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**Abstract**

This paper analyses the way in which the notions of 'integration' and 'normalisation' have been incorporated into disability policy to the potential political and economic benefit of government, and to the possible detriment of a significant number of people who have disabilities. Rather than economic productivity the author suggests aiming for cultural productivity - forms of activity which can be personally satisfying, retaining an emphasis on individuality and also functioning at a wider social level, providing people who have disabilities an opportunity to overturn their negative stereotype and to establish for themselves and others a re-valued position in society. **Keyword: Government**

# Policy Issues

## Challenging Integration:

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The concern of this paper is to critically evaluate the central tendency of contemporary disability policy to focus upon employment. The assumptions here appear to be that work is more or less readily available, that people with disabilities can gain access to jobs, and that such a process will deliver the quality of life promised by contemporary policy and legislation. (See for example the objects of the Disability Services Act 1986)

The paper will argue that policy around employment and community accommodation is premised upon deeply entrenched views in society regarding rights of people with disabilities to fulfilling and satisfying lives based upon access to community goods and services, and to acceptance by others as valued members of society. These beliefs are embodied in notions of "integration" and "normalisation".

In the disability field these concepts have carried a message of individual and social change, and demand for government intervention. However it will be further argued here that, in the process of their incorporation by the state into disability policy, their meaning has been re-interpreted in a way which offers political and possibly economic benefit to governments but which results in less than

## A Critique of Disability Policy

satisfactory outcomes for people with disabilities. In conclusion the paper will look at possible alternative policy positions.

### Historical Development

Traditional explanations of the emergence of contemporary policy based upon principles of integration and normalisation rely upon assumptions of enlightenment and progress:

- that the problems of institutional living have been finally understood..
- that a recognition of human rights has led to their extension to all people, including people with disabilities.
- and that "the community- will provide the best social environment in which all people can develop.

However careful analysis will identify a greater complexity of reasons relating both to demands for change emanating from various interest groups, and to a response by governments driven by deeply entrenched political and economic imperatives.

In describing the climate of change around integration and normalisation for people with

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disabilities, an important reference point is the period of reconstruction following the Second World War. Here we find recognition of the needs of the disabled population based upon community concern for returning soldiers. Many were severely damaged both physically and psychologically by the war experience, drawing attention to the plight of people with disabilities in the community generally.

A second important factor developed with the encouragement given to women to return to the home and to adopt a central role in child rearing. A by-product of this family focus was an increasing interest in the life chances of children with disabilities. Partly this resulted in demands for better institutional care. But there also emerged a move towards care for disabled children in the home, supplemented by community self-help support such as In the Helping Hand Association.

Increasing International travel brought Australians into contact with developments overseas. Perhaps the most notable of these in recent years has been the impact of Wolfensberger from the US on the development of a belief in principles and practices of normalisation. Reference should also be made to the period of the 1960's and the human rights movement. Although originating with students, blacks and women in America, the principles upon which such demands were based spread rapidly to other countries and to other oppressed groups, including those with disabilities.

All these developments contributed to a burgeoning climate of liberation from which social policy was not immune. In all areas, moves designed to further the rights of op-

pressed groups began to take hold: for women, policies around equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, for aboriginal people, moves towards establishing rights to traditional land. More recently standards of residential care for the aged have also incorporated a philosophy of resident's rights. In the field of disability the focus has been around notions of normalisation and integration.

In pointing to these wide ranging social developments care must be exercised in avoiding the reductionist argument that all change can be traced back to common origins. Nevertheless there are some important points to be made about the tensions and changes which typified this historical period; and which had wide-ranging social impact. This is not at all to claim that outcomes for disadvantaged sectors of the population were uniformly or significantly successful. In fact it can be shown that in all the areas identified above gains are at least ambiguous in their effect. In respect of people with disabilities, it will be argued the incorporation into policy of demands for integration and normalisation has been problematic in outcome. It has resulted in limited gains for only some people, and has also tended to close off what might have been more productive avenues of action.

### "Normalising" Policy:

#### Incorporation By the State

The key question here has to do with the way in which long-standing and clearly articulated calls for an enhanced quality of life, emerging under a rubric of integration and normalisation, have been translated into policy initia-

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tives focussing on accommodation and employment. In other words, what is to be done about where people live and what people do?

The answer to the first question regarding accommodation has emerged as a policy of deinstitutionalization. This outcome is hardly surprising given the longstanding and almost universal criticism levelled at institutional life. A resurgence of Interest in the liberal notion of "community", together with ideas of integration and normalisation, have created considerable pressure on government for decisive action. The result has been an increase in the rate of closure of institutional beds, coupled with programs designed to prepare institutional residents for community life in a variety of forms of "Integrated"

accommodation. This development is not without its problems. The process is costly, at least partly because community living does not offer the economics of scale in provision of specialised services when compared with the large institution. There is also a need to retain dual funding of both institutions and community options during the transition period.

It must also be said that, even when community living is established, it is not without substantial problems. Evidence is emerging that it is resulting in a fracturing of friendship groups, that generic services are not replacing specialised services, that abuse of vulnerable individuals is continuing, and the segregation of the institution is being replaced with isolation of the community. In fact it is clear that an urgent need for review of accommodation policy exists. This is not the task of this paper. However it is important to demonstrate

that disability policy is comprehensively problematic in its outcome, and the solutions can not be based upon a "fix-it" approach to specific difficulties.

In dealing with the second question: what is to be done about what people with disabilities do: it will be argued that the response of the state has been equally categorical: they will work. The critical non-residential focus of the Disability Services Act 1986 is on employment. Increasingly, as federal/state agreements around disability services take effect, state legislation will reflect a similar focus.

The key service type relevant to this employment strategy is that of "competitive employment training and placement services". This refers to services "to assist persons with disabilities to obtain and retain, paid employment in the workforce". The complementary service for those with higher support needs is that of "supported employment service". This is designed "to support the paid employment of persons with disabilities for whom competitive employment at or above the relevant wage is unlikely: and who, because of their disabilities, need substantial ongoing support to obtain or retain paid employment". (Disability Services Act, 1986, para 7).

In arguing that employment is the key non-residential objective of legislation the claim can be made that the notion of employment is influential in dictating the nature of other non-employment service type descriptions. Here we refer to such programs as independent living training, respite care and recreation. For instance condition (b) of the Recreation service type description states: "This involves people with disabilities participating in age-appropriate recreation activities, tak-

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ing place in free (leisure -non-work) time..." (DCSH, Recreation Service, p4). Clearly this is intended to exclude people with disabilities from recreation participation in what is commonly referred to as "worktime" - even though they may not have, nor ever secure, a job. A similar reference can be found in the case of Respite Care. Here item 5 of the service type description states that "regular week day activities (e.g. during business hours most days of the week) whilst often having a respite value for families and carers, are more appropriately provided through vocational services or a vocational alternative(DCSH, Respite Care Services. p4). The clear intention here is that the only legitimate activity during "business hours" for a person with a disability is work.

The argument here then is that, in terms of what the Act expects people with disabilities to do as their central life interest, paid employment provides the dominant focus. Other sets of activities and services, such as respite care and recreation are treated as residual and of secondary importance to work. In this regard the Act is consistent with other aspects of government policy in the field of general unemployment. Here we refer to the active employment strategy, operating through the New Start program.

This scheme has as its central logic the assumption that with the proper mix of regulations and Incentives around training and searching for work the unemployed person will eventually be funnelled into a job. At no point is this scheme discounted for the effect of recession conditions on the availability of work. Nor does it take account of the quality of available work nor personal ambitions and Interests. In other words the qualitative di-

mension is rather poorly developed. It appears that current policy around employment is intended to see that the state takes a controlling position in people's lives in terms of income, type of activity, use of time, geographic location, and career interests and ambitions. It is not too much to claim that such a position on employment is becoming, alongside community accommodation, the single most important factor in shaping the life experience of people with disabilities.

### **Employment: Contradictions In Policy**

In the case of employment services, the relationship between this major focus of government funding and outcomes of quality of life is problematic. It will here be argued that the adoption of an employment focus is at least as much to do with the political and economic pressures under which government is operating as it is consistent with community demands for change. O'Connor's thesis of the fiscal crisis of the state (O'Connor, J. 1973) suggests that welfare expenditure is largely driven by a need for cost reduction and legitimisation. Here it can be argued that the process of incorporating a philosophy of normalisation into policy on disability has generated an emphasis on employment for largely political and economic reasons. In the first place it offers the opportunity of moving people off pensions and onto a PAYE taxation system. Second, it helps to fulfil a wider strategy of contemporary government to involve the private sector in fulfilling welfare goals. In this case the cooption of private employers is seen to extend the goal of community responsibility for disability services. Third, an employment focus capitalises on a strong sense of

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community demand for individual self help - those who can work should work. This is linked to a converse attitude of criticism or suspicion of those on unemployment benefits which can be traced back in recent times to the Fraser Government's "dole bludger" image. While it is true that such a criticism is not immediately levelled at people with disabilities, a government policy emphasising the responsibility to work is one which is likely to gain strong community support. Finally such a policy furthers the argument for employment identified by the Social Security Review as the proper basis of community welfare and well being.

Thus the position is put that federal government, through the Disability Services Act, has interpreted normalisation in terms of employment for persuasive economic and political reasons and not primarily because this coincides with the best Interests of the person with a disability. In fact this paper will argue that such a focus is most unlikely to be able to deliver the promised quality of life outcomes for those to whom it is directed. The Issues to be considered in this regard include the following:

- Current predictions suggest that unemployment In Australia will remain high (in the region of 7-9%) for several years to come thus making the expansion of needed job placements for people with disabilities problematic.
- The federal government has rejected a strategy of work creation as a mechanism for overcoming general levels of unemployment in favour of an emphasis on controlling inflation. It will therefore be difficult to increase a flow of funding into job creation for people

with disabilities without stimulating a criticism of double standards

- A second "double standards" problem relates to the method by which people with disabilities are assisted to gain access to employment, compared with the traditional relatively less assisted method via C. E. S. for the mainstream unemployed.

- A further problem relates to the relationship between need and Income. The connection between productivity and income is sustainable on grounds of rational economics. However, in terms of satisfying need the productivity/ income relationship is more likely to be inverse since the costs of living for a person with a disability are generally greater than for the non-disabled;

- The pace at which jobs can be secured seems to suggest a further area of difficulty for this policy direction. It is understood that at least two government reports have been written on the open and supported employment programs, but that neither have been released as they provide evidence of marked lack of success in terms of expansion and retention rates. In Victoria, depending upon what criteria of eligibility are used, it can be claimed that some 14,000 people with an intellectual disability are entitled to an employment service. So far, from unofficial evidence, no more than one or two hundred appear to have been placed. The question here is: What are those people not yet in employment doing with their time? What provision will be made for those unable to secure work in the foreseeable future?

It is true that community access and independent living training are providing for

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some. But training programs, by definition, are not in themselves a solution. As has been asked by welfare groups in respect of the current New Start program for mainstream unemployed; training for what? It is here contended that the employment strategy upon which current federal disability policy is largely based cannot deliver the enhanced quality of life promised by the Act.

### **Economic Productivity: A Limited Basis For Policy**

In understanding the nature of contemporary society, it is clearly the case that full time paid employment is the single most important mechanism for achieving a satisfactory level of independent living. Welfare services offer some degree of support as an alternative. But the nature of the welfare system is such that support is structured around administrative categories rather than individual need, and is subject to underlying tension to cut costs and transfer responsibility to the individual for their own ongoing requirements.

While employment strategies are important for those who are able to make good use of them, there appears to be two fundamental reasons, already outlined, as to why employment for people with disabilities is unable to satisfy primary needs for a satisfying life. First there are not the jobs, adequate support systems nor finance to provide work opportunities for all. Second, people with disabilities, who are by definition deviant, are just not acceptable within the paid employment sector, except on the margins. Work is largely structured for the young, fit, intelligent, anglo, male.

As was argued earlier, other groups have

been similarly excluded to a greater or lesser extent. The aged, women, blacks and other disadvantaged populations continue to find the work environment structured against access to a significant degree apart from in relatively devalued positions. This could be the basis for an argument for more resources and change strategies around access to the labour market. To a degree this has been important, as in the case of women now able to enter paid employment. However, for others, an alternative approach is needed.

The primary concern here is for those for whom the workforce is unlikely to offer significant opportunities. In this regard we are looking at more than just a job. The clear intention of the Disability Services Act is that employment will provide for the individual not only a living wage but also a sense of personal identity and meaning; and further, a place within the wider society and culture.

For some this has provided a satisfying basis for life. But for others, the majority, this is not and probably will not be the case. It will be argued here that the goal should not be to replace work with an alternative for people with disabilities. For all people a place in the labour force still offers the most reliable and effective means of personal economic security and social identity. The task is to find ways in which policy can build beyond the work alternative to provide for people with disabilities. We take as our starting point in this project the notion of productivity.

Traditionally productivity has been defined economically. This definition has been applied very largely through the labour market and assessed in terms of gross domestic product. This view of productivity is inadequate

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on a number of grounds. In the first place it fails to recognise the productivity of the home. This deficiency is widely condemned by the women's movement. The task here is to accept the role of women in child rearing and home making as productive of value for the community. A second problem in the current notion of productivity is its link to the notion of retirement. The type of activity, which is considered productive, is that which terminates with retirement. Consequently, by definition, no person who has retired can be considered to be productive. This is anomalous given the span of healthy life, which can generally be expected past retirement. In terms of current encouragement by government and community organisations to older people to live more active and fruitful lives an expanded notion of productivity must be seriously considered. This could include some paid work, but should also incorporate aspects of voluntary activity, together with other individual contributions to the cultural richness of the community.

The notion of economic productivity, it can be argued, is becoming less able to accommodate the needs of many sections of the population. In an economic climate in which a central tenet has become the need to increase productivity. It is clear that this is resulting in a shedding of labour. In other words productivity gains are increasingly being found in non-labour forms such as the introduction of labour - replacing technology. It is increasingly being signalled by politicians that wages policy is shifting towards work-place bargaining; and that wage increases are to be tied to productivity gains. Therefore the tendency for firms faced with the need to pay productivity gains is increasingly to replace labour, or to limit increases

in their work force.

It could also be suggested that moves to disconnect labour from gains generated by increases in productivity are made easier by a weakening of the union movement. It is presently the case that no more than 40% of the private sector workforce is unionised. While some moves to accommodate people with disabilities in the labour movement are being made this is to a degree undermined by other forces including a tendency to part time and casual employment. Here again unionisation is difficult to achieve and the relationship between income and need is further weakened by the underemployment of workers.

In all these ways it is becoming clear that productivity, defined in economic terms, is marginalising larger numbers of the workforce. Thus the contradiction in the disability services legislation: to confine the definition of central life interests to economically productive employment at a time when other social forces and developments are making such an activity less accessible to people with disabilities. It has been recognised that a focus on paid employment is broadly consistent with the government's active employment strategy. It is further consistent with a particular reading of the notions of normalisation and integration. Further, it coincides with a general community support for self-help by all sectors of the population in times of economic constraint. For all these reasons it is clearly politically and economically understandable that strenuous attempts will be made by government to sustain this focus. But it is equally clear that it will provide a viable life option for relatively few people with disabilities. This does not at all mean that the work-based form should be dismantled. But it

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does mean that the implied focus on productive activity defined in solely economic terms must be broadened beyond the notion of paid work to incorporate other creative and culturally valued forms of activity.

### From Economic To Cultural Productivity

It has been argued that paid work is unlikely to provide adequate and significant opportunities for people with disabilities in terms of offering a sustaining central life interest for all. It has further been established that, in addressing this problem, the focus for change should not be work as such, but the narrowly defined nature of economic productivity. In other words the task is to conceive of forms of activity which can be recognised as personally satisfying, generative of personal meaning and identity, and productive in a wider creative and cultural sense. We use the term "cultural productivity" - to describe this form of activity.

Cultural productivity retains an emphasis on value to the individual at the immediate experiential level. An activity which is culturally productive must also function at the wider social or cultural level. That is it must begin to challenge constricting stereotypes of disability, which define disabled people as relatively unproductive, marginal, and basically dependent upon others. Culturally productive activity will provide for people with disabilities an opportunity to overturn cultural stereotypes and in doing so to establish for themselves and others a re-valued position in society. A clear example of such activity has been demonstrated in the recently completed project with an aged population in Diamond

Creek, Victoria. This has been reported in an article in *Community*. The project involved older people, some with dementia, in a series of community art activities which included creating a sculptural installation and street banners for the local festival. As the community arts worker reported:

*Here was an institution (Adult Day Care Centre) traditionally concerned with physical rehabilitation and respite care for older people and their carers, which was beginning to function as a vital centre for community art and culture... the distinctive work of the day centre was proclaiming the voices, memories and reflections of our elders ... sensitive shapes balanced against each other, in forms which were both dedicated and rugged, spoke clearly and forcefully about the experience of ageing.*

(Trail M. 1989, p22)

Here it is possible to begin to identify elements of what might be referred to as culturally productive activity. A further instance was in the work some years ago by Aldo Gennaro. Here groups of people with intellectual disabilities developed a presentation of pieces around the theme of Madame Butterfly. The work was presented at the Sydney Opera House and recorded in the film "Stepping Out". Again the theatre of the Deaf and groups such as Arts Project Victoria are demonstrating the enrichment to culture which comes through the work of people with disabilities. In a sense these projects can be categorised as recreational. To define recreation in a traditional, residual sense as has been done within much contemporary social policy, is to fail to recognise the essential cultural dynamics of these programs. Participation is clearly important in the sense of immediate satisfaction. However of far greater value is the opportunity created by such programs for the development of a deeper sense of personal identity and meaning not available through career opportunities. Also of

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central importance is the wider social and cultural impact of such programs on the conventional view of disability as passive, dependent and reactionary. Here we find a central dynamic of creativity and a re-interpretation of cultural traditions in a way which helps people with disabilities to redefine themselves and their capacity; as well as to redefine for others what it is to be disabled and marginalised.

It should be recognised that the strategies proposed above are not new. The women's movement has attempted to assist women to develop for themselves a viable re-definition of the position of women in society. In doing so, women have been able to achieve a more critical self-identity within the context of a society defined by and for men. The vehicle, or activity, for this personally and culturally creative process has included women's literature, drama, humour or discussion groups. These activities could superficially be referred to as recreational. However, they have also carried a far more significant load of cultural productivity.

A further example could be drawn from developments with Koorie groups. Here too, for many aboriginal people, paid work has simply been inaccessible. In response, again attempts have been made to reconstitute traditional Koorie culture and identity via creative activities such as painting, dance, storytelling and a return to traditional lifestyles. Such a response is not readily available to all Koorie groups, nor is it equally sought across the aboriginal community. However, for some who have been excluded from employment such cultural activities provide an important source of personal and social identity. As well they create the possibility for challeng-

ing devaluing stereotypes of Aboriginality.

### Conclusion

The question here is whether any similar possibilities exist for people with disabilities. As has been argued above, employment options seem not to be available. Thus a role of economic productivity seems closed for most people with a disability. However, it could be held that a re-definition of what is productive for a society to include a notion of cultural productivity would provide for the development of personal and social identity so essential to the wellbeing of marginalised people. Just what such activities might consist of is not really the task of this paper. The focus here is to analyse the way in which originally oppositional notions of integration and normalisation have been incorporated in social policy to the potential political and economic benefit of government: and to the possible detriment of a significant number of people with disabilities. ♦

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