

Centre of Excellence Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the **Establishing a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence - Options Paper October 2023**. This submission is being made on behalf of Bus Stop Films.

The screen and commercial production industry is unique and complex and should be viewed outside of the general 'arts' grouping. The nature of the industry makes it very difficult for individuals living with disabilities to enter the industry and remain in the industry. Specific challenges include:

- An industry where employment is often based around "who you know" and networking, and vacancies are rarely advertised through formal channels such as seek.com or through disability employment providers.
- Long working days, often without regular breaks
- Limited budgets that rarely support placements of people with disabilities - ie. no funding for support workers, assistive technology, physical supports etc.
- Fast paced nature of work including rapidly changing schedules and creative/logistic direction
- Travel requirements and non accessible locations
- A lack of diverse casting options
- Gig economy that rarely supports those needing more consistency and structure
- An assumption that people with disabilities can not undertake crew roles given the exclusive attitude of sector
- Tight turn around and unrealistic time frames to crew up and cast projects, particularly in commercial and advertising productions, which can move from ideation to production in a matter of days.

Bus Stops Films has been working towards a more inclusive and accessible industry since it was founded in 2009. Bus Stop Films teach adults with disabilities and others from marginalised communities film studies. We use filmmaking and the film industry to change community attitudes globally around the rights and contribution to society of and by people with disability. More recently, we have established Bus Stop Employment, a professional, inclusive and reliable service for all people with disability seeking work in the screen industry and for production companies wishing to hire people with disability in their companies and productions.

In 2022 with support from the Snow Foundation and a Westpac Inclusive Employment grant we launched Bus Stop Employment, a dedicated business unit within the organisation to support people with disabilities gain employment within the screen industry and build confidence in the sector to employ people with disabilities. Given the piecemeal nature of work in the sector, it is not supported by the Disability Employment Service (DES) system and Bus Stop's ability to ensure the viability of our services is connected to our expertise in inclusive filmmaking and unparalleled understanding of inclusive practice in commercial screen production. Through our Accessible Film Studies Program we have a national footprint and work with 100's of people

with disabilities and producers to facilitate disability employment pathways in the screen and commercial production sectors.

We recognise the unique aspects of excellence and barriers around disability employment in the screen and commercial production sector plan to host a 2 day Disability Employment in the Screen Industry in November 2024, to explore this topic in greater detail.

A Centre of Excellence would be welcomed by Bus Stop Films and on behalf of our community. We particularly would welcome the below functions outlined in the options paper:

- Provide best-practice guidelines
- Undertake and publish research that will continue to strengthen and guide practice
- Aid design and delivery of policy and practice in disability employment
- Regulatory functions
- Elevate the importance of disability employment with the public and with business.

A survey released in 2021/22 by the ABS found that the Australian screen industry employed approximately 55,000 people and contributed over \$6 billion in value-added to the Australian economy in 2021/22, making it the largest creative contributor.

Just like no two people in our community are alike, no two productions are alike. It is the work we are doing to proactively advocate and facilitate for people with disabilities to be in front of the camera and behind the camera, regardless of whether it's for a film, television series, commercial project, audio project or otherwise.

Our recommendation would be in the first instance to work towards a stand alone statutory agency, which would be truly groundbreaking for Australia. A secondary consideration would be a hybrid model that brings together key elements of both the statutory agency and the clearing house models.

It is also imperative that any COE sees the screen and commercial production sectors recognised as a critical but under-resourced sector around disability employment and note that our work is different from "The Arts" when you consider the commercialisation of film production and the machinery of commercial production for advertising. The screen industry needs to be recognised as a sector that, while a close relative of "The Arts", is quite different from traditional areas such as dance, art or music. Additionally, in terms of societal change when we consider attitudes towards disability, there is no more powerful medium than content to change lives and minds and as such, the screen and commercial production sectors are critical pieces of the puzzle in bringing to the fore best practice in disability employment.

Sincerely,

Diana Fisk (GM Employment) and Tracey Corbin-Matchett (CEO)