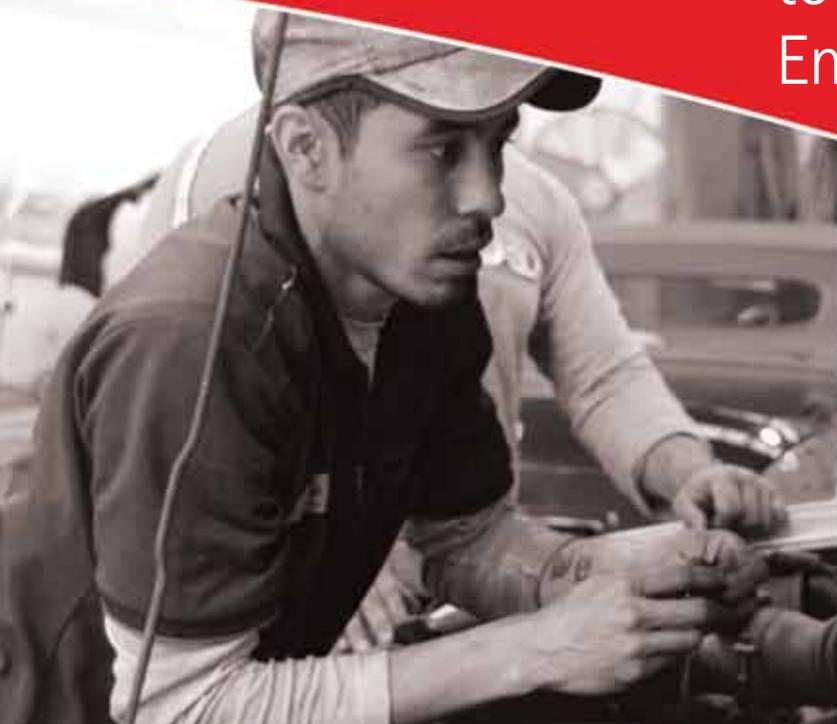




# Employers Guide

to Partnering with Disability  
Employment Services





*Represent, Support, Resource*



## **Australian Network on Disability**

The Australian Network on Disability is funded by its members to take a leadership role in advancing employment opportunities for people with disability. AND assists its members to understand the business benefits of employing people with disability, and develop strategies to welcome customers with disability.

AND provides an effective network for over 120 member organisations, that collectively employ approximately 10% of the Australian working population.

AND assists its members to:

- Become disability confident
- Develop best practice policies and procedures
- Become barrier free employers
- Meet their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and other anti-discrimination legislation.

[www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)

Ph: 1300 363 645

## **Disability Employment Australia**

Disability Employment Australia (formerly the Association of Competitive Employment or ACE National Network) is the peak body for Australia's Disability Employment Services. Disability Employment Australia members are specialists in finding employment for people with disability.

Disability Employment Australia exists to:

- represent the interests of members at a national level;
- identify opportunities to get a better deal for people with disability participating in the workforce;
- educate employers and the public about issues around disability employment.

Disability Employment Australia represents the interests of service providers to government and other stakeholders. Disability Employment Australia advises, lobbies, and advocates for the employment of people with disability. Disability Employment Australia also provides training, information and events, and promotes the range of services delivered by Disability Employment Services.

[www.disabilityemployment.org.au](http://www.disabilityemployment.org.au)

Ph: (03) 8676 0353

## **Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks to the Australian Network on Disability employer reference group, representing ManpowerGroup, McDonald's Australia, RTA and Woolworths.

**Funded by the Australian Government through the Innovation Fund**

# Employers Guide to Partnering with Disability Employment Services

---

\* Joint Australian Network on Disability  
& Disability Employment Australia Project



# 04

# 06



---

## INTRODUCTION

**04.** Introduction



---

## BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP MODEL

**06.** Approaching

**07.** Case Study: Claudia's Cafe

**09.** Proposing

**09.** Inherent Requirements

**09.** Job Analysis

**10.** Being Flexible

**10.** Job Customisation

**11.** Creating a Good Job Match

**11.** Employability Skills

**12.** Case Study: McDonald's

**13.** Placing

**13.** The Support Plan

**14.** Checklist for Success

**15.** Case Study: Dept Justice and Attorney General NSW

**16.** Probationary Period

**17.** Case Study: SD Smash Repairs

**18.** Retaining and Supporting

**18.** Job in Jeopardy



# 19

# 20

# 22



---

## SUMMARY

19. Summary



---

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 20. Disability Employment Services
- 21. JobAccess
- 21. National Disability Recruitment Coordinator



---

## FACT SHEETS

- 22. Employment Support Plan
- 24. Occupational Health & Safety
- 24. The Business Case
- 26. Employer Incentives & Financial Assistance
- 27. Building a Partnership
- 28. Legislation: Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
- 29. Language & Communication

# 04

## INTRODUCTION

**This guide has been developed in response to requests by Australian employers. In early 2010, several member organisations of the Australian Network on Disability identified gaps that exist in the understanding between employers and Disability Employment Services.**

This was further reiterated by other employers at the National Disability Employment Forum held in Melbourne in July 2010. This guide has been written in an attempt to capture the employers' perspective, and to address any inconsistencies so that expectations can be managed.

This guide aims to help Australian businesses to better understand and partner with Disability Employment Services to recruit from the entire talent pool and make it easier for candidates with disability to get and keep jobs. It also aims to create shared understanding and a shared language to assist Disability Employment Services and employers to work effectively together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Businesses can employ people with disability in a variety of ways. Many people with disability will apply for roles through an employer's regular recruitment channels and will be selected for their skills and experience and the contribution they can make to the business.

Some people with disability benefit from assistance to help them to get and keep the right job: this assistance is provided by Disability Employment Services.

### **Myth:**

People with disability have few skills and can't or don't want to work.

### **Fact:**

The ABS reports that over a million Australians with all sorts of disabilities are already in the workforce. Australians with disability work, pay taxes, purchase products and services and go on holidays.

*(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Ageing, Disability & Carers Report 2009)*

Disability Employment Services may contact an employer to look for work opportunities for their candidates. Alternatively, employers can contact a local Disability Employment Service to assist them with their recruitment needs. National employers with over 100 employees can utilise the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator service, which can help them to streamline their recruitment processes. Visit [http://jobaccess.gov.au/Services/A-Z\\_list/Pages/NDRC.aspx](http://jobaccess.gov.au/Services/A-Z_list/Pages/NDRC.aspx) for more information.

Disability Employment Services are independent organisations contracted by the Government to help employers to attract, recruit and retain candidates with disability.

**Myth:**

My workers' compensation premiums will skyrocket - I can't afford it!

**Fact:**

An Australian Government review of research found that workers with disability are no more likely to be injured at work than other employees.

*(Source: Are People with Disability at Risk at Work? A review of the evidence. Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2007)*

This guide has been developed to outline the ways that employers and Disability Employment Services can work together to improve employment outcomes for people with disability in Australia. Search online for a local Disability Employment Service at [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au), under "Find a provider".

## WHY EMPLOY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY?

18.5% of the Australian population has a disability – that's over four million people.\*

By employing people with disability businesses can:

- attract and retain the best candidates from a wider talent pool;
- retain other employees who have valuable experience and knowledge should they acquire a disability;
- reduce hiring and training costs;
- improve productivity through innovation and technology;
- reduce sick leave and early 'medical' retirements;
- strengthen workplace morale;
- customise products and services to increase profitability;
- attract a broader customer base and increase customer loyalty;
- reduce workplace incidents;
- reduce the risk of claims of unlawful discrimination against the organisation; and
- leverage payroll tax benefits (NSW only).

*\* (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Ageing, Disability & Carers Report 2009)*

# 06

## BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP MODEL

**Disability Employment Services are contracted by the Australian Government to support people with disability prepare for, secure and maintain work. Many of Australia's Disability Employment Services have been in operation since the 1980's and collectively provide support to most regions of the country.**

Over the years, Disability Employment Services have worked with thousands of employers and candidates with disability to achieve great results.

Candidates with disability represent a significant proportion of the Australian workforce and yet continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market. This guide outlines the key pieces of information that need to be exchanged between the Disability Employment Service and the employer to successfully place a candidate with disability, as well as information on forming partnership approaches to success.

The recruitment process was broken down into five stages:

1. Approaching
2. Proposing
3. Placing
4. Probationary Period
5. Retaining and Supporting

---

1. *What would it take? Employer Perspectives on Employing People With a Disability*, Waterhouse, P., Kimberley, H. Jonas, P., Glover, J., 12 Feb 2010

### APPROACHING

Employers and Disability Employment Services have a fantastic opportunity to create mutual benefit. When there is a thorough understanding of both the business requirements and the type of work to be performed, it is easier for managers who recruit for specific skills to see how a candidate may fit into their business. It is also vital for an employer to know how an employee with disability will be supported in the work environment to achieve their best and create a win/win for all.

In a good practice model the Disability Employment Service will take the time to get to know the employer and find out more about the business including the workforce skills, knowledge and capabilities required, as well as what opportunities may be available to build more diversity into the workforce. Employers report that it is essential for any potential supplier of candidates to have a thorough understanding of the workplace culture, work environment and any specific job requirements<sup>1</sup>.

Building a good relationship at the initial stages will lead to more mutually beneficial and sustainable employment for people with disability.

There are many ways that information can be found about employers and their existing job opportunities. This is likely to begin with the Disability Employment Service conducting some research (see text box top right page 9) that leads to one or more visits to the workplace to fully understand the business requirements and the specifics of the position or type of work available.

It is important for the Disability Employment Service to have access to the appropriate person within the business. This is the person who will know most about the workforce or position requirement and the person who can make the employment decision.

Larger organisations have increased complexity and it can be difficult to identify exactly who is able to make a decision to recruit a person from outside of their standard recruitment processes. This difficulty can be experienced by people inside the employer organisation as well as the Disability Employment Service. However this is a critical factor in forming successful relationships and achieving successful outcomes for all parties. Most importantly, once a Disability Employment Service has developed a relationship with an employer, they can begin to work in partnership to provide solutions to any problems or issues that may arise.

**Employers are more likely to engage with a Disability Employment Service when:**

- Assumptions have not been made about their business;
- The candidate put forward by the Disability Employment Service has a real interest in the role and the business, and there is a good 'job match';
- The Disability Employment Service offers the employer a business solution; and
- They can see the value that the particular candidate could bring to their business.

**Suggestions from the employer reference group on how Disability Employment Services can find information about specific employers:**

Research the employer's website. Consider finding out the organisation's goals and look for alignment with your purpose; Careers sections will provide information about the type of work and the attributes the organisation values in its employees.

Determine who the key stakeholders and decision makers are. Write a letter or email to introduce your organisation and indicate you will follow up with a phone call.

Communicate with employers in a way that suits them. This may include by phone or email – they may not have time to meet with you face to face. Listen to and address the employer's concerns and needs, providing more information as required. Employers, like all of us, really appreciate being listened to.

Provide a one page summary of the support available.

## Case Study - Claudia's Café

### Overview

Sam has been employed at Claudia's Café in Morwell, Victoria, for about three years. She was supported into the role by Work Solutions Gippsland (WSG), a local Disability Employment Service.

Sam had registered with WSG, and was looking for some part time work to fit around her university studies. Despite having a vision impairment, Sam was very keen to have all of the usual experiences of every other uni student, including getting a part time job in retail or hospitality.

WSG already had a positive relationship with Claudia at Claudia's Café, and approached her about employing Sam in a customer service role. Claudia saw that Sam had the motivation to work and the right personality for customer service, so decided to give her an opportunity.



### Support Provided

WSG worked closely with Sam and Claudia's Café to ensure the job match was a success. They helped to train Sam in the tasks of her new role, and facilitated the implementation of a range of adjustments to help Sam work to her full potential.

During the first year of Sam's employment WSG was always on hand with support, however now that Sam has completely settled in to the role, the WSG managers only ever stop by for a coffee. Both Sam and Claudia are aware that they can contact WSG at any time if required.

***"Working with Work Solutions, the best thing has been the level of support"***

Claudia Davies, Claudia's Café.

### Government Incentives and Subsidies

Claudia's Café received an incentive payment for the first six months of Sam's employment, while Sam was being trained in the role.

### Reasonable Adjustments

WSG assisted Claudia's Café by implementing a number of adjustments, funded by the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).

Some yellow tactile indicators were installed outside the café so that Sam could see the edge of the path, and raised buttons were added to the cash register keys to help Sam distinguish items.

Other adjustments have been in changing the way things are done slightly, including making sure all walkways are clear of obstacles, and positioning particular products in certain areas of the fridge or display cabinet so Sam can tell what is what.

***"Work Solutions staff will actually go over my options for different things like lights that we can purchase for instance"***

Sam Macklin, Claudia's Café.



### Benefits

The team at Claudia's Café enjoy working with Sam because of her friendly personality and excellent customer service. She has an amazing memory, and is often called upon by other staff when they can't remember the price of something.

Claudia's Café has benefited by having an outstanding customer service employee, who is genuinely the best person for the job. Claudia believes that nobody else could do the job better than Sam.

Customers really love Sam, and appreciate that they can order 'the usual' when they come in to buy their lunch, and have Sam remember every order.

Sam has benefited by gaining confidence in her customer service skills, and being able to earn some extra money while she completes her degree.

## PROPOSING

Once a relationship has been built between the employer and the Disability Employment Service, and an understanding of the business and the skills that the employer is looking for is gained, a mutually beneficial proposition can be put forward.

Employers need to understand how the candidate can meet the requirements of the job, the benefits the employer will gain, and any support they will receive from the Disability Employment Service.

In particular, employers want to know that the candidate will be able to perform the specific tasks, meet the productivity requirements, and be punctual and reliable. The Disability Employment Service and the employer will need to work together to facilitate a thorough review and plan how they will achieve a successful result.

As part of this conversation, the Disability Employment Service will be able to anticipate the time the employer will need to invest as well as the risks (if any) to achieving successful onboarding of the candidate.

Many successful placements of candidates with disability occur when Disability Employment Services approach businesses to find out where the candidates skills and attributes can be utilised – unlike the traditional approach of responding to advertised vacancies. This strategy is known as **'reverse marketing'**.

## INHERENT REQUIREMENTS

Inherent requirements are those requirements, tasks or skills that are essential to the position. They are the tasks or duties that cannot be allocated elsewhere, are a major part of the job, and result in significant consequences if they are not performed.

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*, employers are required to offer equitable employment opportunities to everyone. This means that if a person with disability can perform the core activities or 'inherent requirements' of a job, then that person should have the same opportunity to do the job as anyone else.

Disability Employment Services can review job advertisements or position descriptions (if available) to identify the inherent requirements of a particular job, and determine if their candidate can perform them. A key inherent requirement of any position is the ability to comply with Occupational Health & Safety standards, so the Disability Employment Service will also assess the position and the workplace for any hazards, and ensure the candidate can work safely.

## JOB ANALYSIS

Employers and Disability Employment Services both agree that the best successes come from a great 'job match'. For some candidates with disability, achieving a good job match may require some job customisation before and during the 'placing' phase.

A job analysis may be an effective way of determining whether a job is suitable for a particular candidate with disability, and whether any job customisation is required.

A job analysis may review the following:

- details of any physical requirements;
- shift work requirements;
- customer service requirements;
- interpersonal skills;
- communication skills;
- computer skills;
- literacy skills; and/or
- numeracy skills.

The job analysis should be completed by the Disability Employment Service and a representative of the employer. If possible, the candidate with disability should be given an opportunity to trial the work prior to commencement to demonstrate their skills and identify areas where support may be required. The Disability Employment Service can assist in setting up an appropriate work trial which meets the needs of the employer and the candidate with disability.

Once the job analysis has been completed, the Disability Employment Service will outline any 'reasonable adjustments' that may be required.

---

## BEING FLEXIBLE

Sometimes it may be necessary to make a few changes to the way things are done to allow an employee with disability the best possible opportunity to be successful in a position.

Modifying the working environment or making changes to the way a job can be performed is called making 'reasonable adjustments'. If there is a cost involved, the Disability Employment Service can utilise the Employment Assistance Fund on behalf of the employer. Reimbursement is available for approved reasonable adjustments, which include Auslan interpreters, captioning, software, hardware and some building modifications.

A reasonable adjustment can be as simple as relocating a person with a mobility impairment closer to an accessible bathroom, or installing a particular type of software on a computer for a person who is blind or has low vision. Sometimes a reasonable adjustment may include making changes to duties.

The *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for any employee with a disclosed disability, unless that adjustment would cause 'unjustifiable hardship' to the employer. See the **Disability Discrimination Act Fact Sheet** at the back of this guide for more information.

It is important to remember that the majority of candidates with disability will not require any adjustments at all.

### Myth:

People with disability always need expensive and high tech equipment. I can't afford that for my business.

### Fact:

Simple and inexpensive devices are often the most fundamental in helping people with disability live and work to their full potential. Assistive devices can be as simple as a desk with adjustable height, or keeping a pen and paper at a service counter to communicate with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.

---

## JOB CUSTOMISATION

If job customisation is required, this may involve reallocating certain tasks or duties of a particular role to other team members, or creating a customised role for a particular candidate. This can be a great opportunity for experienced and skilled staff to take on more responsibility, while allowing the candidate with disability to work to their strengths. The more experienced staff will benefit by being able to demonstrate they are ready for the next step up in their careers, the candidate with disability benefits through securing meaningful employment where they are part of a team, and the business will benefit through greater productivity and increased workplace morale.

While job customisation can be an effective strategy in some circumstances it generally represents a small proportion of workplace opportunities.

## CREATING A GOOD JOB MATCH

While many employers will routinely hold an interview with potential candidates to determine whether they are a good match for their business, this may not work as well for some candidates with disability. For this reason, allowing a candidate to show what they can do through a work-trial may be more beneficial.

As well as meeting the requirements of the job, there are other sought after attributes that contribute to creating a good job match (see "Employability Skills" text box). The Employability Skills are a list of broad skills valued by employers, that a candidate may acquire through work experience or general life experience.

When an organised collection ('portfolio') of anecdotes and evidence of strengths that covers those employability skills is developed for each candidate, this makes it easier for employers to see the candidate's potential.

Other key information that employers benefit from includes, but may not be limited to:

- the candidate's work performance, including their productivity and ability to work as a member of the team;
- the candidate's life experience and any unique skills or personality traits;
- the contribution that the candidate can make to the business;
- the benefits to the team of a worker who is enthusiastic and committed, with a keen interest in the business and the work available; and
- details about how ongoing support will be provided, including access to any employer incentives.

### *Suggestions from the employer reference group for Disability Employment Services to engage successfully with the employer:*

Explore other opportunities within the business that may be suitable for a candidate with disability.

Develop an understanding of the job requirements and the organisation's culture. Does the job involve work on weekends, early mornings, late nights, long shifts, etc? Is the candidate able to meet those requirements? Ensure that travel arrangements are suitable to the candidate.

Provide some examples of previous successes in similar roles/industries.

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

1. communication
2. team work
3. problem-solving
4. initiative and enterprise
5. planning and organising
6. self-management
7. learning
8. technology

(Source: Business Council of Australia & Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry 2002)

### A strong proposition to employers:

- confirms that the candidate can complete the inherent requirements of the job;
- includes a summary or resume that clearly articulates the candidate's skills and abilities, and their interest in the role and business;
- provides independent referees;
- advises of any adjustments to the position the candidate may require; and
- outlines to the employer the support that is available to both the employer and the candidate.

## Case Study - McDonald's

### Overview

Russell has been employed by McDonald's for over 24 years. He was supported into employment at McDonald's by Jobsupport, a not for profit Disability Employment Service that specialises in finding jobs for people with intellectual disability.

In the initial stages, Jobsupport worked closely with Russell to determine his skills and interests. They identified Russell's well developed social skills and his enjoyment of interacting with different people, and assessed that he would be an excellent 'job match' for McDonald's. Jobsupport then approached McDonald's about the possibility of securing a job for him. Russell is now a Dining Room attendant, and his tasks include cleaning tables, emptying rubbish, replacing straws and napkins, and mopping the floor.

***"We really try to suit our client to the job itself, so that's the really vital part of our program and I think that shows in our retention rate of our clients, that we've found a job that really match the clients"***

Kate O'Grady, Regional Assistant Manager, Jobsupport.

### Support Provided

Jobsupport worked very closely with both Russell and his manager in the beginning to ensure that Russell learnt the skills required. The Jobsupport officer conducted a task analysis where each task was broken down into steps which were then taught to Russell. The Jobsupport officer actually learnt how to physically perform each task before teaching it to Russell.

This intensive on-the-job support provided by Jobsupport helped immensely in ensuring Russell's employment was a success. Jobsupport officers now visit Russell on a regular basis, particularly if there are any staff changes or new tasks assigned. Russell has had several managers and supervisors over the 24 years he has worked there, and in each case McDonald's has made sure that new managers are aware of Russell's specific requirements, and understand that they can call on Jobsupport at any time for assistance or support.



### Supported Wage System

Russell is employed under the Supported Wage System, whereby his productivity is assessed as a percentage against the standard productivity of a worker without disability. McDonald's pays his wage at this assessed percentage.



### Reasonable Adjustments

Russell did not require any adjustments in terms of equipment or modifications to the workplace. However, Russell's role has been customised slightly from the standard Dining Room attendant role in that he does not do any work on the cash register.

***"Jobsupport have helped us look at the job descriptions we have here for crew people and then look at the abilities that Russell has and really customise it to his needs"***

Michael Little, Store Manager, McDonald's Northmead

### Benefits

Russell's long term employment at McDonald's has had many benefits. Russell benefits through the development of confidence and self esteem, and a sense of satisfaction that he is making a contribution. Having the opportunity to interact with his team members and regular customers is also a very positive aspect of working at McDonald's for Russell.

McDonald's benefits by having an extremely dedicated employee, who is an active and enthusiastic member of the team. Having Russell on staff helps McDonald's to reflect the diversity of the local community, and many customers come in specifically just to see Russell. Other staff members, particularly Russell's supervisors, gain valuable experience in working with people with disabilities.

Jobsupport has also benefited through Russell's employment at McDonald's. Having such a successful outcome with Russell opened the door for Jobsupport to approach McDonald's with other potential employees. Working with McDonald's also helped Jobsupport learn about the types of support employers value from a Disability Employment Service.

### PLACING

Once a particular candidate has been proposed for a specific role by a Disability Employment Service, it is time to address any issues, and define each party's role in the process.

### THE SUPPORT PLAN

Increasingly, employers are looking for a 'support plan' document to be developed. The support plan guides all of the essential information needed to facilitate a successful placement for both the employer and the candidate. A quality support plan is created by the Disability Employment Service in partnership with both the employer and the new employee.

The support plan provides clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the employer and the new employee, and the Disability Employment Service.

An effective support plan may include:

- the type of support the new employee will need to learn the job;
- the frequency, duration and type of support the Disability Employment Service can offer, including timeframes, review periods and requesting additional support (types of support may include formal or informal support, one-to-one training, workplace guidance, non-vocational support, etc);
- training requirements for specific tasks and productivity coaching;
- identifying natural workplace supports and co-worker supports;
- the process for reducing the level of support provided by the Disability Employment Service; and
- the names and contact details of all parties: the Disability Employment Service contact, employer contact and the new employee's carer if applicable.

If the new employee requires reasonable adjustments to be made, the support plan may also include:

- the equipment that needs to be purchased for the new employee;
- a plan for adapting any existing equipment or tools which may be required;
- briefing to co-workers on any adjustments that may be required; and
- any training requirements for the new employee in the use of the equipment.

The support plan should be signed off and a copy given to all involved, as well as a copy placed on the new employee's human resources file. This should be repeated whenever any revisions are made to the document.

See example support plan on page 22.

***Suggestions from the employer reference group for Disability Employment Services to gain greater insight into the employer's business and processes:***

Consider attending an induction session to gain a better understanding of the recruitment and induction process, and establish any support that may be required by a candidate with disability.

## Checklist for Success

These valuable steps have been compiled from the AND employer reference group:

- Job analysis undertaken (individual task analysis if required).
- Confirmation of tasks agreed.
- On-the-job training determined, clearly identified roles and responsibilities and timeframes for review.
- Training to any co-workers and supervisors.
- Agreement on provision of feedback to the new employee.
- Agreement on a reasonable timeframe for reviews.
- Support plan is determined and agreed.
- Workplace adjustments are agreed and review schedule confirmed.
- Co-workers are briefed if required.
- Agree on action to be taken and responsibilities if there are changes to the workplace.

N.B. Much of the information from this checklist will form the basis of a support plan.

## Case Study - Dept Justice and Attorney General NSW

### Overview

Philip has been employed by the NSW Dept Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ) for over 14 years. He was supported into open employment by the Sydney Employment Development Service (SEDS), a specialist Disability Employment Service.

Prior to his role at DAGJ, Philip had worked in many different sheltered workshops and supported environments, but was not satisfied with any of his jobs. To improve his employment prospects, Philip undertook a course run by SEDS which focused on overcoming barriers, being assertive, skill development and changing negative attitudes.

While doing this course he ran into an old friend who just happened to be the HR Manager at DAGJ, who thought there could be a role at DAGJ for Philip. With Philip's encouragement, SEDS then collaborated with DAGJ to create a position that could utilise Philip's skills and abilities. Philip was initially employed in the Information Technology Department securing back-up tapes, transferring office equipment and other general office and IT duties.

Philip now works in the Records Management area of DAGJ, sorting and delivering mail to the many different business units within the department.

### Support Provided

SEDS helped to train Philip in his role, and provided intensive support for an extended period of time in the beginning. Now, 14 years into his employment, Philip's SEDS Employment Officer, Warren, makes contact with Philip or his supervisor Brendon every few weeks, and will drop in for a quick coffee if he is in the area. Philip and Brendon both know they can call on SEDS any time they need some extra assistance.

*"The Federal Government ... have some good financial incentives and we're able to access those incentives on behalf of the employer"* – Warren Chapman, Manager, Sydney Employment Development Service (SEDS).



### Reasonable Adjustments

Philip has Cerebral Palsy which causes some mobility impairment and difficulties with his vision. He has difficulty reading a computer screen, so SEDS organised for him to receive "WordQ", a predictive text software package that reads out whatever is written on the screen. SEDS also assisted Philip to find some specialist orthotic shoes, and a bag to carry his deliveries, which both help him safely perform his delivery duties. These adjustments were funded by the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).



Other adjustments have been made in the day to day procedures within the Mail Room, to accommodate Philip's disability.

***"We came in and we had a look at the workplace. We put into place any training that was needed, any workplace adjustments that were required that help him do the job"*** – Warren Chapman, Manager, SEDS



### Benefits

Philip's employment at DAGJ has been mutually beneficial for both Philip and the Department. DAGJ has gained an extremely productive employee who is passionate about his job, and Philip has gained confidence and has great job satisfaction.

SEDS has also benefited as Philip is now a very vocal advocate for their employment program, and will speak to other people with disabilities to encourage them to find work in open employment through a Disability Employment Service such as SEDS.

**The timing of an employee's probationary review is particularly important for trainees or apprentices, as this is the point where their formal Training Agreement is endorsed (or otherwise).**

## PROBATIONARY PERIOD

While the support needs of every employer and employee will vary, for most people with disability the support needs will be higher during the settling in and probationary period. The probationary period will be defined by the employer and should be specified in the employee's Letter of Offer or employment contract.

During the probationary period the Disability Employment Service will follow up as per the agreed support plan. This provides an opportunity to assess how things are going. It is important that the lines of communication are open and any questions are dealt with in a timely way.

During the probationary period the following should be addressed:

- review the employee's initial progress (e.g. skill acquisition and productivity rate) and attendance, in accordance with standard HR practice for the business;
- review any reasonable adjustments that have been implemented, and arrange any modifications as required;
- review the scheduled times for support outlined in the support plan and adjust as required;
- review any scheduled development activities (e.g. induction training, new tasks or career development opportunities) that the employer is planning for the employee;
- review Occupational Health and Safety, emergency evacuation and any 'buddy' systems that have been put in place specific to the individual employee if required;
- schedule a probationary review meeting if required, including the Disability Employment Service support worker, work supervisor and the employee. Allow the employee to have another support person (e.g. family member) present if requested.

Organisations looking for a broader understanding of disability can access Disability Awareness Training (training providers can be located through JobAccess). Costs for disability training may be reimbursed under the Employment Assistance Fund.

## Case Study - SD Smash Repairs

### Overview

Walter has been employed by SD Smash Repairs for just over a year. He was supported into the role by the Deaf Society of NSW, a Disability Employment Service that specialises in supporting people who are deaf or hard of hearing into employment.

Walter had previously completed work experience in another panel beating workshop with the manager of SD Smash Repairs, Sam. Sam knew Walter was a keen and skilled worker, and sought him out when a job opened up. Walter was registered as a jobseeker with the Deaf Society of NSW, who were able to support him into the job at SD Smash Repairs.

---

### Support Provided

Walter is profoundly Deaf and uses Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as his first language. Initially the Deaf Society provided frequent face-to-face support (including interpreting) to assist Walter to settle in to the workplace and build relationships with his work mates, but over the last year the need for support has reduced dramatically. Walter will soon become a completely independent employee, requiring no support from the Deaf Society of NSW.

---

### Government Incentives and Subsidies

SD Smash Repairs received a wage subsidy after Walter completed the probationary period. This is a one off lump sum incentive payment that is made after 13 weeks of continuous employment.

---

### Reasonable Adjustments

The Deaf Society of NSW assisted SD Smash Repairs with a few different types of adjustments

to support Walter's employment. Costs for these adjustments were covered by the Federal Government's Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).

Reasonable adjustments included a vibrating pager for Walter to carry so that he could be contacted in the workshop, a TTY (telephone typewriter) for Walter to make and receive phone calls, and some posters to put up around the workshop which showed some basic Auslan signs. The EAF also covered the cost of Auslan interpreting that Walter required.



Walter works closely with a couple of guys in particular and they have designed their own way of communicating using hand gestures and signals.

***"The Employment Assistance Fund covers Auslan interpreting so if they did need it, even for staff meetings, they can bring in an Auslan interpreter which would be paid for through the Employment Assistance Fund and the deaf worker can participate fully in any of the staff meetings or training"*** - Rhonda Ryde, Employment Officer, Deaf Society of NSW.

## Benefits

Walter had always wanted to work with cars, and had really enjoyed doing work experience as a panel beater. Working as a panel beater at SD Smash Repairs gives him great job satisfaction, and he is appreciated for his skills and experience.

SD Smash Repairs has gained an employee who is dedicated and loyal, and who does not get distracted by the loud noises of the workshop. The other team members accept Walter for who he is, and can see past his disability to see his skills as a panel beater. The owners of the business really appreciate how hard a worker Walter is, and also appreciate the support provided by the Deaf Society of NSW.

***“They’re looking at his ability rather than his disability. They see that he does the job and he does it well”*** - Rhonda Ryde, Employment Officer, Deaf Society of NSW.



## RETAINING AND SUPPORTING

There is no 'end date' on support provided by a Disability Employment Service, and depending on needs, support can be ongoing and indefinite. Disability Employment Services are contracted by the Government to provide support in employment. However, the ultimate goal is

to facilitate the relationship between the employer and employee. It's a good idea for employers and Disability Employment Services to review the agreed support plan regularly to accommodate any changes to circumstances that may occur.

As the employee's employment continues, the Disability Employment Service may scale back the support they provide, however it is important that all parties know that they can request additional (flexible) support at any time as required.

The employer or employee may want the Disability Employment Service to assist:

- if the job/tasks/hours/location are changing;
- if supervisors or co-workers are changing;
- if an organisational or team restructure is occurring; and
- if the employer/supervisor has any concerns. (Concerns may be related to welfare, conduct at work or other issues).

---

## JOB IN JEOPARDY

The Australian Government also funds a program called 'Job in Jeopardy'. Job in Jeopardy assistance is immediate support to help employees who are likely to lose their job as a result of their disability, illness or injury, and is available through Disability Employment Services.

The employee does not necessarily have to already be a customer of a Disability Employment Service to be eligible for the program. This means that support is available at any time to help navigate through the process, and keep a valued employee in work.

---

# 19

## SUMMARY

To summarise, Disability Employment Services can assist employers by:

- sourcing enthusiastic candidates who have an interest in the employer's business, and are motivated to work;
- assisting with job customisation as required;
- providing information about financial supports and incentives available for employing people with disability;
- providing assistance with the purchase and implementation of reasonable adjustments;
- providing support and advice on the best ways to work with the new employee; and
- offering onsite support for the employer and new employee for as long as is required.



# 20

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Disability Employment Services aim to assist candidates with disability prepare for, find and keep work. The network is made up of over 220 organisations - large and small, non profit and private sector - which are funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Disability Employment Services currently support approximately 145,000 Australians with disability to gain and maintain meaningful employment in the open labour market. They do this by connecting candidates to the right job for them, preparing both the workplace and candidate for employment and offering ongoing support to ensure success in the long term.

All work secured by Disability Employment Services is in the 'open' labour market and paid at standard rates.

Candidates can be referred to Disability Employment Services if they:

- have a permanent (or likely to be permanent) disability;
- have a reduced capacity for communication, learning or mobility;
- require support for more than six months after placement in employment; and/or
- require specialist assistance to build capacity in order to share in the financial, social and personal benefits that employment offers.

Candidates must be of working age with a diagnosed disability.

[www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)

Employer hotline 13 17 15

The Federal Government provides funding to Disability Employment Services to assist people with disability find employment.

There are two main services:

**Disability Management Service:** for candidates with disability, injury or health condition who require the assistance of a disability employment service but are not expected to need long-term support in the workplace.

**Employment Support Service:** for candidates with permanent disability and with an assessed need for more long-term, regular support in the workplace.

([http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/Disability\\_Employment\\_Services/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/Disability_Employment_Services/Pages/default.aspx))

These services are delivered through a network of Disability Employment Services across Australia.

## JOBACCESS

JobAccess is an information and advice service funded by the Australian Government. It offers help and workplace solutions for people with disability and their employers. JobAccess is an initiative of the Australian Government to support the employment of people with disability.

JobAccess includes a comprehensive, easy to use website and a free telephone information and advice service where employers and candidates can access confidential, expert advice on the employment of people with disability.

JobAccess can provide information on finding a Disability Employment Service, applying for funding under the Employment Assistance Fund, applying for the Supported Wage System or other employer incentive schemes. JobAccess also has a number of useful fact sheets available for employers and candidates with disability.

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

Ph: 1800 464 800

---

## NATIONAL DISABILITY RECRUITMENT COORDINATOR

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator service works with large employers to increase their recruitment of people with disability.

Once employers make a commitment to work with the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator service, the service helps the employer to implement practices to employ more people with disability, as well as to train staff in working with people with disability. The service also provides information about Disability Employment Services and other support available to the employer.

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator sends information about the employer's job vacancies to Disability Employment Services who service the area where the jobs are located. It offers a free pre-screening interview service at the point of recruitment to help make referrals of potential applicants as suitable as possible.

The service facilitates the development of relationships between large employers who employ more than 100 people across different locations to make it easier for the employer to develop their knowledge of Disability Employment Services and the support that they provide to people with disability, including support in the workplace.

---

# 22

## FACT SHEETS

### EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PLAN

Whilst most employees with disability will not require significant adjustments or modifications to be made in the workplace, some will. In circumstances where the employee may require support to (a) settle into their job or (b) maintain that job in the long-term, an employment support plan can provide a useful way of outlining the nature of support available through a Disability Employment Service.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that both the employee and employer receive all the assistance

necessary to address any disability-related issues and potential barriers that could get in the way of satisfactory work performance and hinder job retention in the longer term.

It is recommended that a copy of this plan be placed in the employee's human resources file and be referred to as required by authorised personnel.

A good employment support plan will clearly outline the nature of support the employee may require at various stages of their employment and be developed with both the employee and employer's needs in mind.

### EXAMPLE SUPPORT PLAN

Employee Name:

Job Title:

Company Name:

Supervisor Name:

Job Location:

Job Commencement Date:

Disability Employment Service:

DES Employment Consultant:

Back-up DES Contact Person:

### DES CONTACT DETAILS

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Website

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PLAN FOR (INSERT EMPLOYEE NAME)

Phase of Employment	Action (Specify clearly)	Person(s) Responsible	Frequency / Duration
Induction / On-boarding	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
Probationary Period	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
Retention / Career Development	7.		
	8.		
	9.		

Workplace Modifications Required Y/N & Description	Date required by	DES person responsible for application	What is the Job Access reference code?
Supported Wage Subsidy			

(Name of DES) agrees to provide the following support to (Name of Employee) upon commencement of their employment.

Agreement Date.....

Agreement Review Date(s).....

Signatures..... (DES representative)

..... (Employer representative)

..... (Employee)

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Effective Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures will ensure that risks are prioritised and safe work procedures documented to minimise the risk of harm. Regular employee training on safety procedures is also essential. Occupational Health and Safety is important for all employees, irrespective of whether they have a disability or not.

When an employee with disability joins your workforce, the first step should be to consult with the employee on their individual situation and confirm that they are able to follow the safety procedures.

Consulting with your employee will also help to identify any specific adjustments they may require to ensure a safe work environment for everyone.

It is important to consider your organisation's emergency evacuation procedures, and think about any assistance that an employee with disability may require in an emergency situation.

This may include having equipment in place such as flashing alarms for people who are hard of hearing, or implementing a 'buddy system' to ensure the safety of all employees during an evacuation.

The employee with disability should discuss any arrangements in relation to evacuation procedures with fire wardens and/or appropriate team members.

Contrary to common employer perceptions, research has shown that employees with disability are not an increased safety risk in the workplace, and in fact have, on average, a lower number of workplace incidents and lower workers' compensation costs than employees without disability.

It is important to balance your Occupational Health and Safety obligations with your obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*.

\*Are People with Disability at Risk at Work? A review of the evidence. Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2007.

## THE BUSINESS CASE

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that 18.5% of the Australian population has a disability – that's over four million people. Australia is currently facing very real skills shortages across a wide range of industries, with many businesses struggling to fill vacancies. With this in mind, it makes sense to consider all the options when looking at recruitment, including people with disability. There are thousands of talented and skilled individuals with disability ready and willing to work, who just need an opportunity to prove themselves.

Increasingly, employers understand that employing people with disability makes good business sense. Employing people with disability is likely to bring new skills as well as bring new and valuable perspectives to an organisation.

By considering people with disability as potential candidates, businesses benefit by increasing the size of the talent pool from which they recruit, making it easier to find the best person for the job.

Becoming confident about employing people with disability will mean that an organisation will be well placed to:

- attract and retain the best candidates from a wider talent pool;
- retain other employees who have valuable experience and knowledge should they acquire a disability;
- reduce hiring and training costs;
- improve productivity through innovation and technology;
- reduce sick leave and early 'medical' retirements;
- strengthen workplace morale;
- customise products and services to increase profitability;
- attract a broader customer base and increase customer loyalty;
- reduce workplace incidents;
- reduce the risk of claims of unlawful discrimination against the organisation;
- leverage tax benefits (NSW only).

There is a strong business case, as well as an ethical case, for recruiting and retaining people with disability.

With one in five people in Australia having a disability, many clients and customers of Australian businesses will also be people with disability.

Employees with disability can help businesses understand what customers or clients with disability may need, which can give businesses an edge over competitors.

Having a workforce that reflects the diversity of the wider community can lead to greater customer loyalty and satisfaction, positively impacting an organisation's bottom line.

## BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

The benefits of employing people with disability are immediate and measureable. Studies in Australia<sup>1</sup> and overseas have found that employees with disability have fewer unscheduled absences than employees without disability, have increased tenure, as well as performance and productivity on par with co-workers without disability. A review of research entitled 'Are People with Disability at Risk at Work'<sup>2</sup> found that workers with disability are no more likely to be injured at work than other employees.

On average, employing people with disability does not cost any more than employing people without disability. Additionally, financial assistance with the cost of making reasonable adjustments is available through the Australian Government-funded Employment Assistance Fund. For further details refer to the following website.

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/Disability\\_Employment\\_Services/Employer\\_Support/Pages/EAF.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/Disability_Employment_Services/Employer_Support/Pages/EAF.aspx)

1. Graffam, J., Shinkfield, A., Smith, K. & Plolzin, U. (2002), Employer Benefits and Costs of Employing a Person with a Disability, *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* (17), 251 - 263.
2. Are People with Disability at Risk at work? A Review of the Evidence, Australian Safety & Compensation Council, March 2007.

## EMPLOYER INCENTIVES & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Australian Government strongly encourages all employers to consider employing people with disability. There are several programs which may assist employers with any financial cost associated with employing people with disability.

### EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Employment Assistance Fund provides financial assistance to purchase a range of work related modifications and services for employees with disability. Assistance is available for people who are about to start a job or who are currently working, as well as those who require assistance to find and prepare for work.

The Employment Assistance Fund may reimburse the cost of work related modifications and services including, but not limited to:

- the cost of modifications to the physical work environment;
- modifications to work vehicles;
- adaptive equipment for the workplace;
- information and communication devices;
- Auslan interpreting (Australian sign language);
- specialist services for employees with specific learning disorders and mental health conditions;
- disability awareness training;
- Deafness awareness training; and
- mental health awareness training.

Recruitment agencies may also apply for reimbursement of Auslan interpreting that they provide for a job interview.

Disability Employment Services can apply for funding through the Employment Assistance Fund on behalf of an employer or candidate, or an employer may apply independently.

The Employment Assistance Fund does not reimburse the cost of repairs or maintenance of work equipment or the costs of medical, therapeutic or fitness items or treatments, including cochlear implants and hearing aids.

### DISABLED AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICE WAGE SUPPORT (DAAWS)

The DAAWS program provides funding for employers and training providers to assist apprentices and trainees with disability to successfully participate in on-the-job and off-the-job training. Apprentices and trainees with disability can access training support such as tutoring, mentoring, note taking or Auslan interpreting.

Financial assistance is available to an employer who currently employs an Australian Apprentice with a disability who has been assessed as requiring support.

More information, including eligibility requirements, can be found at [www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au).

### WAGE SUBSIDIES

Wage subsidies are paid to the employer to assist with covering the cost of paying wages in the first few months of employment of a person with disability. The aim of wage subsidies is to encourage employers to consider people with disability, and increase the competitiveness of people with disability in the marketplace.

Wage subsidies are available through a number of programs including:

- Wage Subsidy Scheme, for candidates registered with a Disability Employment Service.
- DSP Employment Incentive Pilot, for candidates registered with a Disability Employment Service in particular Labour Force Regions.
- Employment Pathways Fund, for candidates receiving Intensive Support services with Job Services Australia.

For more information including eligibility criteria, call JobAccess on 1800 464 800. Disability Employment Services can also assist employers to determine eligibility.

---

## SUPPORTED WAGE SYSTEM

Some people with disability are not able to fulfill usual workplace productivity requirements, due to the nature of their disability. The Supported Wage System allows employers to pay less than award wage by matching a person's productivity with a fair wage. Through the Supported Wage System, approved assessors can determine an employee's productivity, and calculate a fair wage.

Applications for the Supported Wage System must be lodged online through JobAccess at

[http://jobaccess.gov.au/Employers/Financial\\_help\\_and\\_wages/Help\\_with\\_wages/Supported\\_Wage\\_System/Pages/Applying\\_for\\_SWS.aspx](http://jobaccess.gov.au/Employers/Financial_help_and_wages/Help_with_wages/Supported_Wage_System/Pages/Applying_for_SWS.aspx)

---

## PAYROLL TAX EXEMPTIONS (NSW ONLY)

The NSW State Government provides payroll tax exemptions for employers of people with disability. This exemption applies to all new employees with disability who are employed on or after 1 July 2011.

## BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP

The relationship that develops between the Disability Employment Service and the employer is vital, and is different in many cases to the relationship the employer will have with mainstream recruitment agencies. This is because the relationship has the potential to have ongoing contact in relation to providing advice and support for the workplace and the individual employee. Ideally the relationship is considered a **partnership**, one of mutual benefit and trust - it is beyond a customer/service provider model.

In the partnership approach there is a level of equality and an understanding that it is a **relationship of mutual benefit**. The business gains an effective employee who meets productivity targets and enriches the workplace, the candidate develops valuable skills that assist them to become a productive and valued member of the workforce, and the Disability Employment Service achieves the goal of a sustainable employment outcome.

In an effective partnership, communication channels are open and it is easier to resolve issues if or when they arise. Both parties are well informed of the others' needs and how to meet them, allowing effective long term relationships to develop.

---

Model	Characteristics
Partnership	Mutual benefit, open channels of communication and a strong level of trust and engagement, mutual understanding of each other's needs
Customer/service provider	Customer benefit, communications channels may be one way, weaker level of trust and engagement, limited understanding of service provider's needs

## LEGISLATION: DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (1992)

The *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) is the federal legislation that protects people from discrimination based on disability.

Disability discrimination happens when people with disability are treated less favourably than people without disability. Disability discrimination doesn't only happen to people with disability, it can also occur when people are treated less fairly because they are relatives, friends, carers, co-workers or associates of a person with disability.

Disability discrimination can be direct or indirect.

An example of direct discrimination would be a person being turned down for a job simply because they have a disability.

An example of indirect discrimination would be a wheelchair user not being able to visit a shop because it is down a flight of stairs, or a person with low vision not being able to purchase tickets to a concert because the website is not accessible.

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992), the definition of the term 'disability' is very broad. This means that people you might not regard as having a disability, and people who may not even think of themselves as having a disability, are included.

In relation to the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992), the term 'disability' refers to:

- physical disability;
- intellectual disability;
- psychiatric disability;
- sensory disability;
- neurological disability;
- learning disability;
- physical disfigurement; or
- the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms.

The purpose of this broad definition is to ensure that the law applies to every person with disability.

While some people are born with a disability, many people acquire a disability during the course of their lifetime. Some people have disabilities that are obvious, yet many people have disabilities that are not visible.

The *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) also protects people who may be discriminated against because they:

- are accompanied by an assistant, interpreter or reader;
- are accompanied by a trained assistance animal, such as a guide or hearing dog; or
- use equipment or an aid, such as a wheelchair, hearing aid or assistive device.

The *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone with disability in the following areas:

- employment;
- education;
- access to premises used by the public;
- provision of goods, services and facilities;
- accommodation;
- buying land;
- activities of clubs and associations;
- sport; and
- the administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

With regard to employment, the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) prohibits discrimination against people with disability throughout all stages of the employment process, including:

- recruitment processes such as advertising, interviewing, and other selection processes;
- decisions on who will get the job;
- terms and conditions of employment such as pay rates, work hours, job design and leave entitlements;
- promotion, transfer, training or other benefits associated with employment; and
- termination of employment, demotion or retrenchment.

Harassment in the form of insults or humiliating jokes about a person's disability is also unlawful and considered a form of discrimination.

The DDA requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for any employee with a disclosed disability, unless that adjustment would cause 'unjustifiable hardship' to the employer.

The *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) is administered by the **Australian Human Rights**

**Commission (AHRC)**. Individuals can lodge complaints of discrimination or harassment under the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) and/or the Disability Convention with AHRC in writing, by phone or online.

**Australian Human Rights Commission**

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Complaints Infoline 1300 656 419

---

## LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

Words can have a very powerful effect. When talking to a person with disability, or having a conversation with someone in relation to disability, it is important to use appropriate language and terminology.

Use empowering language that focuses on the person first, rather than the disability or impairment, e.g. a person who uses a wheelchair, or a person who is hard of hearing.

'Person with disability', or 'people with disability' are the most commonly accepted terms used in Australia. This is known as 'person first' language, and is widely used throughout Australia and the United States.

If you are unsure of the correct words to use, don't be afraid to ask the person with disability. They will generally appreciate your openness and it may help to make them feel more comfortable.

It is always easiest to describe people as they describe themselves and, if in doubt, ask.

### Language tips:

- The term 'blind' should only be used to describe someone who has no sight at all, otherwise say person with low vision (only a very small percentage of all people with vision impairments are actually blind);
- The term 'deaf' should only be used to describe someone who has no hearing at all. Otherwise, use 'person with a hearing impairment' or 'person who is hard of hearing'.
- When a capital 'D' is used for 'Deaf', this is to describe the Deaf community which uses Australian Sign Language (Auslan). The Deaf community is considered to be a cultural and linguistic minority group, similar to an ethnic community. As not all people who cannot hear identify with the Deaf community, the 'd' in 'deaf' is not capitalised when referring to all deaf people, or the physical condition of not hearing.
- Saying 'disabled parking space' or 'disabled toilet' implies these things do not work! Use 'accessible parking space' and 'accessible toilet' instead.

Many people do not see themselves as having a disability at all, such as some people in the Deaf community who use Auslan as their first language, or those who have a long-term medical condition.

As well as being aware of the appropriate ways to communicate about issues relating to disability, it is also important to be aware of the best ways to support an employee with disability if they experience communication barriers as a result of their disability.

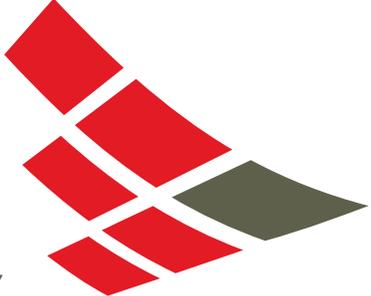
### A few basic tips:

- Never describe people solely by their impairments, e.g. 'an epileptic' or 'a diabetic'; instead say 'person who has epilepsy', or 'person with diabetes';
  - Avoid collective nouns such as 'the disabled' or 'the blind'; use 'people with disability', or 'people who are blind';
  - Avoid phrases with negative connotations such as 'wheelchair bound' or 'suffering from a disability', or words that demean people with disability such as 'unfit', 'abnormal' or 'defective';
  - Also try to avoid patronising language that implies people with disability are overly courageous, special, or superhuman just to get through the day with their disability; people with disability are just living their lives;
  - It's OK to use common expressions such as 'See you later' with someone who is blind or has low vision, or 'I've got to run' to a person who uses a wheelchair;
  - Always ask the person with disability if they'd like any help, before rushing in to assist them;
  - Try to **relax** and just focus on the person, rather than their disability — offer an apology if you feel you've said the wrong thing, but always be willing to communicate.
-





**Australian Network  
on Disability**  
FOR EMPLOYERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



*Disability*  
**Employment**  
*Australia*

*Represent, Support, Resource*

---

**Funded by the Australian Government through the Innovation Fund**

**Australian Network  
on Disability**   
FOR EMPLOYERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

© Australian Network on Disability &  
Disability Employment Australia 2011

*Disability*  
**Employment**  
*Australia*



*Represent, Support, Resource*