



BREAK THRU PEOPLE SOLUTIONS

**RESPONSE TO THE
NATIONAL DISABILITY
EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK
– ISSUES PAPER**

A response contribution which incorporates jobseeker and employer feedback, identification of improvement, and offers innovative solutions for consideration by the Disability Employment Taskforce Group.

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Breaking thru barriers, creating futures.

A LETTER FROM BREAK THRU MANAGING DIRECTOR, ROSS LEWIS

Break Thru People Solutions (Break Thru) welcomes the opportunity provided by the federal Department of Social Services to comment on the development of the National Disability Employment Framework – Issues Paper. As an experienced disability and mental health services provider since 1985 and significant stakeholder within the Australian disability sector, we are pleased to contribute to the discussion on how to develop a system which aims to improve employment outcomes for people with a disability.

Break Thru is an Australian not-for-profit organisation whose core vision is to “Break Thru barriers and create futures” by being the leading diversity champion, courageously promoting the value, potential and inclusion of all people in the life of the Australian community. We place social inclusion at the core of our mission and therefore support the objectives of the Australian Government’s commitment to encouraging and supporting the equal and active participation by people with a disability in economic and social life.

In preparing our response Break Thru sought the views of a number of stakeholders including:

- Break Thru’s Client Reference Group which represents our clients, especially in the area of mental health.
- Job Seekers registered with Break Thru’s Disability Employment Service in Parramatta, NSW.
- Break Thru employers who have employed people with disabilities (Job seekers registered with Break Thru).
- Break Thru’s staff expertise – Senior Executive Management Group: Managing Director, General Managers of Employment Services, Mental Health and Community Services, National Manager (Disability Employment Services) and other senior Managers with NDIS and business development expertise.

The following feedback is based on questions outlined in the Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper documentation.

Authorising Signature:



Ross Lewis

Managing Director

8th July 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report is split into three response categories, which answers various questions from the Disability Employment Framework issues report.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

In this section, those job seekers with disability share their perspective, listing considerations for the proposed framework. Among the group, there was general consensus that the development of a framework must be flexible enough to take into consideration the whole circumstance of the person's life in order to provide the best overall service. They also conclude that discrimination and stereotypes must be tackled by the government replacing these with positive examples of including people with disability into the workforce.

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

In this section, the perspective of employers is discussed. Diversity, loyalty, mutual benefit and promoting inclusive employment practices were the main themes of the benefits of working with those with disability. Employers suggest further promotion and engagement with companies is needed by the government in order to best align government programs with employer needs. Training is also seen as essential in order to give those with disabilities the best chance at a sustainable career.

BREAK THRU'S STAFF PERSPECTIVE

In this section, the Break Thru staff perspective is detailed which supports the redesign of a National Disability Employment Service to operate in an NDIS-style environment that facilitates greater user choice and control. The section also looks at international examples and best practice initiatives that encourage open employment of those with disabilities.

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THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY – BREAK THRU’S JOB SEEKERS

In this section, the job seekers with disability give their perspective, listing considerations for the proposed framework. Among the group, there was general consensus that the development of an improved Disability Employment Framework is necessary to ensure that people with disabilities have better access to meaningful and sustainable careers.

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities registered with Break Thru (referred to as Job Seekers throughout this document) acknowledge the contribution that people with a disability can make:

“We contribute to the economy because we then become taxpayers”.

“Less people on welfare”.

“Loyal employees”.

“Diversity in the workplace reflects the diversity in the community. Then you get an employee who offers empathy to the customer base”.

**ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:
How can the Government help people with disability to find and keep jobs?**

Some jobseekers highlight that they are presented with challenges in accessing employment prior to their entry into the Employment system. It would therefore be helpful if providers of employment related supports (Centrelink, Disability Employment Service Provider, Personal Helpers and Mentors, Australian Disability Enterprises etc) be aware of their needs.

Jobseekers recommend that employment support providers acknowledge that people with disabilities, particularly those with mental illness, face many challenges when confronted with the prospects of finding a job including:

“Those who have had careers and not just jobs (prior to the onset of their disability) are fearful of and concerned about non-performing in the job because that’s your reputation. I would not be able to function at times”.

“It is hard to face each day...to get to out of bed, get out the door and go to work...like climbing Mount Everest for an ordinary person”.

“My journey is 24 hours a week 365 days a year with no weekends”.

FINDING A JOB

Other jobseekers commented that obstacles get in the way of entry into the employment market. One jobseeker suggested that the rising number of labour hire agencies are gate-keepers, giving them limited access to employers directly.

“Labour hire agencies discriminate based on selection criteria even though it is not an inherent requirement of the job (e.g. driving licences). Labour hire firms don’t care about wage subsidies”.

KEEPING A JOB

Whilst many of the jobseekers saw the value of a wage subsidy as an attractive incentive for employers, some advised that this did not help in keeping a job long term.

“As the wage subsidy dries up so do the hours”.

Some jobseekers recommended that a wage subsidy given over a longer term would provide greater opportunity for enduring job tenure.

“Provide ongoing/continuity of wage subsidies – perhaps a sliding scale to keep the person with disability in the job longer”.

Other jobseekers suggest that Disability Employment Service (DES) providers could have a role in ensuring better communication between employer and employee regarding their progress and performance:

“They (DES provider) could act as mediator between employer and employee for feedback”.

Additionally, the DES provider could encourage the person with a disability to capitalise on:

“Professional development opportunities offered by employers”.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: How can the Government encourage employers to hire people with disability?

In answering the question about encouraging employers to hire people with a disability, one jobseeker puts it succinctly:

“Encourage employers to give people with a disability – a go!”

Employer education is a key recommendation raised by jobseekers because:

“People with mental health issues are not understood”.

Jobseekers also recommend that the Government could have a role in de-bunking discriminatory myths and provide information about mitigating any workplace health and safety issues.

“Discrimination is an issue. I have epilepsy and employers argue that there are problems with insurance.”

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: What can the Government do to promote the benefits of hiring people with disability?

Whilst jobseekers highlight the value of traditional advertising in promoting benefits of people with disability, they also suggest other methods to promote the value of people with disabilities including:

APPEAL TO THE BOTTOM LINE

"Showcase that Company A who hires people with a disability is making money, so you can make money too".

SHARE SUCCESS STORIES AMONGST INDUSTRY/BUSINESS NETWORKS INCLUDING:

"Business councils".

"Go to unions to promote people with a disability to their membership".

"Attend Leader summits, annual meetings, G20 summit".

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: How can the Government support people at different stages of life?

MATURE WORKFORCE

Jobseekers recommend supports provided to older people with disabilities are done so with respect and understanding. That it should be acknowledged that they may experience a loss of confidence associated with changing job markets in the mid life. They also want support in preparing for technological developments in a labour market that does not stand still, put concisely by one jobseeker:

"Jobs change. Careers change."

YOUNG PEOPLE

Jobseekers recommend that work experience, training and volunteering activities would be useful for young people to prepare them for the workforce but counsel that young people with disabilities should not be exploited:

"Have volunteering aimed at young people and approach businesses to get them on side but give young people an incentive to do it such as money".

"Give skills training but it needs to be vocationally relevant".

One jobseeker suggested that national service may be an option for training and work experience development.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:
What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?

Jobseekers were presented with the following hypothetical scenario:

If you were allocated an individualised funding package and the opportunity to exercise choice and control over the employment support you received, what would you choose to spend it on to help you achieve your employment goals?

Their considerations included:

- Training and courses
- Courses attached to work based work experience
- Provide money directly to the employer to supplement my wage and give me a real job opportunity
- Driver's licence/Truck license/Car
- Collaborate with other people with disabilities to pool the funds, start a business and as the business grew, hire more people with disabilities to build the business
- "I would do an instructors course in Mental Health first aid to enter the peer workforce".

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Break Thru employers were unanimous in their advocacy for employing people with disabilities. They also recognise the value of inclusion. Benefits identified by employers include:

DIVERSITY

"We acknowledge that diversity in the workforce is beneficial as it reflects the diversity of our customer base".

LOYALTY

"[People with disabilities] give 100%".

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE –CO-WORKERS PROUD TO WORK AT A PLACE WITH INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

One employer indicated that company employees responded positively to having a person with a disability in the workplace: When Ben (not his real name) left the company after 3 years his co-workers missed him and asked when he would be replaced by another person with a disability. Ben infused a sense of positivity within the workplace and taught his co-workers not to take life too seriously:

"It has turned a lot of frowns upside down here"

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

"The person with a disability gets a chance. We feel good. Everybody wins".

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: Are employers aware of government supports?

Employer awareness of Government funded supports varied. Some were aware of the majority range of supports including the National Disability Recruitment Co-ordinator and the Job Access website whilst others were only aware of a relative few. As no employers were aware of the Jobs in Jeopardy program, providers should be encouraged to promote this program to employers.

All had knowledge of wage subsidies and all had taken up on this offer. Wage subsidies are considered as an important ingredient to the success of hiring people with disability. However, some employers suggest that it is not enough.

"After 6 months (at which point the wage subsidy runs out) we only keep them on if there is a meaningful job for them to do beyond 6 months or if...we don't have the heart to let them go".

For those employers aware of the full suite of support products they commented that the bureaucracy made accessing these supports unwieldy for employers.

"The biggest barrier to employment (of people with disabilities) is the bureaucracy itself."

"It is great to know that the Government is there to provide those things (supports), but it was a long and lengthy exercise ..(to access the Employee Assistance Fund to secure an adaptable keyboard)".

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

Are the support needs of large employers different to the support needs of small employers?

Most employers did not think that there was much difference between the needs of small and large employers. In fact, large and small employers alike commented that wage subsidies were necessary to ensuring success in hiring people with disabilities.

However, one small business owner highlighted that each employee in a small business needs to be multi-skilled:

"A wider range of skills is required so they can step in and do many things in a small business. The larger the company the narrower range of skills (per employee) required".

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

How can we encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability?

PROMOTION

Advertising (both above and below the line) were seen as key methods of promoting inclusive employment practices. One employer suggested that:

"follow the IKEA model of placing brochures at point of sale promoting their inclusive practices".

Another employer was persuaded by a video created by marketing agency, Droga5, in partnership with Break Thru People Solutions that showcased their success with hiring a person with a disability:

"That video really affected me That really got me going to say...let's try this".

Other employers recommend the direct approach:

"Be on the ground and meet with employers face to face at their workplace".

"Invite employers to social events outside working hours at local community venues, e.g. Parramatta Leagues Club, as this gives opportunity for people to relax away from the busy work environment".

Some employers were in support of the concept of engaging a Corporate Champion to promote employer engagement but caution:

"Each industry would have to choose the right corporate champion as not just one would be sufficient to reflect cross-sectoral needs. A corporate champion chosen to showcase hiring people

with disabilities would need to speak the industry's language. Additionally, the impact of the corporate champion approach would need to be measured to determine the value".

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: What other supports or approaches could increase employment participation of people with disability?

One employer suggested that the establishment of a short term contract/temp agency and supplier of workers with a disability could provide direct access to people with disability for employers. The companies could engage temporary staff at low cost subsidised by Government. (Contractors would be paid award wages). This gateway to people with a disability would increase employer engagement and acceptance:

"Once you break that first barrier and get someone in the door and staff see how it affects both them and the person with a disability, then the staff tell people and they say we have a person with a disability working for us and he's great".

Employers recommended removing the obstacles to employing people with a disability:

"Make access for people with disability to jobs easier – e.g. some companies have online application processes which could be daunting for people with disabilities– provide alternatives".

TRAINING NEEDS

Other employers want appropriately skilled staff:

"Conduct more investigation and thorough screening– On the Job training and pre-skills training would be good. Work trials are also very good. Anyone can write a resumé but come and work for 4 hours and show me what can be done. Discuss their skills and disability (prior to commencement) to determine if they need any special assistance"

Employers recognise the value of vocational skills:

"Vocational skills training is an advantage".

And they also highlight the benefit of complementary non-vocational training and support to minimise the impact personal issues have at the workplace:

"Provide basic training in workplace professionalism, business and customer service"

"Social skills training, hygiene and financial literacy e.g. managing personal budget".

BREAK THRU STAFF PERSPECTIVE

In this section, the staff perspective (Senior Executive Management group) is discussed and outlines considerations for the proposed framework. Among the group, there was general consensus that the development of an improved Disability Employment Framework is necessary to ensure that people with disabilities have better access to meaningful and sustainable careers. We welcome the opportunity to consider a licensed based model where employment services could operate in a competitive market place and individualised funding applied, to facilitate greater user choice and control.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

What can improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

Minimisation of administrative burden will allow disability employment services to do what is important to successfully support: direct engagement of employers in real work situations (on the job) and enable opportunity to build the capacity of both the person with disability and employer at the workplace.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people with disability?

"The significant player is the employer".

We acknowledge the critical role of the employer:

- Fundamentally the employers are doing the most of the work in engaging people with disabilities. Under current arrangements, the employer supervises the person with a disability five days a week (or fewer days if part-time) and the employment agency provides nominal support for a few hours per week. Increased resourcing for post placement support would reduce the burden on employers, facilitating shared responsibility between the employer, person with a disability and the employment agency.
- A greater focus on post placement support would be possible if: (a) continuity of support is provided i.e. consistency of servicing from the same employment consultant and agency and (b) the cycle of procurement is abolished as it brings uncertainty and high turn-over to the sector.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

What can help reduce barriers for people with disability seeking employment?

- Focus on engagement rather than filling in forms or focussing on process.
- Eliminate disincentives to work. For e.g. loss of Disability Support Pension may mean a loss of eligibility for personal care support in the home. Refer to John's shared story as an illustration of this.

A SHARED STORY: JOHN

John is degree qualified, presents well, is capable of securing a job independently and does not require pre-vocational assistance. John has incomplete quadriplegia, and as a Disability Support Pension recipient, he qualified for in home personal care. Prior to the introduction of the NDIS trial, he discussed his desire to move into full time employment (which was his goal). However, he was not entitled to receive this personal care support in the workplace. As a result, he left work for this reason. He discussed that he felt there were more incentives to stay at home than there were to look for employment and lack of supports existed to assist in remaining in employment, in his case personal care and assistance. He felt that the "system" was being reactive, rather than pro-active.

He has since moved into employment again, this time with individual supports under NDIS, as he was able to purchase the critical personal care supports in the workplace which has enabled him to remain in full time employment. These supports are provided post placement and on-going.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: How can we promote the benefits of employing people with disability?

There is opportunity for Government to play a role in promoting people with disabilities by partnering with the business community to showcase positive examples and success stories. The provision of better education and support in understanding disability coupled with a strong economic argument will assist employers to see the value in hiring people with significant disabilities and effectively manage perceived workplace health and safety risks.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?

BreakThru staff are in agreement that a licensed model based on market forces will provide individuals with real choice and control when determining their employment support needs. Such a market based approach has distinct advantages as outlined below:

- Offers individuals control and choice.
- The market would determine service quality eliminating the need for a *relative* star ratings system and enable community collaboration between service providers.
- Easier to integrate services.
- Offers national consistency.

Although we are in favour of the exploration of an individualised funding model, there are associated challenges which need to be considered:

- As we work with vulnerable groups, safeguards need to be put in place to ensure quality of support. Key to this is education and information availability so that people with disability are able to make an informed choice.
- Working hours/benchmarks are not suitable for people who may not be able to work 8 hours.

Potential solution: Removal of benchmarks or flexibility will open up employment possibilities for people who would otherwise not have considered work as a viable endeavour for e.g. those on Disability Support Pension.

- User choice and control is not consistent with mutual obligation requirements.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

How can elements of the disability support system better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

Break Thru staff recommend the following:

- Examine the experiences of the Partner in Recovery (PIR)¹ approach to determine the applicability of this model to the employment services sector. A central coordination role such as PIR that ensures supports address all domains in a person's life, rather than just employment may be beneficial to person with a disability. However, if such a model is considered Break Thru staff caution:

"We should not 'medicalise' wrap-around support. Also this won't be needed for all people - it is important to provide 'just enough support' and not over service a person"

- Monitor the progress of individualised funding models in the aged care sector to determine best practice and lessons learnt.
- Consider wrap around servicing of supports that will continue to exist outside the NDIS environment such as: accommodation services, services for ex-offenders, drug and alcohol, etc.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

Are there other contextual factors of the jobseeker that should be considered?

Align employment support with complementary social support to provide a whole of life approach. Look at the other domains of a person's life and how that might affect their capacity to get a job and keep a job (e.g. having a job, but not being supported at home or having concurrent disadvantage). Please refer to John's shared story above as an example of this.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

How can the employment service model be improved to help providers deliver better support?

We have identified a number of measures to improve the existing Disability Employment Service model as outlined below:

- Retain service provider specialisation (e.g. psychiatric specialist) but ensure that there is *"no funding differential"* for disability types so providers can operate within a *"level playing field"*.

¹ <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pir-about>

- The current system rewards short term job outcomes and is a disincentive for providers to deliver ongoing support. Therefore it is recommended that the 13-26 week outcomes measures be adjusted to ensure long term and sustainable employment outcomes.
- The abolition of a *relative* performance based performance management system such as the existing star ratings measure would generate an environment which inspires service provider collaboration and sharing of best practice.
- If a licensed based model (e.g. NDIS approach) were to be introduced then organisations operating in a competitive market (as opposed to a capped market-share approach) could deliver services directly within the community/workplace at low cost and be less reliant on a fixed address: *“Providers could operate a **lean hub** model which would be less expensive”*

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: Does DES need to be redesigned to operate in an NDIS environment?

As previously discussed, Break Thru is in support of an NDIS style market-based approach and a redesign of the existing employment service model. Although it would be important for employment services to be aligned with the existing NDIS model we emphasise that employment services should operate separately from the NDIS as a distinct service. We outline below some considerations under such a model:

- Providers could register for an Employment Cluster of support and individuals could choose where they source pre-employment, recruitment, workplace aids and materials and post placement support. In an environment offering freedom of choice people with disabilities could also purchase recruitment assistance through mainstream providers and purchase specialist post placement support from registered providers.
- The market could determine the success or otherwise of service providers. Therefore, this would allow for (a) the elimination of the cycle of procurement which has brought uncertainty and high turn-over to the sector and (b) the removal of a performance ratings system which emphasises compliance and stifles collaboration.
- In a user choice environment, there should be provision to build the capacity of people with disabilities to ensure they make informed choices.
- There would need to be consideration about how mutual obligation requirements would operate in an open market.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION: Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)/Social Enterprises

Although Break Thru is not an ADE provider as such, senior Break Thru staff members have had extensive experience in operating ADEs and Social Enterprises therefore bringing expertise to the discussion in this section.

Currently, some ADE's are “treated as places of last resort” for people with disabilities as they do not encourage them to join the open employment market. However, we believe there is a role for ADEs in the employment market providing they;

- Apply business principles and operate for profit.
- Pay award wages to employees.

- Offer an environment which employs both people with disabilities and those without disability.

There is also scope for ADEs to work within a licensed service model, if a market based approach was introduced.

A recent industry visit by Break Thru to Spinal Cords Industry Australia is an ADE exemplar as outlined in the shared ADE story below:

A SHARED STORY: AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY ENTERPRISE

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia² (SPIA) is a provider of ADE which operates as a commercial business providing real work opportunities for people with disability where they work alongside people without a disability and earn equivalent wages. SPIA is currently contracted to the NSW Government to deliver projects in the areas of road safety, vehicle fleet administration and fire history mapping verification and one project for a private company, capturing training course evaluation data. The staff (those with disabilities and those without) conduct data entry, data analysis, report writing, report analysis, telephone enquiries etc and provide specialist experience in geographic coding and mapping to fulfil the contract needs.

The volume of people with disabilities, who work at the ADE, enables economies of scale in the provision of disability employment support which is available on site.

The *social enterprise model* was also discussed and we suggest that international models such as the German experience be explored. (Refer Social Enterprises' shared story' below):

A SHARED STORY: SOCIAL ENTERPRISES (GERMAN INTEGRATION COMPANIES)

The workforce of private sector "integration-companies" in Germany is to a large degree (25% to +50%) made up of people with disabilities. Currently over 600 "integration-companies" are operating in Germany³. These companies include department stores, hotels, trade and repair services, auto shops, bakeries, farms, IT services, marketing agencies, travel agencies, supermarkets, museums and high-tech factories⁴. These companies differ from the sheltered workshop model as they operate across a wide variety of industries, jobs go beyond tasks of basic manual labour, staff are paid market rates, companies are for profit businesses, and companies do not present themselves as "disability organisations" in order to "normalise" the idea of people with disability in the workforce.

ISSUES PAPER QUESTION:

How can we encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability?

² <https://scia.org.au/australian-disability-enterprise-ade>

³ Translated from <http://www.bag-if.de/das-netzwerk-sozialer-unternehmen>

⁴ <http://www.rehadat.info/export/sites/einstieg/downloads/VerzIntFirmen.pdf>

QUOTAS/TARGETS

Although Break Thru staff agree with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's report (2013)⁵ that the introduction of disability quotas and targets may impose additional regulatory burden on companies, we suggest that it may be worth examining the German model where there has been relative success. After introducing a 5% employment quota for medium to large organisations in Germany nearly 4% of the labour market is occupied by people with disabilities⁶. The Bosch shared story below highlights how one Germany company has increased the engagement of people with disabilities.

A SHARED STORY: BOSCH' EXPERIENCE

Embracing employment quotas of the German model can encourage companies to actively establish effective disability action plans. For example, Bosch, an engineering and electronics company with annual revenues of around \$66 billion, increased participation rate of people with disabilities to 5.5%⁷. Interestingly, this success is not limited to the company's German branches that are legally bound to the quotas. The organisation's branches in countries that have no employment quotas regarding people with disabilities aspire to fulfill these quotas as well. Bosch received help and training in developing their disability action plan by local "integration bureaus" in Germany. These offices manage and coordinate financial assistance for employers (workplace modification, training of HR and other staff) and employees with disabilities (work assistance, interpreters, OT assessments).

ISSUES PAPER QUESTIONS:

What more can be done to assist people with mental illness to find a job?

What more can be done to support people with mental illness in the workplace?

How well do these programmes work together to support people with disability throughout their life-course, including for conditions episodic in nature?

- Provide continuity of support and capacity to scale support quickly to prevent job seekers and employers having to re-engage with a support system.
- Promote a model of strengths based disclosure support to facilitate disclosure to employers and access to workplace modifications for people with mental illness.
- Capacity to keep engaged with clients on an ongoing basis with both job seeker and employer.
- Permission for employer to allow adjustments for people with mental illness. The existing contract doesn't allow for cyclical support for people with episodic conditions.

⁵<http://www.acci.asn.au/getattachment/80bf883e-e8d5-4cdb-8200-ef674f9018da/ACCI-Response-to-Improving-the-Employment-Particip.aspx>

⁶ http://www.iaw.uni-bremen.de/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=995009

⁷ For more information on this story: http://www.bosch.com/en/com/boschglobal/responsibility_in_india/dates_facts_and_figures/dates_facts_and_figures.html

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously outlined in the introductory letter to this report, our response to the Government's issues paper on the National DES framework, considers a variety of perspectives including those from employers, job seekers and Break Thru staff.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MODEL – STAFF CONCLUSIONS

The senior management team, whose collective knowledge brings significant expertise to this discussion, agree in making the following recommendations in relation to a revised model:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

A licensed- based model (in contrast to the tender-based archetype) where individualised funding will facilitate a market-based approach to service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The elimination of a *relative* performance based system (star ratings) will promote collaboration and the sharing of best practice amongst employment service providers for the benefit of people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

If a tender-based procurement archetype is to continue (as opposed to market-based approach), then specialisation services (based on disability type) should continue but without a funding differential, to enable a level playing field.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Draw from international⁸ and domestic⁹ experiences to re-model ADEs into viable businesses which encourage people with disabilities to work in 'real' work environments alongside those without disabilities.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT – STAFF CONCLUSIONS

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Although we acknowledge the risks associated with the introduction of quotas and targets including; disclosure (privacy) issues and regulatory burden (red-tape), it may be worthwhile examining the international experience to determine the applicability of such a strategy in Australia. (Refer Bosch' shared story example in the staff perspective section of this report).

COLLECTIVE VIEW OF BREAK THRU'S EMPLOYERS, JOB SEEKERS AND STAFF

Although the views from each group are unique, there are common themes which are summarised in the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATION 6: LONG TERM, ENDURING AND HOLISTIC SUPPORT

Jobseekers and Employers recommend that (a) wage subsidies provided over a longer term and (b) continuity of post-placement support, will provide greater opportunity for enduring job tenure.

⁸ Please refer to the shared German story, in staff perspective section of report.

⁹ <https://scia.org.au/australian-disability-enterprise-ade>

The Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED) in their report of the labour market situation of people with disabilities in European countries¹⁰ reinforces the view of Break Thru employers that additional non-vocational support or guidance is an important adjunct to post placement support: *“Guidance must be wider than employment, e.g. include social context and personal characteristics of the beneficiary”* (2009, p.29).

Furthermore and consistent with the view of job seekers and employers, ANED recommend the value in *peer worker* guidance as a component of support provision.

RECOMMENDATION 7: FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS AND BENCHMARKS

Prescriptive benchmarks (working hours) for people with disability stifle flexibility for those with changing circumstances and limits options for meeting employer demand.

RECOMMENDATION 8: PROMOTION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Increase awareness amongst employers by delivering effective campaigns. One employer suggests that Australia should look to the European example for better ways to engage people with disabilities. Case studies offered in the ANED report would be worthwhile exploring (2009, p.34).

RECOMMENDATION 9: EDUCATION

Job seekers and staff agree with the ANED report (p.32) that *“Education and life-long learning must in general be seen as a key aspect of social integration.”*

They also agree that employer education is critical to reduce concerns about the association between safety hazards and the employment of people with a disability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Break Thru wishes to acknowledge contributors to this report.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Members of Break Thru’s Client Reference Group
Break Thru Job Seekers Parramatta Office, NSW

EMPLOYERS:

Australian Retailers Association, Retail Institute
Clemengers BBDO, Melbourne
Grafil Pty Ltd, (trading as Mackas Sand and Soil), Port Stephens NSW
LJ Hooker, Merrylands, NSW
Sweethings, Heatherbrae, NSW

Break Thru’s Executive Management Team
Break Thru’s Research Manager and Marketing teams

¹⁰ Greve, B. (2009). The labour market situation of disabled people in European countries and implementation of employment policies: a summary of evidence from country reports and research studies. Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED).



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Breaking thru barriers, creating futures.