

Submission from [REDACTED]

Next steps in Supported Employment: consultation on the way forward

Question 1

Is there any other work that is missing from the table at Appendix 3?

There are supported employment services that operate in an inclusive environment and apply the supported wage system in the same way as open employment. We recommend a rating system to distinguish inclusive supported employment providers.

Question 2

What is your ideal future state for the supported employment sector and employment of people with disability with high support needs?

- Opportunity for people with varying levels of disability to access employment, including people who are not yet ready to commence or transition to open employment. It's important people with high support needs are not left behind with an "open employment first" approach. Employment is essential to wellbeing, self-esteem and long-term health, particularly for people with significant disability.
- Opportunities for people with high support needs to work in both open and supported employment where this meets their needs. That is, ensure there is choice & control for people with high support needs to opt between supported, open or a combination of employment where practicable.
- Recognition that the supported employment sector has specialised skills in supporting people with significant barriers who may not be ready for open employment.
- Recognition and awareness that some supported employment services operate in an integrated and inclusive work environment:
 - Enterprise can offer employees a range of jobs
 - Enterprise can provide in-demand skill development and training (RTO registration/partnership)
 - Enterprise can offer promotions in the business
 - Enterprise can offer customised employment services
 - Enterprise can be a trusted partner to mainstream business
 - Enterprise can provide diverse and well paid employment opportunities
 - Enterprise cultivates social connections and peer supports for current and past employees
 - Enterprise can build community networks and social capital of employees
 - Enterprise undertakes individualised, open ended on-boarding planning for supported employees

- Enterprise engages in regular career check-ins with supported employees
 - Enterprise has an annual performance review process for employees with disability
 - Enterprise equips interested employees to leave the organisation
 - Policies and procedures in place for supported decision making
 - All staff have individualised employment goals
 - Workplace policies and procedures in easy read format
 - Enterprise communicates with all staff as equals
 - Enterprise engages all staff as equals
 - Workplace has a policy for workplace adjustment
 - Enterprise workforce ensures high quality support and safe working conditions
 - Enterprise has buildings and facilities that are safe and accessible
- Increased accountability to prioritise supported employee skill development.
 - Additional training, education and tools for the supported employment sector, to implement the “Guiding Principles for the Future of Supported Employment”.
 - Additional funding and resources to assist the supported employment sector to maintain business viability and achieve the above objectives. Supported employment can contribute significantly, to overall employment, of people with disability, through their extensive knowledge and experience of employing people with high support needs.
 - Increased publicity and support from DSS, NDIA and NDS for supported employment providers making significant impact and contribution in the disability employment sector.

Question 3

What additional actions do you consider are necessary to increase employment of people with high support needs in open/inclusive settings?

- Implementing an assessment process to distinguish supported employment settings that are inclusive. We support the implementation of a rating system to differentiate supported employment environments. We also support the introduction of new language and terminology to help families and professionals make informed choices and distinguish the variability between supported employment providers.
- Reporting systems that ensure supported employment providers focus on ongoing skill development.
- Implementing key performance indicators that reflect achievement of individual career goals in both supported and open employment workplaces.

- Awareness that the transition to open employment for people with high support needs is not one big step but a series of small steps over an extended period and reflecting this in outcomes and funding.
- Funding for professionals to assess and address individual barriers to open employment. Often people with disability have the necessary work skills to perform their tasks but personal or other barriers impact longevity and success of employment.
- Opportunity and access to funding for supported employment providers to source and support open employment positions.
- Access to employer subsidies for supported employment services.

Question 4

The Royal Commission recommended the development of a Plan or Roadmap to guide further reform in the supported employment sector. What would you like to see included in such a plan?

- Alternative language and descriptors to convey the range and variability in supported employment settings. The terminology of “Australian Disability Enterprises” and “Supported Employment” is reflective of the use of the Supported Employment Services Award and historical funding arrangements through the Department of Social Services. The homogeneous grouping of workplaces that have the above arrangements, unfortunately classifies all these workplaces as segregated. The sector needs new language as businesses adopt and implement the “Guiding Principles for the Future of Supported Employment”.

Question 5

How could the sector best increase wages for people with disability while avoiding job losses?

- a. Are there examples that currently exist that can be leveraged?
 - b. Are there new approaches that can be tested?
- Review previously identified arrangements, for example, a Social wage which includes the DSP, government to top-up gaps between supported wages and full award wages. This can be offset by the tax Gov’t receives from higher supported wages.

Question 6

Do you see a role for workplaces which provide specialised employment opportunities for people with disability in the future?

- a. If so, what should these places look like?
 - Yes, there will always be a role for employers that can provide specialised employment to people with high support needs. These employers can contribute significantly to skill building and providing long-term support in open employment.

Question 7

How could the benefits of supported employment settings be reflected in open employment settings?

- Increased communication and collaboration between supported employment, DES providers and employers.
- Providing incentives to supported employment providers when they source and support jobseekers in open employment.
- Providing opportunities for supported employment providers to implement their experience and knowledge of task analysis and job carving in open employment.