



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Ensuring a strong future for supported employment Consultations

Summary of stakeholder
consultations December 2017
– April 2018



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Part One

Introduction

From December 2017 to April 2018, the Department of Social Services (the Department) consulted with stakeholders on the future for supported employment.

The purpose of these consultations was to help the Australian Government develop principles to guide future supported employment policy to ensure positive employment outcomes for people with disability under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The consultations built on work the Department has undertaken in recent years to improve how the Government can best support people with disability to work.

Stakeholders who participated in these consultations included people with disability and their family members, Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), other and emerging supported employment providers, Disability Employment Services (DES) providers, peak associations, disability advocates, and researchers.

Consultations highlighted that supported employment is an important issue. Stakeholders welcomed Government focus on the area and enthusiastically offered views on challenges and opportunities for future policy development. The Department would like to acknowledge the significant time and effort stakeholders gave to the consultation process, and thank everyone who participated for their contributions.

This summary provides an overview of key issues voiced at the workshops and supported employee interviews, and the feedback provided in the written submissions. The summary does not detail all feedback received, but highlights themes divided into parts:

- Part One** Introduction, executive summary (Easy Read), principles for policy development and key observations
- Part Two** Key themes that inform specific ideas for policy development
- Part Three** Additional information, including breakdowns of submissions to the discussion paper, the workshops and interviews with supported employees.

Consultation Format

As part of consultations, the Department:

- published a discussion paper, which received 63 submissions in response, between 7 December 2017 and 16 March 2018
- held ten targeted workshops in six cities with around 200 stakeholders in February and March 2018
- conducted group discussions and interviews with 54 supported employees in April 2018.

In this report, these forms of consultations are referred to as submissions, workshops and interviews respectively. 'Stakeholders' is a broad term used for anyone who has been consulted and includes supported employees, their families and carers, services providers and advocates. To assist with context a description is sometimes used, such as 'peak body' or 'family member'.

A breakdown of the submissions, including workshop locations, design and attendees, and interview method and locations is at Part Three – Additional information.

Executive summary

How to use this document



The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) wrote this report. When you see the word 'we' it means DSS.



We have written this executive summary in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.



Some words are written in **bold**. We explain what these words mean.



You can ask for help to read this report.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

About this report



This report is about what people told us about the future for supported employment.



Supported employment is when businesses employ mostly people with disability and support them in their job.



More than just good business

Supported employees are usually people who work in **Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)**.

Australian Disability Enterprises are businesses that employ mostly people with disability.



In December 2017 we wrote a document called *Ensuring a strong future for supported employment*.



We asked people to:

- read the document
- tell us what they think.



When somebody tells us what they think we call it a **submission**.



We received 63 submissions.



The submissions came from:

- people with disability (5 submissions)
- family members (7 submissions)
- ADEs (19 submissions)
- disability peak bodies – organisations that represent people with disability or disability services providers (12 submissions)
- service providers (7 submissions)
- advocates – people who support you and help you have your say (5 submissions)
- others (8 submissions).



We also held 10 workshops around Australia.

200 people came to our workshops.



The people who took part in the workshops included:

- ADEs
- other providers of supported employment
- disability peak bodies – organisations that represent people with disability or disability services providers
- advocates – people who support you and help you have your say
- family members
- people with disability
- researchers – people who are studying in this area.



We talked to groups of supported employees around Australia.

54 supported employees talked to us.



This report explains what people told us.

The main things people told us are:

1. Jobs are really important to people with disability, but there are things that make it hard to get a job.
2. Help to get a job and move to different jobs is really important.
3. Wages for people with disability is an important issue.
4. Ideas to help build strong businesses that give lots of people with disability jobs.

This report has more information about these four things, on pages 22 to 50.

The future for supported employment



The Australian Government thinks the future of supported employment is really important.



Everyone agrees having jobs for people with disability is really important.



But people have different ideas about what it should be like.



Everyone wants to make sure the needs of people with disability are put first.



Some people are not sure what supported employment will be like under the **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**.



The NDIS is a new way of providing support to people with disability in Australia.



People with disability who take part in the NDIS are called **participants**.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



DSS will work together with the people who look after the NDIS.

5 important principles



There are 5 important ideas that will guide the future for supported employment.

We call these **principles**.

The 5 important principles are:



1. NDIS participants who want to work, should be able to.



2. NDIS participants should have a clear path to employment and to move jobs.



3. Lots of different businesses should offer supported employment.



4. We need good businesses that employ and support people with disability under the NDIS.



5. There should be some certainty about wages for people with disability.

What will happen next?



We want to keep talking to people who care about employment for people with disability.



At the end of 2018 we will write another document and put it on our Engage website.



We will talk about our ideas for the future.

We'll ask people to:

- read the document
- tell us what they think.



If you have something to tell us now, you can send us an email at:
sepolicy@dss.gov.au

Principles

Across consultations, the Department sought advice from stakeholders on foundational principles for supported employment policy development. The Department proposed four key principles in the discussion paper, which stakeholders were invited to respond to in their written submissions. In general, stakeholders agreed with these principles, but also suggested supplementary principles. The table below lists the discussion paper principles and suggested supplementary principles.

Discussion paper principles	Stakeholder suggested supplementary principles
1. An 'employment first' approach for all NDIS participants of working age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment that brings about inclusion and social integration
2. A diversity of employers providing employment supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEs are considered a genuine employment outcome • An 'open employment first' approach • A human rights approach • Training and skills development are prioritised
3. Strong and viable disability enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) plays an active leadership and stewardship role
4. Employees and employers have certainty about industrial wage setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported employees have true choice and control over how, where and when they work • Clearly defined and measurable employment outcomes • Person-centred, evidence based, innovative policies and services that are accessible and relevant to geographic context (urban, regional, rural) and cultural diversity • Fair wages contribute to a reduction in the correlation between disability and poverty • Increased employment for people with disability • A realistic, whole of life employment pathway • Flexible, adequate and timely supports to enable transition across different models of employment

Part One

Key observations

Three key observations can be made about the views and feedback put forward by stakeholders across all consultation types. The aim of this section is to acknowledge these observations and allow the Department to clarify some questions asked by the sector during the consultations.

1. People with disability need to be at the centre of policy development

All consultations highlighted that people with disability need to be at the centre of policy development.

The interviews with 54 supported employees gave valuable insight into issues supported employees face in their current employment and in achieving their goals and aspirations. The lived experience of supported employees is captured throughout this report.

For future supported employees, over half of the most important outcomes identified in workshops related to choice and control of employment, including choice and control over the type and place of work.

The tension between valuing their current workplace, and desiring work outside of an ADE was explored in the supported employee interviews. When asked if their current job is the kind of job they wanted, approximately 30 out of 54 supported employees interviewed said yes. This included many supported employees who noted they were happy and secure in

their current job and workplace, and saw this as their ongoing and future job. Approximately 20 out of 54 supported employees wanted to move into open employment in the future.

In submissions, there were varying views on what putting people with disability at the centre of policy development means and what evidence should be drawn upon. For some ADEs, this means ensuring ADE viability to facilitate employment outcomes for people with disability thereby achieving 'choice' of employment type. Some submissions observed that the discussion paper could have provided a better opportunity to engage in the human rights framework of employment. Down Syndrome Australia cautioned that the selective use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to support the continuation of segregated work environments is inappropriate. Some submissions also noted that the discussion paper did not reference the history and research conducted in the previous 30 years, or provide a strategy for protecting the rights of people with disability to work in an inclusive environment.

People with disability and good employment outcomes are at the centre of policy development.

2. Government leadership in policy setting

Across the ten workshops and in some submissions, stakeholders raised the need for strong Government leadership in future policy setting for supported employment. In particular, there was confusion about which Government

agency would be responsible for supported employment policy in the future.

While funding responsibility for employment supports is transitioning from the Department to the NDIA, policy oversight for employment outcomes for people with disability remains the Department's responsibility.

Workshop participants acknowledged the complexity of the current supported employment landscape, especially the transition of funding to the NDIS; however they called on the Government to provide more certainty and clarity on funding settings, particularly the definition of reasonable and necessary supports in NDIS plans and the price of those supports.

Overall, stakeholders agreed the Department should have an ongoing policy role and stressed this needs to be communicated to the sector. Most workshop participants expressed a desire for the Government to demonstrate stewardship in helping the sector through the transition to the NDIS, to protect the jobs of the existing 20,000 supported employees in ADEs and ensure the broader viability of supported employment.

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring policy settings enable good employment outcomes for people with disability and the need to clearly communicate policy settings to the sector.

The Department retains policy oversight for supported employment and works closely with the NDIA, as employment supports are implemented through NDIS participant plans.

3. The sector has diverse views on supported employment

While this summary aims to provide an overview of key themes emerging from the consultations, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholders had diverse and varying views regarding supported employment. This highlights the complex policy landscape of supported employment, and is evident throughout this summary.

Whether supported employment should be considered a desirable employment outcome for people with disability was contested by a number of stakeholders, with some arguing open employment was the only legitimate employment outcome and expressing concerns about the segregated nature of ADEs.

Advocates and disability peak bodies voiced concern that the current model of supported employment in ADEs did not meet Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly the rights to inclusion and non-discrimination. There was concern that ADEs do not uphold these rights because of their segregated environments. Additionally, it was suggested that ADEs deny people with disability the right to exercise the choice of open employment. These submissions called on the Government to develop a strategy

to achieve good outcomes for people with disability in more integrated settings.

Advocates and some peak bodies argued that the alternative to working in an ADE, is work in open employment with the right policy settings.

In contrast, a number of stakeholders argued working in an ADE was a positive employment outcome for people with disability, and expressed concern that the discussion paper appeared to focus too strongly on a desire for open employment outcomes.

Most ADEs advocated that they provide social inclusion for people who would not otherwise have it, as the alternative to working in an ADE would be participation activities or home-based isolation.

Social connection, a sense of belonging and descriptions of ADEs being a 'family' for supported employees were consistently raised as the reason supported employees stay in an ADE for long periods. One submission argued the social inclusion outcomes facilitated by ADEs mean that the model meets Australia's international human rights obligations.

Importantly, within stakeholder groups many views were not uniform. For example, within the group of ADEs that participated in consultations there were a wide range of views on the role ADEs might play in the future and how Government should support the provider market.

Stakeholders defined 'supported employment' differently, with some describing it as

employment exclusively provided in ADEs, and others taking a broader view that included job customisation, labour hire models and supports that could be better provided to an individual in open employment. While stakeholders acknowledged that supported employment would be different with the maturity of the NDIS, it was difficult for them to describe how.

Stakeholders acknowledged that the landscape for supported employment is already changing, and some offered different policy ideas for supported employees at ADEs currently, compared to new supported employees in the future (see for example, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Disability Employment Australia).

Navigating complex and diverse views, the Department will aim to secure good outcomes for existing and future supported employees, through policy development.

Key Themes

There were four key themes emerging from consultation. This part explores those four themes, highlighting views and proposed options in each.

Employment as a priority for people with disability

- Employment first in NDIS plans
- Building aspirations and expectations of people with disability
- Experiences of open employment
- Defining ‘meaningful work’
- The role of education
- Engaging with new participants
- Training and skills development

Clear pathways to employment at different life stages with appropriate supports

- The importance of choice
- Systems issues related to policy and process
- Person-centred policies and services
- The interaction between ADEs and DES
- Supporting transitions out of supported employment

Wages for people with disability

- Industrial wage assessment practice remains uncertain
- The need for a ‘good’ wage to support effective and fair economic participation
- Wages and the Disability Support Pension

A strong business market

- Business viability in a changing marketplace
- Ongoing, block grant funding for ADEs separate from NDIS plans
- New market entrants
- Innovation
- Social procurement and collaboration

The following section of this summary report provides an analysis of submissions, feedback at workshops and supported employee interview responses and presents consultation findings as they relate to these key themes, alongside proposed ideas for policy development.

Part Two - 1

1. Employment as a priority for people with disability

Across all consultations types there was agreement that employment is a priority for people with disability and should be both an aspiration and an expectation. Stakeholders identified a number of barriers to people with disability accessing employment and related issues, which are outlined below.

1.1 Employment first in NDIS Plans

One of the most common concerns expressed by stakeholders in submissions (37 out of 63) and workshops was a lack of employment supports in NDIS participant plans. The majority of submissions and workshop participants agreed with the Government's principle in the discussion paper of 'An employment first approach for all NDIS participants of working age.'

“Deploying an ‘employment first’ approach is a necessary and reasonable expectation of the NDIS to promote the right to an ordinary life.”

- Activ, ADE

“There is need for a work-first planning approach that asks supported employees about their career goals.”

- Melbourne workshop

In workshops there were strong views that changes are needed in the NDIS planning process to achieve an 'employment first' approach. Concerns were raised about the

NDIA's role in ensuring employment was both encouraged and communicated clearly in people's individual plans. In areas where the NDIS rollout is not as far progressed there were fewer concerns. Some ADEs have sought to rectify concerns with NDIS planning by actively taking on a support role in the planning process for their existing employees. These ADEs noted that this involves a significant amount of their resources, and that they do not receive funding specifically for this assistance.

Stakeholders consistently communicated what was at stake if employment was not prioritised in NDIS planning. They highlighted the social and health costs of unemployment for people with disability, contrasted with the economic benefits of supported employment (including second tier benefits such as freeing up family members and carers to participate in the labour market). Some stakeholders noted the potential for employment to offset NDIS costs.

Submissions raised concerns that NDIS Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and NDIS planners did not appreciate the importance of employment, were unaware of the options available to an individual seeking employment, or were actively discouraging people from working in an ADE.

“In some instances, NDIA Planners/ Local Area Co-ordinators (‘LACs’) have discouraged some NDIS participants to pursue supported employment, suggesting it is not an attractive pathway or have overlooked the matter of employment during the planning process entirely.”

- Bedford Group, ADE

Other submissions cited cases of existing employees going into planning meetings uninformed of what they needed to request in order to seek or maintain supported employment. Low numbers of NDIS plans with employment supports was cited in submissions as evidence of the above issues.

Across consultations, the Department heard frustration among various stakeholders with regard to the NDIS. As well as employment supports reportedly missing from participant plans, there were concerns that when a participant wants to rectify this, they are waiting three to six months for a review process.

“What we now have under the NDIS is a situation whereby people with a disability are being forced to wait, in some cases for over 6 months to commence employment. The NDIS should be an enabler of employment not an inhibitor of employment.”

- Disability Services Australia, ADE

The supported employee interviews did not focus on NDIS processes (see Additional information for a list of interview questions).

Stakeholder ideas

Priorities identified in submissions and workshops to address concerns about NDIS planning included:

- Employment as a standing item in all NDIS plans for people of working age
- An ‘opt-out’ approach to employment supports in plans

- Allowing employment to be a NDIS plan amendment without triggering review, or expediting a review
- Funding employment supports as a preference before social participation programs
- Increase NDIA planners and LACs’ awareness of available employment options.

“Employment needs to be part of every planning conversation. The process needs to be iterative and involve all those who might be able to make employment a real possibility.”

- Self Help Workplace, ADE

While employment champions currently exist at a local level in the NDIS, sector and community awareness of these champions is low and their engagement in promoting employment for people with disability appears to vary greatly across regions.

1.2. Building aspirations and expectations for people with disability

The empowerment of people with disability to access employment opportunities of their choice was a central concern for all stakeholders. A significant concern raised in the workshops and written submissions was the need to build employment aspiration and normalise employment as part of a life pathway for people with disability. Almost half of the submissions (31) included the need to build aspiration and expectation for employment among people with disability.

“For some families, work is not part of their life. Carers on pensions may not have worked. In areas of high unemployment, there are communities and families who have no lived experience of work. Effort is needed to build community understanding of work and the benefits of employment.”

- Self Help Workplace, ADE

“Significantly increasing mainstream employment rates of people likely to enter ADEs relies on building up expectations of work from a young age.”

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, Peak Body

Regardless of how stakeholders viewed the role of ADEs, there was broad agreement on the need to build an expectation of employment among people with disability. Some stakeholders argued employment in ADEs should not be considered a good employment outcome for people with disability, arguing policy settings should focus on and build expectation for open employment. Some stakeholders argued that ADEs should be shut down.

“Supported working environments – Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) – are not appropriate working environments for people with disability. Rather than focusing on reform of ADEs, the focus should be on the replacement of ADEs with an expanded

range of meaningful and valued employment roles in open employment for people with disabilities.”

- Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, Advocacy agency

Stakeholder ideas

- Build expectation of employment from an early age
- Adopt models of employment that seek to create good employment outcomes, in both the social and economic aspects of people's lives
- Introduce a Universal Basic Income
- Practice job customisation, or employment in social firms.

1.3. Experiences of open employment

Feedback from stakeholders across consultation types included the need to address the negative attitudes of employers in open employment. Many of the supported employees interviewed noted they had been bullied, or treated poorly by managers, staff and / or customers in open employment (11 of 20 employees who had worked in open employment).

“I found it demanding, very demanding. Very fast, I couldn't keep up. And I was picked on. You know: ‘you're dumb, you're not worth anything, what are you doing here anyway? You obviously didn't go to school'. Just stupid things like that.”

- Supported employee

“I think potential employers need more understanding and knowledge of people with disability, because there’s always been that mentality, not just in employment but in social life as well, there’s always been that kind of thing of ‘they’re a bit different, stay away from these people’. So I think there needs to be more understanding. Just because we have a certain barrier, it doesn’t mean we can’t do something.”

- Supported employee

A number of submissions (26) specifically suggested educating employers about benefits of employing people with disability to challenge stigma and make open employment more accommodating for people with disability. Some submissions and many workshop participants suggested introducing a quota system for employing people with disability.

“Difficulties in building new sustainable friendships with co-workers without a disability can make fitting into a new workplace difficult. Supported employees may need intensive support in initial stages of open employment to get this established.”

- LEAD, ADE

In the submissions, many stakeholders advocated making open employment more accommodating for people with disability, with 16 of 63 submissions explicitly stating this as a priority.

“People with disability face pervasive low expectations and discrimination relating to education and employment, which undermine their potential to find and keep meaningful job opportunities in the open employment market.”

- Disabled People’s Organisations Australia, Peak Body

Stakeholders also frequently expressed that there is already strong desire to work among people with disability.

“Rhonda Galbally AO, NDIS Board member, in her keynote address to a DEA conference, made a critical observation that in 40 years of advocacy she had never met a person with disability who did not want to work.”

- Disability Employment Australia, Peak Body

One submission recommended policy development considers ways to assist people with disability who are solely active in community participation into employment.

Stakeholder proposed ideas

- Education targeted at mainstream employers to change social norms around employing a person with disability
- A quota system for employing people with disability
- Ensure employees with disability have equal access to training, especially vocational training, and career advancement

- Require mainstream workplaces to implement measures to prevent bullying and harassment
- Educate employers about the importance of simple communication and showing employees how to do a job rather than telling them how to do it
- Clearly define roles for people with disability to reduce exploitation
- Provide mainstream workplaces with funds and additional support.

1.4. Defining ‘meaningful work’

The concept of ‘meaningful work’ was explored in detail in workshops, with stakeholder agreement on the need for supported employment to offer people with disability genuine and valued work. This was often defined as work that employees see contributing value to business and community needs.

Other views on defining ‘meaningful work’ focussed on work in open employment; employment based on the individual’s goals, aspirations and capacity; delivering fair wages; and hours the participant wants to work.

Through the workshops, stakeholders identified several ideal outcomes related to meaningful work for people with disability. These included:

- More people with disability are employed or transitioning into employment, helping them to achieve greater independence
- All employees feel valued in their employment with a strong workplace culture that supports people with disability regardless of the type of employment they choose

- Everybody with disability has the opportunity to work within a system that is sustainable, with a real career path

The majority of submissions (32) suggested that ADEs should be considered a ‘genuine employment outcome’.

The most common things supported employees liked about their current jobs were their workplace friendships and the supportive environment of the workplace. Many comments focussed on the strong and positive social interactions and friendships that exist within ADEs, often describing these as being a ‘family’ or ‘second family.’

The most common things supported employees interviewed disliked about their current jobs were low wages, lack of training and lack of variety.

“We sort out paper, sort out white and coloured paper. I don’t like that too much because it gets boring.”

- Supported employee

While the majority of supported employees consulted with were happy with their current wages, a significant number felt their wages were too low.

Supported employees who participated in group discussions and interviews were very aware of their hours of work. In some interview locations, all or most supported employees were working 35-40 hours a week, while in other locations supported employees were working anything between one and four days each week and between six and 30 hours a week. This included a large number who worked two or three days a week and some who worked a number of short

shifts across two to four days. A majority of supported employees interviewed indicated they were currently happy with the hours they were working, noting their hours suited their lifestyles and abilities.

“I won’t go back to five [days]. Five is too much. Four would be about it...”

- Supported employee

“I’m getting older. Three’s about my limit now.”

- Supported employee

However, a significant number noted they would like to work more hours each week.

“I want to get an extra day or get a Wednesday here. I think that’s just the money. I’m trying to support my daughter. More hours.”

- Supported employee

Interviews and group discussions highlighted that a number of supported employees are very aware of the potential for career progression and would like more support to do so.

A number of supported employees noted the importance of working more hours as part of a progression to a preferred future job in open employment.

“My goal, not now, but in the future, is to work three days a week at [current ADE] and two days in the open employment...”

- Supported employee

“Me, I’d like a few more hours sometimes. Not regularly, but sometimes. Because how am I going to adjust to open employment if I can’t do it here? Most shifts in open employment could be six to eight hours a day. I’m doing four, sometimes less than that, sometimes. So, for me to adjust and actually get out on my own and feel confident to do so, I need to gradually increase the hours to do that.”

- Supported employee

Stakeholder ideas

- Individualised, holistic supports
- Improve transitions to open employment, social enterprises or micro businesses
- Reduce stigma towards ADEs, including not referring to supported employment, but just ‘employment’
- Improve the image of ADEs through marketing campaigns
- Ability for the employee to upskill, change roles, recognise skill attainment and learning
- No minimum number of hours to work in supported employment or open employment.

1.5. The role of education

The importance of engaging effectively with the education system to introduce teenagers with disability to the idea of work as the norm was a strong and consistent theme in workshops and submissions. Down Syndrome Western Australia observed in their submission the critical nature of this period in an individual's life, stating that many people with disability fall through the cracks in years 10 and 12.

The importance of connections with schools was also highlighted by the fact that for many ADEs, a large number of supported employees come into their business directly through a school.

“At the moment there’s a funnel from schools to ADEs which they have a direct relationship with.”

- Brisbane workshop participant

Supported employees in group discussions and interviews confirmed this.

“I did a bit of work experience here, but I got the job from school.”

- Supported employee

“The introduction of the NDIS funded School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) is an important link in the continuum between school and employment.”

- Thorndale, ADE

It was suggested this program should be more widely promoted to schools and NDIA planning staff and better used to help students

with disability sample employment options, prior to finishing school, in a more targeted and intensive way. In their submission, Occupational Therapy Australia suggested that better guidance and associated supports for students through the SLES are needed to ensure meaningful and sustainable placement outcomes.

Another suggestion was to expand access to the SLES program, with one submission stating it could act as a bridge between school and DES for school leavers who need more assistance and training before entering open employment. At the same time, stakeholders cautioned that any expansion of the program would need to be conducted based on evaluation of current SLES outcomes.

One submission suggested that only providers who have demonstrated their effectiveness to deliver open employment outcomes for young people with disability should deliver the SLES.

Some submissions highlighted the potential of ADEs and their connections with schools to more strategically assist in the critical transition from the education system to employment.

“ADEs would be better utilised during the transition to work period.”

- Family member of supported employee

People with disability, supported employees' family members, ADEs, peak bodies, and advocates all stated that engagement with schools would generate better lifetime employment outcomes. One submission focussed on the need to engage effectively and early with people with autism and raise the value of mentoring within the school setting.

“Schools are the obvious place for peer mentoring programs as a start.”

- Simon Edwards, person with disability

In workshops and submissions, there was strong interest in how targeted ‘discovery’ could be integrated at the beginning of an individual’s employment journey, shifting away from work for work’s sake, toward holistic career pathway planning that matches individual skills and interests to a job.

Workshop discussions also touched on the low numbers of youth currently working in ADEs. This, it was suggested, was perhaps a result of a lack of targeted and meaningful engagement with youth. Some stakeholders questioned whether ADEs were the best place for young people with disability.

“People say that ‘working with your peers’ is important to people in ADEs. But for a 19 year old out of school, what is it about working with 40 year olds that is like ‘working with your peers’. Nah, that’s just saying the only commonality you have is your disability.”

- Workshop participant

Stakeholder ideas

- Introduce work experience into the national high school curriculum (a prioritised action identified across all ten workshops)
- Careers counselling and aspiration building from as early as 14 or 15 years of age

- Work experience before a person with disability leaves school
- Encourage teenagers with disability to seek and maintain a part-time job (much like their peers without disability)
- Expand SLES to other cohorts
- ‘Open employment first’ principle in NDIS plans for school leavers
- Facilitate a discovery process, including thorough NDIS planning, careers counselling, schools and vocational training, or employment supports experts

1.6. Engaging with new participants

In consultations new participants were understood to include not only people reaching working age and entering employment, but also people who may acquire disability and need employment supports, and people who through their NDIS plans may build capacity to engage in supported employment.

A couple of submissions expressed concern that the Government’s discussion paper did not fully consider how supported employment could be offered to new participants. One submission argued Government needs to look closely at the people who are expected to be NDIS participants, but are not currently in work, and how they can be engaged.

One submission raised the importance of building employment goals and opportunities for people with disability who have not previously worked but want to.

“It is also very unclear as to what the process is for having employment supports included in planning discussions, or where to begin an employment pathway.”

- Sharing Places, day program facilitator

Stakeholder ideas

- Build expectations and aspirations of people with disability for employment
- Investigate ways to engage with people in community participation or who have never worked before.

1.7. Training and skills development

Across consultations, stakeholders called for more on-the-job training and development opportunities for supported employees. In interviews and group discussions, supported employees were very aware of the importance of training. For many, the training and skill development opportunities provided by their ADE was one of the major elements they liked about their current job.

“We get a lot of training up at (name of ADE) and yes, we get to have our say and that, and we’ve got a committee and that, and yes, the staff are friendly.”

- Supported employee

At the same time, supported employees cited a lack of training as being the second most common thing they disliked about their current job. Similar to hours worked, there was a wide range of supported employee views on this, and it highlights that there is substantial difference in experiences.

“There’s not enough training here. We’re not getting, really, any training.”

- Supported employee

“With the other system they used to have, they used to have an assessment for about a week or two. They only do an hour a week (now) and they probably should do more.”

- Supported employee

Supported employees often related a lack of training to low wages. Supported employees who wanted to earn more money were aware of how training could lead to an assessment of increased capacity and the opportunity to earn higher wages.

Supported employees also noted the connection between training and work variety. Lack of variety in their jobs was another major dislike of supported employees.

Some supported employees noted that training and skills development was needed to help them progress towards open employment. Supported employees saw training and assessment as critical to their ability to move on or rotate into other tasks in the ADE.

“To do more training, to expand my learning, I’d like to get another job, like in the grounds maintenance industry.”

- Supported employee

Many ADE submissions stated they provide the best environment for training and skills development, especially for people with intellectual disability, who make up the majority of their workforce. For many ADEs, supported

employment provides people with exposure to a real workplace and helps build the skills and confidence to transition to open employment.

A large number of submissions saw the purpose of ADEs as being to prepare people for open employment. Several submissions suggested ADEs should be promoted as a temporary learning and development phase leading to open employment, with one submission proposing that ADEs could provide a time limited apprenticeship (e.g. for two years), focussed on building job skills and independence.

“The concept of supported employment must have a primary goal (and the necessary funding) of being a training and preparation facility to transition people through to open employment if they choose that path.”

- Australian Blindness Forum, Peak Body

Many advocates wrote that the training and development provided in ADEs do not lead to people transitioning to open employment. They advocated education, training and skills development, contributes to stronger employment outcomes when delivered in the open employment environment.

All stakeholders acknowledged the importance of an educated and skilled disability support workforce, of individuals who know how to engage with people with disability and can effectively identify support needs for employees. Several ADEs spoke in workshops about the desire to provide more training to support staff and thereby ensure better outcomes for supported employees. However,

they expressed that their resources are mostly dedicated to running a sustainable business.

A number of supported employees noted their workplace experience could be improved if there were more staff and supervisors, and / or if these staff were better qualified and more experienced in working with people with disability.

“Better qualified staff...”

“And more staff, so one staff member is not coping with all the employees in one room.”

“More support for the newer fellas and some of the fellas that need more support.”

- Supported employees

Stakeholder ideas

- Address low expectations and discrimination in education, particularly segregated educational settings
- Greater support for ADEs to provide training and skills
- ADEs as an apprenticeship model for example for two years
- ‘Place’ first in employment then ‘train’ as a preference.

Part Two - 2

2. Clear pathways to employment at different life stages with appropriate supports

Many stakeholders acknowledged in submissions and workshops that pathways to employment at different life stages will change over time as the NDIS rolls out to full scheme and beyond.

The right supports at specific points in a person's pathway was a clear theme. In all consultations, the importance of engaging and working with families more effectively was seen as critical in enabling better access to the right supports at the right time. The Carers Australia submission advocated the need to include carers and family in designing policy, particularly where transport and other supports will be needed.

2.1. The importance of 'choice'

The importance of real and informed choice was a key theme across consultations. Workshop participants noted people with disability should have flexibility, variety, choice and control in the type and place of work, with access to employment that suits them and meets their aspirations.

Consultations highlighted that there are multiple and diverse factors that go into employment decisions for people with disability. These – along with the way policies and systems interact – combine to complicate the matter of 'choice' for supported employees.

Both ADEs and advocates expressed the need to ensure participants are provided with relevant and accessible information about their employment options, and supported to move across and between employment models as they wished.

“[Physical Disability Council of NSW] PDCN would like to see an emphasis on ensuring individuals' decision-making capacity is respected within supported employment, and supported employees are offered greater choice and control in their employment, with access to appropriate support for decision making if required.”

- Physical Disability Council of NSW, Peak Body

“Employees have ownership/part of decision making.”

- Brisbane workshop

“A principle of choice and control should also recognise the value in keeping people with disability informed about and included in the wage setting process so that they understand award rates, industry structure, and the workplace modifications and role [of] adjustments applicable to them.”

- Western Australia Department of Communities, Disability Services

Twelve submissions and several workshop participants proposed that the Government could make incentive payments to ADEs who successfully placed supported employees in open employment. One submission suggested

ADEs should be paid an allowance to support employees in open employment.

“Accordingly we recommend that ADEs automatically be able to take on the role of placing supported employees who wish to work into open employment and receive a weekly open employment support payment to provide ongoing support to the PWD and their open employer.”

- Greenacres, ADE

Similar to the Federal Government program Restart, one submission proposed a financial incentive of up to \$10,000, GST inclusive, to encourage businesses to hire and retain people with disability.

Not all stakeholders agreed with the proposal of outcome payments, with some noting they have the potential to perversely incentivise providers to seek superficial outcomes.

Stakeholder ideas

- Increase peer support and leadership opportunities for supported employees
- Incentive payments to organisations that employ people with disability.

2.2. Systems issues related to policy and process

Workshop discussions covered many issues and barriers to a strong future for supported employment. Well-designed policy and processes were considered the most important element that supports or contributes to good employment outcomes in supported employment (for a full breakdown of the

other contributing elements, see additional information).

Participants in the Adelaide workshop highlighted the need for policy makers to be aware of unintended consequences that can arise if proposed policy settings are not tested with stakeholders. They also noted that the NDIS objective to support informed choice and control is sometimes compromised by NDIS planners who may not see ADEs as a legitimate employment outcome.

The infancy of the NDIS, regions being at different stages of rollout and early issues with implementation were noted as key factors affecting provider and NDIS participant experiences. This mainly included pathway experiences for people transitioning to the new NDIS environment and for some new NDIS participants, beginning the planning process to achieve their employment goals.

A significant concern raised from a provider perspective is lack of clarity on NDIS pricing for employment supports. Confusion from these issues made it harder for services to undertake informed business planning and assist people to find a pathway to employment or to consider broader options at different life stages for existing employees.

“The NDIA price guide needs to be more comprehensive in the supports thus giving the ADE scope to offer new supports that it may not already be claiming but undertaking at a cost to the business”

- Tasmanian Association of Disability Employment Services, Peak Body

There were also submissions that stressed the importance of NDIS processes being responsive and flexible to allow people to adjust and develop employment goals as life circumstances change.

The current policies and processes around supported employment, especially NDIS planning and funding, were seen as lacking flexibility and adaptability. This was a substantial reason given for poor employment outcomes for supported employees and a key concern for ADEs.

“An employment assessment process [needs to] be created as part of NDIS planning to identify aspirations and capabilities of individuals to undertake employment.”

- DARE Disability Support, ADE

Stakeholders identified major issues with employment assessment and pathways in the NDIS system, citing lack of clarity and poor communication as factors that added to the difficulty of navigating these pathways. Queensland Advocacy Incorporated described the constant tests, reviews and assessments people with disability have to undergo to prove their disability in order to access services and support as being “inappropriate and a formidable barrier to employment”.

Advocates identified that they can assist NDIS participants to navigate the system and secure reasonable and necessary supports. ADEs also suggested they can offer to assist in the planning process for existing employees and their families, as well as new NDIS participants that they are marketing their services to.

In workshops and submissions, ADEs referred to the administrative burden they have experienced in transitioning to the NDIS. This included:

- additional administrative work associated with assisting existing supported employees to prepare for their planning conversation with NDIS planners
- challenges using NDIA ‘systems’ to register as a provider of supports and to claim payments
- increased resource costs to deliver new supports to supported employees under the NDIS, and
- concern that some of their existing costs of support are not or will not be met within the NDIS categories of support.

Some ADEs described this burden as continuing after they completed their transition. ADEs reported in some cases, that the employment support funding included in NDIS plans did not meet the cost of providing minimum support levels for supported employees at work. ADEs said they had to bridge the gap with limited resources, with the alternative being to refuse employment.

“By ensuring that existing service providers are funded to assist with pre-planning education. Currently they are doing it at their own cost. That’s unsustainable and counter-productive to the objectives of the NDIS.”

- Our Voice, Peak Body

Stakeholder ideas

- Finalise pricing arrangements for employment supports
- Provide certainty to the sector by promoting a stable policy environment, engaging with providers
- Design and implement person-centred policy and processes collaboratively with the sector
- Dedicate more time and funding to NDIS pre-planning and strategically involve providers and families in the process to ensure NDIS plans include the right supports.

2.3. Person-centred policies and services

Person-centred policies and services that promote the individual's wellbeing were the third most ideal outcome for supported employees identified by workshop participants.

'Hub and spoke' models were identified as an option that could assist regionally-based ADEs to support work activities for people with disabilities in smaller communities as well as outreach work placements for individuals from these communities.

Funding for specific, focussed specialist support for individuals and groups with complex behavioural conditions arising from a combination of cognitive impairment / mental illness, brain damage and foetal alcohol syndrome was also identified as an area for further possible work.

A number of submissions referred to studies and academic literature to support these and other ideas. Some submissions suggested

that the evidence base around what works in supporting people with disability in employment could be better used, while others expressed a need to invest in building more evidence and making that widely and accessibly available. A couple of submissions highlighted the importance of targeting research to what works at different stages of the employment journey and how best to meet the unique support needs associated with different types of disability.

“To ensure that supported employment services are effective in enabling people living with a mental illness to gain and maintain employment there needs to be continued investment in research to understand best practice approaches and to evaluate service effectiveness.”

- Queensland Mental Health Commission

The need for more research and better awareness of existing research was raised as a priority in several workshops.

“Employers and providers of employment opportunities need further support through funding of pilots and research to reimagine and reinvent what supported employment can be, so that the benefits of supported employment in ADEs are not lost, but improved upon.”

- Minda Commercial Enterprises, ADE

“Support needs to be integrated (vocational and non-vocational) to help people with disability sustain employment over time.”

- Workpower Incorporated, ADE and DES provider

“Continue to research and evaluate the models that are working extremely effectively through ADEs.”

- Helping People Achieve, ADE

Several submissions also raised the issue of transport for supported employees. For example, many supported employees have limited transport options, often relying on carers and family or taxis, which Queenslanders with Disability Network noted can make an individual’s costs of attending supported employment greater than their wage.

Stakeholder ideas

- Fund the additional support necessary to accommodate cultural, linguistic and educational differences
- Continue to link employment and the other supports so people can continue to participate in society and maintain their wellbeing
- Improve connection to transport options within planning conversations.

2.4. The interaction between ADEs and DES

In workshops, stakeholders identified the ideal outcome of genuine employment for people with disability, with a view to reducing the “systems approach” and breaking down program silos. One submission suggested creating a new pathway between DES and

ADEs dedicated to help people with complex needs achieve employment goals.

Many ADEs cited in their submissions that a reason for the low numbers of supported employees moving into open employment was a lack of awareness of the system and supports available to help people transition to open employment.

Almost none of the supported employees who were part of the consultations had any awareness of the support provided by the Government that could help them to find a job in open employment. Many supported employees with a strong desire to move felt they had access to little or no support to find and be successful in commencing a job in open employment.

“They don’t tell us about how to get a job outside of here.”

- Supported employee

Submissions that identified a lack of awareness of the system and supports generally continued with comments about people with disability fearing discrimination, bullying and too much pressure to meet business demands in open employment. Almost all supported employees in group discussions and interviews who had worked in open employment reported negative experiences. The most common of these related to a lack of appropriate support and training, leading to the supported employee being unable to complete tasks at the speed or quality demanded by the employer.

“I went to [a fast food restaurant], and that was really full on. You’d be on your feet all day. Especially when it’s really busy and you’re running round trying to get orders out, and it was one of things that didn’t really work out the way I wanted it. They didn’t give you training. Here’s different because they’ll train you – it doesn’t matter how long it takes, but they will support you. But you work in the open employment, and they’ll just say ‘right, this is your job, I want you to do this’ and you don’t know what’s going on.”

- Supported employee

A number of submissions noted a barrier to supported employees in ADEs transitioning to open employment is the fear they will lose their pension. This was specifically raised in three workshops as a substantial weakness in the current system. In interviews and group discussions, supported employees were generally conscious that more pay from their supported employment would adversely affect their benefits or pensions. The way policy settings for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) interact and influence behaviour featured in consultations. Related to this, stakeholders spoke of how DSP policies could create barriers to individual choice. These points are discussed in more detail at Part Two, section 3.3.

Some ADEs reported reluctance from DES providers to engage in partnerships to place supported employees in open employment. Eligibility requirements for DES, specifically that

a person must have a future work capacity of at least eight hours, were also raised as barriers to supported employees transitioning to open employment. Eight submissions specifically mentioned the need to amend the DES eligibility requirement of a minimum of eight hours assessed job capacity, with one describing it as a major barrier and another highlighting how people in remote Australia are especially affected by this policy.

“People deemed 0-7 [hours job capacity] should be able to access open employment roles as well.”

- LEAD, ADE

“If people are willing to work, they should be supported to regardless of assessed ‘capacity’.”

- Down Syndrome Australia, Peak Body

ADEs expressed they offer a legitimate employment option and so constitute a real choice for people with disability. Some noted that it was not in their interest to secure open employment for their most productive workers, as this would put further strain on already challenged businesses.

One submission suggested the idea of assistance for people with disability to gain and maintain open employment assumes that open employment is their choice and goal in the first place. Many stakeholders pointed to the fact that some supported employees want to work in ADEs and this is their choice.

“I don’t think people truly realise that for ADEs [in the NDIS], we need to be attractive to a customer, and attractive to an employee as an employer of choice.”

- Workshop participant, Melbourne

Some stakeholders saw ADEs as already having adequate levels of visibility.

Stakeholder ideas

- Promote supported employment through communication campaigns and policy settings
- Strengthen connections with local communities and employers, to provide opportunities to trial different types of work in different environments
- Remove barriers to assessments and assumptions of hours of work capacity.

2.5. Supporting transitions out of supported employment

As mentioned above, open employment is held by many stakeholders in the supported employment sector as the goal for supported employees, but these stakeholders noted there are many barriers to transitioning to open employment.

Australian Network on Disability (AND) and Disability Employment Australia’s (DEA) submissions suggested the only proven way to get people with complex needs and moderate to severe disability, especially intellectual disability, into open employment is to place them within open employment first and then target capacity building and training in that

workplace. According to AND and DEA, ‘training’ in an ADE then ‘placing’ in open employment is not supported by evidence.

Across the supported employee interview locations, there was a large number of supported employees (around 20 of 54 supported employees) who stated a clear desire to move into specific roles in open employment. However, most of these supported employees felt they were not being given the support needed to find a job, apply, be accepted, and successfully begin work. Many supported employees noted they lacked an understanding of what jobs were available for them and who could help them find these jobs. Many also noted that they were concerned about processes such as applications and interviews, and wanted more support to help them prepare for seeking employment.

For many supported employees, there was a very real sense that there are few or no services that can help them to move into open employment. They felt they will ‘fail’ in some way if they begin a new job in open employment due to a lack of support and a lack of understanding of disability among employers. Many supported employees felt they would not be provided with adequate support in the early days and weeks of beginning a new role. They were concerned about stepping away from supported employment to begin a new job due to previous negative experiences in open employment.

Importantly, many supported employees, including many with a clear desire to move, had very low levels of awareness of the support provided by the Government that could help them into open employment. Only a handful of supported employees were able

to articulate the support they could access. Only a small number were confident that they were progressing along an achievable pathway to their preferred job (or any job outside of supported employment).

“They tell you, what do you want to do in the future? What are your three or four or five goals you want to do? And you get back to it a year later and none of these goals are done...”

- Supported employee

There was strong support for providing assistance to help people with disability move from an ADE to open employment, with 17 submissions making related suggestions. One submission also suggested that there is a lack of awareness among supported employees regarding the cooperative arrangements for DES and ADEs, which aim to support transitions to open employment.

“Big business and mainstream businesses need to be given support to hire more people with disability. I am currently volunteering somewhere, but if they were able to have funding to support and employ me I think they would, and they would work on the things I’m good at.”

- New Wave Gippsland, Self-Advocacy Group

Stakeholder ideas

- Begin models of employment assistance and provide staff training
- Outcome payments for ADEs who assist a supported employee into open employment
- Awareness raising of employment assistance programs among people with disability and employers
- Improve connections between the NDIS and DES.

Part Two - 3

3. Wages for people with disability

Across all consultation types, stakeholders raised issues of wages for supported employees. There was a high level of understanding among stakeholders, including supported employees, that wage setting has a bearing on the future of supported employment.

It was understood by most that in Australia the Fair Work Commission sets minimum wages and working conditions including the *Supported Employment Services Award 2010* (the Award). The Award is the current award for supported employment and it covers most Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). The Award allows ADEs to pay pro-rata wages to eligible workers with disability, calculated using an approved wage assessment tool. There are currently 29 wage assessment tools in the Award, although not all are used. A review of wage setting arrangements is under way in the Fair Work Commission.

While stakeholders spoke of the need for certainty in wage setting, many submissions did not comment specifically or provided very limited input on the issue. This could be due to the Fair Work Commission's review of the *Supported Employment Services Award 2010*. In workshops the independent role of the Fair Work Commission was noted and stakeholders were encouraged to consider broader policy options and opportunities beyond wage setting. Supported employees discussed hours of work and satisfaction with current wages in group discussions and interviews.

Wages for supported employees is discussed in this section in terms of industrial relations matters, economic participation through access to a 'good' or 'fair' wage and interactions with welfare benefits mainly the Disability Support Pension (DSP).

3.1. Industrial wage assessment practice remains uncertain

After a prolonged period of uncertainty, many ADEs noted industrial certainty as one of the most important outcomes needed to support ADE viability.

Several ADEs noted the threat to financial viability if wages for people with disability increase because of the Fair Work Commission's ongoing review of the *Supported Employment Services Award 2010*. This has prompted the exploration of options for wage assessment by some ADEs, with many supportive of paying award wages for supported employees.

This option was explored by ADEs looking at business viability. A number of ADEs suggested paying supported employees the minimum award rate, with a wage subsidy for employers to access, to ensure their viability is not compromised.

“At a philosophical level we would love to pay workers with a disability a full award wage; however in a market based economy productivity is an inescapable factor. The only way to not use a productivity based system would be if an external player, e.g. customer or the Government met the productivity difference.”

- Social enterprise (non-ADE) workshop participant

“My team members may be 30 or 40 per cent productive but they put in 100 per cent effort. I’d rather they could be paid based on their efforts.”

- ADE workshop participant

Some submissions raised the international trend of moving from adjusting wages for people with disability to paying market or minimum wages supported by some form of wage subsidisation.

Some advocacy organisations and some supported employees had views that wage assessment should stop all together and supported the idea of minimum award wages for all supported employees. However, not all advocates had this view with some advocacy groups supporting the use of the Supported Wage System to adjust wages across ADEs, as in open employment.

“QAI recommends foundational principles should prioritise cessation of any productivity-based wage assessment tools and asserts that any wage assessment tool that, when applied, reduces the wages of a person to a level of such diminished proportions that it does not sustain affordable living is a breach of Article 16 of the CRPD [UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities].”

- Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

“We need to stop undervaluing the contribution people with disabilities make in our communities and ADE’s [sic] need to totally revise their wage assessment tools.”

- Down Syndrome Australia

“QDN supports the payment of full award wages for all employees and a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work.”

- Queenslanders with Disability Network

“AED is of the view that the SWS [Supported Wage System] with the agreed modifications should be the only allowable wage assessment tool in the SESA [*Supported Employment Services Award 2010*].”

- AED Legal Centre

National Disability Services (NDS) wanted the introduction of a ‘social wage’ that bundles employee benefits and wages. NDS suggested the Government should look at what added costs might be involved in ensuring that supported employees are paid the equivalent of the minimum wage. NDS stated the social wage would come near to covering this for fulltime employees, but admits there are important social policy questions, including the interaction between wages and benefits, high effective marginal tax rates and making sure that people with disability in work are less reliant on welfare benefits.

The most commonly expressed idea about future wage assessment practice was for Government to provide ongoing wage

subsidisation (contained in 22 submissions). The operation of a subsidised minimum award wage was not extensively explored.

Subsequent to consultations, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, announced that Government is investing \$6.3million to support Australians with disability in the workplace. This includes:

- \$5.3million to address the immediate viability concerns that ADEs using the Supported Wage System (SWS) face because of their higher wage costs, while the Fair Work Commission proceedings on wage matters continues
- Just under \$1million to trial and analyse a new wage classification and assessment method in the Fair Work Commission.

3.2. The need for a ‘good wage’ to support effective and fair economic participation

A number of submissions also discussed wage setting for supported employees, with 15 noting the need for a ‘good’ or ‘fair’ wage.

On a number of occasions across all consultation types, concerns were raised about the low level of wages paid to many supported employees.

“Some people here are on, like, a dollar an hour. It’s hard to survive’.”

- Supported employee

For many, a ‘fair day’s pay’ was paying supported employees a rate equal to or greater than the minimum award wage, although not every submission that mentioned the right to receive fair wages was supportive of the minimum wage.

The question of what constitutes a fair wage was frequently raised suggesting there is more to be done in defining a ‘good’ or ‘fair’ wage.

Views on a suitable wage for people with disability included:

- an expectation of equal rights to pay and conditions
- support for the payment of full award wages
- the provision of a living wage as a combination of wages, Government pensions and other benefits or wage subsidies.

The idea of a ‘fair day’s work’ was made by advocacy organisations when looking at human rights for people with disability to be engaged in meaningful work of their choice, and to be entitled to the same employment protections and entitlements as other Australian workers.

Support for the payment of full award wages was often linked with suggestions for Government funded wage subsidies (as outlined in section 3.1 above).

Queensland Advocacy Incorporated’s submission did not consider wage subsidisation but did suggest that people with disability should be paid the minimum award wage, as the pro-rata wage system creates a disincentive to employment and undervalues the contribution of people with disability to the labour market. Australian Lawyers for Human Rights’ submission also rejected a pro-rata wage system.

“...wages ranging from \$1.00 per hour to full award wage. This is unacceptable and in violation of international law, domestic law and basic standards of human dignity and decency.”

- Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

AED Legal Centre stressed that discussions about the future for supported employment should include the concept of a fair wage and the rights of people with disability working in all employment settings. In particular, AED Legal suggested that wages should be non-discriminatory when compared to people without disability, and when compared to those with disability who have been assessed using other wage assessment tools.

“Fair wages are not a bonus; they are a human right.”

- AED Legal

The provision of a social wage from a number of income sources, was suggested as a way to generate a total income level for supported employees that is equivalent to the minimum wage (as outlined in section 3.1 above).

It was also noted that wage levels could be a critical factor that attracts future NDIS participants with employment goals to a particular employer. Stakeholders suggested consistent wage levels and working conditions could offer a way to remove barriers for transitions between supported and open employment.

Bedford Group encouraged the consideration of wage and other policies that assist people with disability to make a meaningful contribution

through the workplace, and to earn a good wage in a supported employment setting, in businesses that are funded to offer appropriate employment support (see also section 4.1 – Business viability in a changing marketplace).

Submissions commonly referred to the willingness and capacity of people with disability to work.

“I have worked for an ADE and I liked it. Getting paid for some time is better than no time.”

- Person with disability, New Wave Gippsland
Self-Advocacy

In group discussions and interviews, supported employees saw their wages as an important issue. The majority of supported employees (36) indicated they were happy with the wages they were receiving. Many felt that their pay was appropriate given the work they were doing and their abilities.

However, a large number of supported employees (18) were dissatisfied. Their wages were either too low or far too low. This was common among those working in difficult or challenging roles or roles they were aware workers in open employment were being paid at a full award rate for the same work.

Low wages was the most common factor that interviewed supported employees disliked about their current jobs.

Information on wages was one of the most important pieces of information that supported employees sought prior to starting their current jobs.

Many supported employees also felt that their wages were critical to maintaining basic living needs.

“It’s probably alright for some of us that still live with our parents, but it’s a little harder for people who are living on their own.”

- Supported employee

“There’s a few of us who live independently, like I live independently with two children... My childcare fees cost more than our wages. On school holidays I can’t really justify coming to work.”

- Supported employee

Many of the supported employees interviewed felt that their wages were unfair and were very aware their hourly pay rates were significantly lower than those of others in similar roles or industries. Some noted that being paid less than people without disability made them feel depressed and demoralised.

“You come to a place like this and people here don’t get paid a lot. I think any workers should be put in a situation where you earn proper money. You should be happy with the work and know you’re getting a full wage.”

- Supported employee

“It’s depressing. With the previous wages I had (in open employment) it’s depressing that I don’t get that much pay rate as I used to. It feels very depressing and just makes it a bit sad.”

- Supported employee

Stakeholders who made suggestions about improving wages and economic participation sought to improve Australia’s low labour participation rates for people with disability, particularly for existing and future NDIS participants of working age.

3.3. Wages and the Disability Support Pension (DSP)

Stakeholders recognised the complex interactions between wages earned from supported employment and the DSP.

Views expressed about what the DSP means to various stakeholder groups and concepts of what the DSP is or should be included:

- DSP as a supplement to earned wages, to support a living income for people with disability
- DSP as a safety net for people with disability, particularly for those who may experience frequent transitions in and out of work, including for those aspiring to open employment.

“Considering the level of support he needs from time to time, and his work output, I would say his pay level has been appropriate. After all, Australia has an adequate Disability Support Pension to augment the low wage.”

- Family member

“For supported and open employment to be successful, there will be a need to deal with disincentives created by use of NDIS packages for employment support, as carers and people with disability have expressed concerns that they may lose other necessary supports.”

- Carers Australia, Peak Body

In these concepts, stakeholders discussed how current DSP policy settings drive employment behaviours for people with disability and the effect this has on individual choice in establishing their employment goals.

Several submissions noted key aspects of the DSP create systemic barriers. These discourage people from working for more hours and earning more in wages. It can also discourage them from trying open employment, which pays higher Supported Wage System adjusted wages and can include options for pay at a full award wage. Both examples suggest a fear of losing their DSP or other benefits and support.

“It’s good for the moment, because I don’t want to get off the pension yet, because I need more help at the moment. When I’m finished getting help, and I don’t need it any more, I’ll get off it.”

- Supported employee

Stakeholders in workshops acknowledged misunderstanding on some of the technical applications of the DSP, including how the pension free earnings area operates to reduce DSP when income or the number of hours worked reaches a certain level.

Some stakeholders mentioned the importance supported employees place on the DSP as a safety net and relayed the fear that people with disability hold for ‘losing’ their DSP.

They suggested many supported employees limited their hours of work to minimise reduction in their DSP and to ensure they stayed well clear of any circumstance that might call into question their DSP eligibility.

This was raised in several submissions from advocacy organisations and ADEs as a major factor affecting individual choice in relation to increased hours of work or take up of opportunities to try open employment.

The views expressed by stakeholders about misunderstandings of how the DSP operates and interacts with hours of work and wage levels highlights the need for clear and accurate communication with supported employees, their families and carers, and the employers and service providers that support them.

Advocacy groups and some ADEs suggested Government explore raising the income free threshold for the DSP. Other DSP policy settings, they proposed, could be used or better communicated to drive preferred employment participation behaviours. This could include consideration of relevant and appropriate adjustment to DSP taper rates, reconsidering or removing the number of work hours at which DSP automatically cuts off and removing the zero dollar DSP period before a person with disability becomes no longer eligible to access DSP and its associated benefits.

One submission highlighted the connection between the high numbers of people with disability out of employment, relying on their

DSP or other Government benefits, and living in poverty.

“As a result of pervasive barriers to education, training and employment, an increasing number of people with disability are struggling to survive on social security payments. The rate of poverty amongst people with disability in Australia is the highest in the OECD.”

- Disabled People's Organisations Australia

Greenacres, in its submission, encouraged the Government to set up a working party to examine how a minimum wage option, in light of possible DSP adjustments, might be implemented practically.

“One of the great disincentives for people with disabilities working in open employment is the possibility of losing access to their DSP and other entitlements... The DSP for persons with an ongoing disability should be the safety net.”

- Greenacres, ADE

4. A strong business market

Government stewardship for the supported employment business market was an issue discussed in workshops and submissions. Workshop participants identified funding and viability as the most desired outcome for employers / providers in the future, followed by business practices, growth and innovation. The theme of a strong business market is explored in this section.

4.1 Business viability in a changing marketplace

The future challenges and business pressures ADEs face are well documented in submissions, which commonly raised concerns around funding sources.

Stakeholders identified the adjustment to individualised funding from grant funding arrangements as a pressure point for ADE viability. A number of submissions expressed dissatisfaction with the temporary NDIS pricing arrangements for supported employment and an urgent need for NDIS pricing to be revised and settled.

“In order for the future of supported employment to be secure, a sound long-term pricing and funding model must be introduced that takes into account all of the costs incurred by employers when providing ongoing employment support for people with severe disability.”

- National Disability Services, Peak Body

Stakeholders also raised NDIS implementation issues as a significant issue for ADE viability, including employment supports missing from NDIS plans. Uncertainty around clients that will not be eligible for the NDIS and how Continuity of Support will affect them was also causing concern.

“Clear funding pricing for supports needs to be published and available so providers can complete financial modelling and revenue projections, the funding needs to reflect individual support needs in the workplace as opposed to being attached to the ADEs. Unless funding is included in participants [sic] plans, there will be no availability of funding for any providers to offer employment solutions for participants.”

- Minda Commercial Enterprises, ADE

ADEs expressed concern that many of them are operating with small profit margins, with their businesses based in declining industries at risk of digitisation, off shore processing, and mechanisation and automation.

These issues were noted as being magnified in rural and regional areas, where employment opportunities are already fewer than in urban centres and the costs associated with starting or running a business can be higher. Increased wages for supported employees was also seen as a pressure point for ADE viability.

Through submissions and workshops, a number of stakeholders raised the point that donations to ADEs were in decline, putting pressure on ADE cash flow.

“Any funding through public donations is also in decline for disability services as the public mistakenly believes the Government is fully funded by the Medicare levy and all people with disability are supported by the NDIS.”

- The Australian Blindness Forum, Peak Body

A number of stakeholders were concerned with market viability and growth. They stated the need for certainty around policy settings, including NDIS pricing and wage setting. They argued that stable policy settings would assist organisations to plan for the future, make calculated risks and attract investment.

“To support longevity and expansion of the employment market priority needs to be given to policy, recognising that the current environment is high risk with many uncertainties that prevent organisations from moving forward.”

- Activ, ADE

Stakeholder ideas

- Resolve long-term NDIS pricing model
- ADEs could market services and expertise in providing supports to mainstream employers
- Provide Government funding, capital investment or low interest loans for supported employers looking to innovate or evolve into more profitable business lines.

4.2. Ongoing, block grant funding for ADEs separate from NDIS plans

With a substantial level of fear and uncertainty in the sector about the transition from grant funding to participant-based funding under the NDIS, several submissions (7) recommended ongoing, dedicated funding to their business to cover costs outside ‘employment supports’ under the NDIS.

A number of submissions from ADEs stated they need Government assistance to provide supports and remain viable, while a few submissions from ADEs expressed the need for their businesses to take responsibility for their future viability.

Stakeholder ideas

- Provide block grant funding to ADEs, in addition to NDIS participant costs.

4.3 New market entrants

New market entrants refers to organisations who are not currently ADEs, but could deliver employment supports to supported employees under the NDIS.

A few submissions raised social enterprises as an appropriate work setting for supported employees, distinguishing them from ‘congregated’ ADE settings. Further, one submission suggested the Government should not focus on new market entrants to improve employment outcomes for supported employees, rather on supporting current ADEs to transition to becoming a social enterprise, a DES provider, or a more commercially viable business.

While a number of ADEs were against specific Government support for new market entrants,

there were those who supported the idea, so long as support was also available to existing providers.

“Government support for growth and expansion of the ADE sector should not be limited to new entrants and ‘start-ups’ but rather should be available to existing ADE’s [sic] to avoid marketplace distortions.”

- Joint submission from 10 ADEs

“Support from Government in the short term would be a reasonable consideration for new entrants. It would be important that like opportunities for development were also provided to existing providers.”

- Ability Works Australia, ADE

4.4. Innovation

The second most frequently raised ideal future outcome for employers and providers in workshops related to improving business practices, growth and innovation. This came after funding certainty and business viability.

In workshops, many ADEs stated they feel that they are continually innovating and adapting. A number of stakeholders reported they had explored impact investing and social impact bonds, however remain concerned about the underlying expectations and processes involved. Also, as an emerging field, these stakeholders were reluctant to pursue social investment options with few examples of how it could work for their business.

Stakeholder ideas

- Seed funding for innovative models or new businesses
- Capital investment funding
- Low interest loans
- Case studies, forums or showcasing on best practice and innovation in the sector.

4.5 Social Procurement and Collaboration

In workshops and submissions (14), stakeholders recommended increasing and promoting Government and business procurement from ADEs, as a way to support the viability of the sector. Stakeholders noted some state and territory governments have already introduced social procurement quotas and targets, which have assisted with their viability. One submission argued it was important for Government to procure from ADEs, as it demonstrates to business the value of ADEs as a supplier.

“Government purchasing can support the employment of people with disability and ensure Disability Enterprises remain strong and viable into the future. Logically, Government departments should boost their purchasing of goods and services from Disability Enterprises, and initiatives by Government to help drive these changes across departments are very welcome.”

- National Disability Services, Peak Body

The contest between promoting their organisation's social cause with winning contracts based on their product's quality is a clear tension. Several ADEs expressed a preference not to promote their business based on the premise that they employ people with disability. Some ADEs saw opportunity to collaborate to improve business competitiveness. One submission suggested this is already happening among ADEs and highlighted how the approach is at odds with the aims of the NDIS to promote market competition.

Stakeholder ideas

- Introduce social procurement targets, quotas or incentives for government and business
- Offer tax deductions to businesses that procure from ADEs
- Promote BuyAbility (an initiative to increase procurement from ADEs)
- Increase Government procurement activity, across jurisdictions
- Attract competitive contracts and establish a 'pool of employees' who can fill employment needs as they arise
- ADEs collaborate as a sector to improve business practices.

Conclusion and next steps

The consultations on *Ensuring a strong future for supported employment* captured a broad range of stakeholder views. Through submissions to the discussion paper, participation in workshops and engagement in interviews, stakeholders shared their experiences of supported employment and ideas for how best to support people with disability in employment. The Department has collated and analysed the information gathered from consultations to identify themes and present the findings in this report.

The Department is considering detailed proposals to inform the future for supported employment, incorporating feedback from the consultations. The Department will engage with the sector on these proposals at the end of 2018. The following principles will underpin a future supported employment model:

1. An 'employment first' approach for all NDIS participants of working age
2. A clear pathway for NDIS participants into employment
3. People with disability need employment supports from a diverse set of providers
4. Strong and viable disability enterprises with sustainable NDIS funding in participant plans
5. Certainty about industrial wage setting.

Information on further consultations will be available later in the year at <https://engage.dss.gov.au>

You can get in contact with the Department via email, SEpolicy@dss.gov.au

Part Three

Additional information

This third part of the report presents additional information on the consultations, including how each element was designed and carried out. It is separated into the three consultation types:

- Discussion paper and submissions (p.53 and 55)
- Workshops (p.56)
- Supported employee interviews and group discussions (p.65)

Breakdown of submissions

The Department received 63 submissions in response to the discussion paper, *Ensuring a strong future for supported employment*. The discussion paper and public submissions are available online at <https://engage.dss.gov.au>

A breakdown of submissions by stakeholder group is in the table below:

Stakeholder group	Number of Submissions
Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE)	19 (including one joint submission from 10 ADEs)
Disability peak body	12
Family member of a person with disability	7
Advocacy agency	5
Person with disability	5
Other	8 (includes 3 non-disability peak bodies, 2 state government bodies, a research consultant, a social enterprise, and an interested party)
Disability service provider (other than an ADE)	4
Disability Employment Service (DES) Provider	3
Total Submissions	63

Discussion paper questions

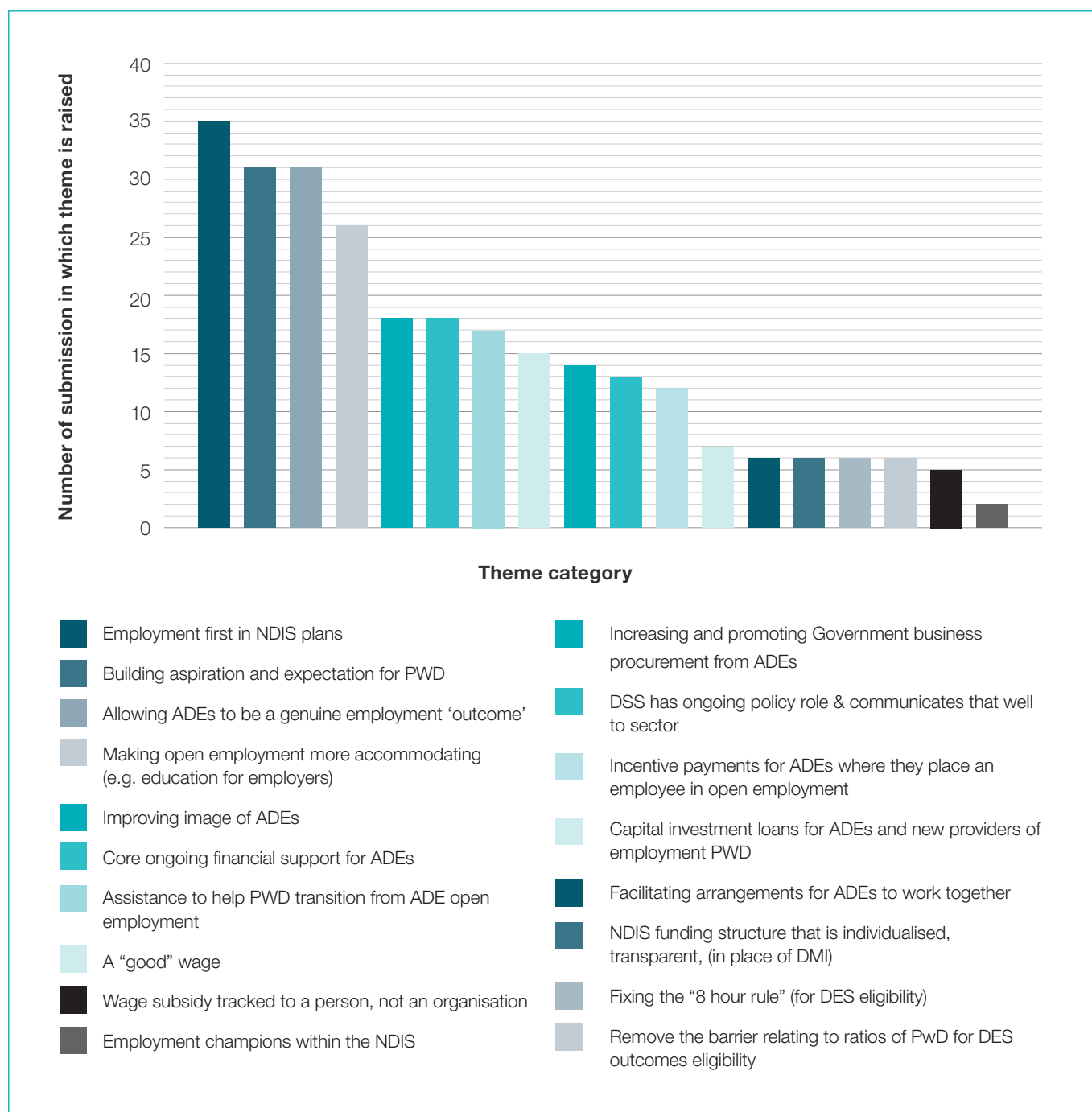
1. Are there other principles, which should guide the Government's policy direction for supported employment?
2. What is a 'good' participation outcome for a supported employee and how can good outcomes be measured?
3. What do supported employees most value about working in an ADE?
4. Why do most supported employees transition back to supported employment from open employment?
5. How can more supported employees be provided the opportunity to choose open employment?
6. Why is participant access to concurrent DES and ADE support services so low?
7. What is the role a supported employer can play in building employee capacity for transition to open employment?
8. What will attract NDIS participants to employment opportunities in the future?
9. How are ADEs marketing their services to an expanded market of potential NDIS participants?
10. What is the range of NDIS supports that ADEs currently offer?
11. What costs would be involved for ADEs that choose to: a) reform to more open employment models? b) redevelop as service providers offering other NDIS supports? c) specialise in the provision of employment support as a non-employer?
12. Should the Government have a role in supporting new market entrants and start-ups in the short term?
13. What investment, or industry adjustment will promote viable expansion in the employer / provider market?
14. How could employer / providers share learnings of their success and failures within a competitive market?
15. How can wage supplementation be better targeted?
16. How can the NDIS enable an employment first approach in planning?
17. How do current assessment processes drive the inclusion of employment supports in an NDIS participant's plan? a) Are existing employment assessment processes appropriate for NDIS participants?

Discussion paper questions - continued

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)?
 - a) How could SLES better support school leavers to build skills and confidence in order to move from school to employment?
19. What role could or should an NDIA Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or planner have in linking participants to an employment opportunity?
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?

Submission findings

The below graph shows the key themes in submissions based on the number of submissions that mentioned each theme. As with findings from the workshops, an employment first approach to NDIS planning was the prominent concern:



Part Three

Breakdown of workshops

From 21 February to 7 March 2018, the Department hosted ten stakeholder workshops across the country on the future for supported employment. The workshops were one part of a consultation process on the future for supported employment.

The Department engaged social policy and communications agencies Gilimbaa and The Social Deck to run workshops and record all contributions made by stakeholders. Departmental staff also attended each workshop.

Workshop participants included current ADEs, other and emerging supported employment providers, peak associations, disability advocates, family members and a small number of people with disability, as well as some researchers. About 400 people registered interest in attending the workshops, and 195 individuals attended. Workshops were held in every capital city except Darwin and the Department assisted ADEs from the Northern Territory to attend a workshop.

Workshop	Number of attendees
Hobart, Wednesday 21 February 2018	19
Melbourne, Thursday 22 February 2018	19
Melbourne, Friday 23 February 2018	19
Canberra, Monday 26 February 2018	19
Sydney, Tuesday 27 February 2018	25
Sydney, Wednesday 28 February 2018	25
Brisbane, Thursday 1 March 2018	16
Brisbane, Friday 2 March 2018	12
Perth, Tuesday 6 March 2018	24
Adelaide, Wednesday 7 March 2018	17
Total workshop attendees	195

While the agenda remained consistent for all ten workshops, each workshop was slightly different because the location and composition of each group generated different types of concerns and ideas.

Workshop structure

The structure of the workshops was a four hour session (10.00am – 2.00pm, with a 25-minute break) and comprised four main parts:

- 1. Desired outcomes** – Identifying strengths and common desired outcomes (or goals).
- 2. Why** – Considering principles for a future for supported employment (and current weaknesses).
- 3. What** – Defining future possibilities, through discovering and prioritising actions and ideas.
- 4. How** – Discussing roles and understanding ways to begin priority actions.

Workshop activities were designed to complement the discussion paper, *Ensuring a strong future for supported employment*.

Session One – Desired outcomes

Session one of the workshops asked participants to describe their best experience with supported employment and identify what made that so positive. In table groups participants had to imagine the best, desired outcomes for supported employment, asking the question, “What do we want supported employment to look like in five-to-ten years?” Groups considered this from the perspective of both supported employees and employers / providers and listed the outcomes on butcher’s paper. Groups prioritised the most important desired outcomes from the perspective of the supported employee and employers / providers and reported this back to the whole workshop. Identifying shared goals was challenging for some groups where stakeholders had

conflicting views, but it highlighted the existing common ground.

Session Two – Why is the future of supported employment important?

In session two, participants were asked to identify the values that underpin achieving these desired outcomes and what best supports them. Through this discussion, participants heard the different views and experiences of stakeholders in the room, which created a deeper appreciation of the potential challenges and opportunities each stakeholder is facing. It also allowed participants to share examples of what was working or not and identify areas for improvement.

Across the ten workshops, 224 values and supports were suggested. To analyse this information, the Department grouped values and supports into ten categories:

- **Policy and process** – for example, matters relating to the NDIS, the Department’s policy leadership, business administration, implementation of government policy
- **Funding and viability** – for example, ideas for business adaptation, innovation and growth; sustainable enterprises; social investment; outcome payments to ADEs and providers; increasing government procurement from ADEs
- **Communication** – for example, promoting ADEs and supported employment more generally, education and awareness raising on supports and opportunities currently available, improving communication between

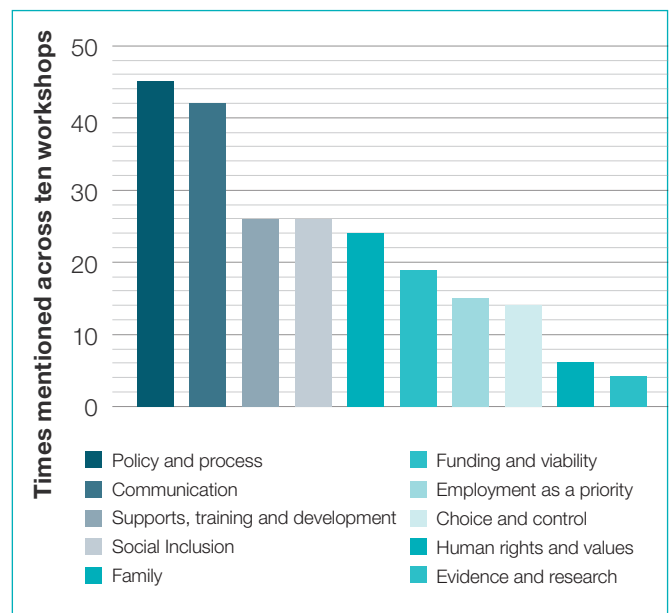
government, supported employers and supported employees

- **Employment as a Priority** – for example, meaningful work valued by employers and employees, on the ground implementation of employment first policy, diversity of jobs, reducing individual and systemic barriers to employment
- **Supports, training and development** – for example, personalised supports aligned to job and career goals, upskilling support providers and supported employees, appropriate and timely supports that assist successful transitions to open employment
- **Choice and Control** – for example, the importance of diverse supported employment options, employees have ownership of decisions, the right of employees to choose whether they work in an ADE or open employment, choice to work more hours, flexibility, informed choice
- **Social Inclusion** – for example, inclusion in the workplace without stigma, social networks, belonging to a community with shared goals, contributing to society, diverse workplaces that are representative of their community
- **Human rights and values** – for example, equity and equality, respect for all people, abilities focused, rights of the individual, openness to different perspectives
- **Family** – for example, engaging families in the discussion about supported employment, promoting the benefits of work and a culture of employment among families, using families as a means to recruit staff

- **Evidence and Research** – for example, building the evidence base around what produces good outcomes, understanding knowledge gaps and identifying opportunities for development, policy based on evidence not ideology.

The figure below shows the 224 values and supports mentioned in the workshops, grouped into the ten categories. These categories can be read as the broad elements that workshop participants thought would assist the desired outcomes for supported employment. In this respect, government policy and business processes were the most important factors for influencing strong supported employment outcomes according to workshop participants. The move to the NDIS was a significant concern raised (to differing extents) across the ten workshops and may have contributed to the finding that policy and processes were the most important factor for workshop participants.

Elements that support desired employment outcomes for supported employment



Session Three – Elements for the ideal future of supported employment

The third session involved a ‘world café’ activity, where participants responded to four identified themes: ‘Meaningful Employment’; ‘Government Stewardship in the Market’; ‘ADEs in the Transition to NDIS’; and ‘Innovation and New Enterprise’.

Each theme was given to a table to explore in more detail. A number of questions were asked to help prompt discussion among participants in relation to each of the areas. Participants circulated between the four themes, visiting each table once and spending at least 10 minutes to: discuss the theme and topic with the group, and then list ideas and actions they believe are needed in the future for supported employment. People were encouraged to mix between groups at each different theme to promote sharing of ideas from different perspectives.

This activity revealed a number of areas for action.

The second part of the world café activity involved prioritising the actions listed at each theme. Participants were each given 12 red dots (three per theme) to select their top three, or the most important things they felt were needed to achieve the best outcomes in a future for supported employment. The table below summarises the top priority actions or ideas against each theme. These were defined as the actions or ideas that scored eight red dots and above. It is worth noting that actions often duplicated across the four themes, which was most likely due to participants recognising those actions as important for multiple reasons.

Prioritised actions and ideas

Meaningful employment

1. Building work experience into the curriculum (get into their plans in Yrs 10-12) - funding support
2. Default employment on plans - opt-out - in policy - "employment (of any sort) first"
3. Paid support for pre-planning process for informed choice
4. More training and education for planners to facilitate real choice
5. Always ask, "What are your employment and education goals?"
6. Employment supports automatically in NDIS plans
7. Removal of stigma - value of work that a supported employee does, bring community on board, procurement for example, going for a minimum spend, supporting ADEs to promote/market their business, financial and social
8. Setting job descriptions, same entitlements, disciplinary actions, staff recognition, same as what employees in open employment have available to them
9. Moving towards a norm: taking away the label - just an enterprise, advocating for variety of options 'employment' (not different streams (communities, schools, Centrelink, NDIA))
10. NDIS plans - employment needs to become a priority in plans 'employment first'
11. Consistency in planning - employment as default option if already working, opt-out of employment plans
12. ADEs seen as viable employment option
13. Employment that is productive - contributes to the community, economy, business, deliverables
14. Improving transition to open employment - supports, workplace attitudes and perceptions, better facilitation, easier collaboration between ADEs and DES
15. "Employees" not "clients" - clear expectations, clear boundaries, dignity and respect

Innovation and new enterprise

1. Must have wages support to ensure a sustainable business is able to innovate
2. More promotion of ADEs for example, campaigns to show people they exist
3. Pool of funding for innovation and capital (could sit in Department of Industry and Innovation, ensures ties with industries, be flexible to support implementation.
4. Innovation fund to move to new community / social enterprises
5. Government and corporations prioritise ADEs as suppliers in potential new services (helps ADEs to diversify)
6. Certainty on wage setting to be able to future proof business
7. Marketing and promotion of supported employment: targeting DES providers, advocates, other business, decision makers
8. Government agency procurement
9. No interest loans for ADEs to diversify and grow (ie. Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) model)
10. Partnerships for increased opportunity for ADEs to be suppliers
11. Offsetting: GST credits, government procurement policy all levels, quotas, mainstreaming

Government stewarding the market

1. Higher threshold for DSP - introducing a social wage
2. More specific employment plan in NDIS - specific to individual - independent plan
3. Removing barriers between employment models - work at multiple ADE / open employment, remove requirements to work full time / part time
4. Focus on creating the market that is viable NOT the 'propping up' - matching the procurement opportunities creates sustainable contract
5. Innovation fund for different models / diversification - individualised approach, different types of work
6. Policy could be changed to social enterprise - greater seamless movement of employees
7. Employment first in plans gives existing system new recruits
8. Procurement from ADEs is prioritised by government
9. Open SLES-type program in NDIS to support transition between ADE - DES / open - skills development, employability training
10. ADEs could receive favourable procurement (e.g. NSW 2% mandatory procurement)
11. Understanding workforce to co-design work (Tasmanian local level advantage)
12. Sustainable funding model, consider DMI, support requirements, wage safety net
13. Individualised funding based on independent assessment
14. Fund the employment outcome, not process - one funding stream to support employment (with individuals having their NDIS plans to purchase additional other individual supports)

ADEs in transition to NDIS

1. Put employment dollars in everyone's plans for them to draw on should they want a job or opportunity becomes available (base-level funds)
2. Employment could be 'triggered' in a plan without review
3. Replace DMI 1- 4 with individualised: funding level tool (for DES) 1 of 5 levels after JCA, ratio to support (community participation item 1:4, 1:8), don't replace it, average/individual DMI
4. Employment is opt-out
5. Employment prioritised in planning
6. Identify what supports are actually needed – looking at skill sets and 'discovery': what do you enjoy? What are you capable of doing? What about your hobbies?
7. Customised employment - genuine work needs
8. Individualised funding: tailored to actually support in workplace (not DMI or average), within employment supports not core supports
9. Improve NDIS system to free-up dollars owed to service providers
10. NDIA to re-think employment - put upfront in plans

Session Four – How do we get to the ideal future, together?

In the final session, participants looked at how priorities for the future for supported employment could best be achieved by government, the sector and supported employees.

For the first four workshops, the discussion of roles was an open discussion. There was broad agreement among participants that everyone across the sector needs to play a role to ensure a strong future for supported employment. However, participants had strong views that Government, particularly the Department and NDIA, needed to show leadership – in providing more certainty about the future, in facilitating working together, and in addressing current issues and barriers (for example in NDIS planning).

From the Sydney workshops on, there was an additional activity called ‘deep-dives’. This was introduced because workshop facilitators thought it might be a more effective use of time to explore in more detail how one of the priorities (by each theme) could best be delivered or achieved, and the roles that would be required. Four priority actions were selected and participants were asked to go to a topic area that interested them the most. The ‘world café’ theme facilitator ran each deep-dive.

Specific ideas about how stakeholders could best work together and with Government to achieve actions together included:

- Government to better align policies in disability employment; break down siloed approaches so it is easier for people with disability to access a range of supports and services at the same time.

- More communication from Government about changes and future policies, using products that are easy to read and accessible so people with disability can be aware of what affects them.
- Sector and Government work together to define the social enterprise model.
- Government could bring together relevant parties to explore the potential for impact investing as a way to help ADEs access new forms of funding to grow, diversify and maintain current services that help people and contribute to social and economic returns.
- NDIA to prioritise employment, including by considering a direct contact in each state / region to connect with ADEs and address issues as they arise.
- Regional Employment Champions are important but need to better connect with providers who can inform them of challenges and help people to remain in employment.
- Government and the sector work together to better promote ADEs and help to build their reputation as vital parts of the disability and employment sectors, which contribute to the Australian economy.

Survey feedback on workshops

Following the consultation workshops, a survey was sent to participants seeking feedback on both the structural elements and content of the workshops. With 57 responses, over a quarter of workshop participants completed the survey. The survey also provided the opportunity for survey respondents to provide free-text comments.

Generally, survey respondents appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the conversation, acknowledging that the Government displayed genuine interest in seeking stakeholder ideas and ensuring future opportunities for people with disability to participate in employment. Of the survey responses:

- 73.7 per cent indicated that they were 'satisfied' to 'very satisfied' with the workshop overall
- 77.2 per cent indicated that the workshop activities were 'relevant' to 'highly relevant' to the organisation and/or individuals they represented
- 84.2 per cent felt they were able to participate and make their views known
- 73.7 per cent thought the purpose of the workshop was 'clear' to 'very clear'
- 63.1 per cent felt they had a good to great opportunity to network and make connections.

Structural elements of the workshops

Most workshop participants felt the 'world café' concept for group discussions worked well as this offered the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and understand the views of other stakeholders. Participants enjoyed the inclusivity of moving to ever-changing groups, the opportunity to engage in robust discussion in different topic areas, and appreciated that all views were respected and heard without judgement. However, there was concern that the group setting turned attention away from the most important issues, and that some of the points raised in the general discussion with the entire workshop may not have been

captured as these may not have been written down.

Regarding the attendance of Government representatives, some discontent was expressed about the NDIA representative in attendance at their workshop; that they knew almost nothing about supported employment and did not sufficiently engage with, respond to or express interest in engaging with the issues. One response expressed disappointment that Departmental Managers were not in attendance at their workshop despite being at others. It was appreciated that a diverse variety of organisations were included, however, a number of responses suggested that more people could have been engaged in the workshops, including more carers, family, and the community.

The structure of the workshops was carefully balanced to give time to drill into issues, while acknowledging that workshop participants were taking time out of their schedules to attend the workshops unfunded. Despite this, a few survey responses suggested that the workshop could have run for longer with more time being allocated to meet others. It was suggested by some that a larger room with more accessible facilities should have been used.

Content of the workshops

Some of the key takeaways from the workshops were that:

- a lot of changes will be occurring in supported employment
- the Government is interested in ensuring people with disability can participate in employment

- there needs to be better promotion of employment in NDIS plans
- the transition to open employment needs to be better understood and people with disability need to be better supported to do so.

There was acknowledgement in a number of responses from different types of stakeholders that navigating the future landscape would not be simple, but that everyone is facing similar issues. Some survey responses indicated the need for a whole of sector approach with much more dialogue and co-operation between agencies, ADEs and educational institutions.

There was a strong desire to better understand what the future for supported employment looks like including what the Government's policy intent is, if there would be a place for ADEs in the future and what this would look like, and how the NDIS will respond quickly to the changing requirements of participants looking for work. A number of responses recommended more focus on innovation and alternative models including those that had been implemented internationally. Participants also wanted a better understanding of the open employment option, including why people should consider this option, what it takes to successfully get people into it, how supported employment options can be better integrated into open employment in the NDIS environment, and how to transition an ADE to provide open employment options.

Some participants had expected more discussion on wage setting, and what kind of funding would be provided beyond the current transitional funding. There was also mention

that the Government needs to do more work around the DSP.

There was also a desire to be informed about the steps the Government would take after consultations. Almost all the survey responses expressed an interest in participating in future workshops about supported employment, at 96.4 per cent. One suggestion for future workshops was to have specific themes for each workshop, while another suggested that a regional workshop be held.

Breakdown of discussions with supported employees

Group discussions and interviews were held to ensure the voices of supported employees and people with disability were captured in a relevant and accessible way. These conversations were led by a social researcher from Gilimbaa and took place in the following locations, with 54 supported employees participating.

Location	Date	Organisation Type
South-East Queensland	13 April 2018	ADE
Hobart, Tasmania	16 April 2018	ADE
Northern Tasmania	17 April 2018	Self-advocacy group
Melbourne, Victoria	18 April 2018	ADE
Sydney, New South Wales	19 April 2018	Social group
Wagga Wagga, New South Wales	23 April 2018	Self-advocacy group
Toowoomba, Queensland	24 April 2018	ADE
Melbourne, Victoria	30 April 2018	Self-advocacy group

Design and implementation of discussions

A total of 18 supported employees also participated in one-on-one interviews to provide more details about their experiences in supported employment and other support they could receive to improve their employment experience.

Before each group discussion, the host organisation was contacted to discuss the communications and support needs of potential participants, and then contacted again to confirm the format for the group discussion and interviews that would best suit their supported employees.

Host organisations (ADEs, self-advocacy and social groups) and the supported employees were given the following documents to assist them prepare for the consultation:

- A document providing organisations with an overview of the planned group discussions and information on the purpose and planned structure of the consultations (produced as an Easy Read document).
- A copy of the Discussion Guide to be used in the consultations (produced as an Easy Read document) for review before the consultations.

- A copy of a Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form for review in advance of the consultations.

Each group discussion was made-up of 3-11 supported employees, and lasted between 30 and 75 minutes.

These group discussions were semi-structured, allowing participants to ask questions, state opinions, and voice their own priorities in their terms and using their words.

This approach allowed flexibility with open and interactive discussion.

Following group discussion, the facilitator invited any additional questions or comments from all participants.

Group discussion participants who indicated a willingness to participate in a one-on-one interview were then interviewed in private. These interviews were based on the discussion guide used in the groups, with some additional questions added where needed to gather more detailed feedback on the individual opinions and experiences of each supported employee.

Semi-structured interviews of 15-30 minutes in length were conducted with supported employees who indicated they would be interested in providing more detail about their individual experiences and opinions. These interviews were fluid in nature, allowing interviewees to express freely their views about their current and potential future employment. This type of semi-structured interviewing allowed clarification of points, extension of responses, and the ability to remind respondents of points they might not have mentioned.

The Department developed the methodology for group discussion and interviews based on advice from disability advocates with expertise in communicating with people with intellectual disability, including Inclusion Australia, Disability Advocacy Network Australia and Down Syndrome Australia.

Discussion guide and questions

- We want to ask you about the job you have now.
- We want to know:
 - What you like about it, and
 - How to make it better.
- Your ideas will help the Government do more to support people in jobs like yours.
- What kind of work do you do?
 - How long have you worked in this job?
 - How did you choose:
 - this job?
 - the place where you work?
 - What did you do before you started at this job?
 - What do you need to know when you're looking for a job?
 - Is this the kind of job you wanted?
 - Did you want a different kind of job?
- How much do you work?
 - How many days do you work each week?
 - How many hours do you work each day?
 - Would you like to work more or less hours?

- What do you like most about your job?
Why?
 - What don't you like about your job?
Why?
- What could make your job better?
 - Do you need support to make your job better?
 - Are you learning new things at your job?
- Would you like to try any job training or education?
 - How would this make your job better?
- What do you think about your pay?
 - Is the amount you get paid:
 - too low?
 - enough?
 - too high?
- Have you ever worked at a different job with other people who don't have disability?
 - What was that like?
 - Why did you leave that job?
- Do you know anyone who works in a job with people who don't have disability? For example:
 - at a supermarket
 - at another business that is not an ADE.
 - What jobs do they do?
 - Would you like to try something like that?
 - What would be good about working with people who don't have disability?
- Do you know what support you can get from the Government to help you find a job that is not at an ADE?
- If you could work anywhere you like, what would it be?
 - What help would you need to work in another job? For example:
 - at a café
 - in a shop.
- Do you have anything else you want to tell us?
- Do you have any questions?
- Would you like us to give you information about what other supported employees we have spoken to think?

