

Inclusion WA is an NDIS registered disability service organisation. We work alongside individuals to support them to live a good life of their choosing. For many years Inclusion WA has worked alongside individuals to help them to find and maintain employment. Currently Inclusion WA provide customised employment services under an individualised service model.

Are there barriers or concerns for job seekers with disability not covered in this consultation paper?

1. Lack of cross agency collaboration

We have identified a lack of effective collaboration between service providers including NDIS service providers, Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) and Disability Employment Service Providers (DES). We believe this is a barrier to job seekers with disability accessing holistic support. In many cases we have observed providers working in isolation of one another. The impact to individuals means they often repeat job searching activities, are forced to share their story over and over again, and are missing the opportunity to access support they may need to succeed in gaining or maintaining employment.

As a service provider attempting to collaborate effectively with other services to support individuals, we are on occasion faced with hesitation from providers to work together due to concerns of 'double dipping'. A more recent example of this was in Brisbane where Australian Inclusion Network (an organisation that falls under Australian Inclusion Group and provides individualised support like Inclusion WA) was attempting to collaborate with a DES provider. The provider stated that they were unable to work together with Australian Inclusion Network as they believed a participant accessing multiple employment services concurrently was considered double dipping.

In cases where we have been able to work collaboratively with other service providers we have seen people achieve some great outcomes. A recent example of effective collaboration was when we supported an individual who was also accessing a DES provider to gain paid employment. The DES provider secured this young man a work trial at Big W, however he required more ongoing on the job support than initially anticipated. This is something that the DES provider was unable to fulfil. The DES provider was able to call upon Inclusion WA support workers who supported the man one on one for the duration of his placement until he was able to complete tasks independently. He went on to secure paid work with Big W. Another example is a DES provider supported a woman to access support through Inclusion WA to assist her to maintain her job at Kmart. Inclusion WA and her DES provider worked in collaboration with her employer and family to fill the gaps in support and ensure her employment was maintained. This involved supporting her in the workplace and outside of the workplace to complete workplace related tasks, such as managing her roster, up keep of her personal hygiene before work, and catching public transport to and from work.

There is a definite need to promote cross agency collaboration and streamline access to services to ensure individuals are receiving holistic supports to help them to achieve their employment goals. There are some great initiatives attempting to promote this, including the National Disability Service Ticket to Work program. This is where many of our collaborative relationships with other providers were initially established.

2. Lack of ongoing career development and advancement

Another barrier is lack of support available to individuals to advance their career or diversify their role once a job has been secured. We see individuals placed in positions, often entry level roles,

without ongoing role development and career advancement. Frequently we see individuals linked with DES providers who are eager to develop their role, but aren't given the support to do so. This is often due to constraints from the DES provider and employer. In a more recent example a young man who had been working at McDonalds for a number of years was becoming frustrated that he was doing the same tasks since he began working. He was eager to learn new skills however the DES provider and employer stated they were not able to invest the time that was needed to train this individual. There is a need for services and support to exist that are committed to ongoing career development. We believe this is another area where cross agency collaboration could be of benefit to individuals.

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

1. Improving systems and services for job seekers and employers

The Employment Strategy recommends reforming and streamlining existing employment services and supports to make them easier to use and more person-centred. We are in support of this. In addition to this we believe it would be beneficial to build the confidence and capacity of existing NDIS registered providers to deliver individualised employment supports. Many organisations are currently providing individualised services and may already be well placed to support people to achieve their employment goals using a person centred, customised approach. NDIS eligible participants seem to be relying more heavily on DES providers to meet their employment needs and have limited knowledge about other services available to them, and how to access these. There is a need to promote the diverse range of employment services that are accessible to NDIS eligible participants, such as services who offer School Leaver Employment Supports and other individualised support options. We frequently hear from NDIS participants in WA that it is also difficult to access NDIS registered employment services as they are limited, and many have limited capacity.

Using the flexibility of NDIS funding to their advantage, individuals may have the opportunity to customise their supports and work with a range of services simultaneously to achieve their employment goals, including ADEs and DES. An example of this is a young man who was attending an ADE two days per week while accessing DES supports and individualised employment services through Inclusion WA. He was supported to explore mainstream employment opportunities with Inclusion WA supports and his DES provider, while using his ADE to complete workplace training. Eventually this man went onto securing employment through a mainstream employer.

The Employment Strategy recommends exploring opportunities within the ADE model for workplace training and experience as a pathways to other employment opportunities. We support this recommendation. Our experience working alongside people employed through ADEs is that it is often the last stop in their employment journey and not a lot of support is provided to transition to open employment settings. It would be important for ADEs to drive this transition and set a start and finish point, with regular opportunities for goal setting, skill acquisition and career progression. Sharing stories about successful transitions from ADE to open employment settings with people with disability and their support network may help raise low expectations, and show the possibilities of open employment. We feel this needs to be driven by ADEs, as much as it does other agencies and providers. This is another area where cross agency collaboration and improved linkages between key systems/agencies may be beneficial.

2. Building employment skills, experience and confidence of young people with disability

The Employment Strategy recommends building employment skills, experience and confidence of young people with disability. We are very much in support of improving career development opportunities of young people while they are still in school, ideally before they reach their final year of schooling. Inclusion WA supports many people who are post school age who have not had the opportunity to engage in meaningful work experience, further education and other career development opportunities. As stated in the Employment Strategy we find this makes it increasingly difficult for people to be considered by employers for paid work opportunities. There is also a need to focus on building the skills, experience and confidence of this cohort of individuals (post school age) that are not work ready. Our experience with DES providers indicate they are unable to focus heavily on skill development and work best with individuals who are considered 'work ready'. We therefore have concerns for how this cohort are accessing capacity building supports and services to increase work readiness if they are not NDIS eligible.

For NDIS eligible participants, individualised employment supports should be accessible prior to a young person's final year of schooling. Typically we see School Leaver Employment Supports funded for Year 12 students. This usually allows for only 6 months of planning and work experience, and is often not a sufficient amount of time for a student to participate in meaningful career development opportunities. Because of this we find young people are transitioning into ADEs after schooling as this provides parents with the structure and stability needed for them to continue working. If individualised employment supports can be accessed earlier in a person's schooling life we may find young people seamlessly transition into open employment or mainstream study options after school more frequently.

Inclusion WA is in support of the Employment Strategy vision and priority areas and we welcome future consultation towards the strategy.

Feedback Submitted by Jessica De Masi, on behalf of Inclusion WA

Contact details:

jessica.demasi@inclusionwa.org.au

(08) 9201 8900