

**SUBMISSION – Ensuring a stronger future for supported employment (ADE)**

Orana welcomes the opportunity to ‘have a say’ about the future for supported employment as it is Orana’s chance to scope notions for positive reform that will build the capabilities of people with a disability in an ‘employment first’ approach for those who finish school and/or vocational or tertiary study. It also allows for timely consideration of what should be deemed suitable alternatives to study or (open employment) work for people of working age who have more limited functional, cognitive or psychosocial capabilities, who have diminishing capacity as they endure unsettling life changes or begin to age. We should also be mindful of those who have become long-term day options program participants with no opportunity to progress to other alternatives including supported employment.

The data presented in the discussion paper confirms the future for supported employment needs to be encompassing of people with diverse disabilities, with special consideration for those with an intellectual impairment and enable people with a disability to achieve even more diverse and higher aspirations in terms of their economic or community participation. Supported employment has not discriminated against people of working age who have more limited capabilities in the past hence this cohort has benefited from the wrap-around support under the current employment arrangements – appropriate alternatives and ‘choices’ must feature in the future supported employment sector for this cohort otherwise this group could ‘fall through the gaps’ and could potentially be worse off.

Orana suggests a ‘big picture’ framework that encompasses a broad spectrum of; vocational development (work skills and behaviours), capacity building, skill development, community participation, training, study and/or career and life planning. The future for supported employment can only be stronger where there is a conscious investment in individualised vocational preparation, capacity building that will assist each person with a disability to plan a future that is realistic for them as early as possible. The investment need not be new but rather ensure the convergence of NDIS, DES, ADE, education, open employment and community stakeholders in collaboration with NDIS participants and their families/carers.

Orana suggests two additional **GUIDING PRINCIPLES** to align to this ‘big picture’ framework:

1. **A continuum of opportunities that build capacity towards open employment** – a pathway that enables people with a disability to access diverse vocational learning and skill development opportunities and to work and grow in different roles throughout their life.
2. **Suitable alternatives to work and study (short or long-term)** – building community capacity so that volunteering and diverse community engagement opportunities are available to those who can no longer work due to limited or diminishing capacity or who are enduring unsettling life changes.

Orana’s responses to the prescribed discussion questions are provided in Attachment 1.

The responses have influenced the ‘big picture’ framework explained in more details as follows:

**‘BIG PICTURE’ FRAMEWORK**

**INDUSTRY** - clear workforce requirements and demands

* Open employment options
* Improvised job roles reserved for NDIS participants
* Government investment to maintain openings through joint venture programs (social and commercial enterprises)

**NDIS PARTICIPANT** - a range of options relative to his/her need and capabilities but is constantly ‘coached’ to develop further

* Personal aspirational goals – lifelong development and experience

Transition from school

Recently acquired disability

**CAPACITY BUILDING DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING**

Pathway coaching and mentoring

* Vocational Preparation
* Open Employment
* Work Experience
* Job Placements
* Re-Training
* Supported Employment

Assessment of capacity vis a vis various job role criteria

Training needs analysis

Choices and Options – Job Matching

Capacity Building and Career Pathway Plan

Study or Training Programs Provided or Facilitated – Individualised or Small Group

**SHORT OR LONG-TERM ALTERNATIVES**

Health/Crisis Recovery – Career Change - Volunteering - Community Service - Transition to Retirement

**BENEFITS OF THE FRAMEWORK**

* Pre-emptive assessment of capacity and learning style will help individuals to develop realistic career plans and guide them towards open employment in the first instance (if appropriate)
* Coaching and mentoring that is focused on capacity building development and achievements whether going into open employment in the first instance or requiring longer lead times to do so (ie transition from school, supported employment, health/crisis recovery)
* Extra effort to assist people to consider choices and options in the context of their needs and capabilities (short and long term)
* A continuum of opportunities for development that will enable people to work through different or unexpected stages of their life (recently acquired disability, health/crisis intervention etc.)
* Access to diverse vocational learning and skill development opportunities with the potential to work and grow in different work roles throughout their life (open or supported employment)
* Specialist expertise that can be accessed by commercial enterprises at any time
* Fostering of relationships that could lead to innovative social enterprises run by NDIS participants
* Support ‘at the ready’ for participants of working age who have more limited functional, cognitive or psychosocial capabilities, who have diminishing capacity as they endure unsettling life changes or begin to age
* Cost savings that would be attributed to early intervention as opposed to crisis intervention or the need for replacement supports where there is a disruption to work ie for those who drop out of school; remain jobless for extended periods; are not productively engaged, are retrenched, or who have complex family issues they are unable to deal with alone
* Unquantifiable emotional and social benefits in terms of the participants’ self-worth and purpose in life where their potential for social and economic participation has been ‘tapped’
* Certainty for those who may seek a variety of job roles in their lifetime or those who will require longer lead times to enable them to progress in their development and achievements
* Incentives for commercial enterprises to improvise from a social justice perspective and maintain inclusive open employment opportunities
* Access to the ‘untapped’ potential of people with a disability to contribute socially and economically in ways that best suit their personal circumstances and capacity.

**RESPONSES TO PRESCRIBED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – ATTACHMENT 1**

***What is a ‘good’ participation outcome for a supported employee and how can good outcomes be measured?***

A good participation outcome for a supported employee is that they:

* have a stable supported employment placement like any other post school student or adult have the ‘choice’ to attend ‘a job’ that caters for their functional, cognitive or psychosocial needs
* are contributing in the workplace or workforce to the best of their ability and fulfil jobs/tasks as required
* have a growing service record and experience in different work activities ie specialist packaging, gardening worker, timber worker, etc.
* are becoming permanent following successful work trials
* are being promoted (Grade 3 or 4 SESA or Leading Hand)
* are constantly learning and growing their vocational skills and behaviours through workplace training and support ie forklift licence; accredited training, TAFE qualification, etc.
* have good camaraderie with their fellow employees
* have been appointed and are contributing as a committee representative
* have a CV
* have achieved vocational goals
* have job satisfaction i.e. enjoy working
* have moved onto other jobs in other companies (DES, open employment or community work)

The outcomes can be measured through:

* attendance records
* monthly and annual workplace productivity records (stable or increasing),
* wage assessments (productivity rates); wage increments based on real industry productivity outputs
* workplace morale
* training and qualifications records
* measurable multi-skilling capacity and
* employee self-reporting on technical/social skill development and job satisfaction
* progressing to open employment

Supervisors, families and employees would all provide commentary on the individual’s achievement of vocational goals.

Diversity of experience and job roles in a lifetime is becoming the ‘norm’ in the general community hence people with a disability should be afforded the same mobility and ‘choices’ in their working life.

***What do supported employees most value about working in an ADE?***

Orana employees have reported the following as what they most value about working:

* friendships – social aspects – being with other people with similar backgrounds
* valued role in society and self-esteem
* sense of purpose
* the work – knowing that what I do is valued by others eg making a bed someone will buy and use
* the routine
* getting paid
* getting out of the house
* meeting new people
* being with familiar people
* learning new skills
* skilled employer staff that understand their needs and help to train and re-train as necessary
* being supported – not as much pressure as open employment
* feeling secure in their future by having work.

The same as any employee working in any job, people with disability want dignity, to make a contribution to society and the economy and a ‘choice’ to go to a job after school like every other student.

***Why do most supported employees transition back to supported employment from open employment?*** Also refer to comments for the last question.

Supported employees who have transitioned back to supported employment from open employment have reported the following in the past:

* there was a lack of understanding of their needs – other workers and the business operator/manager their cognitive, functional and psychosocial limitations are not understood
* there was too much pressure in open employment in industry and particularly small businesses have a productivity expectation for a certain rate of pay. The pressure comes with the productivity expectation of the employer and workers i.e. if an able bodied worker can produce 10 items in an hour then the workmates and the employer expect the disabled worker to produce the same. The able bodied worker will not accept someone getting the same as them to produce half. The employer is expected to be competitive cannot be 50% less productive than his competitor.
* there were higher expectations in terms of demands and expectations of work performance – causing stress and anxiety as above
* they were bullied in the workplace resulting from psychosocial characteristics or able bodied employees feeling they are being treated unfairly i.e. doing most of the work and getting paid the same
* it didn’t work out once trained supported employees cannot adjust to variabilities and changes in the job without additional training and support
* they became unwell as above
* their pre-vocational barriers were not addressed first most people with a disability have very limited vocational experience, cognitive, functional and psychosocial limitations. They also have the lowest education making them the most unemployable people in the community. Similar statistics to others in our society with very low education (literacy, numeracy, comprehension).
* at times their transition was from being ‘higher’ in the pecking order to ‘lower ‘self-esteem and confidence
* there was a limited support network for their cognitive, functional and psychosocial limitations
* the environment was foreign
* they missed their friends - social alienation
* they were unable to blend with able-bodied people in the workplace - social alienation
* there was less opportunity for social interaction social alienation
* the ‘real’ world experience was not as good as anticipated all of the above

***How can more supported employees be provided the opportunity to choose open employment?***

The following strategies are recommended:

* Discussions with employees about choices and options and vocational aspirations – exploring other interests in more depth, before they leave school so that they are better prepared to secure and maintain a job in open employment.
* Capacity building programs addressing pre-vocational barriers and building employability skills in a supported environment i.e. ADE before they attempt open employment.
* Support for employees through the journey, pre and post open employment – building relationships with open employment providers and supporting employees whilst transitioning until they are comfortable with the change
* Promotion – open days at open employment providers so prospective employees see the requirement of the roles they have
* Linking with DES providers i.e. information sessions etc.
* Training that is understanding of individual issues and needs – ADE internal offerings and evidence of skills attained documented – aligning skills to open employment suitability
* Specialist support to explore outplacement to open employment
* Integrating the discussion as part of the NDIS planning session
* Businesses need to have access to ongoing professionals to support in training as jobs change, are modified and deal with psychosocial issues. Consider open employment wage assessments based on actual productivity

***Why is participant access to concurrent DES and ADE support services so low?***

Our experience is that is employees very rarely want to be part of both. The more obvious individuals which would be most likely to benefit from DES, that do want to work in ADE’s, want to work every day in their ADE setting

To ensure participation in DES is appropriate, ADE employees must meet the usual eligibility requirements for DES including having an Employment Services Assessment (ESAt) or Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) which confirms they have the capacity to work for at least eight hours per week in open employment with support from a DES provider. Most employees are not aware this is an option for them. Hence, few people are participating in both programs. Work could be done to better promote this option more effectively for eligible supported employees., however ADE’s rely heavily on their most capable and productive workers and have relied on them working most week days. Other considerations include previous funding restrictions; confusion about what is allowable; difficulty working in multiple locations due to transport options available; and a preference to work the one job.

It is Orana’s experience that DES have not been able to address specific gaps until the NDIS started.

***What is the role a supported employer can play in building employee capacity for transition to open employment?***

Orana has recently established a Capacity Building Team that can offer and provide more capacity building programs ie:

* Training regarding work skills and behaviour (using the capacity building team to develop and deliver training programs), safety at work, confidence in speaking in a professional manner, etc.
* Training in job seeking skills, job readiness and specialised skills training for particular work.
* Facilitation of a Mentor Program – employees could mentor work experience students or new workers – assist with their orientation. Supervisors could also be training and mentoring employees open to change.

Generally, supervisors and managers could provide more choice over work and skill development and more individual specific feedback. The capabilities of an employee need to be matched to a suitable role that will also provide the opportunity to grow towards their potential. They could also provide more opportunities to work harden or increase responsibility of existing employees re quality and safety at work or leading hand options. There needs to be more focus on individualised work-related goals that are beyond the scope of the ADE work options they are currently placed with – this is currently not happening across the board).

DES referral pathways and resources could be presented to supported employees.

***What will attract NDIS participants to employment opportunities in the future?***

The following strategies are suggested:

* Testimonials from their friends
* Positive experiences/ tours
* More incentives
* Greater variety and scope of work
* Less staff turnover
* Capacity building programs – work related.
* More support from the NDIS Planners and Policy Makers that have been disinterested in ADE’s and reluctantly referring
* More community support, ADE’s are seen in a negative light and young people with disabilities are being encouraged to participate in DES

***How are ADEs marketing their services to an expanded market of potential NDIS participants?***

It is Orana’s experience that the following strategies are utilised extensively by most ADEs:

* Events
* Social Media
* Newspapers
* Updating their websites
* Expos
* Word of Mouth
* Offering new services
* Opening up at new locations
* Creating new roles
* Branding
* Becoming registered providers
* Networking
* NDIA website
* DE website
* Joint projects
* Pilot projects

***What is the range of NDIS supports that ADEs currently offer?***

All ADEs have unique histories from early incorporation to what they have become today. The majority offer a range of NDIS supports. As for Orana it has a diverse range of services it provides apart from it’s ADE specific businesses.

Orana is an approved NDIS provider for:

* Core Supports – assistance with daily living and assistance with social and community participation, and
* Capacity Building – support coordination, improved living arrangements, increased social and community participation (including skills development), finding and keeping a job, improved relationships, improved health and wellbeing, improved learning, improved life choices and improved daily living skills.

Also refer to the NDIA website>providers or the DEAI web-site.

***What costs would be involved for ADEs to choose to:***

1. ***Reform to more open employment models?***
2. ***Redevelop as service providers offering other NDIS supports?***
3. ***Specialise in the provision of employment support as a non-employer?***

The costs would relate to recruitment and training of personnel and the development of appropriate infrastructure to support each scenario:

1. For service providers to achieve this they would need to create or attract new business that can break even or generate a profit – given the current state of the SA economy this is a bigger challenge than in other States and Territories – a number of industries are becoming eastern seaboard centric and closing operations in SA.

Orana employs people with a wide range of disabilities. This diverse range of people brings with it a diverse range of i.e.; cognitive, behavioural, productivity and functional attributes.

To transform to an Open Employment Model the ADE needs to; become competitive like any other commercial organisation, therefore needs to;

* mechanise
* classify its worker productivity into a range of pay rates that reflect productivity
* consolidate the range of jobs it performs as the current ADE diversity established over the years is to broad creating a diverse range of jobs that don’t allow for economies of scale or mechanisation. It also makes it difficult to employ people with the appropriate skills that have the ability to manage the diverse range of jobs. Under the old paradigm, the expectation was to provide a supported environment for keeping disabled workers vocationally engaged. The diverse range of skills perpetuated the inability to commercialise as jobs were necessary to engage all employees.

The consequence of the above has led to ADE’s being unable to compete as an open employment business.

Furthermore, until recent years the manufacturing industry in Australia was one of the largest employers of people with low education. There has been a significant downward shift over the last 5-10 years in manufacturing due to the economic expansion of cheap manufacturing in Asia making employment opportunities in this country and particularly in South Australia extremely challenging.

The costs required to transform ADE’s into open Employment Models would be dependent on; the number of people the enterprise would like to employ, the types of disability and the difficulty of the market or local economy i.e. remote, regional, small city.

1. Where service providers are already offering other NDIS supports and NDIS participants are progressively making service enquiries, the staffing and infrastructure could grow apace with the growth in demand and NDIS funding available in participant plans. Where demand increases significantly without warning, the service provider would need to incur up-front costs to ensure a swift response to service requests. The challenge for all service providers in this scenario is the expected explosion in demand for support workers beyond the capability in the community and marketplace today.

This would be as difficult as transforming from an auto manufacturer to a food producer. This requires significant transformation in; facilities, skills, culture, specialist skills, etc. Over a period of time, this would be possible for medium to larger organisations. Small organisations would not have the resources or skills to facilitate this transformation.

1. Current service providers have grown beyond the provision of employment support as a non-employer due to the range of supports people with a disability require to meet their needs. This scenario would result in downsizing for a number of providers who have taken decades to build the workforce and programs they currently offer. People with a disability will exercise choice and control in selecting their service providers into the future but experience to date indicates that people don’t want too many service providers in their lives hence they seek to purchase a range of services from the one provider. Incidentally this has led to early intervention for people who are in crisis or who are experiencing reduced capacity due to ageing. New providers may enter the market choosing to specialise but they will bear workforce and infrastructure development costs that may not show a return for the first few years of operation.

***Should the Government have a role in supporting new market entrants and start-ups in the short-term?***

This a vexed issue – all current service providers have invested significantly in the operations in the marketplace today – the investment has come from benefactors, charitable donors, and even commercial company support. Why should new market entrants and start-ups receive Government support upfront when their profitability and sustainability is subject to market forces and may never be delivered?

Service providers would rather welcome an initiative that draws on their expertise and experience in a joint venture arrangement where the objective would be to establish social enterprises that are run by people with a disability. Credible service providers would aim to keep these enterprises at arms’ length and with a view of separate governance in the long-term.

***What investment, or industry adjustment will promote viable expansion in the employer/provider market?***

People with a disability need to become a viable option based on market driven forces. Employers need ongoing support for the ongoing functional, cognitive or psychosocial needs of workers with a disability and they need to be financially rewarded to maintain their industry competitiveness. This type of approach simplifies the employment process for people with disabilities as they can choose to work wherever they want (like any other employee) and in fact encouraged. The employer can avoid having to deal with complex functional, cognitive or psychosocial needs simultaneously is not required to keep pressure on the disabled worker to perform at an able bodied rate.

**How could employer/providers share learnings of their success and failures within a competitive market?**

Learnings of success and failures could be shared via:

* Business network meetings or alliances
* Seminars
* Blogs
* Electronic media
* Facebook – Twitter - Instagram

***How can wage supplementation be better targeted?***

Wage supplementation needs to be ongoing and provided to the organisation sponsoring the person with disability. Therefore, whether it is Supported Employment or Open Employer a wage supplementation system should exist to cater for functional, cognitive or psychosocial needs. These factors also influence productivity.

This arrangement would provide the person with a disability with the ‘choice’ of whether they work for a Supported Employer or Open Employer. They would continue to receive the financial support regardless of where they choose work.

Unlike the current system where the ‘choice’ to move between Supported Employment or Open Employment is limited. Supported Employment receives Case Based Funding as long as more than 8 hours a week are paid. This perpetuates a sense of safety for the employee and making them reluctant to leave. Conversely, Open Employers only receive funding for a 6 or 12-month period making people with a disability uncompetitive employees leading to poor retention rates particularly for people with intellectual disabilities.

***How can the NDIS enable an employment first approach in planning?***

The NDIS can support this by ensuring that NDIS participants have reasonable and necessary supports in place – the supports need to start during a person’s high school life to enable the participant to explore the post-school work, study or alternatives that align to their potential to learn and build capacity. Young people need to be supported to access the post-school pathway that is most appropriate to their individual needs and circumstances.

For adults with a disability who are currently accessing inappropriate post-school activities that don’t align to their needs the NDIS planning needs to assist the person to have a ‘fresh’ look at what will suit them in the future and provide the necessary and reasonable vocational support to enable them to make the change.

***How do current assessment processes drive the inclusion of employment supports in an NDIS participant’s plan?***

The JCA and the ES@T determine where a person has the capacity to work and how long for.

1. ***Are existing employment assessment processes appropriate for NDIS participants?***

Orana does not rate the existing employment assessment process as appropriate for NDIS participants as they can narrow the scope of possibilities for people with a disability. The processes are subjective and heavily weighted by qualitative measures creating a non-competitive environment. This uncompetitive environment results in the necessity for ongoing funding.

***Are there different approaches to planning that could be explored for different groups of supported employees (eg younger workers, established workers, retirement transition)?***

The planning should be individualised and along with considering a person’s life stage, their informal supports, needs, barriers and goals are also fundamental. Younger workers could have short-term, medium term and longer term goals, whereas retiring workers may have more of a focus on immediate goals.

1. ***How could SLES better support school leavers to build skills and confidence in order to move from school to employment?***

This is a critical stage where ADE’s can play a significant role for school leavers. Currently, school leavers with special needs can stay in the education system up to the age of 24 years. The period between 16-24 years should be used to;

* Establish a vocational goal for students with various disabilities
* To use ADE’s as Vocational Preparation Centres to provide these inexperienced young people from school with the; skills, training, behavioural support, social support essential to transitioning in the the open employment, where they are competing with mainstream students.

More placements sooner rather than leaving work experience until Year 12 (preferably Year 9 or 10). More job ready and preparation programs addressing vocational barriers.

***What role could or should an NDIA Local Area Coordinator or planner have in linking participants to an employment opportunity?***

They should be providing 10 hours for support connection to participants post their plan being approved (ie those who do not have support coordination) which from Orana’s experience is at least 90% of NDIS participants. This should include linking participants into employment opportunities if they have the capacity to work. The participants, NDIA Local Area Coordinator or NDIS planner all need to have up-to date & vast knowledge of what employment opportunities are available to give the person with a disability the best chance at choice and control.

***What role could or should NDIA market stewardship have in developing a market with a range of employment, other support, or participation options for existing supported employees?***

Orana sees this as a whole industry responsibility to develop a diverse market. The NDIA has a responsibility to keep abreast of current ‘state of the economy’ in the State or Territories the participants reside, capacity building services and alternatives to work options for all participants.

The NDIA needs to work with the ADE industry to establish how the ADE Providers are to transform where they become a complimentary adjunct to the school system e.g. for school student preparing to leave school, post school students in preparing them for the workforce and for other disabled workers that require re-training or to have their confidence resurrected so they can return to open employment.

ADE’s should become the ‘bridge’ for people with a disability from school, trauma or significant health changes to return to the workforce.