



# The Salvation Army

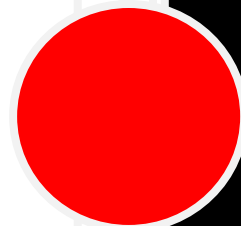
## THE SALVATION ARMY SUBMISSION TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES DISCUSSION PAPER – ENSURING A STRONG FUTURE FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

7 March 2018

**For more information, please contact:**

Lieutenant-Colonel Laurie Robertson  
National Secretary for Government Relations  
The Salvation Army Australia  
**address** 261-265 Chalmers Street Redfern NSW 2016  
**phone** 02 9466 3084  
**mobile** 0417 380 725  
**email** [laurie.robertson@ae.salvationarmy.org](mailto:laurie.robertson@ae.salvationarmy.org)

[www.salvationarmy.org.au](http://www.salvationarmy.org.au)



# The Salvation Army Submission to Department of Social Services Discussion Paper – Ensuring a strong future for supported employment

## ***1. Are there other principles, which should guide the Government’s policy direction for supported employment?***

**Greater awareness of post-school options and pathways to supported or open employment** - With more students with disabilities being supported to attend mainstream schools, we have an opportunity to improve educational and vocational outcomes for persons with a disability. However, unlike their mainstream peers, students with a disability lack awareness of post-school options and have lower expectations in terms of individual outcomes. There needs to be greater emphasis on educating students, families and carers from the beginning of secondary school, on available pathways to further education, supported or open employment.

**Inclusive workplaces that reflect diverse communities** - Our work places do not reflect the inclusive, diverse and accessible communities we are striving to foster. The majority of an ADE’s workforce typically has a disability. When they enter open employment the person with a disability is usually in a significant minority. A community education campaign aimed at achieving widespread cultural change is required for Australia to progress to a community that is truly inclusive and workplaces that genuinely embrace diversity. Initiatives to support employers, including ADEs, to develop sound diversity and inclusion practices are required.

**Support for critical transitions** – For a child with a disability and their families and carers, the stress related to critical periods of transition can be magnified. The transitions from ECEI to Primary School, Primary to Secondary School, and then to post-school options are fraught with anxiety. A greater emphasis on supporting persons with a disability to successfully navigate these transitions and build awareness of pathways to employment will result in improved outcomes.

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

If we consider the NDIS Outcome Domains, participation in supported employment under an NDIS operating model will support many of these but in particular:

- Daily activities
- Relationships
- Health and wellbeing
- Work
- Social, community, civic (and economic) participation

If we consider the broader ILC outcomes, participation in supported employment will help persons with a disability to:

- connect with their local community;
- build the skills and confidence to participate and contribute to the community and to protect their rights;
- provide both capability and opportunity to participate in and benefit from the same community activities and mainstream services as everyone else.

Ultimately, the bigger goal of an ‘ordinary life’ is supported.

# The Salvation Army Submission to Department of Social Services Discussion Paper – Ensuring a strong future for supported employment

A social outcomes measurement tool would be helpful to formally capture useful data on the benefit derived from supported employment and also provide for some comparison with outcomes achieved in open employment. Government funding to assist ADEs to employ such tools would be helpful, as they can be expensive to implement, as would a partnership with an academic institution to conduct research and provide meaningful analysis of the data.

The Salvation Army uses MiSO in some of its disability support programs and has found it a user friendly tool. There are nine outcome domains measured:

- Wellbeing and spirituality
- Social cohesion
- Self determination
- Living situation
- Knowledge and skills
- Individual capabilities
- Healthy life
- Financial resilience
- Employment participation

If delivered well, supported employment should result in improved outcomes under all of these domains.

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

We recently surveyed supported employees at The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities and the top five responses were:

- Learning new skills (49%)
- Making friends (44%)
- Money (41%)
- Something to do (41%)
- Fun (37.5%)

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

At The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities our supported employees enjoy a sense of belonging and an opportunity to form good relationships with their peers. This may be in contrast to the difficulties faced fitting in and feeling genuinely included in a mainstream environment. A community education campaign aimed at achieving a significant transformation in social behaviour is required before we enjoy inclusive communities that embrace diversity. Support to employers in the open job market to develop sound diversity and inclusion practices, will be beneficial. Programs aimed at providing temporary work placements, prior to a permanent appointment in open employment will also facilitate a smooth transition.

## The Salvation Army Submission to Department of Social Services Discussion Paper – Ensuring a strong future for supported employment

A recent survey of supported employees at The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities revealed that 69% of employees had never considered applying for another job. When asked why, the majority of respondents replied that they were happy at Creative Opportunities (50%). Other respondents expressed a concern that they lacked appropriate job search skills and skills that are transferable to the open employment market.

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

Greater emphasis on educating students, families and carers from the beginning of secondary school, on available pathways to open employment, is required. In addition, responses to The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities supported employees survey, indicates that supported employees need to build capacity and skills to feel confident to apply for and participate in, open employment. This would include social skills development, so they can interact with mainstream employees with confidence.

It may be beneficial to introduce job search support as a feature of supported employment in an ADE. This would enable a longer term approach to be taken to addressing vocational and non-vocational barriers to accessing open employment concurrently and within an environment that the employee feels comfortable in. ADE's could also provide peer-to-peer mentoring, work exposure, industry tours and on-the-job training for DES participants where there is capacity. For this support to be successfully delivered, ADEs need to be educated in how to broaden their service offering and provide additional employment related supports under the NDIS.

Assistance to employers in the open job market, to develop effective diversity strategies that will genuinely support an inclusive workplace is critical. Recruitment, induction and retention policies need to be flexible enough to address the diverse needs of persons with a disability. In addition, support for small business owners to navigate the complexity of relevant legislation is essential in order to remove existing barriers to employment opportunities. Complex legislation is a disincentive to small business considering providing opportunities to persons with a disability.

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

The old system of block funding ADEs to support a capped number of employees may have acted as a disincentive to support staff to move into the open job market. There was an inherent inflexibility that meant, if an employee moved to open employment and then changed their mind, the option to go back to their original position in supported employment may not have been available. Under the NDIS, this will no longer be a barrier, as the number of employees an ADE can support is only restricted by operational capacity. This may provide a measure of assurance to employees anxious about moving to open employment. A gradual process of supporting the employee to build capacity and slowly transition to open employment, with fluidity between workplaces for an initial period may be helpful. This will require ADEs to be informed about how to broaden their service offering and access funding for the provision

## The Salvation Army Submission to Department of Social Services Discussion Paper – Ensuring a strong future for supported employment

of employment support under the NDIS. Greater (formal) collaboration between DES providers and ADEs would also result in improved outcomes for participants.

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

Under current NDIS funding for supported employment there is little excess capacity for staff at an ADE to work on skills development that is not directly related to operational tasks, in order to facilitate the successful transition to open employment. This would require the provider to broaden the service offer to include capacity building and other employment related supports. If supported employees who aspired to move to open employment were able to use capacity building funding to access skills development in the workplace, either in a group or individually, additional resources could be employed to achieve this. Options to encourage providers to pilot capacity building initiatives would be beneficial.

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

At The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities, we have recently invested in online marketing – updating our website to market our service to participants looking for supported employment and consumers of our goods and services. In addition, the Buyability network is a useful marketing tool. Word of mouth continues to be a significant source of new participants, with 88% of supported employees indicating they would recommend Creative Opportunities as an employer to their friends. We also make extensive use of industry and Disability Sector networks.

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

At The Salvation Army's Creative Opportunities, our focus has been on successfully transitioning to the NDIS operating environment, adapting policies, procedures and infrastructure to support this. We have also invested considerable effort into ensuring sustainability in a changing operating environment. We have not had the resources available to broaden our service offer to include other supports. If our business transformation strategy is successful, we may be in a better position to examine other options for support in the future.

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

With a number of existing providers struggling to adapt to a changing operating environment, we would prefer to see Government investment targeted at supporting the successful transition, improved business practices and ongoing viability of current ADEs, prior to funding new entrants.

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

Funding to support ADEs to modernise production processes and invest in upgrading existing technology and equipment will improve long term viability of businesses. This in turn, will lead to greater opportunities for persons with a disability to participate in supported employment. For many providers, it has been a challenge to operate an economically viable enterprise and deliver individually appropriate support to employees with disabilities. An investment in targeted training for managers of ADEs to develop sound business acumen is encouraged. In addition, investment in training to facilitate ADEs to broaden their service offer to provide employment related support and capacity building should be a priority.

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

As already mentioned, a WOG approach to informing participants, families and carers on the pathways to employment early, is required. This will facilitate informed choice and control regarding post-school options and raise current expectations regarding educational and vocational outcomes.

Consideration should be given to replicating the *NDS WA's Transition to Employment Project* across other jurisdictions. The *Customised Employment* approach to supporting individuals to transition to employment that commences in Year 10 of their secondary education, achieves a number of the initiatives supported in this response. It has successfully achieved improved outcomes for participants, through engaging families and carers; educators; disability service providers; Government agencies; DES providers; and employers in a coordinated response to individualised vocational support for persons with a disability.

Also critical, is appropriate training for LACs and NDIS planners, so that all engaged in the planning process, bring an employment first mindset to the table. Where a participant is identified as being or becoming eligible to enter the workforce, the plan should mandatorily include funding for finding and keeping a job and associated capacity building. The current SLES funding is not well understood and is too limited and restrictive. A review of the approach to funding employment support, including the interface with DES, in order to simplify the current complexity, is considered helpful.