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21 February, 2008

Hon Joe Ludwig  
Minister for Human Services  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Ludwig

**RE: REVIEW OF JOB CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (JCA) PROGRAM**

Thank you for the opportunity of providing feedback as to Interact Injury Management's experience with the JCA program. I welcome the Government's commitment to Social Inclusion, and appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback in regard to JCA's in the context of the broader strategy of employment as a cornerstone for social inclusion.

**1. Background**

Interact Injury Management have completed Work Capacity Assessments since 2003. Initially we were involved with Comprehensive Work Capacity Assessments and most recently have been successful in thirty Employment Service Areas, completing JCA's since 2006. To date we have enjoyed a very positive working relationship with the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Interact Injury Management currently provide work rehabilitation and assessment services throughout regional NSW. With offices in Orange, Dubbo, Tamworth, Lismore, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Tweed Heads and Mudgee, we cover a vast proportion of the state. As our area covers Mid to Far West NSW we are providing services to some of the most socially disadvantaged groups in Australia. It is in the context that a vast majority of our clients have complex needs that frames our responses.

Interact Injury Management was successful in the recent Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) tender and have been providing employment services to injured workers in the WorkCover, CTP and Comcare settings for the past 15 years. Our history in assisting people to work resonates our commitment to this cohort and our belief that employment is a critical step into social inclusion.

**2. Response to your letter**

I have responded to your letter in *Appendix A*, attached to this email. I would also be pleased to provide further feedback/clarification as required.

### **3. International Forum on Disability Management.**

I have been accepted to present at the International Forum on Disability Management in Berlin, Germany in September 2008. The title of my lecture is: “*Assessing Barriers to Work: Australia's Job Capacity Assessments*”. The abstract for the conference reads:

*“How does a Government successfully and consistently support workers with disabilities to move into employment?”*

*The Australian Government identified the need to assess income support recipients for their barriers to gaining work. These barriers were then used to make a timely referral to the correct employment provider. As a result the Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) was developed and commenced in July 2006.*

*This paper analyses the past 18 months of results to identify its success in appropriately assessing client's work capacity and barriers to work.”*

*The introduction of JCA's into the disability market has consistently delivered assessments that identify barriers to work and the appropriate referral to agencies to overcome these barriers. In 2006-2007, 363,261 JCA's were completed at a total expenditure of \$104 million. All 1,650 assessors across 18 service providers are Health professionals with 72% of all assessors being psychologists or social workers. The current results indicate that 83% of clients are referred to an employment or related service provider. The current complaint level is very low at 0.04%. In summary this Government initiative is successfully connecting people with disabilities with the appropriate agency to assist them to overcome their barriers to work.”*

The international conference is an excellent avenue to assess world trends and to identify other countries approach to social inclusion. I intend to spend time with DHS to discuss the content of my lecture and the key messages that they would like me to highlight.

I fundamentally believe that the JCA is an excellent tool to stream or connect clients into employment. However, to enable it to adequately assist the most socially disadvantaged, I believe that it requires continuous improvement.

The following recommendations have been made on the premise that the foundations to the current system are strong. Through some effective continuous improvement, the JCA can successfully achieve connecting clients into services that best meet their needs and consequently gain a successful outcome.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this review.

Yours sincerely

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