

## Submission Brief

In Response To: “Next Steps in Supported Employment – Consultation on the Way Forward”

Submitted By: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Founded on the principle that communication is a human right, our mission is to dismantle communication barriers, promote equity, and support the full inclusion of our participants in all aspects of life—especially employment.

## 2. Key Themes for Consideration in the Discussion Paper

### Recommendation 7.30 – Inclusive Employment & Choice

We strongly support the development of a National Inclusive Employment Plan that recognises:

- Communication access as a core employment right.
- The essential role of [REDACTED] workplaces in providing cultural safety and inclusion.
- The need for bespoke employment support tailored for communication-disabled Australians.

### Recommendation 7.31 – Subminimum Wages

We support the phase-out of subminimum wages, but only where supported by:

- Targeted capacity-building in communication and digital literacy.
- Access to independent, culturally fluent advocates for communication-diverse workers.
- Language-accessible wage education tools, including Auslan translations and plain English/easy read options.

### Recommendation 7.32 – Ending Segregated Employment

We caution against conflating culturally safe Deaf-led employment environments with segregation. Many of our community members actively choose to work in Deaf or Auslan-fluent spaces for identity, safety and connection—not due to systemic exclusion.

## 3. Why This Matters:

- Over 80% of our workforce has lived experience of a disability that affects communication.
- We are non-conflicted, concentrating on support coordination only, ensuring true choice.
- Delivered culturally responsive support to over 500 NDIS participants.
- Train providers in hearing privilege, [REDACTED], communication equity, and unconscious bias.
- Developed a Quality Framework for Support Coordination with lived experience at its core.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## 4. Recommendations for DSS Consideration

### Additional Recommendation – Interview Accessibility Compliance

We urge the Australian Government to address the growing use of AI-facilitated, audio-only group interviews in recruitment practices, particularly within large-scale employment service providers and government-funded initiatives. These formats, often controlled by artificial intelligence and reliant on real-time verbal responses, inherently exclude individuals with communication disabilities [REDACTED]

Such practices fail to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by not offering equal access to participation. [REDACTED] the expectation for instantaneous responses in a group audio setting renders meaningful participation impossible. This approach not only breaches access obligations but also undermines the dignity and agency of communication-diverse jobseekers.

We recommend:

- Prohibiting group interview practices that cannot accommodate all communication needs equitably.
- Mandating inclusive, flexible recruitment processes with built-in accessibility standards, including pre-recorded or written formats, Auslan interpreter access, and reasonable time allowances for interpreted responses.
- Holding employment service providers accountable to inclusive practices under the DDA.
- Inclusive hiring must begin at the first point of contact—with the interview. No one should be denied the opportunity to work because of how they communicate.

We call on the Australian Government to:

- Include Deaf and people with communication barriers explicitly in all national employment planning.
- Fund specialist communication access services and training.
- Invest in Deaf-led employment and social enterprise models.
- Establish communication access standards in all employment settings.
- Ensure co-design groups include communication-diverse representation.

## 5. Final Statement

For people with communication barriers, employment is about more than income. It's about dignity, independence, language, identity and connection.

The future of supported employment must reflect this. [REDACTED] is proud to submit this submission and assist in leading this change—and we welcome the opportunity to contribute our lived experience and insights to help shape a system where every Australian can thrive [REDACTED]

Signed on 19/05/2025