**Vision Australia Submission to the National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper**

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# Introduction:

Vision Australia is the leading national provider of services to people who are blind or have low vision. We provide services to approximately 30,000 Australians each year across 28 offices and outreach locations through a mix of charitable donations and Government funding.

Vision Australia’s mission is that people who are blind or have low vision will increasingly be able to live the life they choose by participating fully in every facet of community life. To help realise this goal, we provide high-quality services to the blindness and low vision community in areas such as:

* early childhood
* orientation and mobility
* accessible information (including library services)
* recreation
* independent living
* Seeing Eye Dogs
* advocacy

Vision Australia is also a registered Disability Employment Services (DES) provider, under the name Vision Australia Employment Services. We operate employment programs in 7 locations: Melbourne, Sydney (Caringbah and Enfield), Brisbane, Gosford, Newcastle and Canberra.

We support people who are blind or have low vision to find open employment that matches their interests, skills and needs. Employment is an area of particular importance for Vision Australia, as it enables our clients to participate as valued members of society and maintain their independence in the community. In 2012, Vision Australia conducted major research into the employment of people who are blind or have low vision in Australia. The study found:

* 58% of people who are blind or have low vision and want to work are unemployed, which is higher then the rate of unemployment amongst the broader group of people with disabilities (47%)
* Of the respondents who are employed, 49% are in fulltime employment
* Part time work accounted for 32% of respondents
* One third of those who are employed would like to work more hours, highlighting an issue of under employment for people who are blind or have low vision
* Level of education had a direct influence on likelihood of being employed, with 78% of people who are blind or have low vision with tertiary qualifications being in employment

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this consultation on the National Disability Employment Framework and look forward to assisting in the development of a better approach to providing DES and better outcomes for people with disability.

## The benefits of employing people with disabilities

* **What can improve employment outcomes for people with disability?**
* **What can help reduce barriers for people with disability seeking employment?**
* **What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people with disability?**
* **How can we promote the benefits of employing people with disability?**

In its 2012 survey, Vision Australia found that the main difficulty people who are blind or have low vision face when looking for employment was ‘employer attitude’ (44% of respondents). The respondents felt that employers had a pre conceived idea of the abilities (or lack thereof) of people who are blind or have low vision. In Vision Australia’s experience of working with Employers, Employers often feel intimidated and fearful about supervising people who are blind or have low vision. Furthermore, employers often do not feel they have the requisite knowledge about reasonable accommodations, and have a lack of confidence when it comes to performance management of people who are blind or have low vision.

This highlights the need for greater resources to be put into increasing employers awareness of the benefits of employing people with disability, including those who are blind or have low vision. An education and awareness raising strategy to improve employers’ attitudes towards people with disabilities could be created through engagement with peak industry bodies, disability organisations and mainstream employment services

Awareness raising resources, such as tool kits for employers, unions and the wider community, should highlight evidence-based research. Graham et al (2002) found a number of benefits to employing workers with a disability, including:

* Fewer accidents at work and workers compensation costs, which can be as low as four per cent of the workers compensation costs of other employees
* Lower absenteeism rates, as people with disability often take less sick leave than other employees
* Lower hiring costs for people with disability, which can be as low as 13 per cent of the cost of other employees
* Employing people with disability can build staff morale, raise management awareness of workplace practices and conditions, and increase customer and staff loyalty[[1]](#footnote-1)

Another barrier to employment reported by respondents to Vision Australia’s 2012 Employment Survey is a lack of driver’s license or access to transportation. People who are blind or have low vision are often limited to getting around using public transport, which can be especially difficult for people living in regional and remote areas to access. This disadvantages people who are blind or have low vision when compared to other candidates. However, where reasonable public transport options are available, employers must be open to employing people who are blind or have low vision, which can be fostered through employer awareness campaigns. This will give jobseekers a greater chance of obtaining employment and attending work activities

Matching skillsets to appropriate job placements was also identified as a significant barrier to gaining employment by respondents to the survey. Some DES providers match people who are blind or have low vision with whatever placement they can, rather than matching them to jobs that take their individual interests, strengths and weaknesses into account. This often acts as a disincentive for both employers and people who are blind or have low vision to continue exploring disability employment options. Poor placements could be reduced by ensuring that DES staff are trained on the needs of people with different disabilities in matching their individual strengths and weaknesses to a particular job placement. Currently there is no specific training for DES assessors in the needs of people who are blind or have low vision or funding for professional development opportunities. Vision Australia could be engaged as a trainer or to assist with developing a training package to increase the knowledge of DES providers on the needs of people who are blind or have low vision.

Poor job placements resulting in unsuccessful or short term placements are also due, in part, to the job placement and outcome fees that can be claimed by DES Providers. It is common for people who are blind or have low vision to be supported to stay in a job that does not meet their needs through the DES Employment Support Service (DES-ESS). Under an individualised funding model, the incidence of poor job placements could be reduced by making placement fees subject to an evaluation of how much a job placement matches the person with disability’s needs, interests and skills.

Lack of access to technology continues to be a substantive barrier to employment for people who are blind or have low vision. Employers often lack knowledge on the technology needs of people who are blind or have low vision. Furthermore, they are unaware of the workplace assessments available through Vision Australia and technology procurement processes through Job Access. Little will change unless Government sets an example by introducing accessible public procurement policies. Failure by the Government in following best practices will significantly limit the effectiveness of other initiatives both by Government and the private sector.

## Principles for changes to Disability Employment Services

* **Do you agree with these as the underlying set of principles for change?**
* **Are there other principles you would include?**

The underlying principles for changes to DES will help to drive innovation and provide people with disability greater opportunities to exercise their choice and control. However, it is important that these principles are linked with tangible activities and outcomes in order to generate meaningful change in the DES sector.

For example, long-term career planning and capacity building is a sound principle for change in the DES system and is intrinsically linked to the principle that the person is supported through the life course. However, it is important that long-term career planning start in secondary education for students who are blind or have low vision and for those whose vision is likely to deteriorate over time. Career guidance should also be provided to people who are blind or have low vision who are looking to change to careers or seek a promotion. The benefits of such career guidance could extend through to retirement and beyond.

In regards to the principle on whole-of-government coordination and use of technology, the implication is that that DES will be delivered through a virtual marketplace. Therefore, it is important to mention that online pathways into DES must be accessible according to WCAG 2.0 standards and available to all people with disability in their preferred format.

An additional principle could consider aspects of universal design, which is defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as: “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”. Adopting universal design as an underlying principle for changes to DES would ensure that DES’s are usable to the greatest possible extent by a broad spectrum of people with disability.

If DES is to transition to a individualised funding model, akin to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), it is important that these principles align with the general principles under Section 4 of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme ACT 2013* (Cth).[[2]](#footnote-2)

## Current services overview

* **How effective are the pathways into these services?**
* **How well do these programmes work together to support people with disability throughout their life-course, including for conditions episodic in nature?**
* **Are there other services which could assist people with disability to find a job?**
* **What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?**

The pathway into Employment Services for people with a disability is through a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) or Employment Services Assessment (ESAT). These are complex assessments that often involve a lengthy waiting period, with some Vision Australia clients waiting up to two months. The assessment burden could be reduced by classifying anybody in receipt of or eligible for a Disability Support Pension or NDIS support package as being immediately eligible for DES assistance and able to register directly with the provider.

Following a JCA or ESAT, people who are blind or have low vision may not be directly referred to a specialist provider like Vision Australia Employment Services, as the provider may not be in the job seekers Employment Service Area. Currently, the majority of VAES referrals are through direct registration, with few coming directly from JCAs, suggesting that the current process may be limiting the opportunity for people who are blind or have low vision to access specialist services.

The current Government DES programmes, into which people with disability are placed dependent on the outcome of their JCA, are siloed and assume that the needs of people with disability can be mapped on a continuum. Vision Australia’s experience in operating a DES is that the employment needs of people who are blind or have low vision are diverse and are dependent on an individual’s goals, strengths and weaknesses. Approximately 70% of clients who access Vision Australia Employment Services have multiple disabilities, which present multiple barriers to employment.

There are a number of ways in which the current DES system fails to support the needs of people who are blind or have low vision across the life course. For example, full time students who are blind or have low vision cannot access DES in order to find part-time employment. This results in students who are blind or have low vision having greater difficulty finding work to support themselves while they study and experiencing economic disadvantage when compared to their able bodied peers, for whom studying and working part-time is a regular occurrence. It is critical that both younger people with disability have easier access to part time and casual work through DES so that they can demonstrate their ‘experience’ in a competitive market when pitted against other candidates.

Many working people who are blind or have low vision are under-employed, both in terms of time and skill. However, many are unable to access DES services to support them to transition into full-time employment or are being supported to stay in employment that does not meet their needs. Similarly, people who are blind or have low vision and are employed at an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) and are seeking to transition to open employment are unable to access DES to explore possible employment opportunities. This makes it almost impossible for people with disability to move into open employment until they have lost or are at risk of losing their ADE position.

In order to support people who are blind or have low vision across the entire life course, DES providers must also open their services up to people aged 65 years and older. Given that people are living longer, many individuals, both disabled and able-bodied, are now either choosing or needing to work beyond the age of 65 years to support themselves in old age. Ensuring that casual and part-time opportunities are made available to older people who are blind or have low vision and want to work will increase their economic participation and reduce the burden on social welfare.

Transitioning DES to an individualised funding model will provide more flexible solutions that are tailored to the individual needs of people who are blind or have low vision, who will have greater choice and control over how they make use of DES. One caveat with this approach is that it may fail to capture people with a capacity to work who choose not to seek employment. It is important that any individualised funding program be supported by compliance mechanisms to ensure that people with disability who are assessed as being capable to work are actively seeking employment and, thus, utilising DES.

## Employment services in context

* **How can elements of the disability support system better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people with disability?**
* **Are there other contextual factors of the jobseeker that should be considered?**

Vision Australia’s experience as a specialist DES provider tells us that the needs of jobseekers who are blind or have low vision are best met by specialist providers who offer a transdisciplinary approach to getting people job fit and adjusted to their work environment. As a specialist DES provider, we offer many services that a generalist DES providers cannot, such as orientation and mobility training, occupational therapy and assistive technology training to maximise functional vision. This approach allows for a holistic evaluation of how a person who is blind or has low vision can be supported to find employment and increase their economic participation, while also taking into account their personal and social needs.

By incorporating DES into the NDIS, many more specialist disability service providers may be encouraged to offer tailored “one-stop-shop” supports to people with disability who are seeking employment. This would streamline services and ensure that no funding double-ups occur. Furthermore, greater links could be established between generalist DES and specialist disability service providers to provide the best outcome for the client.

Education is the cornerstone to good employment outcomes for people who are blind or have low vision. However, disability education supports sit outside of the NDIS and differ across Australia subject to different state legislation. Greater links should be established between disability education support services and DES in each state to ensure that students with disability in compulsory education receive career counselling and are aware of the options available to them when they finish school. Generally, in secondary schools, students with disabilities are not encouraged in the way that their able-bodied peers are to have aspirational career goals and planning strategies for their future employment.

## Disability Employment Services (DES)

* **How can DES providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?**
* **How can DES providers better support people with disability in the workplace?**
* **How can DES providers better support employers?**
* **How can the employment service model be improved to help providers deliver better support?**
* **Does DES need to be redesigned to operate in an NDIS environment?**

Current statistics indicate that there is one job vacancy for every five job seekers across Australia[[3]](#footnote-3). This means that the odds are well and truly stacked up against people with disability in finding appropriate employment, given that nearly half (47.3%) of all working-age people with disability are not in the labour force.[[4]](#footnote-4) As mentioned above, access to career planning will help ensure that jobseekers who blind or have low vision have appropriate skills and training to obtain employment in their chosen field once they complete their education. However, jobs must first be available in order to see the benefit of career guidance for students with disability in secondary school. Increased jobs creation through apprenticeships and cadetships is needed to ensure that the DES framework will be successful.

In order to better assist people who are blind or have low vision to find a job, DES staff require training on their unique needs and barriers to employment. This will assist DES staff to better assess the strengths and abilities of people who are blind or have low vision when determining their capacity to perform a particular job. A lack of knowledge regarding the needs of people of who are blind or have low vision leads to individuals being employed in job placements that do not match their individual goals, interests and strengths.

In order to better support people who are blind or have low vision in the workplace, a better definition of “ongoing support” is needed to guide the services provided by DES-ESS. Some people may be “supported” to stay in a job that is not compatible with their needs and wishes, without options for career development. The definition of ongoing support should be expanded to include assistance to find another job if the current one is not ideal.

Under current funding arrangements, some DES providers have limited resources, resulting in high DES consultant caseloads. This often results in DES providers focusing on the most disadvantaged jobseekers, while providing a limited service to others. This has a particularly adverse impact on jobseekers who are blind or have low vision, who have highly specialised and often quite technical needs that can only be assessed through detailed planning. Large caseloads impede the ability for DES case managers to place people who are blind or have low vision in a job that accommodates both their skills and interests. Furthermore, large caseloads also prevent DES case managers from developing meaningful partnerships with employers.

An individualised funding model, akin to or incorporated into the NDIS, will regulate the DES sector, as consumers will spend their allocated employment funding on the DES best able to provide them with the services they need. In order for people who are blind or have low vision to receive the best possible outcomes, individualised funding should cover a range of transdisciplinary services provided by specialist and generalist DES providers beyond the placement and outcome fees offered now. This will give DES providers a greater incentive to place people with disability in the right job.

Vision Australia is in the unique position of being a provider of employment services and other vision rehabilitation services, such as adaptive technology training, occupational therapy and orientation and mobility services. This makes it possible for us to take a holistic approach and conduct comprehensive assessments of the employment needs of people who are blind or have low vision. Vision Australia is often called upon to assist other DES providers to deliver services to clients who are blind or have low vision. Whilst workplace assessments are funded via the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF), many of the consultancy services Vision Australia delivers to other providers are not funded. Moving toward an individualised DES model, funding must be made available for generalist DES providers to purchase support from specialist DES providers to reduce the financial pressure on specialist DES providers and ensure better outcomes.

An individualised approach to DES should also allow people who are blind or have low vision to attend the DES of their choice and not be allocated to a DES in their region. This will lead to innovative service delivery options, as face-to-face contact is not always the most convenient or suitable method of delivering services to job seekers. Telephone, email and videolink services can be used to successfully deliver services for people who are blind or have low vision, and is preferable in many situations.

## Job Services Australia (JSA)

* **How can JSA providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?**
* **How can JSA providers better support people with disability in the workplace?**
* **How can JSA providers better support employers and respond to employer needs?**
* **How do you think the proposed changes will improve the JSA model and employment outcomes for people with disability?**

No comment

## Australian Disability Enterprises

* **Can we improve support for people moving out of ADEs into open employment?**
* **How can ADEs operate as viable businesses?**

Vision Australia supports open employment arrangements for people who are blind or have low vision. Currently, people who are blind or have low vision are not able to access support from a DES to transition into open employment whilst working at an ADE. Allowing access to both programmes will lead to better outcomes and a greater chance of transitioning smoothly from an ADE to a successful open employment placement.

## Supports for employers

* **Are employers aware of these supports?**
* **How can supports help achieve long-term employment for people with disability?**
* **Are the support needs of large employers different to the support needs of small employers?**
* **How can we encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability?**
* **What other supports or approaches could increase employment participation of people with disability?**

Greater resources need to be put into making employers aware of the supports currently available to them to employ people with disability. These currently include the EAF, the Supported Wage System, the Wage Subsidy Scheme, DES Employment Assistance program and the Job in Jeopardy assistance program. There are a number of additional supports that could be provided to employers to encourage them to employ people with disability, including:

**Increased employer wage subsidies**

* Wage subsidies make a substantial difference in allowing jobseekers to get a ‘foot in the door’ and in easing employer concerns about the costs of employing a person with a disability. It is important that wage subsidies are reviewed periodically to ensure that they keep up with any rises in the cost of living.

**Employer Reward Programs**

* Recognition and rewards should be made available to large and small employers who demonstrate a strong commitment to employing people with a disability. It is important that the Government leads by example by offering a greater number of cadetships for people with disability with appropriate qualifications.

**Funding to deliver pre-placement assessments with employers**

* Currently, the EAF is attached to an individual job seeker and used after a placement is secured. Future DES models should be structured to include improved support and more direct funding to encourage providers to work proactively with employers to increase their disability confidence and identify opportunities to employ individuals with a disability. The Australian Government must also lead by example by setting and achieving specific targets for the employment of people with disability across the whole of government in Australia.

Vision Australia has worked with several employers to increase their disability confidence and identify suitable job roles for people who are blind or have low vision via job analysis worksite assessments. The job analysis also includes identifying the specialist equipment, adaptive technology and workplace modifications likely to be required for an employee who is blind or has low vision. This approach has opened up job opportunities for our job seekers that may not have been identified had Vision Australia not been involved. It has also ensured that many of our job seekers have the required adaptive technology or specialist equipment available on or before the job commencement date.

Vision Australia conducts these pre-placement assessments free of charge for employers, as we believe this approach will help increase employer awareness and open increased employment opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision. We recommend that future DES models are structured to better support and fund such proactive activities with employers.

## National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

* **In what way do you think the NDIS can support employment outcomes for people with disability?**
* **What do you think we can learn from the NDIS to improve job services for people with disability?**

Vision Australia supports an individualised funding model for the delivery of disability supports under the NDIS, as it respects the dignity and worth of people who are blind or have low vision and people with disability more generally. We particularly support the human rights basis underpinning this funding model with its fundamental emphasis on individual choice and self-determination.

Vision Australia has offices in three of the trial site locations: Newcastle, Geelong and the ACT. At present, we have approximately 170 clients with NDIS packages and have worked closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency to deliver services to these clients.

We believe that the NDIS can support people who are blind or have low vision to achieve their employment aspirations by ensuring that their specialist supports are catered for. For example, people who are blind or have low vision can be supported to increase their access to their home and work environments and the wider community through orientation and mobility skills training and occupational therapy. Similarly, access to adaptive technology and skills training through NDIS funding can increase the employability of people who are blind or have low vision by helping them to quickly adapt to the working environment.

Applying an individualised model to DES will allow specialist DES providers, like Vision Australia, to deliver a transdisciplinary service to get people who are blind or have low vision job ready and into the workforce. Vision Australia is already successfully adopting this approach, support for which is provided by the case studies found in Appendix A.

As the foundation of an individualised approach centres on individuals needs and aspirations, only the DES providers who can meet the needs of the individual will attract funding dollars. This will raise quality standards within the sector, as DES providers survival in the individualised market will rely on them producing better and more individualised outcomes for people with disability.

The transition to an individualised funding model may squeeze some smaller DES providers out of the market, as they lack the resources to adapt to the new funding paradigm. Support and funding must be made available to DES operators in preparation for this transition. Such funding should be similar to the Practical Design Funding made available to disability services providers in the transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Appropriate unit prices for services must also be applied to ensure that DES operators can remain competitive and market their services.

## Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs)

* **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?**

No comment

## Life-course and diversity

* **Are there particular milestones which have a positive impact on employment prospects for people with disability?**
* **What issues need to be considered in relation to specific groups of people with disability?**
* **What approaches work with the different groups and these different issues?**

Through our experience working with young job seekers, Vision Australia recognises that the transition from formal education to employment is a vulnerable time for young people who are blind or have low vision. In order to ease this transition, career counselling must be made available to students with a disability as soon as they enter secondary education to discuss the pathway to their preferred career option. Similarly, the Eligible School Leaver program must engage with students with disability as they enter into Year 10 or earlier to increase job seekers who are blind or have low vision securing employment either before their formal education finishes or soon after. The criteria for the program must also be extended to include all students who are studying full-time.

In 2012, Vision Australia’s Employment Research showed that three quarters of respondents with a tertiary qualification were currently employed, showing the strong impact of education in enhancing job opportunities. However, due to the difficulties many students who are blind or have low vision encounter when trying to find part-time work during their studies, many tertiary students leave university having little or no work experience. This makes it difficult to secure a work placement and leads to many people with tertiary qualifications being over qualified for any employment they can secure quickly. More support must be offered to tertiary students with disability through DES so they can receive appropriate work experience before they cease their studies and transition in employment. DES should also support tertiary students to develop relationships with prospective employers related to their field of study.

Older people who are blind or have low vision face multiple barriers when seeking employment. As vision loss is predominantly an age-related condition, many people who develop a vision impairment may need to reskill in order to find employment or require assistance through the Jobs in Jeopardy program to maintain their current employment. Incentives to hire workers over the age of 50 will be available through the Restart Wage Subsidy announced in the 2015-16 budget. However, the government also needs to increase employer awareness of the benefits of employing older workers with disability, who are likely to become an increasing majority as Australia’s ageing population grows.

# Appendix A: Case studies from Vision Australia’s Disability Employment Services program

## Case Study 1:

John is a mature age client who is blind and uses a cane. He was made redundant from his previous employment and although keen to work, was not confident in his ability to find a different role.

He worked with his consultant, and also attended Job Club and Adaptive Technology classes to improve his skills using the Jaws screen reader, which provides access in synthetic speech and braille to computer software

His consultant put him forward for a telephone based role with a marketing company and he commenced in the role.

However, the company outsourced their IT department, and the IT Company was very reluctant to allow Vision Australia’s Adaptive Technology Consultant to access the system and make the data base accessible for John. This issue took over a month to resolve, but John finally started working 20 hours per week in a telemarketing role.

Vision Australia provided regular support, either from an Adaptive Technology Consultant addressing the accessibility issues or his Employment Consultant visiting the workplace and providing moral support. An Adaptive Technology Trainer, who specialises in JAWS training going in, worked sometimes daily to train John on changes to the system. All of John’s equipment, scripting and training was funded by JobAccess.

John has been meeting his targets every week, even when his sighted peers are not, and his team leader is exceptionally happy with his performance. He is enjoying the role and gets along well with his co-workers.

## Case study 2:

Sam became a client of Vision Australia Employment Services after experiencing a sudden loss of vision. Prior to his vision loss, he had his own business in several trades. Sam was initially reluctant to learn JAWS, but commenced Adaptive Technology training to improve his employment prospects. He was marketed intensively to labouring positions and related jobs and attended several interviews.

Throughout his time with Vision Australia Employment Services, Sam was supported with writing job applications, targeted cover letters and updating his resume. He was also supported with confidence building, interview practice, and was accompanied to interviews.

To improve his employment prospects, Sam enrolled in a Diploma of Community Services. Vision Australia helped him with setting up JAWS on his computer to do his assignments and also encouraged him to apply for volunteer work. Whilst studying, Sam did a placement at his local Council in community services. His employer was impressed with his performance and recruited him for a part time contract role, which is likely to extend. Sam is enjoying his work at the Council while he completes his studies.

## Case Study 3:

Derek holds a high level position in multi-national oil company. Job In Jeopardy support was first provided 4 years ago when he started to lose his vision. Derek was supplied with workplace modifications, including Zoomtext software and a CCTV. He also received orientation and mobility training to/from work, adaptive technology training, and low vision clinic services from Vision Australia and was then able to complete his duties as before.

A year later, Derek’s vision deteriorated and he became legally blind. He rejoined Vision Australia Employment Services as a Job In Jeopardy participant and, after a second worksite assessment, was supplied with JAWS software through Job Access. Derek has received ongoing JAWS training at Vision Australia, in addition to Occupational Therapy and Adaptive Technology services. He is now able again to use MS Excel to create complex spreadsheets and is in charge of a busy Asia Pacific project. He is also the first blind person in his company to be allowed to travel internationally on business, and spends one week in every four in the Bangkok office.

## Case study 4:

Dana is a 32 year old CALD female, who is blind in both eyes, with 2% vision in one eye. She came to Vision Australia Employment Services having completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Criminology.

During her time using Vision Australia’s employment service, Dana attended Job Club and completed an in-house Business Support Course which led to 6 months of appointment setting work. Some of the services offered to Dana were Orientation and Mobility training, interview training and fine tuning of her job applications. During this time, Dana has had some issues with depression and disengagement with our service. However, her employment consultant persisted in engaging and supporting her. Dana was also enrolled into the Australian Network on Disability PACE Mentoring program which she completed with a mentor from the ANZ Bank.

More recently, Vision Australia developed a close relationship with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and Dana was put forward for a position as a para-legal in their legal department, which was a perfect fit for her qualifications.

The post placement support given to Dana included a worksite assessment and provision of equipment, including the loan of a portable hand held magnifier and CCTV until funding was approved so that she could start work straight away. Dana also received constant one on one and phone support from the Adaptive Technology Trainer, as her JAWS software was not initially compatible with PTV’s database. Orientation and Mobility training to and from the workplace and within the workplace was also provided, as well as an Occupational Therapy assessment and support.

Dana has proven herself to be an excellent fit for the role, and what started out as a 3 month contract, has now been extended to 6 months and ongoing.

# Appendix B: General principles guiding actions under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013

1. People with disability have the same right as other members of Australian society to realise their potential for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.
2. People with disability should be supported to participate in and contribute to social and economic life to the extent of their ability.
3. People with disability and their families and carers should have certainty that people with disability will receive the care and support they need over their lifetime.
4. People with disability should be supported to exercise choice, including in relation to taking reasonable risks, in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports.
5. People with disability should be supported to receive reasonable and necessary supports, including early intervention supports.
6. People with disability have the same right as other members of Australian society to respect for their worth and dignity and to live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
7. People with disability have the same right as other members of Australian society to pursue any grievance.
8. People with disability have the same right as other members of Australian society to be able to determine their own best interests, including the right to exercise choice and control, and to engage as equal partners in decisions that will affect their lives, to the full extent of their capacity.
9. People with disability should be supported in all their dealings and communications with the Agency so that their capacity to exercise choice and control is maximised in a way that is appropriate to their circumstances and cultural needs.
10. People with disability should have their privacy and dignity respected.
11. Reasonable and necessary supports for people with disability should:

(a)  support people with disability to pursue their goals and maximise their independence; and

(b)  support people with disability to live independently and to be included in the community as fully participating citizens; and

 (c)  develop and support the capacity of people with disability to undertake activities that enable them to participate in the mainstream community and in employment.

1. The role of families, carers and other significant persons in the lives of people with disability is to be acknowledged and respected.
2. The role of advocacy in representing the interests of people with disability is to be acknowledged and respected, recognising that advocacy supports people with disability by:

(a) promoting their independence and social and economic participation; and

(b) promoting choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports; and

(c) maximising independent lifestyles of people with disability and their full inclusion in the mainstream community.

1. People with disability should be supported to receive supports outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and be assisted to coordinate these supports with the supports provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
2. Innovation, quality, continuous improvement, contemporary best practice and effectiveness in the provision of supports to people with disability are to be promoted.
3. Positive personal and social development of people with disability, including children and young people, is to be promoted.
4. It is the intention of the Parliament that the Ministerial Council, the Minister, the Board, the CEO and any other person or body is to perform functions and exercise powers under this Act in accordance with these principles, having regard to:

(a) the progressive implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme; and

(b) the need to ensure the financial sustainability of the National Disability Insurance Scheme

1. Graffam, Shinkfield, Smith and Polzin. “Employer Benefits and Costs of Employing a Person with a Disability.” Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 17 (2002): 251-63 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Appendix B [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Martin, P. (2014, June 27th). Head East for the jobs, new data reveals. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from: http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/head-east-for-the-jobs-new-data-reveals-20140626-3awgl.html#ixzz35zU1eg2x [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), Disability and Labour Force Participation, 2012. Accessed from: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4433.0.55.006 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)