address the serious workforce issue.

Nearly a fifth of respondents (18%) had contracted COVID-19 since November 2021 alone; 44% of whom used their paid leave for their recovery, and a further 28% who had no access to any paid leave or government payments.

40% of respondents were required to undertake RATs in order to work with 15% of those respondents having to source and pay for them.

Many of the issues highlighted by this survey—lack of PPE, access to testing and staff shortages—are the same as those identified by the Disability Royal Commission, which last week released a [Statement of Ongoing Concern](#) regarding the impact of the Omicron wave on people with disability.

The union movement is calling on the Morrison Government to urgently secure the tests, PPE and other vital supplies that the sector needs, and address staff shortages by improving pay and conditions for workers.

Quotes attributable to HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams:

“Throughout the pandemic people with disability and the workers who support them have been abandoned by the Morrison Government. That last week the Disability Royal Commission found it necessary to release a Statement of Ongoing Concern two years after first raising these issues speaks to the Morrison Government's ongoing neglect.”

Quotes attributable to ASU Assistant National Secretary Emeline Gaske

“One in three disability workers are being driven out of the industry because of low wages and conditions which will exacerbate already extreme workforce shortages.”

“You can't have an 'efficient' National Disability Insurance Scheme if a third of the workforce leaves due to poor conditions, because there won't be a system left at all.”

Quotes attributable to AWU National Secretary Daniel Walton

“There’s no work more valuable than that performed by the women and men in the disability sector, and yet the Morrison Government seems intent on making their lives harder and driving them out of the industry.

“The very least disability workers deserve is to be treated with fairness at work, but that requires a government that respects them and the work they do.”

Quotes attributable to UWU Director Demi Pnevmatikos:

“The abandonment of the disability sector by the Federal Government during the COVID crisis is diabolical. Workers and the people they support are having to pay to keep themselves safe and workers who contract Covid are being left without pay to fend for themselves.

“Disability Support Workers face poor working conditions including, low pay and lack of job security. This diminishes quality and the disability sector becomes a stop in one’s working life rather than the destination. This is not good enough.

“Disability workers and the people with disability they support deserve to be valued.”

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“This survey of workers shows that the disability sector is at breaking point. Years of neglect by the Morrison Government have been exposed by the pandemic and unless the Government acts quickly more workers are likely to leave the sector.

“The Morrison Government must meet with workers and advocates and act now to improve safety, conditions and pay in the sector. Workers need protective equipment, RATs, and financial support.

“These decisions should be made in consultation with people with disability and those who support them.”

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