



**Inclusion Australia**

acting locally - representing nationally - connecting globally

Appendix to supplementary submission: Two case studies demonstrating the positive impact of an evidence based pathway of transition-to-work and open employment support for people with significant intellectual disability<sup>1</sup>

# We Can Work with the Right Support

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<sup>1</sup> This is an excerpt taken from Inclusion Australia's submission to the Review of Australia's Welfare System. Original submission submitted 15th August 2014. Submission was updated 28 February 2015. to make minor corrections to some data items. Disability Support Pension rates used are based as at 15th August 2014.

*This submission is dedicated to Audrey, David and their families who have agreed to showcase their personal journeys to paid work in the open labour market.*



## **Introduction**

Inclusion Australia agrees that the income support system should have a stronger employment focus. An income support system focused on evidence based employment support can significantly increase employment participation and reduce reliance on income support.

To achieve such change requires an examination of our understanding about capacity to work and employment support needs, and how this relates to achieving paid work which reduces pension reliance.

Current programs and policies are out of step with evidence based practice and are not providing youth with intellectual disability with the opportunity to be included in the open labour market.

Our biggest challenge, however, is to address a culture of low expectations about people with intellectual disability and work.

The current pathway of pension, unemployment and alternative programs needs to shift to a pathway of inclusion, work and wages in the open labour market.

To demonstrate this shift in direction, we feature the stories of two young people with significant intellectual disability and the pathway they took to move from school to paid employment in the open labour market. A video of these stories can be found at <https://vimeo.com/92100469>

These stories illustrate that people with intellectual disability have the capacity to work in the open labour market when provided skilled support. This quality support, however, is currently limited to just a few locations.

It is our submission that the welfare review should set a new direction to progressively build evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support on a national scale for people with intellectual disability.

It is possible to progressively change the current low expectations, low work participation and high reliance on the pension, to a culture where inclusion, work and wages is a common part of the lives of all people with intellectual disability.

## David and Audrey: A demonstration of capacity

People with intellectual disability have the capacity to;

1. work in the open labour market when provided skilled support;
2. earn an award based wage;
3. reduce their pension reliance;
4. contribute to the economy; and,
5. have a good life.



### David

David is twenty years old.

He spent 15 months in the NSW Transition to Work program overcoming his barriers to employment.

David needed to learn how to respond appropriately to instructions given to him by his supervisor.

An open employment service then began job search with transition-to-work continuing during this time.

After 5 months of job search, David commenced paid employment at Suncorp in March 2013 and is still employed today. He works 20 hours per week and earns a (full) award wage of \$436 per week.

### Audrey

Audrey is 22 years old.

She spent 21 months in the NSW Transition to Work program overcoming her barriers to employment.

Audrey needed to develop confidence through work experience.

An open employment service then began job search with transition-to-work continuing during this time.

After 1 month of job search, Audrey commenced paid employment at Roadshow Entertainment in October 2011 and is still employed today. She works 20 hours per week and earns \$271.80 per week. A wage determined by the Supported Wage System.



A video discussing the pathway that David and Audrey took to paid open employment can be seen on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1NTceOPpKc>

David and Audrey's pathway to paid employment provides a guide to developing a national evidence-based income and employment support model. We have listed each characteristic of David and Audrey's employment outcome and provided a comparative analysis of how this compares to the national picture for all people with intellectual disability.

### **David and Audrey are manifestly eligible for the Disability Support Pension.**

- People with intellectual disability (i.e. IQ less than 70) are manifestly eligible for the Disability Support Pension. David and Audrey both have an IQ of less than 60.
- Without evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support, this group is unlikely to get a job in the open labour market.
- Permanent disability should not be conflated with no, or little, capacity to work. Work capacity for people with intellectual disability is a matter of providing the right support.

### **David and Audrey are young people**

- Evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support for youth with intellectual disability is the most effective and cost efficient strategy to address employment participation and reduce reliance on the pension.
- Evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support is a strategy of "early intervention" that is well documented and capable of being developed on a national scale.
- Inclusion Australia has proposed to the Parliamentary Committee on the NDIS the need to develop an evidence based transition-to-work support sector on a national scale.

### **David and Audrey both have jobs in the open labour market.**

- In 2012-13, just 7.9% of people with intellectual disability of ages 15 to 64, who received disability support services reported work in the open labour market.
- David and Audrey are not extraordinary. There are many thousand Davids and Audreys of working age in Australia whom are not in paid work but have the capacity to work in the open labour market if provided with the right support.
- Demonstrations of open employment participation for people with significant intellectual disability in Australia are now 29 years old.

### **David and Audrey both received evidence based transition-to-work and open employment support**

- David and Audrey registered with a provider with sustainable open employment outcome rates of approximately 70%. A rate more than two times the Disability Employment Services (DES) national average for people with intellectual disability of 29%.
- The DES Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading (MIDL) evaluation highlighted the need for specialist services or units to better support job seekers with significant intellectual disability.
- There is only one specialist transition-to-work and open employment service organisation for people with significant intellectual disability in Australia.

### **David and Audrey are both working 20 hours per week**

- As manifest DSP recipients, David and Audrey are presumed to have a work capacity of less than 8 hours per week.
- As volunteer participants of the DES program, their provider must assure the Commonwealth that they can work at least 8 hours per week.

- The income support and employment service systems both have low expectations of the ability of people with intellectual disability to work for meaningful hours of work in the open labour market.
- Work capacity assessments tell us what we already know. Youth with intellectual disability have a low work capacity before job placement and training.
- The future work capacity of people with intellectual disability however can only be known with validity once this group are provided with a job opportunity and on-the-job training. This is what David and Audrey received.

### **David and Audrey are earning income.**

- David earns \$436 per week, and Audrey earns \$271.80.
- These are fair wages. David earns a full award wage, and Audrey earns a award wage determined by the Supported Wage System.
- 95% of people with intellectual disability of ages 15 to 64 who receive disability support services rely on the pension as their main source of income.

### **David and Audrey are productive.**

- People with significant intellectual disability are capable of productive work of value to employers in the open labour market.
- Employers will hire people with intellectual disability when they are provided a proposal of mutual benefit and quality support.
- People with significant intellectual disability can perform paid jobs in the open labour market if we are prepared to provide skilled support to the jobseeker and the employer.

### **David and Audrey both have a reduced (or part) pension.**

- David saves the government \$9,256 per year or 42.2% of the full pension<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on current DSP for single adults aged 21 and over.

- Audrey saves the government \$4,986.80 per year or 22.8%<sup>3</sup> of the full pension.
- David and Audrey belong to a select group of DSP recipients. Just 2.5% of DSP recipients (of any disability type) in 2013 reported earned income greater than \$250 per week.
- This is an outcome that directly responds to concern about people with disability remaining on the pension without work for a lifetime.
- It is an outcome that maximises employment and wages, and minimises welfare dependency and government pension costs.

### **David and Audrey are contributors to the economy.**

- David and Audrey are doing what is simply expected of any Australian. They are working, earning and contributing to the best of their ability with the skilled support they need to achieve this outcome.
- They are not on the welfare system as a burden. They are active contributors to life. And they got the skilled support to make that happen.
- Paid employment in the open labour market is good for the individual, employer and the government. It is a win, win, win.
- Employers recognise the value of employing people with intellectual disability, and have demonstrated that they are willing partners in designing jobs which provide a mutual benefit to the business and the jobseeker.

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<sup>3</sup> Based on current DSP for single adults aged 21 and over.