



JFA Purple Orange

JFA Purple Orange Submission

To the Disability Employment Taskforce on the national public consultation on a *National Disability Employment Framework to boost employment rates for people with disability*

Submitter details

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About the Submitter

JFA Purple Orange is the social policy arm of the Julia Farr Association Inc. We are a non-government, social profit organisation that conducts research and engages in dialogue with people with lived experience of disability to develop policy and practice. Our work is anchored on the principles of Personhood and Citizenship.

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1. Summary

JFA Purple Orange is an independent, non-government organisation based in South Australia that fosters innovation, shares useful information and promotes policy and practice that supports and improves the life chances of people living with disability.

In preparing this submission to the Disability Employment Taskforce on the National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper, we surveyed people living with disability and significant others about employment outcomes for people living with disability. Respondents participated in our research via an online survey, one-to-one conversations and focus groups. More than ninety people provided feedback, of which, 44 per cent self-identified as living with disability; 29.5 per cent as a family member, friend or supporter of a person living with disability; 22.7 per cent as a paid support worker or volunteer, and; 3.5 per cent as an employment service provider.

Respondents highlighted the fundamental human need, and right, for people living with disability to have authorship over their own lives through access to meaningful employment with a living wage. For the purpose of this submission, we define a living wage as the legally applicable national minimum wage, as reviewed by the Fair Work Commission annually. This is an employee's base rate of pay for ordinary hours worked, and is generally dependent on the industrial instrument that applies to their employment (for example, a modern award, enterprise agreement, transitional pay scale, or national minimum wage order).¹

¹ <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-guides/fact-sheets/minimum-workplace-entitlements/minimum-wage>

Responses underscored that a living wage brings choice and control; no, or reduced, living wage means far less choice and control. The key barriers to employment identified included the attitudes of employers and co-workers; discrimination and stigma; physical access and building design; and issues around personal disclosure of disability.

JFA Purple Orange's submission endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. We provide evidence to support the importance of genuine employment opportunities for people living with disability. Survey respondents provided insights into ways to improve employment outcomes for people living with disability, particularly focusing on community education to improve attitudes, as well as improvements to transport, technology, and employer flexibility.

Our submission highlights that each individual must have power, choice and control over their own lives, within an inclusive society to effect any real and sustainable change; we emphasise that any systemic national response must include measures that positively build a person's capacity and maximise the chances for a good life. We suggest a framework and options to inform future discussions.

We recommend the following as being supportive of successful employment for people living with disability:

- 1) That the Government establish a levy for employers who do not achieve diversity targets in their workplace, accompanied by tax incentives, paid to employers who demonstrate notable practice in advancing employment participation of people living with disability.

2) That the Government implement measures that counteract disincentives and risks associated with loss of the income as a result of the interaction between wages and disability support regulations. Examples could be to extend the period for which people could retain the Pensioner Concession Card after they obtain employment; and a guarantee that the Disability Support Pension would recommence if a person's working hours drops below the 30 hour/ week cut off. These measures may seek to improve material capital for the person living with disability and remove the risks associated with perceived financial disincentives.

3) That the Government invest in community initiative schemes in partnership with industry leadership bodies and community or philanthropic bodies interested in advancing employment participation. One example of this is Inclusion Alberta's Rotary Employment Partnership².

4) That the Government commission an analysis of successful Disability Employment Services, such as Jobsupport³, to identify key features that can then be set as performance measures for all such agencies.

² <http://www.inclusionalberta.org/partnerships-projects/rotary-employment-partnerships-overview/>

³ http://www.jobssupport.org.au/main/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

5) That the Government implement an awareness and education campaign directed toward the community, and business (specifically employers, employer networks and industry bodies, using communication methods familiar to the business world) in relation to dispelling stigma about employment of people living with disability, and eliminating discrimination. This campaign should extend over a period of four to five years.

Suggested strategies include:

- targeted marketing campaign (television/social media/print media) showing the diversity and value of employing people living with disability
- showcasing people living with disability sharing their employment story
- showcasing businesses via a national recognition program
- working with industry associations to explore employment opportunities in different sectors.

6) That the Government explore options with businesses in the open employment market to decrease the number of people living with disability who are employed in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). If the top 20,000 Australian businesses took on just one person currently employed in an ADE, there would no longer be a need for ADEs, and instead, 20,000 Australians living with disability could finally have a chance to earn a living wage.

7) That funding for disability employment services be commensurate with the capacity to provide ongoing job support for people living with disability who are engaged in employment.

8) That the Government consider the opportunities and options provided through a framework such as The Model of Citizenship Support, which employs strategies and actions to facilitate choice, participation and autonomy. The Model provides a comprehensive contextual framework for organising policy and practice in support of improving life chances for people living with disability, including in relation to employment: a living wage increases Material Capital (increased income), Social Capital (increased social opportunities and support), Knowledge Capital (increased knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with living with disability), and Personal Capital (a positive self-view through having a valued role in the community).

2. Our Approach to this Submission

In developing this submission, we focused on the assumption that all people seek to build a good life for themselves, and to achieve this, the availability of sustainable waged employment is critical. We aimed to amplify the voices of people with a lived experience of disability which we gained through discussions, online responses to a survey, and current research evidence.

This submission commences with a contextual commentary. The main part of the submission then focuses on what might be learned from the results of the community consultation we undertook. This approach generated the involvement of 90 people, each with a perspective on the issues and barriers to employment faced by people living with disability, and each with suggestions of strategies with which to address these. The flow of this submission reflects that consultation.

In addition, we have brought content into this submission that reflects our knowledge and experience. Some of this material enjoys less 'air-time' because of the focus on consultation material. As such, there may be elements to the conclusions and recommendations that may not have the same depth of narrative earlier in the document.

Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to provide additional information as required. We would also value the opportunity to meet with the Disability Employment Taskforce to discuss the submission contents in more detail.

3. Introduction

3.1. JFA Purple Orange

JFA Purple Orange applauds the Australian Government Department of Social Services and in committing to improving employment outcomes for people living with disability, and appreciates this opportunity to provide a submission to the Disability Employment Taskforce to inform development of the National Disability Employment Framework.

JFA Purple Orange is the social policy agency of the Julia Farr group, a trio of social profit, non-government organisations based in South Australia, working to improve the life chances of people living with disability. The Julia Farr group (JFA Purple Orange, Julia Farr Housing Association, Julia Farr MS McLeod Benevolent Fund and Julia Farr Trust Funds) and its predecessor organisations have been involved with the disability community, older people and other vulnerable groups for more than 130 years. We are an independent, community organisation whose work includes discovery and provision of information to the disability community and its associated stakeholders, assistance to linkages and leadership within the disability community, and development and amplification of ideas and initiatives that may help advance the life chances of people living with disability.

JFA Purple Orange is not a service provider – we deliver research, evaluation and information services anchored upon the stories and experiences shared with us by people with a lived experience of disability and others in their lives.

3.2. International and National Contexts

Women and men with disabilities have demonstrated their willingness to work and their capacity to contribute effectively and productively in their places of employment. Yet many are prevented from making this contribution by a range of barriers which result in their underemployment, unemployment, or labour market inactivity. This entails significant social and economic losses and results in a terrible waste of potential, for the individuals themselves, their communities and the wider societies in which they live⁴

Barbara Murray, International Labour Organisation

The matters outlined in the National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper (May 2015) highlight some of the key factors which may impede or assist people living with disability from experiencing the community participation which comes from open, inclusive and accessible employment. This is stipulated in the UNCRPD, ratified by the Australian Government and endorsed by the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

⁴ Fembek, M., Butcher, T., Heindorf, I. and Wallner-Mikl, C. (2012), *Zero Project Report, International Study on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Essl Foundation.

3.2.1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

There is national recognition, through ratification of the UNCRPD by Australia in July 2008, that all people living with disability have the right “to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.”⁵

Article 27⁶ of the Convention sets out clear responsibilities for signatory nations to:

1. Recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:
 - a. Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions;

⁵ United Nations, (2006), <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> Accessed 9/6/15

⁶ United Nations, (2006), Ibid

- b. Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances;
- c. Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others;
- d. Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training;
- e. Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;
- f. Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business;
- g. Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector;
- h. Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures;
- i. Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace;
- j. Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market;

k. Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities.

2. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not held in slavery or in servitude, and are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labour.

3.2.2. The National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 highlights issues relating to employment in Policy Area 3 – Economic Security, which undertakes to “Increase access to employment opportunities as a key to improving economic security and personal wellbeing for people with disability, their families and carers.”⁷

JFA Purple Orange’s submission to the Disability Employment Taskforce endorses the UNCRPD and National Disability Strategy. We provide evidence below, based on the lived experiences of people with disability, to support the life-changing choices and chances afforded to people living with disability to fully participate in open employment opportunities.

⁷ Commonwealth of Australia (2011), National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, p. 42

3.3. Key Principles of the Model of Citizenship Support

3.3.1. Context of a good life

Considering the history of disability and service responses to disability, the key elements of the UNCRPD and the key values underpinning the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, a good life might be characterised by the presence of the following:

- authorship of our own lives (often described as control and choice)
- having valued roles in community life and the economy (often described as inclusion).⁸

Every human being seeks to build a good life for themselves, and our assertion is that this good life, however it manifests itself for each person, will be anchored on expressions of Citizenship, driven by Personhood. Where *Personhood* is defined as people living with disability exercising personal authority, and *Citizenship* as when people living with disability are active citizens in the life of the community.

Unlike citizenship, Citizenship is a dynamic experience: it can rise and fall depending on the person's circumstances. The extent to which any person can naturally take up Personhood and Citizenship is influenced by the degree to which that person lives with vulnerability, and the extent of helpfulness rendered by responses to such vulnerability. For the purposes of this submission we define vulnerability as the presence of circumstances that can adversely impact on the person's capacity to build their own lives and the person's capacity to take up valued roles in community life and the economy.

⁸ Williams, R. (2013), *Model of Citizenship Support: 2nd edition*, Julia Farr Association Inc, Unley South Australia

Employment offers people living with disability access to a range of benefits that most people in community life enjoy, such as a living wage, social network, choices, purpose, meaning and valued membership in mainstream community life.

We therefore believe that any formal response to employment for people living with disability needs to be anchored on supporting the person to move into roles of Personhood and Citizenhood.

3.3.2. Life chances

A good life largely depends on the availability of life chances – the assets and opportunities available to a person. The *Model of Citizenhood Support* (the Model) sets out a framework for how people can be supported to build their chances of a good life, of Citizenhood.

Because of the impact of a living wage on a person's life chances, the presence of sustainable waged employment is critical. The Model provides a comprehensive contextual framework for organising policy and practice in support of people living with disability. It asserts that our life chances comprise four different, interrelated, types of assets we can call upon, termed the *Four Capitals*. These are: Personal Capital (how the person sees herself/himself), Knowledge Capital (what the person knows and can apply), Material Capital (money and the tangible things in our lives) and Social Capital (having people in our lives whom we know and know us). These capitals apply to any person and can reveal what types of investment and assistance might be helpful for someone to build a good life for themselves. It is worth noting that typically each of these assets is advanced when a person is employed, and diminished or hindered when a person is unemployed.

In relation to employment, Material Capital is the most pertinent; it includes assets such as a living wage, savings, security and choices to purchase material comforts such as housing, vehicles and consumables. The presence of Material Capital can have a positive impact on a person's life chances.

As outlined in the Model:

... earning a living wage is the primary way most people maintain and grow their Material Capital; therefore, meaningful paid employment is a powerful way to advance a person into a life of active Citizenship. This steady income means the person can pay for things they might need, build savings, purchase material possessions which have meaning and utility, pay for access to public amenities like public transportation and entertainment venues, buy access to further education and training, take vacations, own their home and, contribute to the Common Good through tax payments.⁹

There is a world of difference between someone living with a disability being employed as an active member of a vibrant workforce, making a valued contribution and being a passive recipient of welfare benefits that only serves to perpetuate the myth that people living with disability are unable to work. As one person commented “... getting a job is life changing.”

The work and experience of JFA Purple Orange shows that not only do most people living with disability want to participate in employment, but they are also determined to overcome obstacles to acquire it. As one survey respondent commented “If you expect nothing, you get nothing; unless we expect to get jobs it will not happen.”

⁹ Williams, R. (2013), *Model of Citizenship Support: 2nd edition*, Julia Farr Association Inc., Unley South Australia, p. 42.

4. Key Questions Canvassed in Survey and Focus Group

We focussed on seven key questions from the National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper regarding workforce participation and the relationship between disability support and employment support in the NDIS landscape. Our response is framed around the themes arising from the consultation process in relation to these questions. We have grouped the responses under the headings of:

- Issues/barriers
- Reducing barriers/improving outcomes for people living with disability
- Reducing barriers for employers
- Promoting the benefits of employing someone living with disability
- Linking disability support/NDIS to improving employment outcomes.

De-identified quotes from individuals are provided to support key themes.

We received 90 responses from the online survey, focus group and targeted conversations. Of these respondents, 44.3 per cent indicated they lived with disability, 29.5 per cent were a family member, friend or supporter, 22.7 per cent were a paid worker or volunteer, 3.5 per cent were employment service providers.

In terms of employment status, 63.4 per cent identified as currently employed; 14.6 per cent unemployed; 7.2 per cent are jobseekers; 3.6 per cent have never been employed and 6.1 per cent preferred not to say.

To identify initial trends in the consultation data, we used Survey Monkey¹⁰ text analysis where larger font size indicates the common words, phrases and concepts identified by survey respondents. We have provided text analysis for each key question.

4.1. What are the issues/barriers facing people living with disability seeking employment?

Transport Productivity
Understanding from Employers Capabilities
Accessible Meaningful Employment Job Flexible
People with Disability Interview
Support Staff Barriers Burden
Work Place Communication Discrimination Public
Employees Stigma

4.1.1. Poor performance as a nation

Australia is ranked 21st out of 29 OECD countries for employment participation rates of people living with disability,¹¹ a poor performance on the international stage.

¹⁰ Survey Monkey (2015), www.surveymonkey.com. Accessed 30/6/15.

¹¹ OECD (2010), *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers. A Synthesis of Findings Across OECD Countries*. OECD Publishing, France

As noted by the OECD: “The vast majority of people with disability can and do want to work and be as financially independent as possible, but employment is one critical area where Australia is lagging behind other countries.”¹²

This is certainly reflected by the experiences of JFA Purple Orange with regard to the perspectives of people living with disability.

Although upon finishing school youth living with disability are far less likely to participate in post-secondary education,¹³ ABS statistics indicate that in 2012, 15 per cent of people living with disability had a Bachelor Degree or higher (compared to 26 per cent in the general population), and that more people living with disability had a Certificate level qualification than people in the general community (26 per cent compared to 21 per cent respectively).¹⁴ This is a significant number of people living with disability with post-secondary qualifications. From discussions JFA Purple Orange has had, these individuals are job-ready, job-seeking and keen to make a valuable contribution to the Australian economy and society. However, in general they are not finding and/or retaining employment.

¹² OECD (2009), *Sickness, Disability and Work: keeping on track in the economic downturn* – background paper, quoted in Commonwealth of Australia (2011), *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*, p. 42.

¹³ AIHW (2008a), *Disability in Australia: Intellectual Disability*, Bulletin No.67, Catalogue No. AUS 110, AIHW, Canberra.

¹⁴ Australian Bureau Statistics, (2014)

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/E82EBA276AB693E5CA257C21000E5013?opendocument>
Accessed 6 July 2015.

This is a serious disincentive for young people living with disability coming through the school system and looking towards their future. Reports by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare¹⁵ indicate that young people living with disability had significantly worse outcomes than their peers without disability in many domains; raising additional concerns of social exclusion among this group.

Young people living with disability may not be encouraged to consider mainstream activities such as open employment as part of their future, and may be excluded from planning and decision making regarding their preparation for transitions to further education, employment and other aspects of adult life.¹⁶ Early and effective investment to assist children and young people living with disability plan for their future in relation to their employment aspirations is important.

¹⁵ AIHW (2008a), *Disability in Australia: Intellectual Disability*, Bulletin No.67, Catalogue No. AUS 110, AIHW, Canberra.

AIHW (2008b), *Making Progress: The Health, Development and Wellbeing of Australia's Children and Young People*, Catalogue No. PHE 104, AIHW, Canberra.

AIHW (2008c), *Juvenile Arthritis in Australia*, Arthritis Series No. 7, Catalogue No. PHE 101, AIHW, Canberra.

AIHW (2008d), *Disability in Australia: Trends in Prevalence, Education, Employment and Community Living*, AIHW Bulletin 61, Catalogue No. AUS 103, AIHW, Canberra.

¹⁶ Murray, P. (2002), *Hello! Are you Listening? Disabled Teenagers' Experience of Access to Inclusive Leisure*, York Publishing Services and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

Little, in fact, seems to have changed in relation to barriers to employment for people living with disability in the past 20 years. In an article written in 1996, the Community Resource Unit Inc., described the barriers to employment at that time:

While few people would argue the importance of work and the benefits it brings for most adults, there remains a readiness to accept that many people with disabilities don't need or can't manage work. There is also a belief that it is unreasonable to expect that people with disabilities will be able to find work when unemployment figures remain high. Lack of successful employment reinforces the notion that work is only desirable for some people with disabilities, and that most people require 'day programs'.¹⁷

The article goes on to say: "While recreational pursuits can provide some valued roles and activities, they rarely have the same scope or benefits provided by employment. Employment remains the most acceptable role for adults in our society."¹⁸

From our consultation, these attitudes appear just as prevalent today. Australia as a nation needs to undergo a paradigm shift to ensure the disability community, without exception, is considered for open, competitive employment.

¹⁷ Community Resource Unit (1996), *Crucial Times*, Issue No. 5, <http://cru.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/CRUcial-Times-05-March-1996.pdf> Accessed 25/6/2015

¹⁸ Community Resource Unit (1996), *Ibid*

4.1.2. Discrimination and stigma

Survey respondents identified discrimination and stigma associated with living with disability is still rife; with 33 instances of those two words occurring in survey responses. Respondents identified fear of the unknown as an issue which limits employer and staff willingness to include new employees who at first appear to live with difference. Experiences, even once in the workplace, can be isolating. People can be present in the workplace without ever truly being part of the workplace culture.

Respondents' comments included:

"Assumptions by management and staff that I am somehow 'less than' because I have a disability. Assumptions by management that I will be a burden to HR, to sick leave liabilities and so on. Sometimes, when adequate provisions are made for my employment, attitudes from colleagues that I'm more privileged than they are."

"Culture of environment, uneducated people in regards to disabilities and their capabilities."

"Any stigma against the disabled needs to be eroded. This should start with educating employers, beginning with 'although a person is disabled they are still from planet earth.'"

"Most of my workforce experience I was discriminated against. I worked there for a long time; a new bloke rocks up and he gets the better role. Even though I had more qualifications and experience than him, he still got the better job. They weren't even willing for me to have a go, even though I knew I could do it well."

4.1.3. Personal disclosure of disability

There were mixed responses about the issue of personal disclosure of disability to potential employers. Some people felt that upfront honesty about what they can or cannot do was the best strategy. Others felt upfront disclosure reinforced discrimination and stigma. Some respondents said they made suggestions about the disability they live with rather than divulging their disability in an interview as an applicant could talk separately to an appointed person, not on the interview panel, about access and support needs. It was suggested that any disability-related concerns can be addressed as a separate issue to the suitability of employment which should be based on merit alone.

Survey respondents commented:

“I believe there is a lot of discrimination against people with disabilities when it comes to looking for work. I have just completed a TAFE certificate and have been to many interviews, but as soon as I mention having a disability myself ... that is the end as I don't hear back again from them.”

“If you TELL people you have a disability, every conversation becomes about that. People are either too sympathetic, too friendly, too prying, or they are trying to prove you are not as sick as you say. Disability makes people SO uncomfortable that they treat you bizarrely.”

“The main barrier that people with disabilities face is the stigma. There have been times at interviews where I have wondered whether or not I mention that I have a disability but because I have a speech impediment it comes out in the way I talk. I have to talk slowly and clearly to make myself understood which at times may make me sound 'slow' as in mental capacity. I am not slow in mental capacity it is just that I have to speak slowly to be understood.”

“It is difficult to know when to disclose the disability. You don’t want it to define you or your abilities. You want to be taken on what you can offer, not what employers may have preconceived regarding your disability.”

“It is very difficult situation with Autism and Asperger’s because if you disclose it employers look down at you and if you do not disclose it you cannot perform well in interviews.”

There is no legal obligation to disclose that you live with disability; it is a personal decision. Typically people may agonise over this decision. People living with disability may be understandably hesitant to disclose that they live with disability for a number of reasons relating to discrimination, employee attitudes, performance and status in the workplace. It is worth noting that when a person has not disclosed that they live with disability, employers are not responsible for providing employment related adjustments or supports. Consequently, if an employee needs workplace adjustments and supports it will be difficult to arrange unless the person has disclosed the disability they live with.

National Disability Services suggests that employees should be free to disclose their disability to an employer. However, it must be a personal decision unless a medical condition exists which could create potential workplace hazards. They suggest that government should facilitate greater recognition of the benefits of employing people and the benefits of support provided by the workplace for those who need it. They further suggest a question to be put to employees: “Are there adjustments to the workplace, which will enable you to maximise your productivity?” This question is relevant to all people, not just people living with disability.¹⁹

¹⁹ National Disability Services (2013), *Improving the Employment Participation of People with Disability in Australia*.

4.1.4. Physical access/Universal design

Physical access continues to be an issue for people living with disability when navigating employment. People living with physical disability are usually experts in their own needs, and will understand the impact of their disability on work performance. They usually know any workplace adjustments they may need at interviews, while training or on the job. For people whose physical disability is not visible, they may be hesitant to advocate for their accessibility needs for fear this may create negative employer attitudes. For these people this can create stress and concern that their employment is at risk.

Survey respondents commented:

“There is definitely still an element of discrimination within the 'able' workforce. Many building managers are reluctant to modify their buildings due to cost concerns; the time limitations within workplaces are often difficult to overcome when a person is unable to fit into those time frames reliably. I have also recently experienced the difficulties when a building is not originally of 'inclusive design' and the manager is reluctant to address the issues due to cost concerns.”

“People living with disability who want to work are by and large unable to due to the problems with the current workplace situations. It is only recently that many State Governments introduced accessible buildings and workplace laws and these are not retrospective so any workplaces not built now would more than likely be inaccessible.”

“Inaccessible building, including limited access to accessible toilets and transport/parking.”

“The practical aspects of getting to and from work as well as possible modifications relating to the physical environment are the first issues that need to be addressed with the person with a disability so they arrive at work in as stress free a state as possible and find their working environment manageable and pleasant.”

“The bad design of workspaces. For example offices and government buildings have fluorescent lighting which is a major trigger for migraines as well as epilepsy. Access to accessible technologies (such as speech to text programs) is still difficult.”

“Adequate disabled toilets and other facilities ... ramps etc. ...”

There is Commonwealth Government funding available for workplace modifications, such as physical and environmental workplace adjustments, computer software upgrades, vehicle modifications, communication technology devices and specific items of equipment an employee may require to do their job.²⁰ Some employers may be unaware of the level of assistance available, and may benefit from the Government deepening the understanding by employers of the considerable financial and practical assistance they can obtain to undertake workplace modifications to assist in the employment/retention of a person living with disability.

²⁰ Australian Government Job Access Website (2012), <http://www.jobaccess.gov.au/content/workplace-modifications-and-adjustments>. Accessed 6/7/15

However, accessibility crosses a lot of personal boundaries for people living with disability. It is about identity, acceptance of disability, and considerations about how one will be seen/treated by colleagues and employers with workplace modifications. It impacts on the person's self-esteem and confidence in ways that other people in employment do not have to consider. JFA Purple Orange strongly believes it must be a matter of priority for governments, and the community as a whole, to support a universal design²¹ approach to building which accommodates the needs of people with all abilities in the community.

It is obvious from the experience of people living with disability who are engaged in employment that universal access for all citizens is a far cry from the current situation. Physical and nonphysical barriers within the built environment can have a substantial impact on easy movement and therefore freedom of choice within the work environment.

JFA Purple Orange believes it is a responsibility of the community that people living with disability of all ages and abilities are able to access the built environment, including places of work. Indeed it is a basic human right and one that employees living with disability should not have to fight for themselves within the context of employment.

²¹ Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2014)
<http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/> Accessed 25/6/2015

4.2. What can reduce barriers and improve employment outcomes for people living with disability?

Question Mentor Education Business
Open Employment Greater Transport
Interviews Work Place Specific Job Think
Needs Family Member Providers Disclose
Level Attitudes Learning Federal Individual

4.2.1. Changing attitudes

Changing the attitudes of potential employers and co-workers was identified by people living with disability as critical to improving employment outcomes.

Many people living with disability who were at the 2014 National Disability Forum indicated that increasing employer awareness, engagement and understanding of disability in employment could go some way to resolving discrimination issues in the workplace: “Discrimination in the workplace actively drives people out of the workforce and into despair. There is a huge need for education programs in workplaces, from CEO level through to base level to appreciate what disability is and how to bust the stereotypes.”²²

²² Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) *National Disability Forum, 2014. Summary of Survey Results*. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/publications/national-disability-forum-2014-summary-survey-results> Accessed 2/6/15

Participants of this consultation process similarly considered attitudes and stereotypes as a barrier to employment:

“Workplaces that actually want to hire people with disabilities would be a great start. They often see the disability and say no because you may ‘require more help’, they don't see that you are as capable of doing the job as anybody else.”

“When organisations actively promote their inclusive approach to employing and involving people with disabilities we will see a paradigm shift in employers’ attitudes.”

Without a change in employer attitude, very little will change in the employment landscape for people living with disability. A change in attitude could reduce the anxiety felt by applicants at the thought of disclosing their disability.

As one survey respondent described:

“I would love to think that I could be open and honest about my disability and that it wouldn't affect the likelihood of me getting a job. Although in job interviews I have seen people's expressions change when I say I have a disability. I always go right into talking about what experience makes me a suitable candidate for the position.”

Education about disability generally, and knowledge of specific supports an employee may require, was seen as a key strategy to overcome this. General education could take the form of better public awareness around the value that people living with disability can contribute to communities and workplaces, so that more employers are likely to take on people living with disability as employees.²³

There were 52 instances of the word “education” in our survey responses. Representative comments included:

“Better education for employers about what is possible for people with disabilities to contribute, how they can make jobs a reality.”

“It would be useful for students in colleges and universities to receive education/training about both working with and employing people with disability; perhaps focusing on business schools, commerce classes, MBAs, etc.”

“Better public awareness/education around the value people with disabilities can contribute to communities and workplaces, so that more employers are likely to take on people with disabilities as employees. More allowance for flexible work hours / assistance with transport to and from work.”

²³ Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) *National Disability Forum, 2014. Summary of Survey Results*. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/publications/national-disability-forum-2014-summary-survey-results> Accessed 2/6/15

The need to dispel myths and negative stereotypes about employing people living with disability is very strongly expressed from a number of sources. The National Forum on Disability²⁴ emphasised this point; acknowledging that some employers want to be inclusive but are afraid to employ people living with disability because they don't understand or know how.²⁵

However, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) (2013) cautions against placing the whole burden of increasing workforce participation on the shoulder of employers. They suggest that government support must be provided to businesses wishing to diversify their employment base. They also make the point that attempts to promote the employment of people living with disability must adapt the use of business communication networks in a sustained effort to address mistaken perceptions and attitudes in a manner familiar to employers.²⁶

Given that efforts to change employer attitudes towards employing people living with disability have not been considered successful to date, JFA Purple Orange suggests a change of strategy, as recommended by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which includes collaboration with employers, using familiar networks and communication strategies to be more effective.²⁷

²⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) Ibid

²⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) Ibid

²⁶ Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2013) *Improve the Employment Participation of People with Disability in Australia-ACCI Response*.

<http://www.acci.asn.au/getattachment/80bf883e-e8d5-4cdb-8200-ef674f9018da/ACCI-Response-to-Improving-the-Employment-Particip.aspx> Accessed 21/6/15

²⁷ Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2013) Ibid

One example of a successful strategy in practice has been implemented by Inclusion Alberta (formerly the Alberta Association for Community Living) which works in partnership with Canadian Rotary clubs, businesses and the broader community to create meaningful employment opportunities for people living with developmental disability to “ ... create the kind of possibilities that contribute to the fullness of community life.”²⁸

Recently, Inclusion Alberta’s Rotary Employment Partnership was recognised internationally as a world leading innovation at the Zero Conference in Vienna by the ESSL Foundation in collaboration with the World Future Council and the International Labour Organization.

The Zero Project website describes the partnership as:

Capitalising on the substantive networking capacity of Rotarians to create jobs, this initiative has proven to be the most cost-effective employment strategy in Alberta over the last 10 years. AACL connects individuals with developmental disabilities to the jobs created by Rotarians and assists the employers to sustain employment by maximally utilising natural supports. Individuals work in roles (office administration, front desk, assembly teams) and organisations that are highly valued and not commonly seen through more traditional supported employment practices. Most striking is the resultant public advocacy of major

²⁸ Inclusion Alberta Rotary Employment Partnership Overview <http://www.inclusionalbarta.org/partnerships-projects/rotary-employment-partnerships-overview/> Accessed 18/6/15

Alberta business leaders and companies in promoting the employment of individuals with developmental disabilities.²⁹

More than 200 jobs have been created in a range of businesses from single person offices to multinational corporations. The average wage is substantially above the minimum wage, with income of individuals living with disability increasing by 50 per cent on average upon the individual joining the program. The vast majority of individuals are naturally supported by colleagues. The cost of the partnership to government is “neutral”, as the cost is offset by the reduction in income support. Success has been achieved with individuals previously identified as unemployable, with the average length of employment approximately four years and increasing. There has also been success in rural and urban communities.

4.2.2. Transport

Transport for people living with disability is a constant issue in relation to employment. Accessing public transport to get to work on time may be problematic as there are insufficient accessible taxis to meet people’s needs, and these frequently run late, particularly at peak times when people are travelling to and from work. The experience of relying on accessible taxis or public transport for people living with disability who are employed can be very stressful. People using mobility equipment may be unable to use public transport and therefore forced to rely on accessible taxis. Employers and colleagues may not be understanding about unreliable transport and may become resentful. JFA Purple Orange has repeatedly called for improvements to transport for people living with disability. This is a vital component for people engaging in employment in a serious and responsible manner.

²⁹Zero Project (2013) Rotary Employment Partnership <http://zeroproject.org/practice/alberta-association-for-community-living-canada/> Accessed 18/6/15

Survey respondents commented:

“Develop transport solutions for example funding transport training including assertiveness needed on public transport where a person with disability is still perceived as different; funding blind and vision impaired people to have talking GPS technology to improve place and journey knowledge relevant at work but also away from work.”

“Supporting the person to and from work would benefit every family member associated with someone with a disability. Financially the families are at a disadvantage with transport, but the social aspect and the self-worth far outweigh the financial cost to us as a family.”

4.2.3. Technology

Survey respondents noted that better use of technology could increase work opportunities for people living with disability. Specifically, enhancing remote access options and highlighting the need for specific technology such as voice recognition software and screen readers. Comments included:

“Better use and deployment of technologies to allow people to work remotely where possible. Better management training so that when people can use technology to work remotely, managers are willing to allow that to happen, without assuming that the worker is slacking off because he/she can't be seen.”

“Increased access and use of technology to modify work places and processes.”

“Getting adaptive equipment prior to job search would mean that new employers wouldn't have to wait 8 to 10 weeks, from application to actual supply of the adaptive technology and equipment.”

“My productivity has been restricted practically every time computer hardware or software is changed. I have to rely on my employer's IT Unit which is fine for many problems but the unit cannot be expected to have the deep knowledge of how hardware and software changes may affect a screen reader user.”

One individual summarised the significant positive impact that technology has had on their employment:

“The impact of technology on my ability to participate in employment has been life-changing, as has the role of Disability Employment Services in facilitating the technology. Living with multiple disabilities, simple tasks such as typing have become difficult or impossible. The use of Dragon voice recognition technology has enabled me to continue working and producing effective outcomes for my employer. Consequently my self-esteem, sense of purpose, social networks and sense of satisfaction with my achievements has been boosted. Technology has enabled that to occur and I find myself at the end of my working life facing retirement in similar ways to other people in the community.”

4.2.4. Employer flexibility

One crucial factor in supporting the employment of people living with disability is flexibility on the employer's part. Because of the unpredictable nature of disability and many chronic illnesses associated with disability, employees require work situations which are responsive to their needs. Feedback indicated that flexibility may be needed at both the interview stage (e.g. having an interview via Skype or phone), and, once employed, in working hours, along with working from home options. Many people felt they were unable to work for a full day due to fatigue, or health related issues:

“More flexible attitude to working day. Shorter more meaningful periods of work e.g. two or three hours at a time.”

“I believe that the frameworks within organisations could be improved in order to create a flexible working environment for people with disability that is not dependent on in-person attendance.”

“Help us get some flexibility with work hours. This is not possible in all industries, but sometimes I can't wake up early because I wake up sick, but I can come in later in the day.”

At the National Disability Forum people living with disability placed strong emphasis on the flexibility of employment as being critical to continued participation in employment. They described as important workplace practices such as flexible recruitment processes, tailoring of jobs to individual capacities and needs, flexible working hours and conditions and adaptable work options that could change over time according to the person’s disability. This flexibility also related to accessible workplaces and the provision of reasonable adjustments, including assistive technologies. Much of the stress experienced by people living with disability can be relieved by an employer’s support with flexible work practices.

4.2.5. Supportive relationships with employers

Supportive relationships between an employer and an employee is critical to a positive work outcome. Some respondents felt that employers were always “nice” to them in terms of job performance feedback, but then did not extend the contract due to performance issues. Respondents commented that specific targeted feedback is required.

“I got feedback – the employers would always try and tell me I was going well. That was so unhelpful. It would have been nice to have been told the truth. Employers need to be more honest.”

Many people start their first job in a part-time role as a teenager, often while still at school. It is here that they learn the basics about being an employee: punctuality, dress code, positive interactions with co-workers. It is also here that they learn from their mistakes. Without the opportunity to part-time employment or work experience as a student, many young people living with disability are excluded from an experience valued by the majority of teenagers.

Consequently, some people living with disability may not start their first job until they are well into adulthood. Employers may need to be aware and make accommodation for this so as not to confuse inexperience with incapacity:

“Good supporters in the work place who let you know how you can improve on what you are doing right and wrong. Being given patience and understanding when learning new skills. If being successful in what you are doing, a little praise goes along way.”

As outlined in the Employers Guide to Partnering with Disability Employment Services³⁰ ongoing job support provided by Disability Employment Services delivers a means for addressing the specifics of performance management issues with the employer if the person living with disability does not feel able to do this directly with the employer. The ultimate goal of ongoing job support is to facilitate the relationship between the employer and employee. It is beneficial to have developed a regularly reviewed support plan. Performance issues can be addressed within these reviews in a safe environment. Ongoing job support is a vital component provided to people living with disability. JFA Purple Orange believes that funding provided to Disability Employment Services must be commensurate with the ability to provide their full support of people living with disability in employment.

³⁰ Disability Employment Australia (2012), *Employers guide to partnering with Disability Employment Services* http://guide.disabilityemployment.org.au/retaining-and-supporting/ongoing_support Accessed 20/6/15

Survey respondents commented:

“We need more support provided by Disability Employment Services that are centred around the support the person needs.”

“Need better support/mentoring in the workplace; more effective and active specialist employment support agencies that have real networks with measurable and accountable outcomes.”

4.2.6. Job trials

Having the opportunity to trial in a job was highlighted as a positive throughout the consultation. This was variously described as work experience, job trials or unpaid trials. The importance of these opportunities as meaningful was emphasised:

“Work experience - but they have to be good positions, because being subsidised to go and do some made up job just so the government can get you 'into the workforce' would be depressing, and not provide a person with a real leg up.”

The benefits of supported job training and employment placement for people living with disability were noted. Not only does it provide a range of employment opportunities which develop work skills, it also provides people with the experience of working within an employment structure. The prospect of employment is made less daunting by having experienced a work environment. Organisations which facilitate these opportunities should also be adequately funded to ensure that this continues to be an option.

4.3. What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people living with disability?

Skills Stories Positions Meaningful Support
Building Modifications Education Allow
People with Disabilities
Universal Design Training Trial Job Treated
Awareness Public

4.3.1. Quotas

Quotas for employing people living with disability in Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, and in large companies, were suggested by consultation participants, with an affirmative action platform endorsed by the Government. Survey respondents suggested quotas should reflect the percentage of working age people in Australia who live with disability.

“Without quotas that have to be met, people with disability will basically never get the chance to show they can do a job, and do it well, as applicants without a disability will always be given first preference. Without quotas, people with disability will spend their lives on endless job search activities, getting rebuffed thousands of times. Living with a disability is seriously difficult enough on its own - being constantly rejected by potential employers year after year is more than enough to make even the strongest non-disabled person lose all self-esteem, sense of worth, and question the point of going on living.”

However some respondents held a more cautious attitude towards quotas claiming they did not ensure more people living with disability were employed. The ACCI believes quotas are not only an unnecessary regulatory burden, but most importantly they do not work. Further, they describe quotas as a risk to people living with disability who have not disclosed their disability to their colleagues, and that quotas pose a risk of unequal treatment of an employee hired for the sole purpose to meet such quotas.³¹

Suggestions were made by survey respondents for the Commonwealth Government to lead the way in creating base-grade, entry-level jobs (e.g. ASO 1,2,3 or comparable) in the Commonwealth public sector.

4.3.2. Government incentives

Many consultation participants were in favour of Government systems which provide tax incentives for employers achieving diversity targets in their workforce, and which penalise employers who fail to do so:

“Offer more incentives to business to take on people with disabilities.”

“More incentives for workplaces to employ people with disabilities - mostly in the form of financial support.”

“Government incentives help to provide opportunities so employers can discover the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.”

³¹ Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2013) *Improving the Employment Participation of People with Disability in Australia-ACCI Response*.
<http://www.acci.asn.au/getattachment/80bf883e-e8d5-4cdb-8200-ef674f9018da/ACCI-Response-to-Improving-the-Employment-Particip.aspx> Accessed 21/6/15

However, some caution in adopting quotas or incentives must be observed, as the existence of financial incentives may signal to the employer that people living with disability have less to offer, or are less-valuable than others, which contradicts the notion that they have the same rights to employment as anyone else.

“If employers are simply taking advantage of government wage concessions and is seen to be doing this with continual turnover of disabled staff, they should be struck of the list as they would only be creating more trauma in these peoples’ emotional life.”

It is clear that people living with disability experience a number of perceived risks and threats when faced with the prospect of employment. Many income support policies are built on the assumption that people living with particular disability cannot work, and therefore must rely on others for financial support. Such policies create a “poverty trap” for people living with disability. Fundamental to this situation are the rules that dramatically reduce benefits as a person’s earnings increase. The result is that the person living with disability experiences a poorer financial situation even when wages are factored in.

The potential loss of benefits is a significant disincentive for Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients to seek paid employment. Even if the financial benefits of working are greater than the financial value of the DSP, people living with disability worry about the security of employment. Of particular concern is the loss of the Pensioner Concession Card which entitles people to discount on pharmaceuticals, transport fares and a range of other benefits. That their financial situation may become more difficult is a real threat for people living with disability who fear an already limited quality of life will be further eroded. Measures to counteract these disincentives such as enabling people in employment to retain their Pensioner Concession Card for an extended period could significantly ease this fear.

An additional disincentive is the lack of guarantee that the DSP will recommence if a person's working hours drops below the cut-off of 30 hours/week. This is particularly an issue for people whose disability is episodic in nature.

4.4. What are the benefits of employing people living with disability, and how can we promote this?

Sense Wellbeing Getting Willingness Benefit
Good Corporate Workplace Money Skills Look
People with Disability Support
Employing Valued Members Understanding
Honest Reliability Love Commitment Acceptance

For many people living with disability, employment is the most significant single factor in their lives, bringing meaning, purpose, and a sense of contribution. Income derived from employment provides a sense of self-esteem and acknowledgment of effort. However, many employers are not comfortable with employing people living with disability because they are fearful of potential negative consequences and expenses.

To counter this, respondents recommended promoting the positives of each person's ability, rather than focussing on any perceived negatives related to living with disability.

One respondent outlined all the skills a person living with disability could bring to the workplace based on their lived experience:

“Problem solving skills from getting up to going to bed. Teamwork - working with support workers, family, others with limited abilities. Logistics - from leaving the house, accessing public transport, buying suitable food and beverage snacks and lunch, getting to the workplace, accessing facilities within the workplace, attending meetings, training, seminars, conferences, visiting clients away from the workplace, shopping, using public transport, getting home, family responsibilities, recreation and sport, getting to bed. Understanding people's abilities and their limitations - understandings which skills and how to use them. Loyalty, reliability, credibility, solid values, keen to work.”

Some respondents felt it shouldn't be necessary to specifically promote the benefits, as people should be employed on merit:

“People with disability have so much to offer in any capacity. It's a matter of the right job, the right employer and the right workplace environment.”

“You should hire people living with disability because they have just as good skills as the non-disabled, are just as useful, worthy and skilled as those without disability, and are a resource that is just going to waste.”

“Employing a person with a disability brings a wealth of experience by that person being a support for anyone with a disability within the organisation. It breaks down barriers and no matter what the disability may be.”

Suggested strategies to promote the benefits of employing people with disability included:

- Educate employers via a targeted marketing campaign (television/social media/print media) providing examples of workers across a variety of industries, showing the diversity and value of employing people living with disability
- Have people living with disability share their employment story (including the challenges) via a program such as the 100 Leaders Project³² which showcases the stories of people living with disability
- Showcase businesses employing people living with disability via a national recognition program
- Work with industry associations to explore employment opportunities in different sectors
- Have Government lead by example
- Make work trials a priority.

The ACCI suggests employers alone cannot bear the entire responsibility of increasing workforce participation. They indicate that the current promotion of employing people with disability does not use business language or access business communication networks. The ACCI suggest any attempt to influence employers must be a concerted campaign over a period of four to five years. Access to workshops and networks could also promote further employment of people living with disability e.g. ACCI written publications may be an optimal way of increasing employment outcomes for people living with disability. The use of such measures by Government to gain the understanding of employers is well overdue.

³² JFA Purple Orange (2014) The 100 Leaders project <http://100leaders.org.au/> Access 14/6/15

There is a strong business case in employing workers living with disability. The Diversity Council of Australia³³ highlights employers will need to recruit from a more diverse talent pool in order to meet their workforce needs, and people living with disability represent a largely untapped talent pool. In addition, they add issues of recruitment and retention are becoming even more critical in the context of the ageing of Australia’s labour market.

4.5. How could the disability support system/NDIS better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people living with disability?

Services Businesses Training Unsure
People with Disabilities Mentor
Employment Support Understanding
Job Incentives Support System Assist Workplace

There is currently a lack of coordination and communication among the major services supporting people living with disability in employment. This results in a disjointed outcome for people living with disability. JFA Purple Orange believes a more streamlined approach to supporting people in employment may entail better communication and coordination between support agencies. Communication and collaboration between the NDIS, Disability Employment Support agencies and other job support agencies were the common themes suggested to reduce siloed thinking.

³³ Diversity Council of Australia (2015), *Key Diversity Areas* <http://www.dca.org.au/key-diversity-areas/disability.html> Accessed 3/7/15

Respondents suggested ways to better link disability support services to potential employers, and to encourage NDIS service providers to employ people living with disability:

“I would REALLY like a lot of the disability support system and employment support system to be staffed by people who have lived experience of disability or health issues. There are staff in other sectors who have lived experience and I think that this provides them with a greater understanding of the issues. So instead of seeing someone to be pushed and shoved into a job, they see someone who has certain needs and barriers, and can work to help them overcome them.”

“The NDIS needs to communicate with employment agencies in general so that there is a cross fertilisation of ideas and information about jobs for those with disabilities. Perhaps part of the financial package could be money allocated for courses and any other assistance, as well as money for job training and any other personal support which may be required.”

“NDIS planners need to be optimistic and consider work as a real option for people and not hold them back. The NDIS needs to fund a range of support options and fund properly ... not go with the cheapest option but the most appropriate and long term one.”

“The NDIS need to adequately fund the training for young people transitioning from school, there needs to be an acknowledgement that this isn't a quick fix and for many people they will require regular refresher training and extensive support on the job in the workplace.”

4.6. Australian Disability Enterprises

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) currently employ more than 20,000 individuals living with moderate to severe disability across 192 organisations. Some survey respondents commented on the disadvantages of ADEs as part of the overall system, and felt that ADEs could serve as a barrier to open employment:

“Stop grouping people with disability together; that is one of the biggest reasons why people don't hire people with living with disability. The people that don't understand will think we are all the same and that we are not normal, which is wrong. We are as normal as anyone else.”

“People can get locked into ADEs – then people are labelled. Lowers self-esteem.”

These opinions concur with a recent article: “Though well-intentioned, ADEs can be harmful to a person’s life chances because that person can get trapped into a cycle of very low paid work that dramatically undervalues their potential contribution to Australia’s economy and society.”³⁴

The two main problems cited are that firstly ADEs pay very low wages; and secondly, ADEs provide limited workplace diversity as people living with disability are congregated in a working environment, grouping people on the basis of disability not ability. This environment is not one that normalises employment for people living with disability; segregated environments do not have positive outcomes for people living with disability.

³⁴ Pro Bono Australia (2014), *Aussie Employers Urged to Lift Disability Wages*. <http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2014/12/aussie-employers-urged-lift-disability-wages> accessed 12 June 2015.

Diminishing the value of people living with disability in employment through poor wage conditions traps people in a cycle of poverty which works against them having access to a good life as enjoyed by other members of the community.

This is in contrast to: “Most working Australians [who] are in workplaces that give much stronger opportunities for broader social connection and belonging, and this brings the possibility of a much richer life.”³⁵

Opening up employment to people living with disability beyond that offered by ADEs could create opportunities for increased Material Capital, thereby increasing access to the good things in life enjoyed by other members of the community. According to the ABS, there are more than two million businesses in Australia; of these some 62,000 have 20 or more employees.³⁶ If the top 20,000 of these employed one person currently employed in an ADE, there would no longer be a need for ADEs, and instead, 20,000 Australians living with disability could finally have a chance to earn a living wage.

³⁵ Pro Bono Australia (2014), Ibid

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014), *Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits*
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8165.0>

5. Conclusion

Throughout this consultation JFA Purple Orange heard experiences of discrimination, fear and distrust. Many people living with disability were “treading water” or “getting by”; making difficult life decisions and/or adaptations to their lives in response to the broader social and cultural environments in which they were attempting to participate. JFA Purple Orange believes that currently, employment of people living with disability presents a number of barriers and risks to negotiate. Further, there are a number of disincentives for people living with disability to become employed, such as those arising from the interaction of income support and wages. JFA Purple Orange believes any way forward should involve a multifaceted strategy which works on a number of levels to counteract risks and disincentives.

Based on JFA Purple Orange’s experiences with people living with disability, feedback from the consultation undertaken for this submission, and research evidence, strong leadership, at a number of levels is required to bring about a paradigm shift in opening up genuine waged employment options for people living with disability.

5.1.1. Community leadership

Organisations such as Inclusion Alberta (see example in Section 4.2.1) offer a potent mechanism to model community networking to increase employment options for people living with disability. Organisations involved in such schemes are “early adopters”. They are willing to employ people with diversity, they just need to be linked in with the appropriate networks to do so.

5.1.2. Industry leadership

Employer representative bodies such as industry-specific associations, general business associations and Australia's largest and most representative business association, the ACCI, must endorse and model increased employment of workers from a more diverse talent pool, including people living with disability in order to meet their workforce needs.

5.1.3. Government leadership

Ultimately, the goodwill of community and industry is not sufficient to make wholesale changes to the employment status of people living with disability. The only way to achieve this is by mandating diversity targets in the workforce with penalties such as a universal levy or tax for businesses who fail to meet diversity targets. This, coupled with tax incentives, paid to employers who demonstrate notable practice in advancing employment participation of people living with disability, could ensure increased employment options for people living with disability.

As eloquently stated by one survey respondent:

“Viable and meaningful employment is the pinnacle of integration into the community. The positive value of occupying one's time with an activity that has meaning and therefore facilitates a much higher probability of long term engagement is of immense value to that individual's wellbeing. This is in addition to the monetary value that is brought into their life which also brings stability and contributes significantly to their independence and community viability.... one single outcome provides so much value to not only the individual's life but to the community.”

This is a vision we all need to share.

6. Recommendations

JFA Purple Orange recommends the following based as being supportive of successful employment for people living with disability:

- 1) That the Government establish a levy for employers who do not achieve diversity targets in their workplace, accompanied by tax incentives, paid to employers who demonstrate notable practice in advancing employment participation of people living with disability.
- 2) That the Government implement measures that counteract disincentives and risks associated with loss of the income as a result of the interaction between wages and disability support regulations. Examples could be to extend the period for which people could retain the Pensioner Concession Card after they obtain employment; and a guarantee that the Disability Support Pension would recommence if a person's working hours drops below the 30 hour/ week cut off. These measures may seek to improve material capital for the person living with disability and remove the risks associated with perceived financial disincentives.
- 3) That the Government invest in community initiative schemes in partnership with industry leadership bodies and community or philanthropic bodies interested in advancing employment participation. One example of this is Inclusion Alberta's Rotary Employment Partnership.³⁷

³⁷ <http://www.inclusionalbertainformation.org/partnerships-projects/rotary-employment-partnerships-overview/>

4) That the Government commission an analysis of successful Disability Employment Services, such as Jobsupport³⁸, to identify key features that can then be set as performance measures for all such agencies.

5) That the Government implement an awareness and education campaign directed toward the community, and business (specifically employers, employer networks and industry bodies, using communication methods familiar to the business world) in relation to dispelling stigma about employment of people living with disability, and eliminating discrimination. This campaign should extend over a period of four to five years. Suggested strategies include:

- targeted marketing campaign (television/social media/print media) showing the diversity and value of employing people living with disability
- showcasing people living with disability sharing their employment story
- showcasing businesses via a national recognition program
- working with industry associations to explore employment opportunities in different sectors.

6) That the Government explore options with businesses in the open employment market to decrease the number of people living with disability who are employed in ADEs. If the top 20,000 Australian businesses took on just one person currently employed in an ADE, there would no longer be a need for ADEs, and instead, 20,000 Australians living with disability could finally have a chance to earn a living wage.

³⁸ http://www.jobsupport.org.au/main/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/

7) That funding for disability employment services be commensurate with the capacity to provide ongoing job support for people living with disability who are engaged in employment.

8) That the Government consider the opportunities and options provided through a framework such as The *Model of Citizenship Support*, which employs strategies and actions to facilitate choice, participation and autonomy. The Model provides a comprehensive contextual framework for organising policy and practice in support of improving life chances for people living with disability, including in relation to employment: a living wage increases Material Capital (increased income), Social Capital (increased social opportunities and support), Knowledge Capital (increased knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with living with disability), and Personal Capital (a positive self-view through having a valued role in the community).