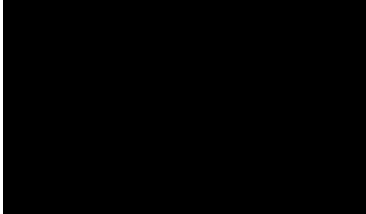




Supported Employment Discussion Paper Response
20th June 2025



Introduction

██████ employs a small team of people with lived experience as Human Rights Advisors and Ambassadors, led by a dedicated Human Rights Lead. This team represents the voice of the people ██████ supports. Their work includes contributing to the development of policies and procedures, facilitating a quarterly Human Rights Advisory Committee and an annual Human Rights Conference, responding to government and industry submissions, and participating in a range of working groups to ensure ██████ remains aligned with its mission and values.

To inform our response to the Supported Employment Discussion Paper, we held two workshops—one with School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) participants and another with Supported Employees ██████. Their feedback has been included verbatim at the end of this paper.

We now share our collective response for your consideration.

2. Supported Employment: consultation on the way forward

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

The future of supported employment must be inclusive, rights-based, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of people with disability, especially those with high support needs. It should reflect Australia's commitment to the UNCRPD and uphold the principles of choice and control embedded in the NDIS.

In this future, people with disability have access to meaningful, fairly paid work in mainstream or specialist settings of their choosing, with their contributions recognised and valued.

Supports are person-centred and flexible, adapting to individuals' needs, goals, and preferences. This includes tailored job design, assistive technology, and on-the-job support.

Multiple employment pathways are available, including supported, open, and social enterprise options, alongside strong school-to-work transitions.

Employers are equipped and confident, with access to training, incentives, and practical tools to create inclusive workplaces.

Funding and policy focus on outcomes that matter, such as fair pay, skill development, job satisfaction, and long-term progression.

People with disability lead the way, actively involved in designing and guiding employment programs and reforms. A broader range of responsibilities and tasks to make work more interesting and fulfilling.

Offer an optional Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment at the workplace upon commencement, including a report with recommendations and a list of possible adjustments—such as Bluetooth headphones, extended breaks, written instructions, assistive technology, quiet spaces, and more.

Achieving this vision requires cultural change, long-term investment, and strong partnerships between government, providers, employers, and people with lived experience.

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

We envision a future where people with disability, including those with high support needs, have genuine access to meaningful, fairly paid employment in inclusive settings of their choice. Employment is recognised as a human right, not a privilege, and all supports and systems are designed to uphold this.

Key features would include:

- Personalised Support: Flexible, individualised employment assistance including tailored hours and job roles.
- Strong Transitions: Clear school-to-work pathways with early intervention.
- Lived Experience Leadership: Embedded in policy design, delivery, and evaluation.
- Innovative Approaches: Investment in customised employment and discovery-based job creation.
- Flexible Funding: NDIS support that follows the person across employment settings.
- Career Development: Early, targeted programs for people with high support needs.
- Employer Support: Incentives, long-term wage subsidies, and inclusion training.
- Workforce Development: National standards and training for support staff focused on rights and inclusion.
- Peer Leadership: Support peer-led mentoring and employment initiatives.
- Training: Supporting people with disability to gain qualifications through TAFE, university, or similar institutions, to pursue meaningful and fulfilling careers

- Organisations and their staff should not be permitted to exclude people simply because they do not provide accessibility features or disability awareness opportunities.
- NDIS funding should include clear and accessible individual funding for personalised workplace supports and equipment.
- Develop a better recruitment system where all employers are required to post Easy Read job advertisements on a central, user-friendly platform, using a co-designed template.
- Improve Disability Employment Services (DES) to provide consistent, tailored, and on-the-job support—rather than limited drop-in visits.
- Employers should be encouraged and supported to offer more workplace trials and promote these opportunities.
- Reform Centrelink so that people with disability are not financially disadvantaged by working in supported employment.
- Promote the financial and personal benefits of employment, including the potential to earn more and achieve greater financial independence.
- Adjust pension rules so people do not lose income or essential supports when transitioning into open employment.

To improve employment outcomes for people with high support needs, we must move beyond traditional models and invest in flexible, person-driven, and rights-based approaches. This requires strong leadership, sector collaboration, and a commitment to doing better.

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?

A National Plan should be bold, rights-based, and co-designed with people with disability, especially those with high support needs.

Key inclusions,

- Employment as a Right: Fair pay and inclusion for all, not a privilege.
- Meaningful Outcomes: Focus on job quality, stability, and satisfaction—not just numbers.

- Lived Experience Leadership: Central in design, governance, and delivery.
- Skilled Workforce: National standards for job coaches and inclusive employers.
- Smooth Transitions: Early career exposure and tailored school-to-work support.
- Engaged Employers: Incentives, tools, and real success stories to drive inclusion.
- Flexible Funding: Person-centred, portable, and supports customised employment paths.
- Diverse Pathways: Open, supported, social enterprise, and self-employment options

The Plan must drive long-term, systemic change, ensuring people with high support needs can access meaningful work and thrive.

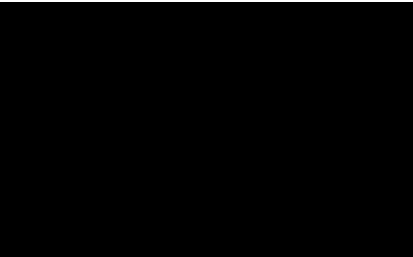
5. How could the sector best increase wages for people with disability while avoiding job losses?

To raise wages while protecting jobs for people with disability, especially those with high support needs, the sector should:

- Fair Wages: Phase in tools to ensure minimum wage with structured transitions.
- Targeted Subsidies: Offset employer costs to promote inclusive hiring.
- Provider Support: Fund job redesign, productivity boosts, and model diversification.
- Employee Support: Invest in coaching and assistive tech to build skills and contribution.
- Employer Capability: Share success stories and build confidence in inclusive employment.

With the right supports, higher wages and inclusive job growth can be a reality.

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



Specialised employment workplaces will continue to play an important role in supporting people with disability, particularly those with high support needs, by offering tailored environments that provide:

- Tailored Support: Individualised skill development for diverse needs.
- Inclusive Workplaces: Safe, accessible environments that build confidence and connection.
- Pathways to Independence: Clear options to transition into open employment.
- Valued Roles: Meaningful opportunities when open employment isn't yet possible.

a. If so, what should these workplaces look like?

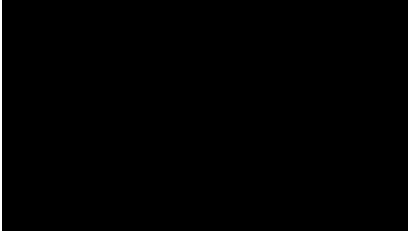
These workplaces should be part of a broader, flexible employment system that promotes inclusion and choice, avoiding segregation and ensuring people can move freely between supported and open settings as their skills and preferences evolve.

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

To bring the strengths of supported employment into open workplaces, it's essential to:

- Tailored Support: On-the-job coaching and mentoring.
- Flexibility: Adjustments and work arrangements to meet individual needs.
- Inclusive Culture: Workplaces that value and support diversity.
- Career Growth: Ongoing, personalised skill development and progression.
- Collaborative Support: Strong partnerships between employers, providers, and employees.

By integrating these elements, open employment can become more accessible, supportive, and sustainable for people with disability, including those with high support needs.



The views of [REDACTED] participants, shared through workshops and Easy English questions, have been included verbatim.

2. What would supported employment look like if it was perfect.

Paid equally as outside employment

Regular/ annual pay raises same as CPI

Not good enough to receive pay prices, based on our performance

Enough skill development

Learning new skills

Peer support / buddy system

What would you be doing?

Office job, data entry, computer work

Looking after animals

Building work

Bar, serving drinks

JB Hi Fi or EB Games, stocking shelves, serving

Kindergarten or Day Care, looking after kids, playing

Florist, opening and closing shop, selling, communication (professionals working with me)

School canteen, chatting to everyone (someone with more experience)

Photography, working in the field

Coles, packing shelves (with someone who knows how)

Theme parks, movie theatre, operator

Forklift driver

Hospitality course, pet shop

Café hospitality, animal welfare league

Administration desk, use paper shredder.

Working with animals, volunteering at RDA

Volunteering at Lifeline, rags into bags

Open employment, working RSPCA, Nursing home, aged care worker. Would like to do Child care, Aged care certificate

Cupcakes, shop front to serve customers, op shop.

Computers, chess grand master

3. We want more people with high support needs to be working in open employment.

How can we make this happen?

Repetitive work - doing the same thing over and over, I got bored so I left

It was too hot, no air con, staff were pretty rude, I decided to leave

Staff are more respectful

Understanding who you are, use pronouns

Get paid equally

More choices

More variety

Applied to lots of jobs, nothing has happened yet
Respect for other people around you, don't swear at them or call you names,
doesn't matter who they are they are all human beings.
Need more education for workplaces, don't know how to talk to people with
disability.
Listen to me
Be able to listen to music Ear phones to help me control my anxiety
Support staff to be understanding, flexible, respect, trustworthy.

4. The DRC thought we should make a plan to help us make supported employment better.

What ideas would you put in the plan?

Better pay
Clear instructions
Support person and supporting each other
More variety
More social activities
Less talking
Help people understand the job
More flexibility
Include everyone
Harmony room with mural to destress
Swap people around, different jobs for everyone
Presentations from companies about their business
Fun activities workplace based to hold the persons attention to what kind of
work they want to do

5. How can employers

• Keep all the jobs

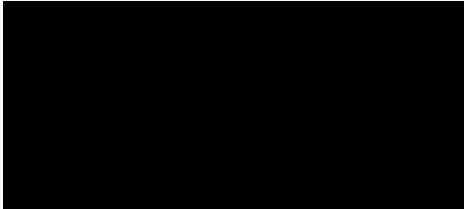
And

• Pay people with disability more money?

Do harder work
Work hard get more money
Do the work prep and listen to supervisor
Help me with jobs at work
Set pay for everyone (regardless of disability)
Give incentives, perks
Longer lunch breaks
More job variety, variety of skills
Allow people to try every activity and keep changing their activities

6. What do you like most about supported employment?

Acceptance when making mistakes
Meeting new friends / working with friends
Support workers / Team Leaders



BBQ. Christmas Party
Talking while working
Footy Tipping
Getting out of the house
Being around Supervisor
Getting paid
Getting trained
Flexibility (there are a variety of jobs if you aren't feeling 100% like doing that job)
Can talk to Supervisors if you have a problem or need advice
The work we do (Sachets, food)
Don't have to come every day
Work environment, professional Team Leader
Positive attitude at work, clear communication, easy to understand
Getting confidence up
Working makes you happy, sense of purpose and belonging
Routine
Socialising with others
Talk to Team Leader's if there is a problem, important to trust them, they need to listen to you.
Different, something new to do.
Harder jobs, more challenging things to do.
Can be boring, want to go home knowing I have done a good job, I often wonder why I am here.
Do work training if there is nothing to do.
Have more lunch activities