



19 June 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Subject: Feedback on the "Next Steps in Supported Employment" Discussion Paper

 appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the "Next Steps in Supported Employment" discussion paper.

Question 1: Is there any other existing work that is missing from the major initiatives improving inclusive employment table at Appendix 3?

While this diagram effectively illustrates the work completed to date aimed at enhancing choice and control for individuals with high support needs,  it does not adequately reflect the significant role of community-based social enterprises that hold labour hire licenses. These enterprises,  are crucial in safeguarding the entitlements of supported employees. These flexible models are essential for providing support to individuals living with disabilities in the workplace.

Question 2: What is your ideal future state for the supported employment sector and employment of people with disability with high support needs?

This is a difficult question to answer as it's quite complex. For individuals with high support needs, we currently lack the necessary infrastructure, work, and resources to provide adequate support. The roles available within our organization do not align with the capabilities of these individuals, making it difficult .

Regarding the future state,  challenges in promoting employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Many individuals do not feel motivated to seek work due to their continued receipt of the Disability Support Pension, concession card discounts, and NDIS funding. Additionally, those who are unemployed but could potentially be employed often prefer to participate in day services, travel, and dining out. This situation places organizations  in a difficult position, particularly with an aging workforce.

While the current government's stance is that Supported Employment funding should be included in every NDIS plan, this certainly does not appear to be the case at present. To illustrate this challenge, we recently had 35 individuals with disabilities participate in work experience  but we were only able to retain one for ongoing employment. Many of these participants had the potential to engage in employment but chose not to pursue it for various reasons.



[REDACTED]

Question 3: What additional actions do you consider are necessary to increase employment of people with high support needs in open/inclusive settings?

There would need significant work carried out in terms of risk analysis for these individuals. Many workplaces are not geared up for intellectual and minor disabilities, let alone high support needs. Speaking from our participants' perspective, they find it difficult to transition to open employment and social inclusion now, even without high support needs. [REDACTED] the infrastructure or training within workplaces is currently available to these individuals in our communities/workplaces. Individuals placed into the wrong settings without support could be soul-destroying placing these people at further risk.

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?

[REDACTED] more realistic goals for individuals with disabilities. Words on a page do not count; it is the actions taken by people that truly matter to people living with disabilities, and currently, there is a lack of support for these people.

An example, it is concerning that government organizations continue to communicate with our participants through written letters, despite the knowledge that many individuals may struggle with literacy. [REDACTED] the roadmap should incorporate communication strategies that are co-designed with people with intellectual disabilities. This will ensure that information is delivered in an accessible manner and that decision-making processes are inclusive. Effective communication is essential, yet the current format of information is not easily understood by individuals living with disabilities.

There remains a significant gap before the open employment market is adequately prepared to support these individuals. It often feels as though organisations [REDACTED] are being asked to provide employment opportunities for those with high support needs, while individuals with intellectual disabilities are directed toward open employment, meaning organisations [REDACTED] are doing the heavy lifting whilst trying to stay viable.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient infrastructure to support these individuals in open employment, leaving staff from organisations [REDACTED] to check in on our participants to ensure they do not feel isolated. [REDACTED] holds a labour hire license to prevent our participants from losing their long service, annual leave, and sick leave when an organisation determines that they are not suitable for their workplace. If we did not have this option available, many individuals would be left without a job and income, leading to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and worthlessness. [REDACTED] covers the cost of the labour hire license, ensuring that [REDACTED] participants can maintain their employment benefits. [REDACTED]

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 could be tested?

This situation is very difficult, as organizations must work diligently on their social procurement strategies to remain viable while employing individuals living with disabilities.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the same tender requirements as mainstream businesses, including price competitiveness, quality (getting it right the first time), time demands on delivery, and adherence to the same tender expectations. If wages continue to rise, there will come a point where Australian Disability Enterprises will need to consider productivity. This poses a significant challenge for employing individuals with high support needs, as they may not meet productivity criteria while still needing to fulfill the same expectations as their peers, causing loss of employment opportunities. This practice encourages job losses not entry into the workforce.

Question 6: Do you see a role for workplaces which provide specialized employment opportunities for people with disability in the future? a. If so, what should these workplaces look like?

Yes, [REDACTED] we have been able to provide meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities to individuals living with disabilities in our community.

Our business units are varied to offer as many employment opportunities as we can. However, we do struggle to offer employment opportunities for those with high support needs, as finding suitable work for these individuals remains a real challenge.

Question 7: How could the benefits of supported employment settings be reflected in open employment settings?

Workplaces need to think outside the box and take the time to get to know the supported employee, understanding their needs and triggers and working with them. They also need to allocate quite a bit of time initially until the individual finds their way. Often this is missed, and there may be a need to rethink how work is carried out to assist individuals living with disabilities in learning tasks.

[REDACTED] challenges and opportunities surrounding the employment of people with disabilities, particularly in the context of transitioning to open employment. There have been many broken promises where our people have been left without work and in some cases has resulted in them remaining unemployed or alternatively moved interstate to try and find work.

Overall, [REDACTED] believe the transition to open employment has proven to be challenging for many individuals for several reasons. Primarily, our participants often express feelings of being a minority in mainstream employment settings, leading to a sense of isolation and the loss of their supportive community. This transition is further complicated by concerns about losing entitlements such as Long Service Leave, Annual Leave, and Sick Leave, which create additional barriers to pursuing open employment options. The fear of job loss, not only in open employment but also within supported employment, is a significant deterrent.

Moreover, we have observed a lack of adequate support and suitable job placements for individuals with disabilities entering open employment. Social inclusion is not consistently

[REDACTED]



successful integration into the workforce. The current economic climate presents additional challenges, as many mainstream employers find it difficult to accommodate supported employees who require monitoring and supervision. For individuals with high support needs, we currently lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to provide adequate support. The roles available within our organization may not align with the capabilities of these individuals, making it difficult to facilitate their entry into the workforce.

In response to the Royal Commission's findings and the research conducted by Taylor Fry regarding the potential impacts of wage increases, we align with their conclusions that individuals with high support needs would be particularly vulnerable to job losses. The potential loss of employment not only affects financial stability but also impacts self-worth and social connections, as highlighted by Taylor Fry.

We look forward to further discussions on these critical issues and appreciate the commitment to improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Thank you for considering our perspective.

