



Australian Government

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## National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

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## Foreword

The Rudd Government believes that everyone who wants to work, including people with disability and mental illness, should be given the chance to do so. With almost 20 per cent of our citizens having some form of disability, we have to act.

This new National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy sets out a number of priority actions to get Australians with disability, including mental illness, into work. It recognises the importance of education and training as a pathway to sustainable employment, and the role of employers in increasing employment opportunities for people with disability.

The Strategy includes an investment of \$1.2 billion in employment services for people with disability. For the first time, services will be demand driven, meaning all job seekers with disability will have immediate access to assistance from an employment service that will help them gain skills and employment. The new services will provide more personalised services for job seekers and more support to employers employing people with disability and mental illness.

For too long, employers have been reluctant to give people with disability a go. To address this, the Strategy includes an employment incentive pilot that will provide job opportunities for 1,000 Australians who receive the Disability Support Pension. The Pilot will trial a new way of encouraging employers to offer employment opportunities to people with disability and allow Disability Support Pension recipients to demonstrate their skills and willingness to work.

The Government will continue to work with stakeholders to increase the education and employment opportunities available to people with disability and make services work better for them.

The Strategy will make a positive difference to people with disability and their families now and in the future. It is an important element of the Rudd Government's Social Inclusion Agenda.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Arbib".

**Senator the Hon Mark Arbib**

Minister for Employment Participation



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Shorten".

**The Hon Bill Shorten MP**

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services



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## Strategy highlights

The Australian Government has developed a National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy (the Strategy) to address barriers to employment faced by people with disability, including mental illness.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of the Strategy is to increase the employment of people with disability, promote social inclusion and improve national economic productivity.

Highlights of the Strategy include:

- **New Disability Employment Services** to give job seekers immediate access to personalised employment services better suited to their needs with stronger links to skills development and training.
- **A Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot** that will provide job opportunities for 1,000 Australians who receive the Disability Support Pension (DSP).
- **The Australian Public Service Commission will develop training and best practice advice for Australian Public Service (APS) agencies and managers,** and establish and support disability networks for APS Human Resource managers and practitioners.
- **Improved assessment and support for people with disability.** Changes to the Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) process have ensured that people on DSP who want help to find work will no longer have to worry about putting their disability pension on the line.
- **Workforce re-engagement through better and fairer assessments for Disability Support Pension.** A number of measures will support the re-engagement of people with disability within the workforce as part of the Disability Support Pension—better and fairer assessments 2009–10 Budget measure.
- **The creation of a new Employment Assistance Fund** that will bring together resources from the Workplace Modifications Scheme and the Auslan for Employment program making it easier for employers, people with disability and employment providers to access assistance.
- **An Innovation Fund** will help more people with disability into jobs by funding innovative projects that remove barriers to employment.
- **An enhanced JobAccess website** to increase awareness among employers of the services available to support both people with disability and mental illness.

Other initiatives that will help deliver the Strategy include:

- **Meeting the needs of school students with disability** through the Government's education reform agenda.
- **Developing a National Disability Strategy** to increase the social, economic and cultural participation of people with disability, to eliminate the discrimination they experience and to improve disability support services for families and carers.
- **Implementing the Fourth National Mental Health Plan,** which represents a renewed commitment by all health ministers to the continual improvement of Australia's mental health system.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, the term 'people with disability' also includes people with mental illness.

## The need for a strategy

An important aspect of social inclusion is the opportunity to get a job. Having employment provides obvious benefits like higher income and greater self-esteem, but it can also help connect people with society by establishing friendships and support networks.

However, the rate of employment of people with disability and mental illness is still well below that of people without disability and, in recent years, their relative employment prospects have declined.

- In 2003, the labour force participation rate of people with disability aged 15 to 64 years was 53.2 per cent and the unemployment rate was 8.6 per cent, compared to 80.6 per cent and 5.0 per cent, respectively, for those without disability.<sup>2</sup>
- The proportion of people with disability in the Australian Public Service has also fallen. Between 1999 and 2008, the employment of people with disability fell from 4.9 per cent to 3.1 per cent.<sup>3</sup>
- Education participation rates for people with disability are lower than for people without disability. In 2003, 29.6 per cent of people aged 15 to 64 years with reported disability had completed Year 12, and 12.7 per cent had completed a bachelor degree or higher, compared to 49.3 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively for people without disability.<sup>4</sup>
- The number of DSP recipients has risen by 36 per cent over the last 10 years to more than 750,000 people. The average duration that people with disability remain on DSP is nine years and fewer than 10 per cent of DSP recipients report earnings from work.<sup>5</sup>

- Around 28 per cent of current DSP recipients have psychiatric/psychological conditions as their primary medical condition.<sup>6</sup>
- People with mental illness (psychological disability) experience even higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of labour force participation than those with physical disability. In 2003, the labour force participation rate of people with mental illness aged 15 to 64 years was 28.2 per cent and the unemployment rate was 19.5 per cent, compared to 48.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively for those with physical disability.<sup>7</sup>

Many people with disability want to work but are hampered by poorly coordinated support, inadequate education and training opportunities, outmoded community attitudes, and the fear of losing eligibility for crucial benefits.

The Strategy addresses these issues and fulfils the Government's election commitment made in 2007 to consult with the community to develop a National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy as part of a new Social Inclusion Agenda.

The Strategy is based on extensive public consultations that followed the release of a discussion paper in April 2008 and a further directions paper in December 2008. Some 700 people from 380 organisations—including people with disability, their carers, advocacy groups, employers, trade unions and service providers—took part in these consultations and more than 300 written submissions were received.

The following six actions have been designed to address the concerns raised.

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2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, 2003*, Report Number 4430.0, ABS, Canberra, 2003

3 Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), *State of the Service Report 2007-08*, APSC, Canberra, 2008

4 ABS Report Number 4430.0

5 Centrelink Administrative Data, 2 May 2009

6 Centrelink, 2 May 2009

7 ABS Report Number 4430.0



## The Strategy

**Action 1: Engaging people with disability**

**Action 2: Improving disability employment services**

**Action 3: Providing better access to education and training**

**Action 4: Supporting and encouraging employers**

**Action 5: Improving public sector employment of people with disability**

**Action 6: Pursuing innovative strategies**

## Action 1: Engaging people with disability



The first action of this Strategy is to encourage people with disability to increase their engagement and participation in the community through education, training and employment.

People with disability need appropriate assistance and support to achieve their potential.

### Consultation and submission summary

The consultation and submission process resulted in a range of suggestions in this area. Suggestions focused on:

- redesigning income support arrangements to increase workforce participation and remove the financial and other disincentives to participation
- ensuring consistent and adequate service provision and advocacy support to assist people with disability to engage in and maintain employment.

### Actions

#### Removing the disincentive for people on Disability Support Pension to seek work

The Government is making it easier for people on Disability Support Pension (DSP) to access help to find work.

Access to employment services for people on DSP has in the past been hampered by the requirement that people undergo a full eligibility review to access support, raising the fear that eligibility for the DSP may be withdrawn. This requirement for a full eligibility review became a disincentive for people on DSP to enter the workforce.

The requirement was withdrawn in September 2008. Since then, more than 12,000 DSP recipients have sought employment assistance. Of these, more than 6,000 have commenced in employment services and more than 900 have already found employment.

### **Developing national approaches to help people with disability and mental illness engage in the workforce**

The Australian Human Rights Commission and each of the state Equal Opportunity Commissions receive more complaints of disability discrimination than any other area. Over 40 per cent of these complaints relate to employment issues.

Consistent and adequate service provision and advocacy support play an important part in assisting people with disability to engage in, and maintain, employment. The new National Disability Strategy and the Fourth National Mental Health Plan will address whole-of-life issues experienced by people with disability and mental illness in work and community life.

### **Workforce re-engagement through better and fairer assessments for Disability Support Pension**

The Government is introducing a number of measures to support re-engagement with the workforce as part of the Disability Support Pension—better and fairer assessments 2009–10 Budget measure.

The Government will provide advice about disability employment and related services to 40,000 DSP recipients taking up employment each year, outlining the services and assistance available if it becomes difficult to maintain employment.

The Government will also pilot workforce re-engagement contacts for 16,000 new entrants to the DSP to determine the best timing and method for encouraging people to re-engage in the workforce and to clarify the assistance and incentives available to DSP recipients to help with workforce participation, such as the tapered withdrawal of income support and the workforce re-entry suspension provisions.

### **Developing a National Disability Strategy**

As part of an ongoing commitment to the rights of people with disability, the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, is developing a National Disability Strategy (NDS). The aim of the NDS is to increase the social, economic and cultural participation of people with disability, to eliminate the discrimination they experience and to improve disability support services for families and carers.

The NDS will provide direction and focus at a national level for the development of disability legislation, policy and standards which deliver a whole-of-government, whole-of-life approach to disability planning. It will be released in 2010.

### **The Fourth National Mental Health Plan**

The Australian Health Ministers' Conference endorsed the Fourth National Mental Health Plan on 4 September 2009.

The Plan has five priority areas: social inclusion and recovery; prevention and early intervention; service access, coordination and continuity of care; quality improvement and innovation; and accountability—measuring and reporting progress.

The Plan acknowledges that education and employment success have a significant impact on a person's self-confidence and wellbeing.

## Action 2: Improving disability employment services

The second action is to improve disability employment services.

Services must be able to give people with disability the assistance and support they need to enter, remain in and return to the workforce.

### Consultation and submission summary

The consultation and submission process produced a range of suggestions, including:

- establishing and strengthening relationships between disability employment services and other services
- making service delivery more flexible and responsive to the needs of people with disability
- developing the skills of disability employment staff and encouraging ongoing training
- ensuring people with disability have access to the right service and service choices
- improving assessment and referral processes (including the Job Capacity Assessment and Job Seeker Classification Instrument) so they support employment outcomes
- extending the role of Centrelink and simplifying the disability employment service funding model, including reducing red tape
- monitoring the effectiveness and improving the performance management of services.

### Actions

#### Job Services Australia

The Government has already begun implementing significant changes to the way employment services are delivered. From 1 July 2009, a new employment services network, Job Services Australia, commenced across Australia.

Job Services Australia folds seven separate employment services programs into a 'one-stop-shop' to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers.

It will provide job seekers with more personalised help, more targeted services and greater access to training opportunities and work experience in areas of skill shortage. The new services will give greater support to the most disadvantaged, including people with disability and mental illness.

#### New Disability Employment Services

The new Disability Employment Services will provide flexible, tailored assistance for job seekers with disability.

Services will be demand driven, so that for the first time all job seekers with disability will have immediate access to a place in an employment service. This will give job seekers and their families greater certainty and allow providers to work with schools and allied health organisations to place job seekers in work.

The new Disability Employment Services will have two programs to help job seekers with disability, injury or health conditions find work:

- Program A will provide services to job seekers who require the assistance of a specialist disability employment service but are not expected to need long-term support in the workplace

- Program B will be available to job seekers with a permanent disability and an assessed need for more regular, long-term support in the workplace.

Other key features of the new services include:

- a simplified fee structure, which targets resources to those with the most need
- simpler eligibility criteria, with less complex assessment and referral processes
- a reduction in red tape
- access to ongoing support in the workplace, including a flexible ongoing support option to assist job seekers who might have irregular support needs.

### **Disability Employment Services at work**

Rodney left school three years ago. With support from his provider, he completed a Certificate II in Security Operations and obtained a first aid certificate. His provider arranged for a work experience placement in the security industry.

After 10 months in the program, Rodney was successfully placed in a part-time security position and subsequently became full-time.

Because Rodney trained for a qualification in an area of labour market need, and entered employment within 12 months in a job directly related to his training, his provider was eligible for a 20 per cent bonus outcome payment on top of the full outcome fee.

Rodney continues to receive assistance from his provider from time to time in his workplace. Six months into his job, a new task was introduced to Rodney's duty statement. Rodney was able to have his provider come and spend some time helping him become skilled at performing the new task. Rodney's provider was also able to help him obtain some new assistive technology that would help him perform the new task.

### **Funding model**

The new Disability Employment Services will provide the greatest rewards to providers who find sustainable jobs for participants. The model has features common to the new Job Services Australia program, including:

- greater emphasis on education, skills acquisition and training, particularly in areas of skill shortage
- increased resources for job seekers in remote areas, with a 70 per cent loading on service fees and ongoing support payments.

### **Simplified assessment processes**

Simpler eligibility criteria, consistent with the *Disability Services Act 1986*, will mean less complex assessment and referral processes. This will reduce the risk that job seekers miss out on the services they need.

A new IT-based funding level assessment tool will replace the Disability Pre-Employment Instrument (DPI). The DPI is an assessment currently undertaken by Disability Employment Network providers for each job seeker commenced in the program. It is used to set the level of funding. Based largely on observations, it takes about four weeks to complete and providers are required to maintain evidence and records to substantiate the outcome of the assessment.

The new IT-based tool will draw on statistically reliable participant characteristics including age, gender, location, disability type and time out of employment. It will significantly reduce the administrative burden associated with the DPI and improve transparency and accountability.

A reference group, including key industry and disability advocacy peaks, is currently working with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations on the development of the new tool.

Simplified administration and reduced red tape will allow providers more time to help people with disability into jobs.

### **Flexible ongoing support**

The new Disability Employment Services model includes new flexible options for ongoing support in the workplace. Flexible Ongoing Support will provide a safety net for participants who have been placed into work, but whose support needs are likely to be irregular or less predictable. This support option enables providers to offer flexible assistance, including short bursts of intensive assistance in the workplace, and better supports participants with mental illness and other episodic conditions.

Moderate and high ongoing support will be available in Program B for job seekers who require more regular ongoing support in the workplace.

### **Job in Jeopardy**

Assistance will be available through Job in Jeopardy services to people with disability already working but whose jobs are at risk because of their injury, disability or health condition. Job in Jeopardy services will be available from both Program A and Program B providers.

### **Improving Job Capacity Assessments**

The Australian Government wants people with disability to get the best assessment and the right support to engage in work. The Government reviewed the Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) process to improve assessment and support for people with disability and other barriers to work.

As a result of the review, the following improvements to JCA are being implemented:

- an increase in JCA fees paid to JCA providers to ensure that Job Capacity Assessors are appropriately qualified allied health professionals, such as registered psychologists
- changes to booking arrangements to make sure that people see the assessor, or combination of assessors, best placed to help them

- 2,250 additional JCA and specialist assessments for Social Security review and appeal processes, so people have access to specialist assessments when they most need them
- providing people in regional and remote communities with face-to-face assessments
- reduced red tape and multiple assessments, particularly for people with serious illness and those claiming DSP.

### **Australian Disability Enterprises**

Australian Disability Enterprises provide supported employment for people with disability who are unlikely to obtain competitive employment in the open labour market at or above the relevant award wage or its equivalent and who need ongoing employment support. Each year the Australian Government invests approximately \$200 million into the sector which employs more than 20,000 people with disability in approximately 610 different Disability Enterprises.



### **The future of Australian Disability Enterprises**

The Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services will shortly release a discussion paper outlining the Australian Government's vision for Australian Disability Enterprises.

The paper will outline the attributes of improved Australian Disability Enterprises. It will include possible strategies, including challenges to be faced and how these will be overcome, to deliver the Australian Government's vision.

### **Assistance to improve the capacity of Australian Disability Enterprises**

As commercial businesses, Australian Disability Enterprises need additional financial assistance to support them through the current period of reduced economic activity. To help meet this need, a one-off payment has been made to each funded organisation. The total cost of this initiative is \$4.3 million. The Australian Government will also continue to work with Australian Disability Enterprises to reduce red tape.

### **Marketing Australian Disability Enterprises**

In late 2008, the Australian Government revised the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines. Included in this revision was an initiative aimed at improving the viability of Australian Disability Enterprises. The new Guidelines provide an exemption from the mandatory procurement provisions, therefore providing flexibility for Australian Government departments and agencies to purchase from Australian Disability Enterprises where they represent value for money.

Each funded Australian Disability Enterprise outlet has received a one-off payment of \$2,500 to boost their marketing activities. This payment will allow Disability Enterprises to build upon sector-wide marketing that is being coordinated by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This initiative will have a total cost of \$900,000.

### **Reducing paperwork for Australian Disability Enterprises**

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs will continue to work with Australian Disability Enterprises to reduce their administrative load. A number of initiatives have already been implemented to lighten workloads and the Department will continue to look for further ways to lighten the load.

### **Evaluating best practice employment assistance for people with mental illness**

A major study is underway to identify and evaluate the most successful models of employment assistance for people with mental illness.

The evaluation will look at interventions provided to job seekers during their journey through employment services, including the effectiveness of relationships between employment service providers and mental health services.

A final report, due in 2010, will identify and describe best practice employment assistance for people with mental illness.

## Action 3: Providing better access to education and training

The third action is ensuring that people with disability have better access to education and training.

If Australia is going to prosper in the future, we will need higher levels of workforce participation and better educated and better skilled workers. People with disability, who are a significant proportion of the labour market, must be part of the solution.

### Consultation and submission summary

The consultation and submissions process raised a number of important suggestions for improving education and training services to people with disability, including:

- placing a greater emphasis on education and training to enable people with disability to develop the skills required for sustainable employment
- improving access to apprenticeships and ensuring that students with disability have a full understanding of the available options
- raising the disability awareness of post-secondary education administrators
- increasing the flexibility of course structures and recognising the episodic nature of many disabilities
- improving linkages, coordination and support during transition from school to training, education to work experience, and education to employment.

### Actions

#### National Disability Coordination Officer program

The National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program—which is a network of 31 officers across Australia—helps people with disability make the transition from school and further education to employment. The program targets barriers that make it difficult for people with disability to enter and complete post-school education and training and then obtain employment.

The program has three objectives:

- improved transitions for people with disability between school and/or the community, vocational education and training (VET), higher education and employment
- improved participation by people with disability in higher education and VET leading to employment
- improved linkages between schools, higher education and VET providers and providers of disability programs and assistance.

NDCOs will build linkages between a range of school, post-school, employment and community organisations including Disability Employment Service providers, registered and group training organisations and Australian Apprenticeship Centres to improve training and employment for people with disability.

## Youth and career transition arrangements

At the 30 April 2009 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Australian governments agreed to work collaboratively to develop a new National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, to improve educational outcomes for all young Australians. Under the National Partnership, the Australian Government will consolidate its suite of youth and transition programs to better help young people engage productively with education and their communities.

The new arrangements will include services to broker partnerships and increase community and business engagement with schools to improve educational outcomes for young people, including people with disability and those at risk of becoming disengaged from school and the world of work.

A new youth program, commencing 1 January 2010, will build on the success of the current Youth Pathways, YouthLinx, Connections and Mentor Marketplace youth services, which are making an important contribution to the Government's participation and social inclusion agendas. The program will focus on education and life skills for all young people at risk of not attaining Year 12 or equivalent and failing to make a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

## Direct registration of school leavers

To make the transition from school to employment as smooth as possible, eligible school leavers who directly register with a Disability Employment Service provider will be exempt from the Job Capacity Assessment process. This provides certainty for people with disability, their parents and carers and allows providers to make solid commitments to early intervention partnerships with schools.

## Higher Education Disability Support Program

The Disability Support Program provides funding to eligible higher education providers to remove barriers to access for domestic students with disability. The program has three components:

- *Additional support for students with disability*—eligible providers may claim reimbursement for high costs incurred in providing educational support and equipment, for example, payment for alternative format materials, such as Braille and audio tapes, for students with vision impairment
- *Australian disability clearinghouse on education and training*—this website ([www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)) provides information and resources designed to promote inclusive practices for people with a disability
- *Performance-based disability support funding*—encourages higher education providers to implement strategies to attract and support domestic students with disability.

## Extra training places

In 2008, the Government announced 711,000 productivity places as part of its Skilling Australia for the Future initiative. The training places are for both job seekers and existing workers. These training places target current and emerging skill needs such as Children's Services, Aged Care, Community Services Work and Transport and Logistics.

## Action 4: Supporting and encouraging employers

The fourth action is to improve information and advice services for employers of people with disability and help them realise the benefits of employing people with disability. Despite the many resources, services and incentives available to employers, inadequate information and employer awareness remains a considerable barrier to employment for people with disability.

### Consultation and submission summary

The consultation and submission process proposed a number of ideas for improving the levels of information, encouragement and support available to employers of people with disability, including:

- ensuring that employers are aware of the services, support and incentives available to them and ensuring they are easy to access, flexible and responsive to employer needs
- improving Job in Jeopardy assistance by extending it to self-employed people with disability
- broadening the Auslan for Employment program in consultation with industry experts and allowing employees to apply for funding directly
- building greater confidence and leadership among employers about disability issues through measures such as disability awareness and mental health first aid training
- encouraging mentoring and training for employees and employers including the promotion of Disability Action Plans
- improving accommodation and workplace access.

### Actions

#### Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot

The Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot is a \$6.8 million initiative announced in the 2009–10 Budget that will provide job opportunities for 1,000 Australians who receive the DSP.

The two-year Pilot will trial a new way of encouraging employers to offer employment to people with disability and allow DSP recipients to demonstrate their skills. The Pilot will raise awareness of the support available to employers and will encourage them to provide sustainable job opportunities to people with disability.

Employers will be paid a wage subsidy of up to \$3,000 after the participant has been employed for 26 weeks.

Employers who have a vacancy can ask a participating Disability Employment Service provider for the position to be filled by a person who is eligible for the Pilot. The Disability Employment Service provider will help identify, recruit, prepare and support people with disability participating in the Pilot.

Disability Employment Service providers will encourage employers to consider employing a person receiving the DSP by promoting the incentive.

### **New Employment Assistance Fund**

A new Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) has been created to remove red tape and to allow access to disability employment incentives via one source.

From 1 March 2010, the EAF will merge resources from the Workplace Modifications Scheme and the Auslan for Employment program to make it easier for employers to access assistance when employing people with disability. There will be a broader range of support for people with mental illness and less restrictive rules applied to the fund. For the first time, people with disability, including those already in work or looking for work, will be able to access the financial assistance, along with employers and employment service providers.

### **Better information for employers**

Employers and employment service providers need better information on which to base decisions about employing people with disability. New information resources will be created to inform employers about the job capacities of people with disability and the assistance available to support their employment, particularly for employers employing people with mental illness. This information will be clear, accessible and will link employers to incentives and support services. It will include improvements to the existing JobAccess website.

### **IBM Australia and New Zealand**

IBM Australia and New Zealand has a long history of diversity and inclusion in employment, including people who have a disability. IBM recognises that people with disability bring a wide range of skills, abilities and qualifications to the workplace.

Recruiting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce is a business priority for IBM and is fundamental to the company's competitive success.

As an innovation company, IBM needs people from a range of backgrounds and experiences who can look at the same issue from a different angle and fuel innovation.

'Innovation requires differences of opinion: and you only get that with an extremely diverse workforce. So diversity and business opportunity are intricately linked,' says Glen Boreham, Managing Director of IBM Australia and New Zealand.

There is also a substantial market opportunity to consider. 'People with disability can and do purchase the products and services we produce. At IBM we recognise the business opportunity represented by the 20 per cent of the population who are living with a disability,' says Glen.

IBM's inclusive principles and practices and respect for a diverse workforce help employees reach their full potential and deliver value to the business.

### **A framework for Disability Action Plans**

A new Disability Action Plan framework has been developed to help businesses understand what needs to be done to improve disability access to employment, goods, services and facilities.

The framework provides ideas on how to become confident about disability, to meet legal obligations and to establish mutually beneficial relationships with disability recruitment providers.

It includes practical advice and tools to help businesses develop their own Disability Action Plan, including: a draft Memorandum of Understanding with a recruitment coordinator; tips for making the workplace accessible; information on how to get started; a template plan for businesses; a practical checklist; and advice about how to get more information.

The framework has been published online, and is available at

**[www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/employers/Pages/dap\\_framework.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/employers/Pages/dap_framework.aspx)**

### **Building the business case**

The Government has supported the Australian Employers Network on Disability to develop a model business case for including people with disability as customers and employees. The 20-page business case, *Opportunity*, was launched in November 2008 and is supported by **[disabilityconfidence.org.au](http://disabilityconfidence.org.au)**.

As the booklet points out, people with disability comprise around 20 per cent of Australia's population, or around 4 million people, representing an important source of skilled employees and a sizeable potential customer base for any company. People with disability purchase consumer goods, have jobs, go on holidays, access information and do all of the things that people without disability do. By meeting the needs of people with disability, whether it is providing wheelchair access, non-visual forms of information or other help, businesses can gain an important source of new customers.

### **Supporting employers of Australian Apprentices**

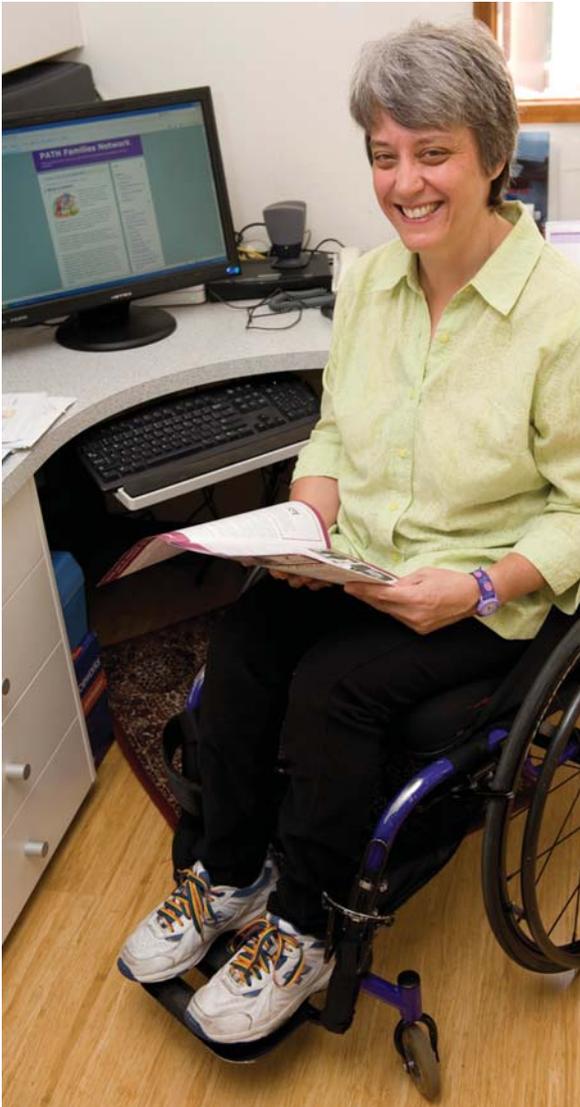
Disabled Australian Apprenticeship Wage Support (DAAWS) is available to an employer who recruits an Australian Apprentice with disability.

The DAAWS assessment process for Australian Apprentices has been streamlined, reducing red tape. Australian Apprentices with disability who are being assisted by an employment service provider are now able to choose to use their JCA as part of the DAAWS application process. They are no longer required to undergo the previously mandatory Occupational Assessment.

Access to workplace modifications for Australian Apprentices has also been streamlined. Employers can now gain help with workplace modifications for any of their employees with disability, including Australian Apprentices, from one location at

**[www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)**

## Action 5: Improving public sector employment of people with disability



The fifth action is to set a strong example to all Australian employers through the direct employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service (APS).

### Consultation and submission summary

The consultation process raised a number of important suggestions for increasing and improving employment for people with disability in the APS, including:

- a formal government commitment to increasing the employment and retention rate of people with disability in the public service
- developing consistent and accessible recruitment practices
- continuing improvement to the accessibility of work premises and facilities
- improving awareness of the services and support available to existing employees with disability
- procuring goods and services (including human resources) from suppliers demonstrating a commitment to the recruitment, retention and inclusion of people with disability
- ensuring that Government procurement processes are accessible to people with disability.

## Actions

### Australian Public Service Commission

The Australian Public Service Commission (the Commission) will develop training and best practice advice for APS agencies and managers, and establish and support disability networks. This new initiative was announced in the 2009–10 Budget.

The Commission will ask all APS agencies to consider, over the next 12 months, what an appropriate target could be for the employment of people with disability in their agency, and what strategies could be adopted to increase employment of people with disability in the APS.

The Commission has already established a Public Employees Disability Network to bring APS agencies together to discuss disability-related workplace issues. The network, supported by the Commission, will provide a valuable forum for Human Resource managers and practitioners involved in the day-to-day management of people with disability to discuss and promote innovative, best practice approaches to employment issues and supporting diversity in the workplace.

### Graduate Lifeskills project

A Graduate Lifeskills project has been established to develop, pilot and evaluate a Graduate Development Program for interns and graduates in white-collar industries including the public sector.

The program is intended to build resilience in graduates and interns, and provide them with knowledge and skills to improve their mental health and wellbeing. The program also aims to raise the mental health and wellbeing of workplaces generally.

By 20 December 2010, the project will report on the benefits of the program to employers and graduates, and present options for ongoing delivery of the program to the private and public sectors.

### Inclusion in the Australian Public Service: an example

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is creating an inclusive work environment that enables people with disability to fully participate in all aspects of employment.

In 2009, the Department is offering traineeships for people with intellectual disability and its Graduate program strongly encourages applications from people with disability.

The Department's Job Application Kit is provided in accessible formats and the Department's helpdesk offers help for those with assistive technologies needing assistance with its online recruitment system.

The Department has a dedicated Disability Access Coordinator, a Disability Champion for staff with disability and a leadership group which is working to advance the interests of staff with disability.



## Action 6: Pursuing innovative strategies

The sixth and final action for the strategy is to promote and accelerate workplace innovation relating to people with disability.

Innovative strategies by employers and governments can help overcome barriers to employment and increase the employment and retention of people with disability.

### Consultation and submission summary

Suggestions from consultations for innovation include:

- improving access to assistive technology, including various web-based technologies for delivering remote Auslan interpreting and captioning services in the workplace
- introducing an Australian employer recognition scheme for employers of choice for people with disability
- providing more flexible work arrangements, including home-based work
- providing education and information for General Practitioners (GPs) to support early intervention, retention and return to work for people with disability, including a communications campaign to challenge negative assumptions about the work capacity of people with disability
- developing and implementing a national, whole-media marketing or educational campaign to promote positive attitudes towards people with disability and increase the services, funding, benefits and support available to them.

## Actions

### Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund is a \$41 million initiative to fund innovative projects that address barriers to employment for the most disadvantaged job seekers. It operates from 1 July 2009 until 30 June 2012.

The Innovation Fund, which is part of the Government's reforms to national employment services, is an important element of the Social Inclusion Agenda.

Through a panel of providers, the fund delivers innovative projects offering place-based solutions to address barriers to employment for groups of the most disadvantaged job seekers, including those with multiple barriers to employment. These projects assist disadvantaged job seekers, including Indigenous Australians, people with mental illness, the homeless, people from jobless families and those living in areas of entrenched disadvantage.

More than 20 per cent of Innovation Fund panel providers are organisations that work with people with disability, including mental illness.

The following projects, developed by organisations working with people with disability and mental illness, have been approved following the first funding round. These projects commenced on 1 July 2009.

### Innovation Fund projects: some examples

#### **Evidence Based Training and Technical Assistance—Jobsupport Incorporated**

The project aims to measure what improvement in outcomes for highly disadvantaged job seekers can be attributed to the provision of evidence-based Training and Technical Assistance.

#### **Creating Jobs for People with Mental Illness or Disability through Social Enterprise—Social Firms Australia**

The project aims to partner with employment service providers, community organisations and other stakeholders to establish and replicate viable social enterprises that will create durable employment for job seekers with mental illness and/or disability.

#### **Local Employment Access Partnerships (LEAP) for Job Seekers with Mental Illness—Social Firms Australia**

The project aims to establish six place-based, multi-disciplinary partnerships that will promote service integration between local employment, mental health and related agencies to provide wrap-around supports to people with mental illness.

### General Practitioners

Communication strategies will be developed to assist GPs to play a greater role in helping people with mental illness find a job, stay in, or return to the workforce.

The strategies will include assistance to help GPs discuss with patients the important role employment can play in their recovery and point them towards sources of support.





