

**Supported
Employment:
much more
than a job.**



ENDEAVOUR
FOUNDATION
Opportunities for people with a disability

Supported Employment: much more than a job.

Endeavour Foundation's submission in response to the Department of Social Services Discussion Paper, A Strong Future for Supported Employment.

Special thanks to the many members of the Endeavour Foundation community who contributed their lived experience and specialist expertise to the preparation of this submission, including:

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Introduction

The 20,000 Australians who work in Australian Disability Enterprises have chosen to work in an environment where the emphasis is on ability.

People who work in supported employment don't consider themselves second class workers because they are employed in an Australian Disability Enterprise, and neither should anyone else.

In tailor-made, supported job roles, people with severe disability are contributing to genuine commercial outcomes, and being paid in recognition for their efforts. One parent has pointed out that her daughter is not going to recover from an intellectual disability, so the skill deficits that prevent her from entering open employment today will most likely continue to exist throughout her lifetime. For this reason, the supported employment arrangement which currently provides her with great fulfilment will probably continue to be her preference into the future.

It is our general observation that, while there is a vast difference between the people who engage with DES/open employment programs and those who participate in ADEs, the implications of this difference seem to be disregarded in many of the underlying assumptions within the discussion paper.

Within a supportive work environment, participant skills, independence and confidence grow amongst friends. Supported employment is much more than a job and deserves recognition for the important role it plays in the lives of those who have chosen it.

Questions and Responses

1. 1. Are there other principles which should guide the Government's policy direction for supported employment?

Endeavour Foundation supports the four underlying principles outlined in the policy discussion paper:

- An 'employment first' approach for all NDIS participants of working age
- A diversity of employers providing employment supports
- Strong and viable disability enterprises
- Employees and employers have certainty about industrial wage setting.

While we support these principles, we also believe that Australia's human rights obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability 2008 (UNCRPD) form an important underpinning principle for the Government's approach to supported employment. As Melbourne parent Sandra [REDACTED] said of her adult daughter, "supported employment is not just about the money (earned at work); it is about the human rights of people with a disability to have an inclusive role in society".

The UNCRPD clearly enshrines the right to work in Article 27 – Work and Employment

1. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work...

For people with an intellectual disability in particular, it can be extremely challenging to fully realise their right to work. Endeavour Foundation believes people with intellectual disability should have the right to adequate supports to enable them to realise this right, whether in supported employment or open employment.

The rights of persons with disabilities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihood are also clearly enshrined among the General Principles underpinning the UNCRPD:

Article 3

- (a) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- (c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- (e) Equality of opportunity

The right to work, and the companion right to make one's own decisions about the workplace and kind of work one wishes to do, should no longer be viewed as a lesser or lower right for people with intellectual disability.

To this end, Australian Disability Enterprises should not be seen only as a means to obtaining adequate experience and skills for entry to open employment.

Many people with intellectual disability who work in supported employment, are fulfilling their aspirations for employment through their work in an Australian Disability Enterprise. While some wish to move to roles in open employment, and should be supported to do so, many others prefer to stay in supported employment and continue to develop their skills within a supportive, friendly and accepting environment. For people who choose to remain in supported employment, their choice to work in an Australian Disability Enterprise should no longer be considered a second class option, but acknowledged as the employment opportunity of first choice for many thousands of people.

To quote from paragraph (e) of the CRPD Preamble:

... disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The low employment rates of people with a disability show that this truth is only too evident in the area of work and employment. People with a disability who desire to engage with their community, contribute to society, and increase their independence and quality of life through work, often find they are most limited by the perceptions and attitudes of others.

We welcome a diversity of employers and employment options for people with a disability. We believe that providing a broad range of support options, coupled with the funding flexibility to enable people to pursue their own individual career aspirations, will be key factors in delivering an “employment first” frame of reference for the NDIS.

Transition to the future landscape.

In our consultations regarding the discussion paper, the diagram shown on page 20 was a great source of concern to families and carers. This diagram, and the use of language such as “reform”, were interpreted as devaluing the role of ADEs and signalling the Department’s intention to break ADEs down into a number of other models.

Some of these models were described as innovative new support models but were not clearly defined. We welcome the entry of innovative new employment models into the sector, which often arise in response to local circumstances, opportunities and innovation. Often these models provide employment for less than 10 people with a disability and may offer an interface for meaningful engagement with the community, which we strongly support. However based on our research of a variety of successful social enterprise models, and in our own experience, we note that it can be very challenging for smaller enterprises such as these to remain financially viable over the medium to long term. These models may be particularly suited for people with physical or psychosocial disability, and people with a high level of function. In other words, they will not address the needs of the vast majority of people who currently participate in employment at an Australian Disability Enterprise.

The diagram on page 20 also included a non-employment category at one end of the continuum, which seems to indicate the Department believes some services should transition into a non-vocational day support model. We acknowledge that some services will always struggle to be viable within an employment model, and a number of supported employees are reaching an age to consider retirement. However promoting this option is at odds with the Employment First principle, and we estimate that the delivery of non-vocational day supports will cost approximately three to four times as much as supported employment in an Australian Disability Enterprise. This would not be sustainable for an insurance-based scheme like the NDIS.

In addition to this, the people engaged in this activity will lose the important benefit of knowing they are contributing to genuine commercial outcomes through employment. They will no longer earn a wage of their own and will experience a drop in their standard of living, as they become entirely dependent upon the Disability Support Pension for their income. They will also lose the many intrinsic benefits of working, such as social connection, growth in confidence and pride in personal achievements.

2. What is a “good” participation outcome for a supported employee and how can good outcomes be measured?

In keeping with the goals of the NDIS, a “good” participation outcome for a supported employee is an outcome that fulfils (or works towards fulfilling) the individual’s employment goals and aspirations, whatever they may be.

This could be measured against the participant’s goals and aims as expressed in their NDIS plan, if the planning language is designed to express individual goals and aspirations in a measurable way.

Measuring outcomes against individual plans is essential to ensuring employment services are delivering outcomes that are aligned to the principles underlying the NDIS.

Some of the goals which might be measured include new or improved skills, productivity, attaining a desired role/position, completion of training, reduction in behavioural disruptions, or increased confidence over time, according to target rates or milestones.

It is worth noting that the McKinsey & Company Independent Pricing Review, conducted on behalf of the National Disability Insurance Agency, proposes outcome-based pricing as a means to reward the achievement of outcomes desired by the participant, rather than rewarding those who simply provide the highest volume of services through input-based pricing (page 39). McKinsey & Co acknowledge that the right measures must be applied to ensure this is effective.

Conversely, we strongly oppose the use of “transitions to open employment” as a key metric for ADEs. There is abundant evidence available to show that the use of this metric has had many negative impacts.

Endeavour Foundation has previously initiated a self-funded program, COMET, to assist supported employees to find and keep a job in open employment. This program was designed in response to the former Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs decision to introduce an Activity Performance Indicator (API) measuring the percentage of supported employees exiting ADEs to open employment, in 2012-15 funding agreement. This was despite a funding gap between the different kinds of employment support available.

The API aimed for 5% of supported employees to transition to open employment. Despite the establishment of a specific program to achieve this aim, Endeavour Foundation was ultimately unsuccessful in achieving sustained jobs for people with intellectual disability in open employment. Data shows that other service providers also struggled to achieve this API, with a national result of just 0.3% for this target in 2013. The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) 2015 figures reveal that under this regime (between the 2012 and 2015 surveys), the labour force participation rate of people with severe disability declined by almost five percent, from 29.7% to 25%.

Endeavour Foundation has also analysed the DES Employment Outcomes data for the November 2016 - November 2017 period. This showed that 84% of the people who were referred to a DES DSS program, then commenced a job placement. This seems like a commendable achievement. However, of these just 4.6% remained in the placement. Analysis of the same data from 2011-2017 reveals that the program has had an overall success rate of just 1.2% (calculated by subtracting total exist from total commencements, and expressing this as a percentage of total commencements). While these outcomes are disappointing, they tell a deeper story about the experiences of people with a severe disability in the DES DSS program. Almost 96% of the people who commenced a DES placement, then exited from the role. The Employment Outcomes data seems to demonstrate that this “client churn” is an ongoing feature of the program. For many people caught up in this cycle, the experience is deeply demoralising and can result in negative psychological outcomes. Experience tells us that people may become deskilled in doing their ADE work as a result, and they may also suffer the loss of valuable social networks they have established over the years.

In responding to the discussion paper, Sydney parent Tony [REDACTED] relayed the experiences of his daughter Rebecca in DES.

Through an employment agency, Rebecca was given several employment opportunities; however none of them were suitable in the long term. The employment agency did not account for Rebecca's poor eyesight, poor motor skills, or requirement to find work close to home.

For her first job, the agency transported her and provided support for two weeks, to clean windows at a takeaway franchise. They complained that she wasn't cleaning the windows properly, because she could not see the streaks. Worst of all was the exploitation from other staff members who would "borrow" - but never repay - her money, or her lunch. Rebecca would come home hungry.

The store manager and the agency did nothing to help to address the problem. In addition to this Rebecca had to catch two buses to work each morning, and wait three hours after the end of her shift for the afternoon bus.

She later got a job as a cooking assistant, travelling two hours on three buses to get to work. After working for two hours, she had to wait four more hours for the afternoon bus home. She only ever received one pay packet from this job, which she brought home empty, with \$80 missing because of exploitation by the other workers. It is easy for others to take advantage of Rebecca, as she can't understand why people would be nasty.

No doubt the employment agency was paid for finding Rebecca these totally unsuitable jobs.

After this time, Rebecca left open employment and engaged with an Australian Disability Enterprise run by Endeavour Foundation (formerly operated by [REDACTED]) in [REDACTED].

Rebecca worked there for ten years, and her family says Rebecca consistently enjoyed it. She always received her pay, and it went straight into her bank account. If Rebecca took money to work, she was able to spend it herself, or choose to share it with others.

She enjoyed having lunch with her workmates, and when they went out for social occasions, was invited and included. Rebecca received a Pay Slip, like her sibling, which was very important to her as another symbol of her success in employment. She was excited to go to work, every day that she worked there. Rebecca could easily get a bus before and after work, because she was employed eight hours a day – a full working day.

They provided training and Rebecca achieved certificates for completing different tasks such as learning to stake a pallet. The managers and trainers were there to help the supported employees complete the job, as opposed to open employment where everyone is expected to do their job, once they have been trained.

Rebecca has now left, because we moved away from the area and she is no longer able to travel there.

Many people employed by Endeavour Foundation cite similar experiences of having been placed into inappropriate or unsustainable open employment by a DES provider. In some instances the psychological impact of this has been devastating. One young man who works for Endeavour Foundation at [REDACTED] agreed to share his experiences in open employment, as long as his identity was protected. His foster father Nev explained why Shaun (not their real names) prefers to work in a supported environment.

When Shaun worked in open employment, he found it difficult to understand instructions and would get very frustrated. The boss would get annoyed and this made Shaun upset. He was verbally bullied by the other staff as well, for being different. After this he was quite down and lost his confidence and motivation.

Supported employment gives people the opportunity to fulfil independence, and being able to contribute through an employment opportunity. It gives people feelings of respect, responsibility, independence, freedom and worthiness. Otherwise if the opportunity is not there, people start to feel worthless and depression can take over. Ever since commencing there, Shaun has been so much happier. He looks forward to working. Socially there are also benefits, and being able to contribute to team work. The skill-learning aspect is also important. It's vital that people like Shaun are given employment opportunities.

For Shaun, the final outcome has been a good one. Despite his bad experiences in open employment, Shaun has now rebuilt his mental health and confidence as a supported employee. Not everyone recovers well from a failed trial of open employment. A number of people from regional Queensland have shared stories of people who left an ADE for a role in open employment, but were unable to retain their new job. Having been recognised as a high performing supported employee before leaving the ADE, they now felt unable to return to supported employment because of the embarrassment and loss of face they experienced over their perceived failure. Sadly as a result of this experience those people, who have much to contribute to society, are no longer involved in the workforce in any capacity.

Despite similar negative experiences reported by a number of people, Endeavour Foundation acknowledges that for a small percentage of supported employees, the DES program is a good option and with the right support, can deliver long-term outcomes in open employment. We believe that participants who aspire to open employment should be well supported in this pursuit. We have welcomed the opportunity to use both DES and ADE support funds concurrently to support individuals who are preparing for open employment, undertaking work experience in open employment, or starting a new role in open employment. Concurrent funding allows the ADE provider to continue offering advice and support (thereby helping to maintain confidence and wellbeing) while people are being guided and assisted by the DES provider to adjust to the challenging and confronting world of open employment. Endeavour Foundation (through our subsidiary Community Solutions Group) is involved in a concurrent funding trial, with good early results.

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

In talking with supported employees about what they value, a common response is that people value the opportunity to simply work.

This comes with an acknowledgment that the work opportunities offered in an ADE would not be available to people in any other employment setting. Many people have past negative experiences in open employment that demonstrate the stark reality of this. People recognise and value the fact that they have access to tailor-made job roles and supports that are designed to help them succeed at work, every day.

It is important to understand why people with severe disabilities would choose to work, instead of spending their time on community access or recreational activities. This is because supported employees recognise work as an opportunity that is available to other members of society. Work provides a sense of purpose, meaning and contribution to society. People report that they feel proud to have achieved the same highly prized goal that is held by their parent, sibling or friend, when they obtain a place in supported employment.

There are a number of attendant skills and responsibilities that people must master in order to obtain and retain a job. People also report that these are also highly valued. Having a job provides stimulus for the development and maintenance of many other important independent living skills, such as getting up on time, attending to personal hygiene, ensuring work clothes are clean and ready to wear, preparing and eating breakfast, packing lunch, travelling to and from work, and maintaining a healthy pattern of sleep. Once people begin to make friends at work and enjoy the positive environment that is offered in an Australian Disability Enterprise, they begin to experience a self-affirming cycle for the skills and routines involved in working life. Not only do people experience self-worth, confidence and a sense of well-being from being in work, but their skill development and motivation to develop new skills increases within this positive feedback cycle. In this regard, people with a severe disability who work in ADEs are no different from anyone else.

However there are many other aspects of working life that are valued by supported employees. Endeavour Foundation recently invited supported employees to complete a survey, including a question which asked people to describe what role their job in an ADE plays in their life.

Many of the 174 respondents described their supported employment role as a “big” or “important part of my life”. People said that it made them happy coming to work, seeing their friends and learning new skills. Others say they work in order to stay active/keep busy, to have a job like other family members, to earn an independent income, or for the pleasure of knowing they are doing their job well. Those who have tried open employment in the past said they enjoyed the supportive environment of an ADE and appreciated the positive encouragement and training provided.

4. Why do most supported employees transition back to supported employment from open employment?

It is useful to analyse this observation from two difference perspectives in order to understand this.

Firstly there are many differences between the participants in supported employment, and the participants in DES/open employment. The discussion paper acknowledges that more than 70% of ADE participants have an intellectual disability, while just 4% of DES participants have an intellectual disability, 44% have a physical disability and 38% have a psychiatric disability. Clearly the style, intensity and manner of support required by a person with severe intellectual disability will be quite different from something with a milder intellectual disability, physical disability or psychiatric disability.

Another important difference between these cohorts is that many high-functioning people with intellectual disability may initially appear to have no impairment whatsoever. In social situations, people with a mild intellectual disability may sometimes be masters of disguise who are acutely aware of the reactions of others and eager to please, reflecting the language and behaviours of those around them in a way that effectively hides their disability. It may only be upon deeper conversation, or once the person feels a sense of acceptance, that the true nature of their disability will be revealed. In other instances an intellectual or disability may limit someone's ability to count, tell time, read and write, or understand and remember instructions, although the person presents as a competent conversationalist with no apparent impairment.

A lack of appreciation for the subtleties of cognitive impairment and the diversity of disability, can make it difficult for DES employment providers and even co-workers or managers to understand and successfully accommodate the needs of a person with intellectual disability. This means that

while open employment may first appear to be a good option for many people with intellectual disability, it will not succeed in the long term unless there is significant education of other staff, an environment of acceptance, an intensity of support, and ongoing involvement from an external provider who can advocate for the person with a disability. Given the factors just described already exist in supported employment, it is easy to see how people can feel more comfortable returning to supported employment, rather than struggling in the often uncaring world of open employment.

Secondly there is a significant difference between the work environment and expertise offered in supported employment, compared with DES/open employment. Simply put, DES services are the experts in open employment for people with the full spectrum of disability including temporary disability, whereas ADE providers are experts in supporting people with moderate to severe disability who have a clearly different set of challenges and needs. The specific expertise of ADEs is to tailor-make roles based on the abilities of each person, whereas the DES sector has a stronger focus on matching people with a disability to existing job roles based on the needs of the employer.

One of the benefits of concurrent funding is that the DES provider may have more opportunity to access specialist expertise from the ongoing ADE provider for the individual. Support staff in ADEs may be able to share insights into successful support strategies based on their knowledge of individuals and their specific disability, thereby ensuring more effective accommodations are introduced at the open employment placement.

Another reason supported employment is better able to provide sustainable employments, is the wide range of ancillary supports are provided by ADE operators as they respond to the needs of the whole person. At Endeavour Foundation, these include:

- Access to the complex behaviour support team and the provision of positive behaviour support plans
- Support of a specialised workplace health and safety team
- Complaint and incident investigation and review
- Supporting supported employees and families with police reports
- Handling transfers to and from other service providers
- Engaging with schools and supporting people doing work experience placements
- Providing training for support staff to maintain quality of support
- Service quality and environmental audits
- Wage assessments and the training of wage assessors
- Developing appropriate modes of communication with SEs and families to share complex information in relation to BSWAT and ongoing industrial matters
- Assisting or supporting supported employees to make BSWAT applications
- Supporting supported employees to investigate and engage with other social, community or work options
- Supporting supported employees via personal counselling and advocacy
- Development and delivery of specialised training programs for supported employees on a range of relevant topics or matters of concern. For example, some of the topics covered in programs developed by Endeavour Foundation are workplace behaviour/expectations, social safety, abuse, budgeting, bullying, complaints, code of conduct, mobile phone use, teamwork, and online/social media safety.

Based on this information we can surmise that, if people with severe disability were not able to access supported employment, most would be unable to access mainstream employment and only a small proportion of could be supported by DES to do so.

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

We believe there may be opportunities for more people to work in open employment if there were a change in community attitudes, a deeper understanding of intellectual disability, and flexible individualised support funding, as outlined previously. However these conditions do not currently exist.

The greatest opportunities may lie in industries that require routine manual labour input, but still provide interesting work in appealing, community-facing sectors such as retail or hospitality.

It would be essential to apply a 'safety net' approach to ensure that supported employees are able to transition successfully and maintain employment by returning back to supported employment if needed, without 'loss of face'.

We consider that concurrent ADE and DES funding appears a potentially good way to support this and provide a more sustainable transitions and eventual placements.

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

This may be because existing systems and processes operate in a way that is reflective of the previous funding model. It may also be that people's previous experiences with DES/open employment have deterred them from trying open employment again. Potentially participants are not aware of the opportunity to access concurrent supports. In some instances support providers may not have sufficient linkages into DES or ADE providers to initiate this kind of support.

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

employment experts. DES providers could be given access to ADE worksites to set up regular forums offering training and information.

Refer also Question 5.

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

A number of factors combined would contribute to higher participation in employment and job-seeking.

Employment support should be discussed as an important component of NDIS planning for people of working age.

Employers should offer a variety of employment options, including financially viable but appealing types of work such as community-facing roles (such as employment in the café area of our Kingaroy Kitchen ADE) and opportunities with a high level of integrated work alongside other community members (such as work in Endeavour Foundation's Tip Shops and Recycle Markets).

Another strategy would be to offer many defined, clear employment pathways, which are advertised up front. For example, an advertisement would explain that to become a forklift driver, these are the steps that you would take, and this is how a service provider could assist.

As previously discussed, it is important to offer a welcoming, adjusting (accommodating) employment environment, with people who generally understand and support people with a disability.

And lastly, feedback from families and carers indicates that one of the greatest drivers for people with intellectual disability wanting to work, will be the knowledge that others are working and the desire to be working too. If the participant has friends who work in a supportive environment they are more likely to be interested.

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

Most ADEs are still marketing their services through traditional advertising channels and direct relationships with local schools. This is changing though, to a more digital landscape. Marketing to people with a disability today is more focused on offering a safe, learning environment that will create the right environment for people to improve their skills and confidence.

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

Whole-of-life service providers will continue to provide a range of services such as supported independent living, capacity building or skill development training and community access along with supported employment.

Some organisations that are ADE providers only, now also offer capacity building/skill development training and support co-ordination in addition to support for finding and keeping a job.

A number of ADEs have also branched out into a broad service offering for participants who were previously supported only as supported employees.

11. What costs would be involved for ADEs that choose to

A) Reform to more open employment models?

This would require extensive business modelling to identify viable enterprise models and set-up costs such as plant, equipment, facility upgrades and potentially moving to new community-facing locations. Along with the new expertise required to operate a different business model, there would also need to be a different sales focus established to ensure commercial outcomes.

B) Redevelop as service providers offering other NDIS supports?

Organisations that expand into new service offerings will need to cover the cost of new infrastructure or the redevelopment of existing facilities, and will need to employ staff with expertise both in delivering and managing new service offerings. However these organisations will face a significant financial challenge as a result of the loss of income derived from commercial activities.

C) Specialise in the provision of employment support as a non-employer?

Organisations that choose to transform in this way will have to manage their income carefully, due to the complete loss of their current funding sources while they as they seek to support employees in other organisations and workplaces.

Whilst they may have many of the right skills within their organisation already, they will need staff with a different sales focus and would have to expend money on transport, capital development/facility redevelopment, and business planning/transformation.

12. Should the government have a role in supporting new market entrants and start-ups in the short-term?

If the market is not delivering on the needs of people with a disability the government, as market steward, may wish to consider this. It would be beneficial if disability employment integration was incentivised or rewarded to ensure positive outcomes from these business models, just as ADEs and DES are. All service provider will learn and benefit from great examples of innovation that others can emulate. These learnings could be shared through a best practice symposium or innovation showcase.

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

Public and private purchasers could be given targets, quotas, or incentives for social procurement via ADEs. A serious NDIA commitment to increasing the uptake of employment supports would also support expansion.

However there are two major factors that must be addressed to encourage expansion and growth. One is the ongoing uncertainty around government support for those ADEs which may become unviable as a result of upcoming industrial decisions. The second is the low pricing applied to supported employment within the NDIS. This issue has been raised by National Disability Services on behalf of service providers collectively.

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

The Government could sponsor a best practice symposium or innovation showcase.

Another option would be to establish Centre of Excellence committees or fora, facilitated by DSS or NDIA. By sharing ideas and innovations across geographies, there would be less concern about the impact of direct competition within markets.

Much could be learned if the channels for sharing information and ideas were faster and better established.

15. How can wage supplementation be better targeted?

Wage supplementation could be better targeted by offering the same or higher funding rates, and then requalifying supplementation levels at milestone dates, according to individual supported employee outcomes (that is, as people attain new skills or are assessed at higher rates of pay). The Department of Social Services / NDIA would need to check this each quarter to ensure ongoing progress where there is genuine capacity for it to be achieved.

The Department of Social Services could also incentivise ADEs with ongoing, higher or bonus funding to encourage a focus on participant outcomes, although the measures and implications would need to be carefully considered.

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

NDIS Planners should directly broach the benefits of employment up front, during every participant planning meeting. For people of working age, employment supports should be included in every plan, unless the person elects to opt out for valid reasons.

They should also provide information about local ADE and DES job ads as examples of the work that is available. This should be supported with marketing and awareness campaigns by the NDIA and information sessions in schools and community centres regarding employment.

It would also be beneficial for NDIS Planners and LACs to complete familiarisation tours of local ADE and DES providers, so they can understand the particular cohorts that each is best able to support, and what their respective service offerings are. Planners and LACs should also be trained to understand employment barriers and the kinds of support that are appropriate for differing situations.

In some areas we have heard anecdotal evidence that NDIS Planners have advised people against ADE participation, although supported employment was within the goals and aspirations of the individual. It is disappointing to learn that some Planners have pre-judged supported employment as an unacceptable participant plan outcome. This does not support choice, control and independence which is central to the NDIS design.

It is essential that the NDIS delivers labour participation benefits in order to deliver on the full economic and social benefits of the scheme, both for participants and carers, and for the Australian economy as a whole.

17. How do current assessment processes drive the inclusion of employment supports in an NDIS participant's plan?

Current outcomes suggest that assessment practices do not necessarily drive the inclusion of employment supports in NDIS participant plans. It is not clear how these might be linked.

A) Are existing employment assessment processes appropriate for NDIS participants?

As outlined in earlier responses, we do not believe existing employment assessment processes will offer drivers for change and growth in the sector. In order to see changes of the kind proposed by the Department, assessments will need to underpin individualised employment outcomes for NDIS participants, and be attached to flexible personal support funding..

18. Are there different approaches to planning that could be explored for different groups of supported employees (e.g. Younger workers, established workers, retirement transition)?

It would be appropriate to apply different planning approaches for people based on age, experience, skill level, aspirations, and current career progress.

An informed understanding of each individual will immensely improve the quality of plans produced, and the outcomes that result.

A) How could SLES better support school leavers to build skills and confidence in order to move from school to employment?

The recent recognition of ADEs as a suitable post-school option for School Leavers is an important and valid change. Endeavour Foundation would like to see the SLES program link closely with local ADEs in each region. This would deliver benefits to both programs, not only increasing the exposure of supported employment as a viable option for school leavers, but also potentially encouraging or demonstrating to ADES how they might go about improving their skill-building/school leavers' program.

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

Please refer to our response to Question 16.

20. 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?

We have recommended a range of strategies throughout this submission, through which the NDIS could steward the growth and development of the employment market and participation rates. These include the sharing of information through best practice symposia, innovation showcase, and economic measures such as procurement incentives or rewards, outcome-based funding and support for innovation.

Since it is within the NDIA's purpose to provide and empower choice for people with a disability, it should also be within the NDIA's prerogative to contribute to developing the disability employment market. This level of engagement will be essential if we are going to raise the bar on current employment outcomes.

In order to succeed in stewarding the employment sector, the NDIA must engage openly and quickly with service providers, to better understand funding anomalies and other barriers to employment.

About Endeavour Foundation

Endeavour Foundation provides meaningful supported employment for 2,300 people with a disability in 28 commercial enterprises along the eastern seaboard, between Mossman and Geelong.

We are dedicated to helping people with a disability live fulfilling lives, working together to turn possibilities into reality for each individual.

We believe in ability and understand that everyone is different, working to make the most of individual skills and interests.

Collectively, Endeavour Foundation supports 4,000 people with a disability through our core services: home, daily living, social and community participation, relationships and independence, learning and work.

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