



**Inclusion Australia**

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Supplementary submission from Inclusion Australia  
in response to the National Disability Employment  
Framework — Issues Paper May 2015

# We Can Work with the Right Support

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This supplementary submission by Inclusion Australia is made further to our detailed submission — Designing Evidence Based Transition-to-Work and Open Employment Support for People with Intellectual Disability.

This supplementary submission is written to respond to questions raised in the government's issues paper.

## **Workforce Participation of People with Intellectual Disability**

The open workforce participation rates of people with intellectual are indeed poor.

For people with intellectual disability in receipt of national disability services in 2013-14, only 7.9% or 4,695 of 68,653 individuals reported work in the open labour market.<sup>1</sup>

This high rate of under-employment of people with intellectual disability stands in stark contrast with well documented research and demonstration that people with intellectual disability can, in fact, work in the open workforce when provided with the right type of service support.

Accordingly, Inclusion Australia has set out recommendations in a detailed submission (submitted separately) which aims to build a new framework of transition-to-work and open employment support founded on demonstrated high rates of open employment outcomes.

A new employment support framework based on *what works* provides the best chance to improve open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability and provides the best value for money for the Commonwealth.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Disability support services: Services provided under the National Disability Agreement. Published for 2013-14

## Employment outcomes and barriers to workforce participation

### What can improve employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability?

We know that people with intellectual disability can work in the open labour market when they get the *right support*.<sup>2</sup>

Improving open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability can be achieved with the expansion and development of evidence based transition-to-work and employment support for people with intellectual disability.

This requires an examination of the job placement and job retention rates of programs and providers to determine the best employment outcome rates and an examination of associated support practices.

The DES evaluation recognised the link between employment outcomes and the right type of service for people with significant intellectual disability .

“There is no doubt that this is a group of job seekers with exceptionally high needs, who face considerable odds in the open labour market. What appears to set them apart is the body of evidence of their potential to succeed **given the right type of service**. From the available literature it is clear that outcomes are driven by **positive conviction and specialist know-how** and gives a strong sense that this is very high cost servicing. Most importantly, the literature confirms that **in spite of a poor overall track record of employment for people with significant intellectual disability the technology to achieve much better outcomes for this group does exist**.”<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added).

We can improve open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability, but this will require a commitment and investment to expand and develop the right type of support for people with intellectual disability.

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<sup>2</sup> Mank, D. (2008) Alderbrook 2007. Journal of Vocational Research. 29, 2, 2008, 53-62

<sup>3</sup> Evaluation of Disability Employment Services 2010–2013. Final report, p. 123

Evidence based support — particularly for people with significant intellectual disability — is currently limited in availability. This was recognised by all stakeholders in the DES evaluation.

“Peak organisations recognised that few DES providers had the specialist skill sets and competencies required to support participants with moderate intellectual disability and the consultations highlighted the need for specialist services to help these participants achieve and maintain substantial employment.<sup>4</sup>”

Inclusion Australia recommends that the Commonwealth design a specialist program within or alongside DES that is focused on people with intellectual disability who are eligible for the NDIS — and who need specialist open employment support to get and keep a job.

Inclusion Australia also recommends that the NDIS develop a specialist transition-to-work program for people with significant disability based on the model of the NSW Transition to Work program. It is important that an evidence based transition-to-work program works seamlessly with specialist DES providers to provide a pathway of support from school to a job in the open labour market.

Employment providers that achieve high rates of job placement for people with intellectual disability typically engage employers via a *customised employment strategy*, and are skilful at matching jobseekers with the needs of employers through *created jobs* rather than advertised positions.

Employment providers that achieve high rates of job retention for people with intellectual disability are skilful in providing *explicit on-the-job training* which teaches the jobseeker to perform job tasks at the level required by the employer.

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<sup>4</sup> Evaluation of Disability Employment Services 2010–2013. Final report. p. 119. MIDL refers to people with moderate intellectual disability or IQ ≤ 60

Employment providers that achieve high rates of long term employment for people with intellectual disability are skilful in providing *ongoing support* by monitoring employee and employer needs to ensure that the agreed standards of the job are maintained.

The knowledge of how to improve the employment participation of people with intellectual disability does indeed exist. It is the implementation of this knowledge which is the difference between high rates and low rates of employment outcomes.

It is our recommendation that the Commonwealth and the NDIA work together with Inclusion Australia to co-design a new disability employment framework based on evidence based support associated with high rates of employment outcomes.

### **What can help reduce barriers for people with intellectual disability seeking employment?**

The two main barriers confronting people with intellectual disability seeking open employment are;

- low expectations about their capacity to work in the open workforce, and a,
- lack of availability of evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support across all regions of Australia.

Whereas it is necessary to empower youth with intellectual disability to aspire to employment participation, and provide greater choice and control of their support needs, these principles alone will not improve employment outcomes or drive the development of a competent market of employment support.

There is no evidence in the international literature that 'empowerment' or 'choice' alone will drive better service competence or improve open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

Empowering people with intellectual disability and improving open employment outcomes will require the expansion and development of skilful employment providers competent in evidence based practices of job customisation, job training and ongoing support.

It is through the availability of specialist skill that youth with intellectual disability will have the choice and best chance of addressing barriers and employment support needs whether due to intellectual impairment, low expectations or the nature of the labour market.

### **What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people with intellectual disability?**

People with intellectual disability rarely fill advertised job vacancies or compete for positions via a job application and interview process. This is because people with intellectual disability are often unable to perform all of the job tasks contained in an advertised job position and compete against other candidates without disability who can perform all duties of the position.

The traditional job application and interview process is ineffective for most people with intellectual disability looking to engage with employers.

*Job customisation* is an employer engagement strategy implemented by specialist employment services that achieve high rates of job placement and job retention for people with intellectual disability.<sup>5</sup>

A customised job is a set of tasks that differ from standard job descriptions and instead are based on tasks found within a workplace. A customised proposal unties the tasks that exist in a workplace and makes them available to be rearranged into a customised job description.

A customised job is designed to *meet genuine employer need* which adds *value to a business*. This is an employer engagement strategy conducted by

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<sup>5</sup> Luecking R.G. (2011). Connecting Employers With People Who Have Intellectual Disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*: August 2011, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 261-273.

a skilful provider seeking to meet business needs or solutions which also meet the strengths and interests of a job candidate.

It is a process which requires a much deeper level of interaction between providers and employers. Job customisation has strong evidence of assisting employers reduce barriers to hire people with intellectual disability.

### **How can we promote the benefits of employing people with intellectual disability?**

Hiring decisions have less to do with whether a candidate has disability but rather more to do with the potential contributions and value a job candidate brings to a business. Good intentions to employ are insufficient in creating sustainable employment valued by employers.<sup>6</sup>

This is why the strategy of *job customisation* has been successful with many Australian employers as this requires the placement of a job candidate in a job which offers value to an employer.

The art of designing a job which meets both the employer's needs and the ability of a person with intellectual disability is a specialist skill with evidence of strong open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

The demonstration of successful *job customisation* with employers provides examples of what is possible that can be presented to other employers considering the employment of a person with intellectual disability.

Employers need the expertise and support of specialist open employment providers competent in disability support methodology, but also in job creation and meeting employer needs, if we are to increase the employment outcomes of people with intellectual disability.

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<sup>6</sup> Luecking, R. (2008). Emerging employer views of people with disabilities and the future of job development *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 29, 3–13

## Principles for changes to disability employment services

**Principles that underpin best employment support practice for people with intellectual disability that Inclusion Australia would include in a new disability employment support framework.**

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
Presumption about the capacity of people with intellectual to work in the open labour market when provided evidence based support	The opportunity for people with intellectual disability to work with the right support in the open labour market without restriction or limitation
Service provision based on evidence based practice	People with intellectual disability have access to best practice support and the best opportunity to be included in the open labour market. Employers receive the best support to include a person with intellectual disability in their business. The best value for money for the Commonwealth and savings from expenditure on more expensive alternative adults support programs.
Published employment outcomes by disability type of transition-to-work and open employment support providers	Individuals, families and employers empowered to make informed choice of support based on past performance rates of employment outcomes by disability. A foundation to track the benefits of pilots or innovative support ideas, and for training of employment support staff in best practice.

<p>Work participation, hours of work, or level of support does not affect disability support pension eligibility.</p>	<p>Individuals receiving the disability support pension can choose work, to the greatest hours per week with support, without fear of losing pension eligibility. Wages decrease pension reliance via the income test providing savings for the Commonwealth, but increased overall income for individuals.</p>
<p>Seamless linkage between transition-to-work and open employment support</p>	<p>Individuals can plan a pathway of transition-to-work and open employment support that works together to achieve employment outcomes</p>
<p>A cooperative and strong link between school, transition-to-work and open employment support</p>	<p>Builds a culture, expectation and pathway of evidence based open employment support for people with intellectual disability</p>
<p>Training and technical assistance to build skills and competence of employment support staff</p>	<p>A competent employment support workforce that is well trained in evidence based open employment support for people with intellectual disability</p>
<p>Adequate funding that meets the real costs of evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support for people with intellectual disability</p>	<p>Viability of transition-to-work and open employment providers implementing evidence based practice and achieving high rates of employment outcomes.</p>

**Do you agree with these as the underlying set of principles for change?**

***Individual funding based on needs and aspirations*** — Individual funding should be based on the real or actual costs of employment support with evidence of achieving high rates of employment outcomes.

***Market based service provision*** — This principle will not be able to respond to consumer choice without an expansion and development of evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support. Combined with current low expectations, a choice of poor or incompetent providers is not a real choice and will not increase employment outcomes.

It is important that provider employment outcomes by disability are published to enable individuals, families, employers, to make an informed choice of employment support. The DES program and the NSW-TTW currently publish employment outcomes by providers which should be maintained as a core feature of a new employment system.

***Long term career planning and capacity building*** — This needs to take into account that many people with intellectual disability have enjoyed long term successful employment careers (10, 20 and 30 years in length) through the provision of excellent job customisation, job matching, job training, and ongoing support. We must be careful that a new framework does not have people with intellectual disability in endless work preparation and training activities which do not lead to employment outcomes.

***Understand Employer Needs*** — This is already a critical principle of evidence based employment support for people with intellectual disability. The most successful employer engagement strategy for people with intellectual disability is “job customisation”. Job customisation understands employer needs by identifying job roles which provide business solutions.

***Whole of government coordination and use of technology*** — The core recommendation of Inclusion Australia is for the Commonwealth to invest in

an evidence based pathway of transition-to-work and open employment support that has demonstrated high rates of employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability. This involves schools and transition-to-work providers as part of the NDIS, and open employment providers as part of the DES program. Expanding and building this quality of support will result in substantial savings from welfare and alternative program supports. A whole of government approach to providing a seamless pathway of support from school to employment in the open labour market has the potential of increasing employment outcomes.

***The person is supported through the life-course*** — People with intellectual disability invariably require lifelong ongoing support due to the nature of their impairment. Ongoing support to maintain employment addresses the well being of people with intellectual disability and is critical over the course of a career. It should be noted that high performing open employment providers have been supporting people with intellectual disability for as long as 30 years and are well aware of the need to monitor change, including retirement, over the course of a person's lifetime.

## **Effective pathways to employment**

**How effective are the pathways into these services?**

**How well do these programmes work together to support people with disability throughout their life- course, including for conditions episodic in nature?**

**Are there other services which could assist people with disability to find a job?**

A significant barrier to building effective pathways to open employment for people with intellectual disability is due to policy weight given to “what we think we know” instead of being driven by evidence of performance outcome.

Inclusion Australia is promoting the expansion and development of a pathway of transition-to-work (via NDIS) and open employment support (via DES) for youth with intellectual disability based on employment outcome results published independent of providers, and practices agreed in professional journals dedicated to employment and people with intellectual disability.

The employment research has consistently found that people with intellectual disability have the capacity to work in the open workforce when provided the right support. This evidence based pathway begins with a presumption about the work capacity of individuals.

Initial assessments of job capacity bear little relationship to what is possible when a person with intellectual disability is provided systematic on-the-job training in a job in the open labour market. This research finding first emerged in the 1950s and remains true today.<sup>7</sup>

Predictive capacity assessments are a major barrier to increasing the open employment participation of people with intellectual disability. An employment services framework based on an initial measurement of job capacity will disadvantage people with intellectual disability and invariably limit their capacity to be included in the open labour market. This in turns creates unnecessary reliance on alternative adult programs that are more expensive than evidence based open employment pathways.

Systems of employment support provision based on an assessment of job capacity which guide the placement of individuals into a continuum of services from day programs to open employment has been repeatedly shown to be ineffective for increasing the employment participation of people with intellectual disability.

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<sup>7</sup> A.D.B. Clarke (1958). The Abilities and Trainability of Imbeciles. p. 309-333. In A.M. Clarke, & A.D.B. Clarke (Eds.). (1958). Mental Deficiency. The Changing Outlook. The Free Press.

The placement of people with intellectual disability in day programs and ADEs is largely a *terminal placement*.<sup>8</sup> There is not a regular flow through of individuals from day programs or ADEs into open employment. While there are a small number of people with intellectual disability that have progressed on a pathway to open employment from day programs or ADEs, it is a pathway repeatedly shown to be largely ineffective over several decades.

The major barrier preventing a “flow-through” model to open employment along a “continuum” of services is that work preparation in non-work settings (day programs or classrooms) or specialist environments (segregated work settings e.g. ADEs) fails to understand that individuals with intellectual disability find it difficult to generalise and transfer skills from one setting to another.

The most effective method of skill development for people with intellectual disability is to learn skills in the settings in which they are to be used. People with intellectual disability invariably need to be explicitly taught job skills in the workplace that they will be using the skills.

The evidenced based model of open employment developed in the mid to late 1970s, and replicated here in Australia from the early to mid 1980s, demonstrates that people with intellectual disability can achieve open employment at greater outcome rates directly through a *place then train* model in the open labour market. This pathway is based on some key principles of evidence based support including;

- a presumption about the capacity work of individuals
- the opportunity to try employment first before a pathway to non-work day activities
- providing youth with the opportunity to gain general skills such as how to use public transport, how to follow instructions, stay on task and building endurance; and experiencing success through work experience

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<sup>8</sup> Wehman, P. (1981). *Competitive Employment*. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore

- on-the job training (whether work experience or paid work)
- direct engagement with employers through a customised employment strategy that meets the mutual needs of youth and employers
- ongoing support for the employee and employer for the life of the job.

A new disability employment framework has the opportunity to build this evidence based pathway of support from school to work in the open labour market.

### **What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?**

The DES program is already based on an individualised funding model. Fees and payments are directly linked to the commencement, service support and employment outcomes of the individual. Individuals generally (with some limitations) have the right to choose providers and change to a different provider.

A new funding system could be enhanced to give the individual greater control including;

- unrestricted choice of employment service provider based on transparent provider employment outcomes by disability
- the choice to use funding to purchase support for employment options outside or in addition to the DES framework.
- signing off on outcome payment for the achievement of employment outcomes.

It is important that any changes to employment support funding addresses the need for adequate funding to meet the actual costs of best practice transition-to-work and open employment support.

Inclusion Australia is greatly concerned that the DES program has not provided for indexation to providers for up to 10 years. This is having a negative impact on people with intellectual disability due to the greater support hours and cost compared to other primary disability groups.

It is important that any changes to employment support funding maintains and expands the capacity of people with intellectual disability to choose evidence based employment support.

## **Intersectoral Linkages**

### **How can elements of the disability support system better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people with disability?**

Best practice open employment support requires cooperative and collaborative links with other sectors, particular the school and income support systems.

### ***Income Support System***

People with intellectual disability are manifestly eligible for the Disability Support Pension (DSP). An assessment of intellectual function that results in an IQ of less than 70 meets the manifest eligibility for the DSP.

Our view is that manifest DSP eligibility should be separated from the issue of job capacity and employment support need.

The manifest DSP guidelines are correct and do not need to change. It is invariably true that a person with intellectual disability is unlikely to participate in the open labour market without evidence based support.

It would be unfair to place high expectations of work obligation on a population when their employment participation is largely dependent on the availability of evidence based support.

Unfortunately, DSP manifest eligibility brings an associated set of low expectations about job capacity and what is possible in achieving employment participation. Many people in positions of assessment, planning and guidance generally reflect these low expectations and will often refer individuals with intellectual disability to support other than open employment.

Evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support clearly demonstrates that youth with intellectual disability can successfully work in the open labour market for an average hours of work per week greater than fifteen.

A new disability employment framework which expands and develops evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support could become a standard offer and expectation of support for people with intellectual disability who manifestly qualify for the Disability Support Pension.

An investment in evidence based support will provide a linkage from the income support system to employment support that has demonstrated high rates of open employment outcomes. This would improve employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability and provide significant savings in reduced pension costs.

People with intellectual disability in receipt of the DSP who are supported to work and earn in the open labour market offer the Commonwealth substantial savings in reduced welfare reliance and offsets from more expensive alternative programs (day programs and ADEs).

### ***Education system and evidence based employment support***

The linkage between the education system and employment support is critical. Inclusion Australia has noted in our detailed submission the need to replicate the NSW Transition to Work model with modifications to provide all youth with intellectual the opportunity to pursue a pathway from school to work.

Evidence from high performing providers in NSW indicate that transition to work offers a linkage with schools for youth to try employment first instead of going to non-work day activity programs. This has enabled a greater number of people with significant intellectual disability to succeed in open employment.

The linkage between school and transition-to-work and open employment support is a form of early intervention for youth to choose employment and receive evidence based support to participate in the open labour market. It is a system that relies on positive linkages with schools, teachers and families in the later years of secondary education.

There are also opportunities to extend linkages with the education system to increase opportunities for youth with intellectual disability to gain work experience and develop skills necessary for post school (e.g. travel skills) before graduation.

## **Disability Employment Services (open employment support)**

### **International Context**

There is clearly much room for improvement in how open employment support is provided to people with intellectual disability. It is important, however, that criticism of the current system is balanced.

To put this in an international context, the comparable USA open employment program achieved a 13-week employment outcome rate of 34.3% for people with intellectual disability in 2013<sup>9</sup>; compared to Australia's DES 13-week employment outcome of 43.8% reported in the DES Evaluation.

The international leading *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* published an edition on the progress of supporting people with intellectual and

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<sup>9</sup> Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 (RSA-911) Database. Reported in Butterworth, J., Smith, F.A., Hall, A.C., Migliore, A., Winsor, J., & Domin, D. (2014). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

development disabilities in the regular labour market and featured articles from across Europe and Australia.<sup>10</sup> This review does not indicate that Australia is performing poorly in comparison to other nations, and Australia may indeed be doing better — at least for people with intellectual disability.

What we have found, based on visits to systems and providers in other nations, and our study of the international literature is that;

- There is considerable research and demonstration of evidence based practices which support people with intellectual disability to have successful open employment careers in the open labour market
- There are “pockets of excellence” across a range of nations including Australia — but there are no examples of nations who have a system wide transition-to-work and open employment system for people with intellectual disability performing at outcome rates superior to Australia.
- Some US states have implemented system-wide transition-to-work and open employment programs for people with intellectual disability to raise low employment participation rates. This strategy, known as Employment First, attempts to direct youth to employment first before choosing a pathway of non-work day programs or sheltered employment. We have visited Washington State to take a look at their *employment first* system. Washington State’s 13-week employment outcome rate of 42.5% is creditable, and a good example of a system wide attempt to make open employment participation typical rather than the exception.<sup>11</sup>

There is no doubt that Australia’s current employment framework needs to improve. It is important, however, that in the design of a new disability employment framework that we do not inadvertently *throw out the baby with*

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<sup>10</sup> *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 37 (2012) 195–202

<sup>11</sup> Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 (RSA-911) Database. Reported in Butterworth, J., Smith, F.A., Hall, A.C., Migliore, A., Winsor, J., & Domin, D. (2014). *StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes*. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

*the bathwater* and fail to recognise what is and what is not working — and therefore what does and doesn't need to change.

It is important that we look at what employment support is achieving high rates of employment outcomes and try to build on this success to improve employment outcomes for all people with intellectual disability.

### **Positive features of DES**

DES is strongly employment outcome focused. A majority of funding and measuring provider performance is linked to the job placement and job retention of people with disability in jobs. This is good as star ratings and government expenditure is targeted at rewarding employment support practices that result in sustainable jobs for people with disability.

Employment outcomes are published by disability type which provide informed choice by jobseekers, and poor provider performance is subject to consequences in contract purchasing. This is good as people with intellectual disability and their families have the capacity to choose employment support based on performance results rather than relying on slick marketing by the provider market. Poor employment support performance can result in a loss of contract or reduced capacity to operate in the market.

Funding, (both fees and outcome payments), are based on individuals and there is some control over the choice of support provider. This is good as funding is linked to the concept of individual support need and jobseekers can (with some limitations) choose an employment support provider.

### **Negative features of DES**

#### ***Major gap in the market***

DES, however, is limited in its technical competence to support people with significant intellectual disability into jobs in the open labour market.

The DES evaluation highlighted that people with significant intellectual disability can be supported into open employment jobs at 15 hours or more per week — but only when technical competence is available.

There is however just one provider with this competency, which targets this population, and achieves high employment outcome rates. This means that there is a significant gap in the market in terms of specialist employment support for people with significant intellectual disability.

The DES evaluation highlighted the need to expand and develop specialist services or units for people with significant intellectual disability based on the right type of service support.

### ***Outcome Performance***

There is currently a broad range of outcome performance for people with intellectual disability from relatively poor to relatively high. On average, for people with intellectual disability, DES is achieving a job placement rate of 54.3%, a 13 week employment outcome rate of 43.8%, and a 26-week employment outcome rate of 29.8%. Best performers are achieving 26-week outcome rates of up to 77.8%.<sup>12</sup>

There is a need to expand and develop services with specialist competence in achieving high open employment outcome rates for people with intellectual disability.

It is also important that a new disability employment framework consider the particular needs of this jobseeker population. For instance, people with intellectual disability on average require greater hours of support due to the need for explicit support to find a job and for explicit training on the job. This requires technical skill but also adequate funding to ensure the viability of providers with this competence.

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<sup>12</sup> Evaluation of Disability Employment Services 2010–2013. Final report. p. 115-116

### ***Targeting people with intellectual disability***

The number of people with intellectual disability commencing in DES has stagnated during a time when the DES program has experienced a substantial increase in the number of jobseekers with disability commencing in the program (— see page 22 of Inclusion Australia’s detailed submission).

It is critical that a new disability employment framework is able to directly engage with youth with intellectual disability that generally do not have an obligation to work and invariably have low expectations to work.

### ***The assessment and referral system via Centrelink***

We need a system whereby competent providers are directly engaging with schools, families and youth to offer the choice of transition-to-work and open employment support — based on transparent reporting of employment outcomes so individuals can make an informed choice of support.

The current assessment and referral system of Centrelink is inadequate for addressing the needs of people with intellectual disability to build expectations and link with evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support.

**How can DES providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?**

**How can DES providers better support people with disability in the workplace?**

**How can the employment service model be improved to help providers deliver better support?**

Improving employment outcomes for people with significant intellectual disability will not be achieved in the absence of technical competency.

On this basis, Inclusion Australia has recommended an expansion and development of an evidence based model of transition-to-work and open

employment support for people with intellectual disability across Australia. This provides the best chance of improved employment outcomes.

Inclusion Australia recommends a specialist program within or alongside DES that is focused on people with significant disability - who are eligible for NDIS — and who need specialist open employment support and ongoing support to get and keep a job.

People with intellectual disability are able to participate in the open employment workforce when this quality of employment support is available. Increasing the employment participation rate will require an expansion and development of evidence based open employment support so that all people with intellectual disability have access to this quality of support.

### **How can DES providers better support employers?**

As discussed above, the most effective employment engagement strategy for people with intellectual disability is *job customisation*. This strategy of employer engagement together with a commitment to maintain the worker performance to an agreed level of work standard offers the best support to employers.

### **Does DES need to be redesigned to operate in an NDIS environment?**

Inclusion Australia has recommended that NDIS develop a specialist transition-to-work program for people with disability based on the NSW Transition to Work program.

It is important that this program works seamlessly with specialist DES providers competent in supporting people with intellectual disability.

The best practice and outcome evidence indicates that people with intellectual disability who require a combination of transition-to-work and open

employment support need to access a provider with the technical competence to deliver this quality of support.

Inclusion Australia has recommended that a specialist program within or along DES should be developed to work cooperatively and collaboratively with NDIS eligible participants who are accessing transition-to-work support as part of their individual plan.

### **Can we improve support for people moving out of ADEs into open employment?**

Supporting people with intellectual disability into open employment requires employment providers with evidence based skill in the placement, training and ongoing support of people with intellectual disability in the open workforce.

Whether an individual with intellectual disability is moving from school to work, a day program to work, or from an ADE to work, — it requires an employment provider with the technical competency in assisting people with intellectual disability to work in the open workforce.

It needs to be noted that a pathway to open employment via ADEs is — in relation to best practice — an inefficient and ineffective model of employment support. This is because people with intellectual disability find it difficult to generalise and transfer learning from one setting to another. The notion of “getting ready” in a separate environment to participate in the open workforce is incoherent with evidence based practice.

The most efficient and effective pathway to open employment is directly through evidence based transition to work and open employment where individuals receive training on the job in the setting they are required to perform the job.

## **Support for Employers**

We have already discussed above how the best form of support for employers to improve the employment outcomes of people with intellectual is for employers to have access to specialist providers who are competent in implementing job customisation strategies.

The Supported Wage System is an important support to jobseekers with intellectual disability and employers to engage in employment agreements when productive output may be less than what is expected for full award wage rates. The SWS has enabled many employers to employ people with significant intellectual disability who would otherwise be excluded from participant in the open labour market.

## **National Disability Insurance Scheme**

### **In what way do you think the NDIS can support employment outcomes for people with disability?**

The NDIS has a critical role to play in supporting people with intellectual disability participate in the open labour market.

The NDIS is responsible for transition-to-work support and this is an important part of an evidence based pathway for people with intellectual disability who are seeking to move from school to the open labour market.

Research and demonstration shows that many people with intellectual disability are capable of work in the open labour market when they are provided with evidence based transition-to-work support as a pathway to open employment.

Inclusion Australia has provided a response to the importance of this role of the NDIS in our detailed submission to the consultation.

**What issues need to be considered in relation to specific groups of people with disability? What approaches work with the different groups and these different issues?**

Inclusion Australia's response to the government's issue paper - both in our detailed and supplementary responses — is that people with intellectual disability require specialist competence in the deliver of employment support.

There is now 30 years of demonstration of open employment practice and 15 years of transition-to-work practice in Australia from which lessons about what works and what doesn't work can be drawn. We also have a rich source of employment outcome data in which to give weightings to what employment support practices have evidence of high rates of employment outcomes.

The core issue that needs to be considered is that if we agree that the current rate of employment participation is poor, and that we need to change how we provide employment support to increase the rate of employment participation, then we need to look at what support practices lead to high rates of employment outcomes.

Inclusion Australia has recommended that the Commonwealth expand and develop evidence based transition-to-work support (as part of the NDIS), and expand and develop evidence based open employment support (as part of DES). This pathway is effective when supported by providers with the technical competence to implement evidence based practice.