Submission

Disability Employment Strategy

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People with disability is not a homogonous group[[1]](#footnote-1) yet the consultation paper and associated research continually refers to “people with disability”. For example, employer confidence discussed on page 8 of the consultation paper provides no insights into the type of disability that employers would be prepared to employ. ABS data confirms that the greatest cohort of people with disability employed in the open market are those classified as people with a ‘mild limitation’, being people who need no additional help and have no difficulty at work but use aids or have limitations, compared with only 27.2 percent of those with a profound or severe limitation[[2]](#footnote-2).

In addressing the consultation questions, we provide the following comments as parents, legal guardians and advocates of a 23 year-old (B) with an ABS classification of a severe/profound limitation (i.e. intellectual disability). B currently works part-time in a supported employment program and is paid in accordance with [The Supported Employment Services Award 2020](https://awardviewer.fwo.gov.au/award/show/MA000103), receiving less that 20 percent of the minimum wage. While the program caters well to B’s needs, B is keen to gain employment in the open market and increase her earning capacity.

***Are there barriers or concerns for jobseekers with disability (jobseekers) not covered in this consultation paper?***

Having a severe limitation is a barrier to gaining employment in the open market. B’s needs are very specific and would require an employer prepared to provide the support and supervision required for a mutually productive working relationship. The application process itself is a further barrier. Written applications are not possible (unless prepared by someone else) and time limited face to face interviews present little opportunity for B to gain enough confidence to demonstrate competence and personality to a prospective employer.

***Are there barriers or concerns for employers not covered in this consultation paper?***

As noted above while employers are keen to employ people with disability, it is not surprising that those with a mild limitation are the most employed/employable. People with a severe/profound limitation do require investment and commitment from employers that may not always be possible.

***Do you have any feedback on the proposed vision or priority areas?***

The priority areas do not distinguish between the type of disability – we already know that those with mild limitation are the most employed/employable. A priority for severe/profound limitation across all age groups should be considered.

***Which actions or initiatives would best create positive change for people with disability and employers?***

Changing community attitudes is a great aspiration but without innovative solutions to employment options (particularly for severe/profound limitation) it is hard to see how another strategy will lead to change. As the consultation paper notes (page 3) significant investment across successive governments (state and national) have not led to increased rates of employment over the last 20 years. While no one model fits all, the redirection of Government funding (i.e. disability pensions) could be used for the creation of bespoke positions for people with severe/profound limitations based on a person’s skills/talents/interests rather than a set selection criteria for a predetermined position.

***How should we report against the Employment Strategy?***

The Employment Strategy should report annual disaggregated data across the various limitation groups. Disaggregated data would identify/confirm the cohorts with the greatest needs, better inform the efficacy of the strategy and would assist in developing appropriate strategics across the limitation type.

***How do we measure success of the Employment Strategy?***

Decent targets should be set for:

* creation of new/bespoke government positions
* employment of people with disability across the various limitation groups.

Success is measured against reaching the targets.

1. Disability status is a measure of the severity of limitations experienced by people with disability (profound, severe, moderate mild). ABS definition <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#key-statistics> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#disability [↑](#footnote-ref-2)