

family

A D V O C A C Y

Submission to Treasury on the Employment White Paper Consultation

“...Students who have access to real jobs while they are in school and plans in place to meet their ongoing needs upon graduation...have a better chance of being employed after graduation.”

Individualized Career Planning for Students with Significant Support Needs Utilizing the Discovery and the Vocational Profile Process, Ellen Condon, Michael Callahan, Mark Gold & Associates

Cecile Sullivan Elder
Executive Officer, Family Advocacy
cecile@family-advocacy.com

Leanne Varga
Systemic Advocate
leanne@family-advocacy.com

Family Advocacy
(02) 9869 0866
Suite 704, 88-90 George Street,
Hornsby, NSW 2077, Australia

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Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

Recognise and support “family” as the agents of successful employment for the person with developmental disability they support and as such, build their capacity to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to have high expectations and a strong vision to create, facilitate and support employment alongside the person with disability in their life.

Recommendation 2

Don't reinvent the wheel! Implement recommendations from the [Willing to Work](#) report, and support initiatives that have a proven success rate here in Australia and abroad. Provide for a suite of innovative, contemporary models such as the School to Work project, the Customised employment model, Microbusinesses, and the Rotary Employment Project. There is no one-size-fits all model. Flexibility is the key to success.

Recommendation 3

Acknowledge the nexus between segregated education and poor employment outcomes. Develop a National Inclusive Education Plan which includes the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education's, [Driving change: A Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia](#) to help realise equitable education and employment outcomes for ALL students including students with disability.

Recommendation 4

Commit to end segregated employment to ensure Australia meets its obligations under the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* with a phasing out of Australian Disability Enterprises and transitioning workers to regular employment settings which includes equal remuneration - real jobs for real pay.

Recommendation 5

Engage with people with a lived experience of disability and/or their family representative in the co-design, implementation and monitoring of the development of the Employment White Paper. Acknowledge and address the compounding disadvantage that comes with intersectional barriers that make it harder for people with disabilities from other marginalised groups and significant disabilities to get a job and keep a job.

Recommendation 6

Commit to fund projects, research and innovative initiatives focused on promoting employment and improved community attitudes towards disability, which also includes an evaluation of current good practice.

Recommendation 7

Set a 15-20% quota for public service employment of people with disabilities. No less than 5% of that 15-20 % be available for people with complex and significant disabilities and with intersectionality barriers.

About Family Advocacy

Family Advocacy is a Federal and State government funded disability advocacy organisation that works across New South Wales (NSW) to advance and protect the rights and interests of people with developmental disability¹ (hereinafter “disability”). It was founded by families 30 years ago who had a strong Vision that their family member with a disability would have a meaningful life that can be enjoyed by experiencing the same opportunities and living conditions as the majority of Australians. This means being included in education, employment, and community with the right to live safely, with dignity, and free from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

It is worth noting, the vision our families had of social inclusion in all aspects of life is now codified under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* 2008 (CRPD), and embedded in Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

In order for the Vision of a meaningful life to become a reality, the advocacy undertaken by a family can be one of the greatest influences of inclusion and safeguards in their family member’s lives. And we have witnessed many examples validating this for over 30 years. Accordingly, we recommend Family must be acknowledged and considered as the “mission critical” conduit to “improve labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment including...people with disability.”

For this reason, Family Advocacy supports families in their advocacy development to advocate with and on behalf of people with disability from a wide range of backgrounds: socioeconomic, First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, and people from metropolitan, rural and remote areas. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the compounding disadvantage that occurs for those with disability that are part of other marginalised groups and that these intersectional barriers make it harder for people with disabilities to find and keep work.

We also provide statewide advocacy advice and advocacy information to individuals and systemic advocacy. Over recent years, our work included specific funding around the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (hereinafter, the Disability Royal Commission). As such, our policy and advocacy work involves questioning the quality and effectiveness of legislation, policy and practice in the disability sector.

¹ Developmental disability is a disability that occurs in the developmental period of a person’s life (in the period from conception to adulthood) and includes but is not limited to: autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and any combination of physical, intellectual or sensory disability.

Introduction

Family Advocacy welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Treasury in response to the Employment Whitepaper – Consultation. From the Terms of Reference, our submission most closely relates to **“5.2 Improving labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment, including First Nations people, those who live in rural and remote areas, younger and older Australians, people with disability, and those who may experience discrimination.”**

People with developmental disabilities are shut out of meaningful employment and earning a decent income and this needs to change. We know change is possible because people with developmental disabilities want to work, and can work in many different settings, with the right supports in place. Other countries have successfully employed people with developmental disabilities for decades through innovative, contemporary models such as the Customised Employment model with an in-depth Discovery Process. The current employment policies and practices do not serve people with developmental disability and their families, and large-scale reform is needed.

Unfortunately, statistics show Australia's poor record employing people with a disability in the open market:

- People with disability are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed than people without disability.²
- Australia has one of the lowest employment participation rates in the OECD for people with disability at 53.4% compared with 84.1% for people without disability. But for people with an intellectual disability, its significantly lower at 14-18%. And these statistics have hardly changed for nearly 30 years.
- 77% of people with an intellectual disability who get NDIS supports are employed in a sheltered workshop or Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE).
- Currently, ADEs pay as little as \$2.36 per hour for work under the Supported Wage System and \$3.50 per hour under the Fair Work Commission findings. Even with the Disability Support Pension (DSP), this is still below the minimum wage.
- Less than 1% of those employed in an ADE transition to open employment (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). Similar issues have been found with day services and community access programs.³
- 37.9% of people with disability aged between 15-64 years old have their main source of personal income from a government pension or allowance.⁴
- Complaints about discrimination in employment make up a significant proportion of all disability discrimination complaints made to Australian anti-discrimination agencies.⁵

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, 2018, Catalogue number 4430.0, 24 October 2019

³ Thoresen, S. H., Thomson, A., Jackson, R., & Cocks, E. (2018). Meaningful social and economic inclusion through small business enterprise models of employment for adults with intellectual disability. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 49, 2: 161-172. doi: 10.3233/JVR-180962

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, 2018, Catalogue number 4430.0, 24 October 2019

⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission (2016) [Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability](#), AHRC, Sydney.

This perpetually poor performance has a severe impact on people with disability and the lives they are able to live, with high rates of poverty being just one example. People with disability are denied the ability to benefit from the good things in life that having a job and financial security provide. The impacts of this are often more profound for people with complex and significant developmental disabilities. High rates of unemployment and low workforce participation create significant social and economic costs for Australia as a whole.

As far back as 2011, a Deloitte study attributed Australia's significant disparity in employment rates to what they termed "removeable barriers", namely limited capacity and systemic factors.⁶ This research was in line with the Productivity Commission's 2011 modelling, which predicted a greater change in employment levels for people with disability.⁷

People with developmental disabilities face many barriers to open and self-employment, and their families face a significant workload to support them. The current system of welfare, education, vocational training and disability employment programs is complex and multilayered which makes it very hard for a person with developmental disability and/or their representative family member to navigate with success, somehow being expected to "find their way". The system is fragmented system and one must be cautious to assume that overhauling one cog in the wheel (such as the DES model reform) on its own will solve all of the barriers faced by people with disability face to gain employment. A holistic approach is necessary.

In any event, we make the following recommendations be adopted for the Employment White Paper in order to improve employment for people with a disability:

- Don't reinvent the wheel. Adopt the successful employment frameworks and models that already exist in Australia and the U.S.
- Provide for a suite of innovative, already successful models such as the School to Work project, Customised employment model, Microbusinesses, and the Rotary Employment Project. There is no one-size-fits all model. Flexibility is the key to success.
- Recognise employment success for the child or young person with disability, the "family" is mission critical in making it all happen. Accordingly, advocacy development of family is also critical.
- Commit to end segregation in education. Acknowledge the nexus between segregated educations and poor employment outcomes. Adopt a National Inclusive Education Roadmap to achieve better education and employment opportunities for ALL children and young people.
- Commit to end segregated employment with a phasing out of ADEs and transitioning workers to regular employment settings which includes equal remuneration - real jobs for real pay.
- Genuinely engage people with the lived experience of disability, and their family supporters in co-design.

⁶ Deloitte 2011

⁷ Per capita report 2021, 17

1. Let's NOT reinvent the wheel! What do we already know in Australia and abroad about successful employment of people with a disability?

We strongly encourage Treasury to implement recommendation of reports and support successful projects that already exist in Australia and abroad, for example:

Willing to Work Report

[Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability](#), the Australian Human Rights Commission's (2016), which contains 56 recommendations, 72 examples of good practice from a range of employers, and 44 case studies outlining individual experiences. The recommendations are grouped into three key themes: Priority Government commitments, Improving existing systems and What employers and business can do. We urge Treasury to implement the findings in this report.

Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education's (ACIE), [Driving change: A Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia](#)

The evidence over decades provides a clear nexus between segregated education and poor employment outcomes as well as between inclusive education and better academic/social outcomes for children and young people with disability.

Case studies of positive inclusive education – Jacob's story and Al's story

Family Advocacy has produced two videos about positive school inclusion experiences: [Jacob's Story](#) (18 minutes) and [Al's Story](#) (15 minutes), which illustrate inclusion in a public high school and give positive views from different members of the school community, peers, and the school Principal and teachers. We recommend these videos be watched by Treasury and encourage the use of these videos more broadly to national and state/territory Departments of Education staff, the Ministers for Education and their staff.

The common theme to a positive inclusive experience has been the “**will**” of the school to give it a go (mindset of a welcoming culture), see inclusion as a journey (a process not a target), upgrading the “**skill**” of the teacher and the willingness to **collaborate** with the family (positive partnerships).

Unfortunately, students with disability continue to be steered onto a “polished pathway” of segregation from school settings (usually Support Units or Schools for Specific Purposes) into Day Services and Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). This has a very distinct “othering” effect, where people with disability end up living their lives parallel to the rest of society rather than being in and part of society.

We see a similar pattern with education and employment in the way people with disability are perceived and treated. In education, students in the 1950's were considered "uneducable". Some 70 years later, we are faced the reality that the majority of people with disability are considered "unemployable", with no genuine pathway that leads to a real job for real pay. This is simply unacceptable in the 21st Century.

To be consistent with the many government policies embracing economic participation and community inclusion for people with disability (eg. Australia's Disability Strategy), we strongly encourage Treasury:

- expressly acknowledge that segregation in education and employment is a violation of the fundamental rights of people with a disability as espoused under the UNCRPD, and must end.
- Develop a National Inclusive Employment Plan that makes concrete, time bound plans to considerably transition workers from segregated employment in ADEs and Day Services to mainstream employment. There must be system reforms that support real jobs for real pay. For some guidance from another jurisdiction already doing this, there is currently a [Transformation to Competitive Employment Bill](#) before U.S Congress awaiting to be passed (with bipartisan support).
- Develop a National Inclusive Education Plan if it wishes to achieve successful tertiary education and employment outcomes for students with disability. ACIE has done the heavy lifting and developed a 10-year plan, [Driving change: A Roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia](#) which we strongly recommend be adopted, to make concrete, time bound plans to considerably transition students from segregated school settings to regular classes.

School to Work Project

[School to Work project](#), (a federally funded Information Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) grant) aims to inspire and equip students with disability, through the support of families, to seek meaningful, paid employment in the community. The conversation, thinking, and preparation for normative work experiences and then part-time or casual employment ought to start as it does with any high school student, around 13 or 14 years old. The project is currently running webinars and workshops across three year groups, Years 7-8, 9-10 and 11-12, in three states [Resourcing Inclusive Communities](#) in NSW (a Family Advocacy initiative) [Imagine More](#) (ACT) and [Community Resources Unit](#) (Qld).

Families of young people with disability are the target audience for this project as research shows how critical it is to have families working with their family members from a young age regarding post school employment. High expectations are very important within families to counteract many of the low expectations held by schools and professionals' groups. This is a four-year project with the intention of this initial four years being a pilot project that will roll out across Australia for a further three years if successful in receiving funding. Importantly, all students in all settings will be targeted in this project, as each young person has the ability to contribute to the Australian economy.

Work experience whilst at School

It cannot be overstated, that work experience is absolutely critical for a young person with disability. Currently, our education system provides poor work experience opportunities, if at all. We often hear from families the person with a developmental disability is asked to either stay home instead of doing work experience. Another common practice is that schools will often send students with disability to Day Programs or ADE's for work experience as they have deemed that the young person is not fit for open employment, with this damaging for the young person prospects of seeking paid employment in the open market with the right supports. These experiences rob students to learn the joy of work in an area of interest and potentially earn their own money. The typical path in high school is to have work experience to get a good taste of work life and also learn what you do not like. It is important that the question be asked What do other students at the same age? What would really good work experience be?

In the video shared, Josh's Story, Josh was only offered a placement in a local laundry in the rural town he lived in which was an ADE. This is very common. It was only because Josh's mother had a clear vision for Josh to have a proper job with proper pay in an area of his interest and acknowledging his ability to contribute that guided her to push back to the school and find him work experience that led to him setting up his own microbusiness in 2018, which still continues four years on.

Having a flexible arrangement available to cater for the person with disability's capacity is important. The example below we have previously provided but it is such an important example as it illustrates one of our parent's experience of advocating for a flexible arrangement for her son's school work experience, which eventually resulted in paid work and then a microbusiness.

There is generally a lack of supported and flexible work experience and this impacts their knowledge of career planning and employment prospects. For my son, I had to advocate rigorously to get the school to give permission for my child to have a flexible work experience as it was not practical for him to do it every day for 2 weeks. Instead, the school gave us permission to go once a week for 2 hours for a few months.

As it was well thought through and the right supports were put in place; this has led to future employment for my son. He now runs his own business as a mail courier. At the same time, I received a letter from the NDIA assuming the only option for my son was for a day program for work experience. If I did not have a clear vision for my son to have an inclusive life, and the support of Family Advocacy, his life would be on a very different path. I feel lucky to be educated and have English as my first language. What about those families that are not and do not know any better and do not have the support?

Carole

Successful Case Study - Rhiannon's Work Experience

A great example is the video recently created by our initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities, [Rhiannon's work experience](#) (6.26 minutes), a story about Rhiannon's successful work experience at her local Bakery.

Rhiannon's mother, Di, thought carefully about the tasks her daughter would be performing and prepared the employer and Rhiannon as much as possible prior to the work experience actually happening. Rhiannon was prepared for success as her mother collaborated with the employer and the employer was receptive to her input. We strongly recommend this video be adopted as an exemplar of good practice towards providing a system that supports genuine work experience for young people with a disability whilst they are at school, and also changing community attitudes, upskilling the capacity of parents, and lifting employer engagement.

Even though this was work experience and not paid employment per se, it does highlight the point that family drove this to happen, through having good community relationships and not a service or a professional. With this in mind, it is vital that Treasury support the capacity building of the family to have the skills, knowledge and confidence in order that they can support the person with disability in their life.

Whilst no system is perfect, we recommend Treasury to consider policy and frameworks from other jurisdictions, such as in the U.S, that have successes in the employment of people with a disability. For example:

Employment First

[Employment First](#), from the U.S Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, is a national systems-change approach to disability services centred on the premise that employment in the general workforce should be the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities, rather than placement in a sheltered workshop, a day program or another segregated or non-inclusive setting. It's a movement to deliver meaningful employment, fair wages, and career advancement for people with disabilities. Simply put, it means real jobs for real wages. Many states have formally committed to the Employment First framework through official executive proclamation or formal legislative action.

Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities

[Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities](#), which offers state policymakers 13 broad policy options, as well as more than 240 real-life examples of innovative programs and policies that states have successfully implemented to build strong, inclusive workforces. *Work Matters* is a culmination of intensive deliberation and research conducted by the National Task Force on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities. The report features bi-partisan and state-driven policy options that are actionable and have broad appeal to a wide number of stakeholders, all with an exceptional degree of customizability.

State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)

[SELN](#) has been supporting state systems for 17 years to offer new community-based employment options. With a healthy sense of urgency and the goal of helping individuals increase economic well-being, many more states are sharing compelling stories of individuals enjoying rich, full lives in their community, including jobs in the general workforce. One of its resources is The Employment Framework explained below.

The Employment Framework - Elements of a High-Performing Employment System

[The Employment Framework](#) is a holistic 7 element model that comes from longitudinal research from SELN. When working together, the 7 factors below can lead to better integrated employment outcomes. It is the dynamic interplay of all the elements that can lead to long-term systems change.

Leadership. Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.

Strategic Goals and Operating Policies. Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state developmental disabilities policy, and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective. (See [Employment First](#))

Financing and Contracting Methods. The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasised and supported through the state's resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.

Training and Technical Assistance. Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasises an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, case managers, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families. (For example, the U.S national certification organisation, [Association of People Supporting Employment First](#) (APSE)).

Interagency Collaboration and Partnership. Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health, state Medicaid agency) and removing barriers to employment supports.

Services and Service Innovation. Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with developmental disabilities regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, such as community service and volunteering opportunities.

Performance Measurement and Data Management. Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality (see [State Data.info](#) a [ThinkWork](#) project of the [Institute for Community Inclusion](#)).

Customised Employment

Customised employment is an evidence-based approach, endorsed by the United States Department of Labor and Industry, as its preferred means of supporting people with disability to gain and sustain employment. CE is based on the fundamental principle that everyone can work in typical paid employment, has been broadly adopted across the United States and evidence demonstrates it is the most successful approach to assisting people with significant disability to participate in labour force. Pockets of CE exist across Australia (possibly a diluted version) but it has not been widely used or tested.

There are a number of organisations in the U.S that have been practicing CE for decades, each with slightly different approaches. Family Advocacy recently hosted a [School to Work National Disability Conference – Securing Futures Shifting Mindsets](#) and several U.S experts presented on CE, whom we suggest Treasury connect with to better understand how the system is set up to support success:

- Dr. David Mank, Assistant Secretary to the U.S Department of Labour, who is the expert on transforming ADEs.
- Milton Tyree of Milton Tyree Employment Consulting, 40 years CE training and experience
- Therese Fimian, President of [Marc Gold & Associates – The People who try another way](#)⁸. Worthy of note, Therese shared successful outcomes of a project aimed at finding employment for individuals with significant disability⁹ - Out of 173 individuals, 74.2% obtained internships, 97 (56%) obtained employment, the average hours worked were 23 hours, the average wage was \$11 per hour USD, and the average tenure was 25.9 months. Significantly better results than here in Australia.

Below is the explanation of customised employment from the Marc Gold & Associates website:

*What is Customized Employment? Customized Employment (CE) is a universal employment strategy that is especially useful for employment seekers with significant life complexities and barriers to employment, such as a severe disability. CE strategies result in competitive, integrated employment (or open employment) that is **based on a determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the employment seeker**. The specific abilities of the individual are matched to the business needs of an employer. CE is a **relationship** between an employer*

⁸ <http://www.marcgold.com/services>

⁹ Pathways to Careers: A Case Study in Customized Employment. Prepared by SourceAmerica with support from Mathematica. March 17, 2021

and an employee that is negotiated to meet the needs of both parties. CE is included as a strategy to support individuals with disabilities to obtain employment in the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act of 2014.

What Does the Process Look Like?

STEP 1

Discovery: Discovery is a form of qualitative research that seeks to understand who the employment seeker is in as many aspects of life as necessary to inform an effective Customized Plan for Employment (CPE); it is used as an alternative strategy to a comparative assessment or other comparative procedure.

STEP 2

Profile: The Profile is a comprehensive descriptive document that is developed to capture the information gathered during Discovery about the employment seeker. The Profile becomes the written document that informs the Customized Job Development process.

STEP 3

Customized Plan for Employment (CPE): The CPE is a blueprint for employment for the employment seeker. The CPE is developed during a Customized Employment Planning meeting, a meeting that takes place after Discovery is complete and adheres to the values associated with person-directed and person-centred services. The employment seeker along with family, friends, colleagues and agency representatives attend the meeting and the Profile documents are shared, to support the planning process. Interest areas, tasks, specific employers, locations and other considerations that will increase the likelihood of employment success, are included in the CPE.

STEP 4

Visual Resume: A Visual Resume is developed for each employment seeker during the Customized Employment process. The Visual Resume is used to present an employment seeker to a potential employer, in a manner that highlights the best of who they are: their relevant interests, education, employment and volunteer experience, potential contributions to the business, and a specific list of tasks the job seeker has to offer.

STEP 5

Customized Job Development (CJD): The CPE becomes the basis for all CJD activities undertaken for the employment seeker. Job developers use the CPE “blueprint” to identify, engage, negotiate and customize a job, and any conditions for success needed by the employment seeker, with employers.

We recommend Treasury read the [Pathways to Careers: A Case Study in Customized Employment](#)¹⁰ which was written by Source America, who have been a leading job creator for people with disabilities for more than 45

¹⁰ <https://www.sourceamerica.org/get-involved/workforce-development/pathways-to-careers/customized-employment>

years. We share the executive summary of the lessons learned which can provide useful insights:

- CE offers one of the most promising paths for improving employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities.
- There is no one-size-fits-all model. Flexibility is key.
- A sustainable funding stream is needed to expand offerings and maximize outcomes.
- Investments in CE have the potential to pay for themselves.

The Australian marketplace will require professional development to teach CE. In this regard, we refer Treasury to [Marc Gold & Associates – The People who try another way](#), who provide performance-based certification in the areas of Discovery, Job Development and Systematic Instruction. There are entry level courses for 3 days on CE then more advanced leadership courses such as a 12-day course on CE and systemic instruction. This includes learning how to really get to know the person with disability, how do people perform tasks and how do they learn them.

Importantly, these courses also include learning how to get to know the employer such as learning to know how a company has tasks and how they are performed, what are the means for learning the tasks, who helps the person to learn the task within the company, how do staff interact, is there an unmet need in the business and how does it intersect with what the person with disability can offer, what is noticeable that could be improved in a business that the person with disability can offer, are there tasks performed by staff that are highly qualified that could be better performed by others at an entry level of pay.

One example given here was of a welding job where the highly qualified welders who were getting paid \$35 were doing certain tasks that Michael could perform, who was getting paid \$15 per hour. This gave the welders more time to focus on their highly skilled tasks and this gave Michael paid employment.

Case study of Customised Employment in Australia – Jack

We recommend watching [Let's Get to Work – The Admin Assistant](#) (5.44 minutes), which was launched during [Imagine More's](#) Let's Get To Work virtual conference on June 11, 2020. When he was in Year 11, Jack's family and his Circle of Support used their connections to find work for Jack at the University of Canberra (UC). Work experience at UC led to paid employment for 8 hours a week at the University of Canberra through a school-based apprenticeship. As a young adult now, the job as an admin assistant was carved by a champion in the workplace that also happens to be on Jack's Circle of Support. The job is customised to Jack's interests and strengths.

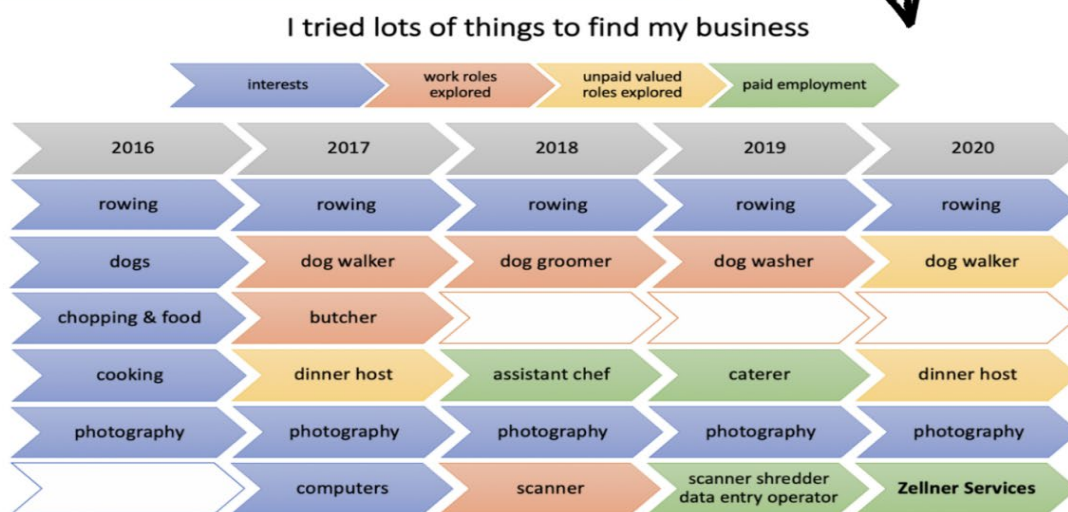
Case study of Customised Employment in Australia – Gus

We also recommend watching [Let's Get to Work – The Research Technician](#) (4.13 minutes) which was launched during [Imagine More's](#) Let's Get To Work virtual conference on June 11, 2020. With the support of Gus's family networks, they discovered a job opportunity at the CSIRO. CSIRO used an innovative interview process that was not dependent on verbal responses, rather Gus was taken straight into the lab where he demonstrated he was the right person for the job. Gus had a strong champion within the workplace and many supportive co-workers. CSIRO didn't have everything worked out before they decided to employ a person with disability, but they acknowledge the right support was imperative. It has been extremely successful.

Case study of Customised employment process of Discovery - Cameron

We advise watching [Let's Get to Work – Zellner Services](#) (6.10 minutes) which was launched during [Imagine More's](#) Let's Get To Work virtual conference on June 11, 2020. With the dedicated support of Cameron's family and his Circle of Support they used the Discovery Process to assist in identifying all of Cameron's interests and skills that could be explored for a business idea. The Discovery Process included Cameron himself, his family, friends and circle of support and the goal was to determine which of Cameron's interests would most likely lead to employment options.

1. Discovery Example



To begin, you can see from the slide above that information was reviewed going back to 2016, to determine which work path was going to best suite Cameron. The blue arrows on the left side of the page are Cameron's interests, which included rowing, dogs, chopping & food, cooking and photography. Red arrows indicated work roles explored, yellow are unpaid valued roles explored and green arrows have led to paid employment.

Many of the opportunities they explored came through Cameron's Circle of Support connections.

One of the interests, was computers which followed his Dad's interests in computers. Good example of how you can consider showing the young person different tasks where they shadow and learn from you. From computers, Cameron started to enjoy scanning images and from there, with the support of his family he has created his own micro business called Zellner services, that specialises in Scanning, Shredding and Data entry.

An Australian success story of a DES using Customised Employment

We have a successful example of customised employment in Australia. We strongly urge Treasury to read the transcript from a presentation made by Peter Symonds, General Manager for Operations at 'Possability' in Tasmania called [Customised Employment](#). Instead of competing for advertised jobs in the open labour market, customised employment strategies are used to support people to create opportunities in businesses and organisations that suit their unique skill set and support needs.

Measuring how successful an employer program is relatively easy. It's based on how many people get jobs, how long they keep them, what they are paid and do the hours of work match what the person is seeking."

- Peter Symonds, General manager for Operations at Possability, Tasmania

The statistics presented by Mr Symonds speak for themselves:

What are the outcomes?

Tasmanian Customised Employment experience Jan 2014 – Dec 2015

75% gained employment and of this group 91% of these people remained in employment after 26 weeks

Disability Employment Service (DES) comparison

24.6% gained employment and of this group 29% remained in employment after 26 weeks

Microenterprises

A microenterprise is a very small business, owned and run by an individual. It's simple to start, and needs minimal capital. It can have a vital purpose in improving people's quality of life and sense of contribution to society. It can give a person a valued role in their local community providing a service or goods, and be based

around the person's passions, interests and skills. It is highly individual – able to happen at whatever level best suits a person. Microenterprises create independence and empower people to make a contribution while using skills and talents.¹¹ Some great examples are in the films below, which we recommend Treasury watch:

Case study of Microenterprise in Australia - Josh

[Josh's story](#)¹² (6 minutes) illustrates that employment can be the norm following an inclusive education rather than a Day Service and/or ADE. Josh now runs his own mail delivery business and is a valued and respected member of his community. We know of other examples of micro businesses such as a coffee cart business, a paper shredding business, a greeting card business where the artwork of the person with disability is used to decorate the cards, a biscuit making where the biscuits are sold in the local café's and markets.

Case study of Microenterprise in Australia – Annie

[Let's Get to Work – Pa's Produce](#) (5.53 minutes), was launched during [Imagine More's](#) Let's Get To Work virtual conference on June 11, 2020. In this video, you'll meet Annie and her family. Together they've created a small enterprise called Pa's Produce. A seasonal business, they roast and sell chestnuts from Annie's grandparents' farm. The family demonstrates how important it was to value Annie's strengths and interests. You'll see the power of planning and of taking the first steps, even when it all seems overwhelming. You'll also see the importance of putting the right supports in place. For Annie, this has been a combination of freely-given support from extended family and the paid support of a well-chosen mentor.

Rotary Employment Partnership

Another model we suggest Treasury explore is the [Rotary Employment Partnership](#) (REP) in Alberta, Canada as it has been so successful it has expanded to other Canadian provinces and internationally. The REP collaboration has been recognized internationally as a world-leading innovation at the Zero Conference in Vienna, Austria.

The purpose of the Partnership is to create meaningful employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities in association with business owners, employers and municipalities. It needs to be a win-win, and as such is not a charitable model. To hear some success stories with the voice of employers and employees with a disability, we strongly recommend watching: [Making a Difference by Working Together](#) (6.31 mins).

To date, the REP has created over 630 meaningful jobs for adults with developmental disabilities with an average wage of more than \$17.00 per hour, the average length of employment 4 + years, and the vast majority

¹¹ <http://microboard.org.au/>

¹² Family Advocacy, *Josh's Story*, YouTube, 24 November 2019. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTdRgyh1dV0>>

(90%) are supported naturally. Worksites include a wide array of companies from one-person businesses to large international firms ranging from office jobs to manufacturing and technology. For more details on the partners involved, we share an explanation from their website below:

Inclusion Alberta – provides the coordination. Inclusion Alberta is a family-based non-profit federation that advocates on behalf of children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Together, we share a dream of meaningful family life and community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. As an advocacy organization we support families and individuals in their desire to be fully included in community life.

Inclusion Alberta's focus on enhancing competency through the Development model gives job seekers a significant advantage over those job seekers who have had few expectations and opportunities for competency development. See the differences in the Developmental model v Traditional approach.

Inclusion Alberta's Developmental Model	Traditional Model
Inclusive education – develop academic competencies (e.g. reading, writing, arithmetic) adaptive modelling, social skills	Segregate education – low expectations, life skills, poor modelling
Youth Employment – typical youth employment after school and on weekends (15-17 year old). Develop positive work habits, experience real work expectations, make a real contribution to employer, typical career development pathway.	Work experience – often segregated, not individualised, low expectations, not valued, often viewed through charitable lens
Inclusive Post-secondary education – young adults attend University or College to audit courses and experience typical college life (courses, assignments, clubs, campus volunteer work, activities – sports etc.	Day program – segregated, low expectations, limited adaptive models, exposed to activities but not real work, life wasting
Rotary Employment – career exploration, career development, building community capacity, real work for real pay and natural supports	Supported employment – cold-calling, job carving, job coaching

Rotary – provide job opportunities by using their natural business networks. Rotary is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide, who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. There are approximately 1.2 million Rotarians, members of more than 35,000 Rotary clubs.

Government of Alberta - Provides the funding for the coordination and support to assist adults with developmental disabilities to live, work and participate in their communities as valued citizens.

In addition, there are key concepts underpinning the REP that make it successful such as:

- Having a high consciousness about the nature of social devaluation, the wounding life experiences of people and the pressing needs of people.
- Develop positive mindsets and expectancies for the people they are developing jobs for and employing. It has been generalised that the typical areas of employment for people with disability are in the 4 F's – food, factories, flowers and filth, which are generally not valued industries. One of the most challenging aspects of the Coordinator's role is to assist employers (and Rotarians) to look beyond the traditional stereotypical roles people with intellectual disabilities have filled in the workplace.
- Using normative pathways in all aspects of the employment process – so asking what a person of the same age without disability would be doing.
- Bringing an awareness of the heightened vulnerability that comes with an unlevel playing field for a person with disability. Ensuring the most valued options are explored and chosen rather than the jobs that merely entrench people in negatively valued roles.
- Being very conscious about portraying positive imagery of the person with development disability such as their personal appearance, and the surrounding environment.
- Provide a service model that is relevant and has potency for the person with disability.
- The invaluable use of modelling and imitation to enhance personal competencies.
- The key importance of fostering interpersonal identification (see themselves in each other) between employees with disabilities and their co-workers.

We recommend Treasury adopt these key underpinning concepts in any framework it puts forward in the Employment White Paper regarding people with developmental disability.

Rotary Employment Projects in Australia

There are two projects in Australia based on the Rotary Employment Partnership, with [Inclusion Solutions](#) in Western Australia and a pilot program with [Belonging Matters](#) in Victoria called [Community Employment Partnership](#) and we include excerpts from their website below.

Rotary Employment Project - Inclusion Solutions, WA

This innovative project is the first of its kind in WA. This project focuses on finding opportunities within the community that connect an individual to employment, based on their interests and skill sets. Inclusion Solutions and Rotary Clubs around WA identify local businesses that can offer valued roles to individuals in a mutually beneficial relationship between employee and employer. Through this project, they are employing a genuine strength-based approach to address a long-standing and pivotal issue for people living with a disability – that of meaningful employment.

Traditionally, when a person with a disability seeks for employment, they will need to approach a Disability Employment Service (DES) Provider. The DES Provider will then find employment for the client. The minimum requirement for people with disabilities is that they must be willing and able to work at least 8 hours a week. With the Rotary Employment Project, businesses will be flexible with their hours, accommodating the needs of the person with disability.

This project gives the person with a disability choice and control based on their capacity to engage in meaningful employment. The Rotary Employment Partnership Project also up skills, equips, and builds the capacity of employers to ensure equal, fair, and inclusive treatment of all people with disabilities in their employment.

Community Employment Partnership – Belonging Matters, VIC

The idea of the project is to partner with service clubs and business groups such as Chamber of Commerce, to find meaningful employment for people with intellectual disabilities and Autism. To start with, they are working with a local Rotary Club to develop the project. Rotarians, the members of Rotary, are often business owners or know lots of business people. The project will work with up to 50 people with intellectual disability and Autism, who are between the ages of 18 and 30 years and would like to be part of the pilot project. The project aims to match the person's interests and skills with possible jobs. The jobs will be developed around each person while also meeting the needs of the business, and might include casual, part time, or full-time work.

The project has currently progressed to the stage where a steering committee has been developed with a Rotary district in Melbourne and a collaboration has been formed with Belonging Matters.

2. The family's advocacy is critical for the successful employment of their family member with a disability

All of the positive case studies of employment of people with a developmental disability were driven by family having a clear Vision of their child being included in mainstream society, high expectations for employment in the long term, and good collaboration with the employer. As a general rule, the parent or family member has a natural authority for the person with disability in their life. They tend to care more, have greater responsibility over their family member's wellbeing, they know them the most fully and for the longest period of time, have a stake in outcomes, and are granted a degree of independence being free of the vested interests which call into question the credibility of other parties. Put simply, family are in it for the long haul.

In addition, families are often best positioned to see the big picture, how everything, in its entirety, adds up to a person's life and for this reason, they can often see the incongruences of different interventions. Utilising this relationship and familiarity with the person with disability enables all options to be explored for a good match in employment that is sustainable in the long term. In this regard, we refer to ["The Natural Authority of Families"](#) by Michael Kendrick.

With this in mind, it is vital that the Employment White Paper support the capacity building of the family to have the skills, knowledge and confidence in order that they can support the person with disability in their life. Certainly, our aforementioned School to Work Project does build the capacity of the person with a disability and their family member to inspire, increase the confidence of and motivate to make a start on the road to meaningful, paid employment in the community. Accordingly, we would recommend Treasury expand this project to be funded in the other 5 jurisdictions and for a longer timeframe as the focus of this work needs to change the perceptions, skills and confidence of a whole generation of people with disability and families.

3. Other considerations

Nothing about us, Without us – genuine engagement with the lived experience of disability

In formulating the Employment White Paper, Treasury must proactively engage with people with disability, advocacy and community organisations as well as external experts with evidence-based practices to ensure the lived experience of people with disability is heard, understood and the effective strategies applied. We do not feel our families have been consulted in a meaningful way other than feeding in their input/information/opinions. Having all stakeholders part of the design and of the monitoring process is essential.

We are very concerned, moving forward, that there will not be adequate consultation with deep engagement of people with disabilities, their family members, advocacy organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.

The success or otherwise of this Strategy will depend on how it ends up being implemented 'on the ground'. We

believe it critical that an ongoing steering committee be involved in the implementation and monitoring process to feed in with proper guidance and the lived experience sought from parents of students with disability, and Family Advocacy and other disability advocacy organisations. We are invested in getting this right and must all work together towards realising this.

Abolish Readiness Programs

Too often, mock scenarios are created for people with disability to prepare and get “ready” for the real world. There are many examples such as pretend supermarkets, and pretend cafés and on the surface, seem like a good idea. However, U.S expert Dr. David Mank, whom recently spoke at our Disability Employment Conference referred to them as Never-ready programs as they are an ineffective way to learn the job. The evidence has shown us that people with developmental disabilities learn best on the job in the real workplace environment. Imitation and role modelling provides are more relevant and potent learning opportunity. Therefore, it is so important to set up real work experience opportunities for people and abolish readiness or pretend work programs.

What support do employers need?

Misunderstanding, stigma, prejudice and discrimination impact significantly on people with disabilities gaining employment in a mainstream workplace. First and foremost, **attitudes** need to be addressed within each government department at the national/state/territory/council levels. We would assert that the Australian government (and the States/Territories) needs to “clean up its own backyard” if it is to engage with business on the topic. Government needs to be a role model and lead the way for community. Having said this, some pockets of business and community may already be exercising good practices of inclusion and in this regard, we strongly encourage Treasury to explore exemplars of good practices and be prepared to learn from these rather than reinventing the wheel.

We recommend Treasury make a commitment to fund projects, research and innovative initiatives focused on promoting employment and improved community attitudes towards disability, which also includes an evaluation of good practices. Such an investment must be across the life of the National Disability Employment Strategy and needs to recognise this goal will require an ongoing and sustained effort.

Any attempt to address employer attitudes, the employer would need support to:

- Intentionally address organisational disability awareness including the inherent devaluation of this group and the unconscious bias¹³ that exists and breaking down barriers to create a more welcoming, inclusive

¹³ For an in-depth discussion on how to tackle the unconscious bias within community and improve community attitudes, Family Advocacy's [Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Submission No.3 - Rights and Attitudes Paper](#).

and accessible culture.

- Improve internal policies, practices and service delivery that improve human resources policies including more accessible recruitment policies, giving attention to reasonable adjustments and quotas. Obviously, there will be much variation depending on the size of the organisation.
- Improve an employers confidence to hire people with disability with a long term sustainable match that is mutually beneficial to the employer and the employee. We refer to the customised employment approach discussed in Question 3.
- Be provided an employer toolkit which could include information and resources on a range of areas that would assist in the building of disability confidence.
- Attend workshops to educate on a range of topics such as disability awareness, communication, language, social media, accessibility, and improving workforce practices.
- Any attempt to address both government and community attitudes needs to intentionally address the inherent devaluation of this group and the unconscious bias that exists in both community members and our systems.

Importantly, the investment in the capacity of families is critical in this as they are best positioned to support their family members with high expectations, work with mainstream services and to counteract low expectations of groups such as allied health, disability services etc. Significant change cannot occur without this group invested in.

Quotas for people with disability and specifically complex and significant disability

Another measure of success would be to ensure the public sector has sets quotas to employ people with disability and also specifically, people with complex and significant disability. For example, the Australian government should set a quota that is proportionate to societal statistics, say 15-20% for public service employment of people with disabilities with no less than 5% be available for people with complex and significant disability. Here, it is pertinent to acknowledge the “hierarchy of disability” which is a social construct that makes certain types of disabilities more acceptable than others¹⁴. Intellectual disability is at the bottom of the disability hierarchy.

In NSW, a Premier’s Priority exists to lift the disability employment rate of public service employees to 5.6% but does not include more innovative models of support such as customised employment that cater more towards supporting people with a developmental disability. Many of the structural changes they have made to

¹⁴ Mark Deal, ‘Disabled People’s Attitudes Toward Other Impairment Groups: A Hierarchy of Impairments’ (2003) *Disability & Society*, 18:7, 897-910.

recruitment and modifications at work only accommodate a certain subset of people with disability, usually the “cream of the crop” or those considered “exceptional” or “high functioning”.

If Treasury is serious about “improving labour market outcomes for those who face challenges in employment, including First Nations people, those who live in rural and remote areas, younger and older Australians, people with disability, and those who may experience discrimination.”, then it will need to adopt and support these more contemporary models as discussed in detail above, in the Employment White Paper. Again, our governments need to lead by example for the business community in the employment of people with a disability, particularly people with a significant disability.

Conclusion

We look forward to the development of a robust Employment White Paper which reflects a commitment to empowering and including people with disability in the entirety of the process, alongside their family member. We encourage the adoption of our recommendations and are happy to provide further information or clarification on any matters we have raised. We look forward to participating in the process and to facilitate the involvement of people with developmental disability and their family advocates as the Employment White Paper is developed.