Inclusion of People with Disability in VET Cross Sector Project
Environmental Scan

PwC's Skills for Australia
17 January 2018


Executive Summary

People with disability experience significant barriers to economic and social contribution in Australia. Government initiatives and reforms have been driving the case for change, and some supports and programs currently exist to facilitate inclusion. However, more needs to be done to change the attitudes and systems that limit the inclusion of people with disability. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that vocational education and training (VET) plays an important role in furthering the employment opportunities of people with disability, particularly in helping people with disability to get a job, or to get a different job.

What is the current state of participation of people with disability in education, training and employment?

Although a non-homogenous cohort, people with disability struggle to enjoy full and equal participation within education, employment and customer service contexts, due to gaps and limitations that exist across all three areas. In an educational context, research indicates that people with disability have consistently lower rates of education completion across all levels of education, with higher levels of education particularly inaccessible for learners with disability. In an employment context, people with disability are significantly underrepresented in the Australian workforce as a whole. By industry, there are differences in employment participation rates for people with disability compared to those without disability, and continued exclusion from employment for people with disability contributes to ongoing dependency on government support and social services. In a service context, a large cohort of businesses and service providers are passive in their approach towards offering inclusive products and services. This is despite recognition that customers with disability are an important part of the market. Many businesses still do not take initiative in ensuring the goods, services and facilities they offer are accessible for this customer base.

In the broader environmental context, a number of emerging trends are accentuating the case for greater inclusion of people with disability in Australian society. From an economic perspective, these include the changing world of work, rise of flexible work options, increasing casualisation of the workforce, and continued advancements in technology and assistive technologies. From a social perspective, the growing trend towards finding meaningful work and purpose, and the move beyond gender to consider other forms of diversity and inclusion are also driving the need for greater inclusion. As well, the legislative context and recent reforms in the disability sector are creating a context for improved inclusion.

This Environmental Scan seeks to outline: the current state of education and employment for people with disability, challenges and barriers that people with disability face in vocational education and training, employment and customer service contexts, emerging trends driving the need for greater inclusion of people with disability, and the existence of skill gaps and opportunities to improve Australia’s VET system. The insights from this Environmental Scan will inform the recommendations for potential training package development, to be validated through targeted stakeholder consultations in January-March 2018.

What are the challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability in education, employment or customer service contexts?

For the individual with disability, there are a multitude of challenges and barriers that they face that hinder their inclusion in education, employment and customer service contexts. These are well documented in research and were consistently raised in stakeholder consultations. For example:

- VET learners with disability often have additional support and learning needs but face a barrier with education and training systems that cannot: accommodate flexibility in learning needs, implement reasonable adjustments, improve accessibility, offer flexibility in course structure and hours, or flexibility in assessment requirements;
- VET learners and employees with disability are often reluctant to disclose their disability, often due to fear of discrimination. For those who do disclose, supports and adjustments are often inadequate, unsatisfactory, of variable quality, or fail to take into account the changing needs of the individual for their continued support and inclusion in education or employment. Inadequate awareness of, and
access to, supports and funding available for students and employees with disability are a large factor causing shortfalls in meeting their needs;

- People with disability often encounter unconscious bias and discrimination as a result of negative attitudes or misconceptions about the capabilities of a person with disability. Biases, misunderstandings, systems and structures that preclude equal accessibility exist within education, recruitment and employment, and customer service; and
- People with disability seeking service or support often need additional specialist support, sometimes as a result of comorbidities with other conditions. For these individuals, the challenge of accessing connected, tailored support often precludes their inclusion.

It is clear that there are a multitude of factors that impede inclusion of people with disability in education, employment and customer service contexts. Overwhelmingly, research and consultations conducted by PwC’s Skills for Australia highlight three key issues:

1. Low levels of awareness and understanding of what disability is and its impacts;
2. Low levels of awareness and understanding of what resources are available and different strategies for how to support people with disability; and
3. Poor implementation of accessibility and inclusion in practice, contributing to often unintended exclusion of people with disability.

Issues and opportunities to address skill gaps of VET educators, employers and service providers and possible training package implications

Table 1 below outlines these further, exploring the barriers from the perspective of VET practitioners, employers and service providers, possibilities to address identified skill gaps, and preliminary implications for training package components.

Possible recommendations for training package development identified at this stage are summarised below, with further detail included in Table 1:

1. Potential general common units that can be implemented across many industries covering: understanding of disability; resources and support available for assisting in improving inclusion; opportunities and strategies for providing support and adjustment.
2. Potential units to implement in specific training packages relevant to vocational trainers, employers or service providers covering: implementation of support and adjustment; the need for and benefits of inclusion.
3. Reviewing existing training package components to identify existing content that can be leveraged across other training packages.
4. Potential opportunities to update guidelines for unit structure or accompanying material, such as Companion Volume Implementation Guides.
5. Reviewing training package offerings and opportunities within: foundation and employability skills courses; lower level courses; specific training for disability service providers.

Further targeted stakeholder consultations will be necessary to refine potential training package development, including consultation with Industry Reference Committees (IRCs), and this is being planned for January-March 2018.
Table 1. Skill gaps, opportunities and potential training package implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill and knowledge gaps by pillar</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Potential common units and other training package implications</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… <strong>VET practitioners</strong>, who generally lack skills and knowledge in their:</td>
<td>These skill and knowledge gaps create a number of opportunities to address the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of disability:</td>
<td>Potential common units in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● awareness and understanding of different disabilities and their manifestations;</td>
<td>● Opportunity to build disability awareness, understanding of different types of disability and manifestations, and different learner needs that arise as a result.</td>
<td>● Awareness of, understanding and identification of disability, types of disability and its manifestations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● awareness and understanding of the impacts of disabilities on learning needs;</td>
<td>● Opportunity to build awareness and understanding of available resources and support that facilitate inclusion of people with disability in a VET context.</td>
<td>● awareness and understanding of different learning needs (could be specific to people with disability or more general);</td>
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<tr>
<td>● awareness and understanding of what resources and support are available to facilitate inclusion of people with disability in VET; and</td>
<td>● Opportunity to build awareness and understanding of the benefits of fostering more inclusive and accessible environments for people with disability in VET.</td>
<td>● awareness and understanding of different resources and support available to foster greater inclusion of people with disability in VET; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● awareness and understanding of the benefits of fostering inclusive and accessible learning environments for people with disability in a VET context.</td>
<td>● Opportunity to shift attitudes and mindsets towards the inclusion of people with disability in VET.</td>
<td>● awareness and understanding of the importance of inclusive and accessible learning environments, including legal obligations and standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potential other training package implications:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Review existing training package components to leverage what already exists that aligns with the above and/or to minimise duplication and overlap.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Consider whether there is industry support for trainer-specific training package components, beyond those generally industry applicable (e.g., units, skill sets or qualifications in the TAE Training Package).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skill and knowledge gaps by pillar

**... employers, who:**
- generally lack similar skills and knowledge as described above for VET practitioners. This can foster negative attitudes and encourage bias in hiring and recruitment practices, culture or behaviours in the workplace.

**... service providers, who:**
- generally lack similar skills and knowledge as described above for VET practitioners and employers above. This often contributes to misunderstanding or misinterpreting the needs of customers with disability and therefore impacts quality of service provision.

### Opportunities

- Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a workplace context.
- Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a service provision context.

### Potential common units and other training package implications

- Potential common units:
  - As above, regarding review of existing training package components.

**... VET practitioners, who** generally lack skills and knowledge in their:
- ability to identify and implement reasonable adjustments and supports for learners with disability;
- ability to create inclusive learning environments and learning materials;
- ability to communicate about and with people with disability about their needs; and

These skill and knowledge gaps create a number of opportunities to address the ‘how’ of disability:
- Opportunity to build skills and knowledge in identifying, implementing and evaluating reasonable adjustments (including use of universal design principles and assistive technologies).

Potential common units in:
- designing inclusive and accessible learning environments, materials and assessments (universal design principles);
- identifying opportunities and/or strategies to introduce reasonable adjustments;
- implementing and evaluating reasonable adjustments in a VET context in response to learner needs;
- communicating with people with disability and about their needs (content could include skills in empathy, respect, advocacy, resilience, and active listening, or frameworks for behavioural or mindset change);
<table>
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<th>Potential common units and other training package implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● ability to identify when and how</td>
<td>● Opportunity to build skills and knowledge in how to</td>
<td>● researching about available resources, funding and supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>(and who) to refer to additional</td>
<td>communicate and interact with people with disability</td>
<td>that exist to facilitate inclusion and support of people with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or specialist support services.</td>
<td>(and about people with disability) about their</td>
<td>disability (and where, who and how to access these);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This often contributes to a lack of</td>
<td>additional support needs.</td>
<td>● knowing when, how and who to respond or refer when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarity about the role of the VET</td>
<td>● Opportunity to build skills and knowledge in</td>
<td>additional or specialist support is needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>practitioner in supporting learners</td>
<td>responding to additional support needs that arise</td>
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<tr>
<td>with disability and to misconceptions</td>
<td>because of a disability activity limitation, including</td>
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<tr>
<td>about the burden on VET practitioner</td>
<td>skills and knowledge of when and how to refer to</td>
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<td>time and resources.</td>
<td>specialist support.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Potential other training package implications:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Review existing training package components to leverage</td>
<td>● Consider introducing more guidance in Companion Volume</td>
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<td>what already exists that aligns with the above and/or to</td>
<td>Implementation Guides on reasonable adjustments and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>minimise duplication and overlap; and</td>
<td>inherent course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Consider introducing more guidance in Companion Volume</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implementation Guides on reasonable adjustments and</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>inherent course requirements.</td>
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</table>

... employers, who:
● generally lack similar skills and knowledge as described above for VET practitioners. This often contributes to low levels of ‘disability confidence’ amongst employers and perpetuates barriers in hiring and recruitment processes and in the workplace.

Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a workplace context.

Potential common units:
● Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a workplace context; and
● Designing, introducing and evaluating organisational systems, processes and policies that support inclusion of people with disability in the workplace (for team leader / manager level across multiple industries).

Potential other training package implications:
● As above, regarding review of existing training package components; and
● Consider specific training in job redesign and job re-definition to support inclusion of people with disability in the workplace (could be specific to Human Resources professionals or for team leader / manager level roles across multiple industries).
<table>
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<th>Potential common units and other training package implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>... service providers</strong>, who:</td>
<td>Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a service provision context.</td>
<td><strong>Potential common units:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Similar to those outlined for VET practitioners above but for a service provision context; and&lt;br&gt;● Designing for, introducing and evaluating inclusion and accessibility in service provision (includes consideration of customer experience, physical premises, and product/service design).&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Potential other training package implications:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● As above, regarding review of existing training package components; and&lt;br&gt;● Consider specific training for disability support and customer service providers to cater to more severe disabilities or disabilities that require specialist support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● generally lack similar skills and knowledge as described above for VET practitioners. This often contributes to lack of clarity about how to communicate with customers with disability and about linkages to other specialist providers designed to support people with disability.</td>
<td><strong>... service providers</strong>, who:</td>
<td><strong>... VET practitioners, employers and service providers alike</strong>, who generally lack skills and knowledge in their:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● ability to identify opportunities for making changes or reasonable adjustments in the: delivery of education, creation of jobs, or provision of services; to promote equal access for people with disability.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● ability to implement changes and reasonable adjustments, based on identified opportunities for improved inclusivity. within; physical facilities and premises, learning materials and assessment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Across the three pillars, these skill and knowledge gaps create a number of opportunities to promote better and more consistent inclusion of people with disability:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Opportunity to shift attitudes and mindsets towards people with disability and to promote ongoing and active inclusion of people with disability.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Opportunity to review supporting structures and infrastructure to incentivise the inclusion of people with disability.</td>
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<td>● Opportunity to make system-wide improvements</td>
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<td><strong>Potential common units in:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Applying universal design principles to different contexts; and&lt;br&gt;● Implementation of established, individualised disability support programs to promote inclusion of people with disability in education, training, the workplace or service contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Coaching and mentoring to promote inclusive mindsets, behaviours and habits in education, training, the workplace and service contexts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Potential other training package implications:</strong>&lt;br&gt;● Review existing training package material and introduce guidelines to remove exclusionary language in training package components;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill and knowledge gaps by pillar</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>formats (for VET practitioners), recruitment and other organisational policies and processes (for employers), and customer service practices (for service providers)</td>
<td>to Australia’s VET system to better meet the needs of people with disability and grow their capabilities.</td>
<td>● Review existing training package components for opportunities to improve accessibility through changes to unit structure or accompanying material. This could range from providing quality assurance lists with additional guidance relating to how to adequately assess the equity implications of a unit, through to including an optional section in the unit template for unit author’s to consider reasonable adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Ability to monitor and evaluate adjustments and accessibility implementations on an ongoing basis to ensure inclusivity for people with disability is successfully achieved and maintained.</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Consider building stronger linkages to foundation and employability skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For VET practitioners, this contributes to inadequacies in how VET practitioners make adjustments to learning environments, training and assessment materials and formats, and education delivery for learners with disability.</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Review existing training package structure and consider foundation skills courses and other lower level courses (nominal Certificate I and II) that can provide a pathway for learners with disability into VET.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For employers, this contributes to inadequacies amongst employers in implementing accessible recruitment practices, job roles, and work environments.</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Develop specific training for disability support workers to build capability, help address quality concerns, and cater to those with more severe forms of disability or activity limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For service providers, this contributes to inadequacies in addressing and minimising accessibility barriers for people with disability in a customer service context.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The above are extensive undertakings and would require considerable consultation with industry and other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implications outside the scope of training package improvements are covered in section 6.3.</td>
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Background

Australians with a disability experience diminished education and employment outcomes when compared to those without a disability. Just over half of working age Australians with a disability are in the labour workforce, a participation rate significantly lower than that for people who do not have a disability.\(^1\) This figure is exacerbated by poor rates of participation in education and training; people with disability are more likely to complete lower level qualifications and are more likely to remain without employment one year after graduation.\(^2\)

About the ‘Inclusion of People with Disability in VET’ cross sector project

The Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) is seeking to strategically redress and enhance the inclusion of people with disability in education and employment. This cross sector project - *Inclusion of People with Disability in VET* - aims to develop training package components that address current skill and knowledge gaps amongst vocational education and training (VET) practitioners, employers and service providers across multiple industries, with the intention to facilitate enhanced inclusion of people with disability.

There are three primary pillars to the *Inclusion of People with Disability in VET* cross sector project:

1. Skills and knowledge required of VET practitioners to better include people with disability in vocational education and training, including potential improvements to the Training and Education (TAE) Training Package;
2. Skills and knowledge required of employers to better include people with disability in workplaces across multiple industry sectors; and
3. Skills and knowledge required of service providers to better support people with disability across multiple industry sectors.

This cross sector project involves an Environmental Scan (this document), targeted stakeholder consultations, identification of skills and knowledge to inform training product development, and development of new training product/s that can be used across multiple industries. The final deliverable is a Case for Endorsement, to be submitted to the AISC in July 2018, which articulates the proposed training package changes. Expected outcomes of this cross sector project include improved flexibility in the Australian vocational system, enhanced occupational mobility and improved accessibility for people with disability in education and employment.

About the Environmental Scan

Prepared with assistance from the Project Reference Group (PRG),\(^3\) this Environmental Scan outlines the current state of inclusion of people with disability in Australia, with a particular focus on the barriers or challenges they face in education and training, employment and service provision contexts. It presents an evidence base from desktop research, preliminary stakeholder consultations, a review of existing data on workforce trends, Industry Skills Forecasts and existing training package components. Where relevant, we have included “spotlights” to highlight programs and initiatives that employers, training providers, and service providers, domestically and internationally, have implemented that have relevance to this cross sector project.

Insights from the Environmental Scan will inform recommendations for potential training product development and will form the basis for targeted, hypothesis-led consultations in January-March 2018. Key sections of the Environmental Scan are:

### Section 1: Current state assessment

This section aims to answer: What is the place of people with disability within society, what is the need to promote better integration for this group, and what are the benefits of improving inclusion of people with disability within society? What is the current state of participation of people with disability in an educational, employment, and customer service context?

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\(^1\) ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015, Cat. No. 4430.0

\(^2\) ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015, Cat. No. 4430.0

\(^3\) Refer to Appendix B for a listing of current Project Reference Group members for the Inclusion of People with Disability in VET cross sector project.
Section 2: Key emerging themes and trends This section aims to answer: What trends have been identified in Australia that will impact skill needs and potential opportunities for change?

Sections 3 to 5: Identified challenges and barriers for the inclusion of people with disability in education and training (Section 3), employment (Section 4), and customer service (Section 5) These sections aim to answer: What are the barriers and issues that hinder people with disability from enjoying full participation in education and employment, and accessing the services they need?

Section 6: Implications for future skills needs and training product development This section aims to answer: What opportunities exist to develop skills and knowledge across the three key pillars to promote integration and inclusion of people with disability? What possible opportunities for training product reform exist? This section also outlines opportunities that will support the broader intent of this cross sector project but fall outside the scope of this undertaking.
1 Current state assessment

This section of the Environmental Scan provides a snapshot of the current state of inclusion of people with disability in education and employment in Australia. There are numerous pieces of legislation, new pilot programs and initiatives, and a growing body of evidence both here and internationally that support improved inclusion of people with disability in Australia. There are multiple benefits of inclusion at the individual, organisational, and broader economic level, yet it is clear that there is significant opportunity to improve the inclusion of people with disability in Australia.

1.1 Adopting the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 definition of disability

For the purposes of this cross sector project, disability is defined according to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (‘DDA’ or ‘the Act’). The Act stipulates that:

“disability, in relation to a person, means; a total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or total or partial loss of a part of the body; or the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that: presently exists; or previously existed but no longer exists; or may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or is imputed to a person.”

Other definitions of disability also note the breadth of different types of disability (e.g., covering intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory, physical or psychiatric conditions); and the concept of ‘imputed disability’. An imputed disability arises when there may not be a formal disability diagnosis, however, another party has judged under a reasonable basis that a condition likely exists.

This cross sector project considers different types of disability, including imputed disability, late onset disabilities, and mental illness (separate and distinct from intellectual disability).

The vocational education, employment and customer service contexts referred to in this report cover:

1. Vocational education and training contexts - delivery of nationally accredited training and education courses in industry and technical skills through registered training organisations.
2. Employment contexts - participation in paid work roles within organisations and encapsulates positions of varying scope, responsibility and hours across many industries.
3. Customer service contexts - access to customer service on a broader scale, including service providers used by the general population (e.g. banking and retail services), but also including disability specific services (such as Disability Employment Services). Encapsulates product and service offerings, as well as the service environment and customer service assistants.

5 National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013, s 24. Other useful definitions identified include those issued by the ‘NCVER Researching VET and Disability’ and ‘World Health Organisation’.
1.2 Why the inclusion of people with disability is important

1.2.1 The place of people with disability within society

People with disability have an important contribution to make to society. People with disability have the right to be treated with fairness and dignity, and to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all other members of Australian society. Many have an unrealised potential to bring value and be of benefit to the Australian nation. More effective inclusion of people with disability in the community is beneficial to the individual, as well as society as a whole, allowing individuals to pursue goals and contribute to the community, rather than being forced into a state of dependency.

However, current social structures and attitudes continue to pose a challenge to the inclusion of people with disability within society. People with disability often experience being ‘shut-out’ and perpetually isolated from the economy and society. Inaccessible education and training, exclusion in the workforce, and a lack of consideration for the different needs people with disability have as consumers are three ways in which people with disability are precluded from full integration into the activities of wider society.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of people with disability, and has introduced strategies aimed at promoting and supporting the rights of people with disability to be fully included in society. The Australian Government has introduced strategies and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion and support for people with disability in society. Examples include, but are not limited to:


2. The National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2010-2020: plays a role in ensuring the principles of the CRPD are upheld through government policies and programs. The NDS covers six key areas: inclusive and accessible communities; rights protection, justice and legislation; economic security; personal and community support; learning and skills; and health and wellbeing.

3. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS): established as a vehicle for achieving the objectives of the CRPD and NDS. The NDIS supports participants in achieving personal goals in relation to independence, community involvement, education and employment. It puts purchasing power back in the hands of the consumer, giving them control over what services and providers they utilise. The NDIS recognises that the person most equipped to make decisions about the needs and suitable supports for a person with disability is the individual themselves.

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Spotlight on the National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy has four key policy directions related to education:

1. To strengthen the capability of all education providers to deliver inclusive educational programs
2. To reduce the disparity in educational outcomes for people with a disability compared to others
3. To ensure government reforms/initiatives for education, training and skill development are responsive to needs of people with disability
4. To improve the pathways for students with disability from school to further education and employment

Additionally, a number of environmental factors continue to drive the need for greater social inclusion and opportunity for people with disability.

- An ageing population means that the ratio of people in the workforce compared to people not working in Australia is dropping. By 2050, there will be only 2.7 people of working age for every person aged 65 or over, as compared to 5 people today.\(^\text{13}\) This will put pressure on the Australian economy, and presents a strong need to grow the Australian workforce. People with disability present a strong opportunity to further build the workforce as a proportion of Australian society.
- A global increase in chronic health conditions has contributed to rising disability prevalence rates\(^\text{14}\) and, relatedly, an increased emphasis on health, wellbeing and support.
- The move towards more flexible ways of working within many industries opens up more possibilities for people with disability to find work positions suiting their needs and capabilities.
- Advancements in assistive technologies are creating more opportunities for people with disability to harness their capabilities and successfully undertake education or fulfil employment roles.
- Changes to Commonwealth and State/Territory policy are instigating reform in the disability support and service industry.\(^\text{15}\) Regulatory and initiative changes seek to improve support offered to people with disability, and promote more opportunities for inclusion within society.

Section 2 of this report explores these factors further, and outlines key emerging trends driving the need for greater inclusion of people with disability.

Still, much more needs to be done to effectively include people with disability in Australia. Despite the existence of numerous legislative instruments, policies and initiatives, there are still gaps in the provision of support to people with disability in Australia. For example, large geographic gaps where accessible services and disability agencies are lacking still persist, especially in some remote areas of Australia.\(^\text{16}\) Social exclusion and discrimination still persist and need to be addressed for the betterment of the lives of people with disability and wider Australian society. Changes in attitudes and systems throughout the entirety of Australia are needed to ensure full integration and inclusion.\(^\text{17}\)

### 1.3 Benefits of including people with disability in education, training and the workforce

The inclusion of people with disability in education, the workforce, and as recipients of customer service, has positive implications for the individual, employers, and the broader Australian economy as a whole.

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\(^{14}\) Thompson S, Disability prevalence and trends, 25 August 2017

\(^{15}\) Skills IQ, Client Services Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work


Benefits to the individual
Education and training promotes a sense of self-worth, wellbeing, independence, work opportunities and social connectedness.
Participation in and completion of education and training is an important aspect of social inclusion. Education promotes self-worth, a sense of purpose and achievement; skilling a person with disability to be job-ready; and creating opportunities for community involvement and integration.

Vocational education and training is particularly beneficial for helping people with disability find employment opportunities.
The completion of VET qualifications can assist people with disability to find employment by signalling to employers that the individual has industry-relevant skills, a good work capacity and ethic, and the requisite level of ability and motivation required of an employee.\(^\text{18}\) Vocational education has added benefits beyond the development of industry ‘hard skills’, also building widely beneficial employability ‘soft skills’ such as communication and time management.\(^\text{19}\) VET is particularly beneficial for individuals who have experienced the onset of a disability during their career and, as a result of the impact to their skills and/or abilities, need to retrain in order to maintain or find new employment.

Inclusion in the workforce is important for promoting social inclusion, individual well being, and improved financial outcomes for the individual with disability.
Benefits stemming from employment also include a sense of self-worth and purpose, well-being, independence (including financial independence) and social connectedness.\(^\text{20}\) In general, people with disability experience decreased financial outcomes, with the average weekly income for working-age people with disability just $344, almost half the $671 average for people without disability.\(^\text{21}\) Lower inclusion in the workforce, along with extended reliance on welfare, can lead to social exclusion and a higher risk of poverty.\(^\text{22}\) Those who are unemployed report poorer life satisfaction, and health outcomes.\(^\text{23}\)

Benefits to employers
People with disability often have work capabilities and productivity levels that exceed the expectations of most employers.
A common misconception amongst employers is that employees with disability will underperform.\(^\text{24}\) However, research indicates that people with disability have a strong work ethic, with high productivity and loyalty, and lower absenteeism and turnover, leading to reduced hiring and training costs.\(^\text{25}\) In a 2016 survey, 90 percent of employees with a disability recorded productivity levels equal to or higher than other employees, and 86 percent have equal or greater attendance records.\(^\text{26}\) It was found that work capabilities often exceed expectations, particularly for employees with an intellectual disability.

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Employers report positive experiences from the inclusion of people with disability in the workplace and a high proportion are likely to continue to hire from this talent pool. Employers who have previously hired employees with disabilities found the working relationship to be positive and suggested that they intend to continue to employ people with disability in the future. Furthermore, over 90 percent of employers surveyed expressed a desire to continue to source employees from this group. This demonstrates that people with a disability can be relied upon and that they can contribute meaningfully to a variety of workplaces.

Additionally, inclusion of people with disability in the workplace has positive outcomes for organisations, extending beyond the individual's work capability. Employing people with disability can enhance corporate reputation and brand image. This can attract other talent, particularly from younger generations that are drawn to work in values-driven organisations that foster diversity and inclusion. Inclusive employment can also enhance competitive advantage, and customer satisfaction and loyalty, with an improved community perception of the company and its brand values. Furthermore, by employing people with disability, an organisation makes itself more accessible and relevant to (and thus more competitive in) customer markets consisting of people with disability.

Employers also stand to benefit substantially from including people with disability in their workforces through access to a broader talent pool, improved staff engagement and morale, and promotion of a more innovative workplace culture.

Benefits to Australia’s economy
Improving the inclusion of people with disability in education and the workforce has positive implications for Australia’s gross domestic product.

The Australian economy stands to benefit from increased participation of people with disability in training and employment. A 2011 PricewaterhouseCoopers report estimated that $50 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) could be added to Australia’s economy by 2050 if Australia became one of the top eight Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in terms of employment of people with disability.

Further benefits to GDP stem from raising the capacity of carers to participate in the workforce, by promoting stronger independence of people with disability.

Increased employment of individuals with disability would reduce national expenditure on welfare. The NDS Consultation Paper confirmed that people with disability want to work, reduce their dependency on the Disability Support Pension (DSP), and achieve financial independence, but current barriers restrict them from achieving employment. The DSP cost an estimated $13.8 billion in FY 2011/12, representing around 1 percent of Australia’s GDP. Supporting employment opportunities for people with disability would have a

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strong fiscal benefit in terms of reducing government expenditure on disability supports, promoting budgetary savings and the redirection of taxpayer funds into other areas of social need.\textsuperscript{37}

Failing to promote the accessibility of training and employment for people with disability will come at a social and economic cost to Australia. The cost, socially and economically, of inaction is high if Australia fails to implement change in the promotion of the inclusion of people with disability in education and the workforce. These costs include: loss of potential taxpayer income from employment of people with disability and their carers, the expense of ongoing hospital admissions and medical attention due to poor wellness outcomes for people with disability, continued expenditure on provision of social housing, and government funds being spent on incarceration of people with disability in the justice system.\textsuperscript{38}

1.4 The prevalence of disability in Australia

A key challenge to understanding the current state of disability in Australia is that current data relies on self-reported and/or medically diagnosed disclosure of disability. Due to the stigma often associated with disability, as well as a variety of other factors, many individuals choose not to disclose their disability, which means that prevalence rates reported in this section may be lower as a factor of under-reporting. For example, the Business Council of Australia (BCA) Recognising Ability survey indicated that 65 percent of employers do not ask if an applicant has a disability during the recruitment process, and only 44 percent of employers keep a record of the disability status of their employees within their human resource systems.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, the data reported in this section of the report give insights into the current state of support and inclusion of people with disability in education and employment.

People with disability represent an important and diverse cohort in Australian society, with prevalence of disability varying by type of disability, degree of limitation and geographic location. Across the nation, 18.3 percent of people reported disability in 2015 (4.3 million people).\textsuperscript{40} Figure 1 below depicts an overview of self-disclosed disability characteristics, indicating that the majority of people with disability have a physical condition, and 86 percent of people with disability report experiencing some degree of restriction or limitation in undertaking everyday activities.

\textsuperscript{37} Deloitte Access Economics, \textit{The economic benefits of increasing employment for people with disability} (August 2011) \url{https://www2.deloitte.com/au/}.


The Australian Network on Disability offers a snapshot of the prevalence of a selection of types of impairments within Australian society:

- One in six Australians experience some form of hearing loss
- More than 350,000 Australians have a vision impairment
- Approximately 10 percent of the population has dyslexia
- An estimated 45 percent of the population will experience mental illness at some point in their life

Table 2 below depicts the prevalence rates of different levels of disability activity limitations and restrictions. Consideration of level of limitation or restriction has implications for determining to what extent an individual with disability may require additional supports in an education, employment or service context.

### Table 2. Prevalence rates of different types of restrictions and limitations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability status</th>
<th>Proportion (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total core activity limitation</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schooling or employment restriction</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific restrictions</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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41 Cunningham I et al, *Issues and trends for learners with disability* (NCSEHE, 2016) [https://www.nesehe.edu.au/].
Without specific restrictions 2.5

All with disability 18.5

No disability 81.5

Total 100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015

Table 3 below shows the variability in disability prevalence rates by geographic location. It is relevant to note that the states with the highest numbers of individuals reporting disability (Tasmania and South Australia) also have the oldest population distributions, highlighting the correlation between disability incidence and age.

**Table 3. Disability prevalence by State/Territory and geographic remoteness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory of Usual Residence</th>
<th>Estimates (‘ooo’)</th>
<th>Proportion of State/Territory population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>1329.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1000.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>781.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>335.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>382.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>113.9</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Australia</strong></td>
<td><strong>4026.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Remoteness</th>
<th>Estimates (‘ooo’)</th>
<th>Proportion of State/Territory population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major cities</td>
<td>2699.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner regional Australia</td>
<td>981.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer regional and remote Australia</td>
<td>435.5</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Australia</strong></td>
<td><strong>4026.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015
Disability rates vary globally, with Australia’s rate of disability sitting above the global average, despite being a developed nation.

The World Health Organisation 2011 estimate of the global disability prevalence rate was 15 percent. Disability prevalence was higher globally for women, and was positively correlated to population age, with worldwide rates estimated at 12 percent for working age adults and 39 percent for the elderly. In a United Kingdom report on disability prevalence and trends, a range of factors were identified that influence prevalence rates worldwide. These are outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Factors influencing disability prevalence rates worldwide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| National prosperity/income    | ● Lower income countries were found to have higher disability rates than higher income nations.  
                                | ● Poorer countries and populations were found to be at greater risk of ill health and injury, have higher exposure to unsanitary or low standard housing, experience higher malnourishment and sanitation issues, have lessened access to medical care to prevent disability, and live and work in more unsafe or violent environments. |
| Chronic health conditions     | ● A global increase in chronic health conditions has contributed to a rising disability prevalence rate. |
| Conflict and war              | ● Countries with higher incidence of conflict were found to have higher disability rates due to sustained injuries and trauma. |
| Environment factors           | ● Natural disasters have been shown to increase disability prevalence rates.  
                                | ● Countries with higher incidence of road traffic crashes have also been linked to higher disability rates. |
| Substance abuse and mental illness | ● Global upward trends in areas of mental illness and substance use disorders have contributed to an increase in disability prevalence. |

Source: Thompson S, Disability prevalence and trends, 25 August 2017

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PwC’s Skills for Australia  | Page 13
1.5 Current inclusion of people with disability in education and training

1.5.1 Education completion rates for people with disability

Education completion rates are significantly lower for learners with disability across most education sectors, compared to learners without disability.

There is a significant gap between learners with and without disability in terms of completion of Year 12, vocational education, or university courses.\(^{45}\) In 2015, 41 percent of working age people with disability reported Year 12 as their highest level of education attained, an increase from 35.6 percent in 2012. Furthermore, 17.0 percent reported completing a Bachelor Degree or above, compared to 30.1 percent of people without disability.

People with disability are more likely to enrol in lower level qualifications, particularly Certificate I level qualifications, as shown in Figure 2 below.\(^{46}\) This is consistent with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), indicating people with disability are more likely to attain a Certificate level qualification than people without disability (28.4 percent compared to 22.5 percent).\(^{47}\)

Insights from stakeholder consultations

Anecdotally, training organisations that were consulted for this Environmental Scan noted that people with disability often need to complete Certificate I or II courses, including literacy and numeracy courses, as pre-entry to VET. We heard from one training provider that they have had a few learners with disability want to re-enrol in the same course after completion, to cement their learnings.

Figure 2. Highest level of education undertaken for learners with disability

![Proportion of students with a disability by major qualification level undertaken (2016)](source)

Source: TVA program enrollments 2014 -2016, NCVER

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\(^{46}\) Griffin T & Beddie F, Researching VET and disability; at a glance (NCVER, 2011) [https://www.ncver.edu.au/].

1.5.2 People with disability in vocational education and training

People with disability are an important subset of all those enrolled in VET.
As a snapshot, of the 804,700 learners reported as enrolled in government funded VET in June 2017, approximately 9.5 percent (or 76,800 people), identified as being a learner with a disability.\(^{48}\) It is important to note that, in line with Section 1.4, it is likely that the VET sector would also experience an under-reporting of disability prevalence rates, due to reliance on student disclosure of disability. Table 5 below shows the breakdown of VET learners with disability by state/territory.

Table 5. Learners with disability enrolled in government funded VET by state/territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Number of learners with disability enrolled in government funded VET</th>
<th>As a proportion of total enrolments (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>31,600</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>24,400</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>9,100</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The impact of disadvantage on VET completion and employment gaps, NCVER 2016

People with disability in VET tend to enrol in similar areas of study to people without disability, with a few key differences.
As demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4 below, the proportions of people with versus without disability in VET by field of education are very similar, with a few exceptions. Notably, a higher proportion of VET learners with disability are enrolled in Mixed Field Programmes (which provide general and personal development education and include literacy and numeracy skills; personal, social and workplace relationship skills); information technology; and creative arts, society and culture. In contrast, a lower proportion of VET learners with disability are enrolled in management and commerce; engineering and related technologies; architecture and building. Although this data only presents a snapshot, it highlights the need to look across multiple industries to better understand factors contributing to differences in enrolments.


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VET learners with disability are a non-homogenous group and have different learning needs. In terms of types of disability, the most common disability reported by VET learners was a medical condition, followed by learning disability and then physical disability.49 Perhaps relatedly, people with disability were also found to take longer to complete their VET studies.50

Insights from stakeholder consultations

Anecdotally, several of the training organisations that were consulted for this Environmental Scan had additionally noted a rise in self-disclosure of mental health issues by VET learners in the last few years and comorbidities with other disabilities. With regard to longer completion times, training providers commented that VET learners with disability need additional time to learn and relearn content, practice skills more times before they can demonstrate competence according to training package assessment criteria, and may need time away from attending classes due to illness or for reasons directly related to their disability.

Despite enrolling in similar VET courses, learners with disability are less likely to complete their course compared to learners without disability. Additionally, completion rates are lower for learners with multiple disabilities or mental disability, compared to those with other types of disability. VET learners with disability have a course completion gap on average 4 percent lower than the overall rate (26 percent). However, completion rates vary largely with disability type; learners with multiple medical conditions or a mental impairment report the lowest completion rates (16.5 percent and 17.5 percent respectively), whereas those with a sensory disability report a higher completion rate, over 24%. Learners with mental illness in particular were identified as having the lowest rates of VET course completion.

Insights from stakeholder consultations

Although anecdotal, some training providers that were consulted for the Environmental Scan posited that this could be for multiple reasons, including: a lack of adequate support from teacher aides; inflexibility in course schedules, which meant that learners with disability might have to skip classes due to illness or other reasons related to their disability; or exclusionary course material or instructional design, which meant that learners with disability received course content later than others (e.g. if course content included video footage, learners with a visual or auditory disability would have to wait for the footage to go through copyright before it could be augmented and adapted). One training provider commented that discriminatory language and inflexibility in assessment criteria meant that some trainers might prefer to encourage learners with disability to learn the course content without completing the assessment.

1.5.3 International comparison for inclusion of people with disability in education

Internationally, many countries are taking steps to redress the education gap for people with disability. Some nations with higher rates of people with disability participating in education have a strong democratic government focus on ensuring that education is accessible to all; these give an indication of possible levers for successful inclusion of people with disability in education. For example:

- **Sweden** has succeeded in almost completely eliminating variances in access to education for disadvantaged groups. Recently prioritising students with special needs, the country ensures that all levels of education are accessible, promoting equal opportunities in learning and employment for all. This demonstrates that an active approach to removing barriers to education for people with disability is necessary to effect real change in vocational education.

- A study undertaken in the **United States** outlined that successful inclusion of people with disability in training and education is dependent on stakeholders perceiving the opportunities that lie within diversity, and being adequately incentivised to emphasise inclusion. Education and preparation of
teachers, investment in flexible and accessible learning environments, and building capabilities to assess and identify learning needs without necessarily labelling students, were all identified as key factors in ensuring people with disability can be effectively included in mainstream education settings.

- The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) is a Canadian advocacy organisation with the mission to promote full equal access for students with disability to tertiary education and employment opportunities. Student initiated and based on consumer principles, NEADS strives to improve awareness of the need to foster equal access for students with disability, and build inclusivity within all aspects of the education environment.

- The European Youth on the Move Initiative seeks to build awareness of education opportunities for people with disability; remove legal and organisational barriers to education for people with disability; provide necessary training and support for education professionals working with students with disability; and report on resulting education participation rates and outcomes.

- ‘Beauty in All its Forms’ is a joint initiative between Down Syndrome Ireland and the haircare brand ALFAPARF Milano. Introduced as a training and employment program for adults with Down Syndrome in Ireland, the initiative offers participants training coupled with in-salon work experience, to equip them with the skills they need to find long-term employment in the hairdressing industry.

Although not exhaustive, the above examples give an indication of the importance of active government policy, flexibility in training and education and effective preparation of teachers to support more inclusive education environments and drive higher education participation rates.

1.5.4 Current inclusion of disability related materials in VET curriculum

An initial scan of existing units of competency related to areas of disability and provision of support to people with disability was conducted. Details on the process undertaken to conduct this initial scan and examples of existing Units of Competency (UoCs) can be found in Appendix C. In total, 50 potentially relevant UoCs were found across 12 training packages, of which 8 were accredited.

Unsurprisingly, we found that the highest prevalence of disability related units were in the CHC Community Services Training Package, focusing broadly around topics of care and treatment of people with a disability. Similarly, there are many units related to disability access within the CPP Property Services Training Package. This demonstrates that some efforts have been made to produce relevant units surrounding disability in the national training system, but these are largely siloed in two training packages. As this project progresses, it will be important to test whether there is a need for greater emphasis of disability related units that can be used across many other training packages. More specifically, it will be important to determine what current knowledge, capabilities and learning materials exist surrounding topics of inclusion of people with a disability.

1.6 Current participation of people with disability in employment

1.6.1 Employment participation rates for people with disability

People with disability are consistently underrepresented in the Australian workforce. In 2015, there were 2.1 million Australians of working age (15-64 years) with disability. Of these, 1 million were employed and 114,900 were looking for work. In other words, 53.4 percent of working age people with disability were employed.

disability were participating in the workforce, compared to 83.2 percent of people with no disability. This rate of labour force participation for people with disability has remained relatively stable for the last 20 years, with people with disability comprising almost 10 percent of the Australian workforce, compared to 5.3 percent for people without disability. Of those working age Australians, only 27 percent of people with disability are employed full-time, compared to 53.8 percent for those without disability.

A number of factors contribute to lower employment participation rates for people with disability, including discrimination, severity of activity limitation and the existence of any employment restrictions. The Australian Human Rights Commission reports that disability discrimination complaints are the largest complaint category received, and 35 percent of these complaints directly relate to workplace discrimination.

Inclusion in the workforce also varies with severity of limitation. Of the employed working age population with disability, 52.6 percent reported employment restrictions; including limitations in the type of work that can be performed, the need to work fewer hours, additional leave requirements, or requirements for additional equipment, modifications or assistance in order to work. However, only 25 percent of people with profound or severe limitation are included in the labour force, compared to 58.9 percent of people with mild limitation. The participation rate of people with a profound or severe limitation has actually dropped 4.7 percent since 2012, indicating that inclusion of this group has worsened in recent times. People with Down Syndrome, as an example, experience a 95 percent unemployment rate in Australia, with anecdotal evidence indicating a severe lack of job opportunities for this population. Figure 5 below shows the state/territory breakdown of workforce participation of people with profound or severe disability who are of working age.

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Low employment participation contributes to substandard income for people with disability and ongoing dependency on government support and social services. OECD research found that people with disability on average earned only 44 percent of the income of those without disability. Furthermore, people with disability most commonly report government pensions as their main source of income (41.9 percent), followed by a job salary (36.5 percent). Low employment rates have contributed to Australia having one of the highest rates in the OECD of people with disability living in poverty. Research indicates that 45 percent of people with disability in Australia live in or near poverty, doubling the OECD average of 22 percent, and contributing to ongoing dependency on government support and social services.

1.6.2 International comparison for inclusion of people with disability in the workforce

Australia ranks 29th out of 35 OECD countries globally on economic inclusion of people with disability, which further highlights the need for change. Of the 35 member countries in the OECD, Australia has the seventh lowest employment rate for people with disability. In Australia, people with disability are only 50 percent as likely to be employed as people without a disability, compared to the OECD average of 60 percent. For further comparison, among the top eight OECD countries, people with disability are on average 70 percent as likely to be employed as people without a disability. If low rates of inclusion of people with disability in the workforce persist, Australia’s international competitiveness will suffer, along with its ability to fulfil the requirements of the United Nations Convention

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the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that the nation is a signatory to,\textsuperscript{70} which further highlights the need for positive change.

International examples provide learnings for Australia regarding the successful inclusion of people with disability in employment.

- **The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020** outlines the European Union’s intention to provide member states with guidance and support for employing people with disability, including the identification of challenges and implementable solutions. In particular, the strategy will focus on the transition from education to employment for people with disability, and will look to increase the uptake of voluntary workplace diversity and employment initiatives. Although Australia (and many other countries) have developed their own similar strategies, the European Disability Strategy stands out because of its unique focus to connect learners with employment.

- The **United Kingdom Government** committed in October 2016 to halving the nation’s employment gap between people with and without disability, a gap currently sitting at about 32\%\textsuperscript{71} Initiatives the UK Government has instigated to support people with disability in finding and maintaining employment include the ‘Work Choice’ specialist disability employment program, and the Access to Work Scheme; providing funds to cover additional costs people with disability may incur in the course of performing their job roles.

- Countries with high rates of employment of people with disability, such as **Sweden and Denmark**, have an employer-focused approach, working with employers to create more jobs and support their employment of people with disability.\textsuperscript{72}

- **The German government’s national action plan** for implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes a joint initiative between the Federal government, industry representative organisations, unions, employers, training institutes, employment agencies, job centres, integration agencies and disability associations. This initiative will aim to improve vocational training and employment opportunities for people with disability through the nationwide campaign ‘Inklusion Gelingt!’ (‘Inclusion is Successful’). As part of the initiative, integration agencies will look to improve their advisory services for employers and people with disability, and emphasis will be placed on making employers more aware of the capabilities of people with disability as employees.

### 1.6.3 Inclusion of people with disability in the workforce by industry and occupation

There are differences in the inclusion of people with disability in certain industries and occupations, highlighting the need for further cross-industry consultation. As depicted in Figure 6 below, the health care and social assistance; retail; and education and training industries employ the highest proportion of people with disability. More recent data from the Australian Network on Disability reported that the top three industries for employment of people with disability are: IT; healthcare; and manufacturing and engineering.\textsuperscript{73} The accessibility of the IT industry for people with disability is particularly highlighted through findings that 8.5 percent of learners of the ICT Training Package identify as people with disability, as compared to the 5.4 percent average across all training packages.\textsuperscript{74}


\textsuperscript{71} Skirmuntt, M, *The (long) journey to closing the disability employment gap* (Great Place to Work, 31 August 2017) <http://www.greatplacetowork.co.uk/>.


\textsuperscript{74} PwC’s Skills for Australia, *Information and Communications Technology Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work*
As depicted in Figure 6 below, relative to people without disability, there is a slightly higher representation of people with self-reported disability in health care and social assistance; agriculture, forestry and fishing; and administrative and support services industries. In contrast, there is a slightly lower representation of people with self-reported disability in accommodation and food services; professional, scientific and technical services; manufacturing and construction industries.

**Figure 6. Industry comparison of people with and without disability in employment**

![Industry comparison of people with and without disability in employment](source)


Although not evidenced in the ABS data in Figure 6, the BCA survey found that employers with a retail presence were more likely to employ people with disability. The main reason for this was indicated as a corporate perceived need to reflect the community and its diversity. In the same survey, the hospitality and tourism industry also identified people with disability as a key opportunity population to source members of the workforce from. This suggests that industries with a social-facing emphasis, that is, industries where the main focus is interacting with and delivering service to members of society, place higher importance on including staff with disability. This may be due to the desire to convey relevance and corporate social responsibility as a means of competitive distinction. Further research or stakeholder consultation is needed to understand why this might be the case, and whether there are aspects of these working environments that are more supportive of self-disclosure of disability. These variances highlight the importance of cross-industry consultation for this cross sector project.

In terms of occupations, the employment distribution for people with and without disability, across different occupations was found to be relatively similar. As depicted in Figure 7 below, there is a slightly higher representation of people with disability in labourer occupations and machinery operators and drivers, indicating that there is a slightly higher representation of people with a disability in more ‘hands-on’ occupations, and slightly lower representation in more traditionally office type roles (e.g. see employment participation for professional and manager occupations).

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77 SkillsIQ, Tourism Travel and Hospitality Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work.

1.6.4 The impact of VET on employment of people with disability

Although not surprising, disability negatively impacts employment outcomes for VET learners. Given the tendency to complete lower-level qualifications, which have fewer direct pathways to employment, people with disability who complete VET tend to have lowered employment outcomes compared to people without disability. The NCVER VET Student Outcomes 2016-2017 survey found 55.9 percent of learners with disability reported being employed in the labour force one year after completing training, as compared to 79.7 percent for people without disability. However, VET completion does play an important role in furthering employment opportunities.

Employment outcomes for people with disability are higher for those who complete a VET qualification compared to those who do not complete. For people with disability who are out of work, completion of a VET qualification raises their chance of finding employment from 9 percent to 29 percent in the first year following completion. Findings have indicated that VET builds employability skills and increases the chance of finding employment for people with disability to a greater extent than for people without.


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Figure 7. Occupation comparison for people with and without disability.


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Figure 8. Comparison of employment outcomes as a result of VET course completion for people with and without a disability

![Comparison of employment outcomes](image)

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS Total VET Student Outcomes 2016-2017

Following completion of VET studies, learners with disability were more likely to be employed in traditional trades type industries. NCVER surveys of VET student outcomes for 2016-17 indicated that VET graduates with disability were most commonly employed in the following industries following their training: Manufacturing, Construction, Retail trade, Accommodation and food services, and Health care and social assistance. They were least commonly employed in: Electricity, gas, water and waste services; Wholesale trade; Financial and insurance services; and Real estate services.

Figure 9. Occupation comparison for people with and without disability after completing vocational training

![Occupation comparison](image)

Source: NCVER VOCSTATS Total VET Student Outcomes 2016-2017
1.6.5 Existing initiatives and supports for people with disability in VET and employment

There are some existing programs which aim to foster support and inclusion for people with disability in education and the workforce. These are important to consider in the context of the current state in order to determine: what supports currently exist; where they are functioning inadequately or not fulfilling their full potential as intended; and where gaps and opportunities for improvements may exist. A summary is provided below, with further details included in Appendix D.

Requirements for reasonable adjustments in education and employment

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 outline that reasonable adjustments must be made where necessary to ensure that learners with disability are treated to the same standard of education experience. Reasonable adjustment encapsulates inclusive practice (teaching strategies that recognise different types of learners), and universal design (maximising accessibility and usability for learners of all abilities). 83

Reasonable adjustments also need to be implemented in an employment context in order to assist employees with disability in fulfilling their role requirements. In both an education and employment setting, implementing reasonable adjustments involves multiple processes: 84

- Promoting disability disclosure and registration for disability support services
- Assessment of support needs
- Identification of reasonable adjustments and development of a support plan
- Ongoing liaising with staff to facilitate adjustment implementation
- Referral to appropriate supplementary services

Government funded education supports

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training is one resource funded by the government that seeks to improve inclusion of learners with disability in tertiary institutions. The Australian Federal Department of Education and Training funds the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) website. ADCET is an accessible resource that informs and supports disability practitioners, educators and students, advises on inclusive practice, promotes successful undertaking of tertiary education for learners with disability, and encourages accessibility and inclusion improvements within the sector. 85

The Australian Government also introduced the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program to further assist people with disability in accessing and participating in further education, and seeking employment opportunities. NDCOs are based regionally throughout Australia and work with educational institutions, employers and other relevant organisations to reduce barriers to inclusion of people with disability, and facilitate transitions into education, and from education into employment. NDCOs advise and support people with disability in finding post-schooling opportunities, and manage relationships with a variety of stakeholder groups to foster equal access and inclusive practices across many sectors. 86

**Employment support services**

Australia has three main employment services catering to people with disability: jobactive; Disability Employment Services; and Australian Disability Enterprises.87 Disability Employment Services (DES) is of particular relevance to this cross sector project as an example of how to improve open employment outcomes for people with disability. DES provisions include: assisting with job search and applications; resume preparation; support for employee upskilling; disability training for employers; assisting employers in accessing wage subsidies, apprentice wage support, and reasonable adjustment funding; job redesign and workplace modification; and ongoing workplace support.

Australia has 119 DES providers, including both for and not-for-profit organisations.88 DES in particular assists about 3,600 secondary school learners through the School Leavers Employment Scheme, which is funded through the NDIS in order to support young adults leaving school in becoming job ready.89 DES aim to help people with disability find long term, sustainable work. However, only one in three DES participants find and maintain a job for 26 weeks or more.90 It is important to note that the functioning of DES is dependent on State/Territory level differences in implementation models, funding, and the existence of any other concurrent initiatives. For example, in Victoria, Skills and Job Centres operate in competition with DES providers to offer advice on training and careers to VET sector students. Therefore, the success of DES must be judged within the broader State/Territory context, keeping in mind how environmental and funding factors may impact DES outcomes. Changes are being implemented to DES to improve the incentive system for providers, to promote longer-lasting employment outcomes and improved job-to-person matching. DES utilises a Star Ratings system to assess the provider’s relative performance and assist participants in choosing their service provider.

Also of relevance to note is the Work Assist program, formally ‘Job-in-Jeopardy’. The initiative exists to assist people with disability already employed, but struggling in their current role.

**Social enterprises**

Social enterprises are one mechanism effectively utilised in Australia to further support disadvantaged groups and provide them with employment opportunities.

Approximately 20,000 social enterprises exist in Australia, with approximately one quarter being based in Victoria, and 35 percent being established with the primary aim to benefit people with disability. They are mostly small to medium enterprises (SMEs) of less than 200 employees.91 Across Australia, social enterprises employ 20,000 people with disability in a broad range of roles; including gardening, retail, printing and cooking.92

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Spotlight on social enterprises

Nadrasca couples supported employment opportunities with related training and education programs, to help build the skills of people with disability and improve their future mainstream employment opportunities. Nadrasca employs people with an intellectual disability, delivering in-house vocational education courses to complement their practical, work-based experiential learning. Nadrasca recognises that people with intellectual disability have different learning and work needs, benefitting from the expertise and understanding of its employees, who have worked in the disability sector for many years.

Nundah Community Enterprises Co-operative aims to deliver sustainable employment and training opportunities for people with mental illness, learning difficulties, or intellectual disability. The organisation operates a cafe, and a parks and maintenance business, offering jobs to those who have a strong desire to work, but struggle to find employment opportunities due to the pace of their learning. Nundah Co-op was awarded Australia’s best social enterprise in 2015.

Generalist supports and government initiatives

The Australian Government has established several initiatives to supplement the education and training system, and assist Australians in equipping themselves with the right skills to promote career success. Such initiatives have the potential to be utilised by people with disability to enhance their career prospects, especially for those seeking apprenticeships, entering the workforce for the first time, or undergoing career change. Although not exhaustive, examples include:

- The Skilling Australians Fund recognises that traineeships and apprenticeships are generally underutilised as an opportunity to re-skill individuals, including those with disability. A source of resources to promote increased engagement of trainees and apprentices in the workforce.

- The Transition to Work Program focuses on getting young Australians ‘work-ready’ and filling employment skills gaps.

- JobAccess offers help and workplace solutions for people with disability looking for work and it also helps their employers.

- The Industry Specialist Mentoring Program aims to increase retention of individuals in apprenticeship programs.

- The VET In Schools Program offers a number of lower level certificate courses to Year 11 and 12 learners, often with limits in choice and relevance to future career aspirations. These are usually delivered either by: secondary school teachers, who would have specialist skills in the area of disability if their cohort includes learners with disability, but who may lack VET expertise; or by VET lecturers, who are more familiar with training package requirements, but will have less understanding of the learning needs of any learners with disability who choose to participate.

- The Disability Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) Program makes payments to employers who employ apprentices with disability. Tutorial, interpreter, and mentor services are available to Australian apprentices who have been assessed as eligible for DAAWS and need extra help with their off-the-job training.

- The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator service works with employers across Australia to develop job opportunities for job seekers with disability. It does so by developing relationships with larger employers to increase their knowledge of the support available through Disability Employment Services and other Government employment services. The service also works with employers to implement disability employment practices and provide disability awareness training for staff.

It is important to note that accessibility issues for people with disability may preclude their ability to benefit from career support and advice resources available to Australians as a whole. This has implications for the
extent to which people with disability can make use of other services or initiatives to assist them in education and employment endeavours.

1.7 Current state of delivery of customer service to people with disability

People with disability comprise a significant customer market. Worldwide, people with disability have a total of 9 trillion USD in disposable income. This represents a huge market to tap into, especially in saturated markets. Within Australia, 67 percent of businesses believe their customer base includes people with disability, and 57 percent believe that customers with disability are important to their organisation. Improving the accessibility of buildings, transport, goods and services, will increase the extent to which people with disability can contribute to the economy as consumers. For example, the travel and tourism industry has been identified as having a large potential to tap into customer markets consisting of people with disability, through ensuring that service, venues and accommodation are accessible.

However, businesses are mostly passive in ensuring their products and services are accessible to people with disability. People with disability are more likely to struggle with a lack of access to goods, services and facilities compared to those without disability. 62 percent of SMEs had not done anything in the past 12 months to make their service experience easier for customers with disability. The most commonly cited reason for not making any accessibility improvements was ‘not receiving any requests’. This indicates a very passive approach to addressing accessibility issues in customer service. The National Disability Strategy acknowledges that people with disability cannot access all the services they need to live a full lifestyle, solely from the specialist disability service system. They need to be able to access and make use of mainstream services, which currently do not adequately meet the needs of diverse groups such as those with disability.

Employers have identified opportunities for improvement, including facilities, assistive technologies, and additional customer service support. In an Australian survey of employer organisations, 61 percent of SMEs aim to make changes in the coming year to make it easier for customers with disability to do business with them. The most probable changes to undertake were identified as modifying premises (70 percent), utilising accessible technologies (47 percent) and offering additional customer service support (47 percent).

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93 Australian Network on Disability, 2016 Disability Confidence Survey Report (December 2016) [https://www.and.org.au/data/Disability_Confidence_Survey/].
96 Australian Network on Disability, 2016 Disability Confidence Survey Report (December 2016) [https://www.and.org.au/data/Disability_Confidence_Survey/].
98 Australian Network on Disability, 2016 Disability Confidence Survey Report (December 2016) [https://www.and.org.au/data/Disability_Confidence_Survey/].
99 Australian Network on Disability, 2016 Disability Confidence Survey Report (December 2016) [https://www.and.org.au/data/Disability_Confidence_Survey/].
2 Key emerging themes and trends

This section outlines key emerging trends in the broader environmental context that further accentuate the case for greater inclusion of people with disability in Australian society.

2.1 Economic context

Increasing casualisation of the workforce across multiple industries, including the VET sector, presents a challenge to creating inclusive environments for learners with disability. Employers are increasingly using more part-time or casual staff employment models. In the VET sector, this can sometimes translate to more discrete interaction with learners, rather than ongoing interaction across a learner’s education and training journey. This poses challenges for the VET practitioner who then has reduced exposure to learners with disability and places greater emphasis on the need to be across individual learner needs, availability of resources and support, and access or uptake of this support. Similarly, in other industries and sectors, increasing casualisation of the workforce is changing how employees collaborate, stay connected and are supported in their workplace.

However, the increasing popularity of flexible work options, including home-based working, presents opportunities to increase participation of people with disability in the workforce. Trends towards adopting more flexible working arrangements are opening more work opportunities for people with disability. The emergence of job-sharing, co-working, flexible hours, and working from home, means new norms are being established about what employment looks like in modern society. Larger organisations are increasingly offering flexible work options, which benefits all employees, not just those with disability. The challenge will be for smaller businesses, which represent a significant proportion of the Australian economy, and face limitations to the extent to which flexible work options can be introduced as a function of having a smaller employee base. Irrespective, flexible work options are facilitating more inclusive workplaces for all employees, have the potential to employees with disability.

The area of job redesign and role redefinition is another means through which inclusion of people with disability in the workplace can be facilitated. Job redesign is not new to human resource management, however an increasing number of employers are redefining job roles specifically for people with disability. Anecdotally, we heard from supported employment providers about employers that are breaking down a job role into aspects, tasks or capabilities (“the atomisation of work”) and carving out job components to provide a better match for the person with disability. Whilst redefining job roles specifically for people with disability may not be standard practice for employers just yet, early anecdotal evidence suggests that repackaging roles facilitates greater inclusion of people with disability in the workplace.

Ongoing advances in assistive technologies, and increasing adoption of Augmentative and Alternative Communication methods, are improving the extent to which people with disability can effectively complete work and education tasks, and receive services. Automation, digitisation, and the accelerating evolution of technology continues to change how we work and interact. Connected technology presents an opportunity to further enable people with disability to more easily perform tasks they have prior struggled to perform, enabling them to further realise their potential and make use of their capabilities in a personal, educational and employment setting. Particularly for those with a

101 PwC’s Skills for Australia, Information and Communications Technology Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work.
sensory or physical disability, use of assistive technologies should promote ease in fulfilling job role requirements and demonstrating vocational competencies. Furthermore, developing technologies pose more options for employers and educators, looking to provide effective supports and adjustments, to facilitate the successful inclusion of people with disability in their organisations. One opportunity lies within the realm on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), that is, presenting communications through means other than speech, such as through utilising communication boards or speech conversion technologies. Assistive technologies can also be implemented in a customer service context, to allow accessibility of products and services for customers with disability. ANZ Bank, for example, has instigated technical alterations to its ATMs in order to facilitate easier access for customers with sensory limitations.

2.2 Social context

People with disability are increasingly seeking out meaningful work opportunities. Historically, Australia has emphasised keeping people with disability ‘occupied’, in often unstimulating, poorly-paid, or mismatched roles, as opposed to engaged in genuine employment. Anecdotally, consultations with disability advocacy groups indicated that Australia’s involvement of people with disability in the workforce has tended to over-utilise ‘tokenistic employment’; as opposed to engaging them in roles that match their skills and passions. Inclusion of people with disability in the workforce needs to be on the basis of offering genuine career progression, and opportunities that match their capabilities and aspirations, as the rest of the population.

There needs to be stronger emphasis on supporting career development for people with disability; assisting them in finding real work opportunities that fulfil and build their capabilities and skills, and that are relevant to their personal areas of interest.

Education is becoming increasingly vocational for people with disability. It is not just a tool for ‘keeping people with disability busy’. For people with disability, particularly intellectual disabilities, there is a need to better focus on utilising education as a pathway to employment, and not just as a means of filling in time. Completion of vocational education should lead to employment opportunities. Putting more emphasis on the uptake of accredited courses along with general education classes, and the inclusion of supplementary skill development in areas such as resume writing and interviewing, would help promote the work-readiness of people with disability undertaking studies, and ensure they are on track to use their education as a pathway towards finding a suitable job.

Appreciation for diversity beyond gender is arising, as workplaces look to implement inclusion initiatives considering other forms of diversity workplaces to better reflect the communities in which they operate. Diversity and inclusion in the workplace are now CEO-level issues, with research indicating that the proportion of executives citing inclusion as a top priority up 32 percent in the three years to 2017. Not only that, the same research indicates that employees are expressing stronger views on diversity and inclusion. Workplaces are also looking beyond gender diversity to include other forms of diverse groups; anecdotal evidence was received that many employers recognise the benefits of having diverse workplaces, but face a challenge with the multitude of diversity groups vying for representation. Anecdotally, we heard from DES providers that people with disability are seen to be lower in priority for inclusion in workplaces relative to other diversity groups.


2.3 Legislative context, support systems and funding models

Multiple reforms to disability support systems and funding models are intended to improve how Australia caters to the needs of people with disability and facilitate their inclusion within society. These changes have the potential to positively impact how well people with disability can access education, employment, and support or customer services. People with disability are often fearful of the impact that employment may have over additional financial supports they receive, such as the Disability Support Pension. Furthermore, the Willing to Work enquiry revealed that only 17.5 percent of NDIS participants have ‘economic participation’ as a goal in their plan, indicating internalised low expectations about their capacity to find employment, and a reduced desire to look for work. Although not an exhaustive list:

1. The recent NDIS system reform has a goal, amongst others, of increasing the participation of people with disability in education and the workforce. The new model aims to promote individual ownership, empowerment, control and choice, allowing participants to seek out the resources they need to achieve their specific personal, learning, and career goals. The NDIS will have a direct impact on employment demand for disability support workers in Australia. It is anticipated that by 2020 the disability service workforce will grow by approximately 35 percent as a direct result of NDIS implementation. This sector growth presents an opportunity within VET, as new disability support professionals, and existing providers looking to up-skill or specialise, will have training and skill/knowledge development needs.

2. The Higher Education Disability Support Program, introduced by the Department of Education and Training, offers funding for Higher Education institutions, aimed to encourage implementation of strategies to support learners with disability. Funding specifically excludes VET institutions and only applies to the Higher Education component of dual sector providers, illustrating the gap between the VET and Higher Education sectors in terms of distributed funding to support inclusive practice.

3. The 2011/12 Budget also announced changes to the Disability Support Pension, to facilitate the people with disability increasing their work hours without fearing loss of their pension. The Budget also announced the intention to introduce additional subsidies for employers of people with disability.

4. Furthermore, changes to the DES model, to be implemented in July 2018, will improve the financial incentives system currently in place. The improved model will promote stronger choice and control for DES users, in order to promote better employment outcomes for participants.

Sections 3 to 5 of this Environmental Scan outline the challenges and barriers that people with disability experience in different contexts: vocational education and training (Section 3), employment (Section 4) and customer service (Section 5).


110 SkillsIQ, Community Sector and Development Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work

111 PwC’s Skills for Australia, Education Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work

3 Challenges and barriers for the inclusion of people with disability in vocational education and training

This section of the report outlines the challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability in a vocational education and training context as identified through desktop research and initial stakeholder consultations. These are framed from the ‘demand side’ (i.e., learners who seek to undertake VET) and the ‘supply side’ (i.e., providers of vocational education and training).

3.1 Demand side challenges

3.1.1 Making the decision to disclose a disability

Fears of prejudice, or perception that their disability is irrelevant to their ability to undertake VET studies, and therefore does not need to be disclosed, are the main reasons learners with disability choose not to disclose their disability.

Learners with a disability or mental illness often find it difficult to decide whether or not to disclose their condition to VET institutions and the predominant student concerns pertaining to disclosure are the risk of experiencing prejudice and stigma. A review of NCVER data found that institutional processes of registering with disability services were found to be ‘complicated’ and/or ‘humiliating’ for the learner. Other identified deterrents to learners disclosing disability include a lack of standardised institutional processes regarding disability disclosure, failures within inter-institution information transfer due to privacy issues and systemic barriers.

Anecdotally, RTOs in stakeholder consultations reported that many learners do not disclose their disability due to self-perceptions that their disability does not and should not impact their studies. Disclosure often only occurs later, once a need or issue arises, if and when a condition begins to have an effect on their learning, and if the learning environment is perceived to be supportive of such disclosure.

When learners do choose to disclose their disability, they are often unsatisfied with the outcome. VET participants are not required to disclose any disabilities, but sharing information about any condition they have and how it may impact their studies, is intended to assist in ensuring they receive any supports and adjustments needed to promote successful course completion. However, in practice it has been found that VET students who disclose their mental illness or disability are often dissatisfied with the institutional reaction and offer of supports and/or adjustments. Anecdotal indication was given that some VET institutions may use disability disclosure processes solely as a source of data collection, and that disclosure does not always trigger changes to student support. Furthermore, students with disability reported that implemented adjustments often

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did not substantially improve learning outcomes, and did not justify the personal risk taken on in choosing to disclose their condition.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{3.1.2 Awareness of the VET learning options, education supports and funding available to support the learner with disability}

Learners with disability may face limits on their learning opportunities imposed by other people. Disability professionals engaged by individuals with disability regarding post-schooling education options do not possess full knowledge of the scope of choices available. This impacts the awareness of the person with disability in terms of what education opportunities exist for them. Further findings have also indicated that some guidance counsellors direct students with disability away from undertaking further education.\textsuperscript{117}

Additionally, learners with disability are not fully informed with regard to support services and financial assistance that are available to assist their participation in VET. If a learner with disability does decide to enrol in VET, subsequent issues may arise due to their lack of awareness of the supports and programs available to them, as well as the process of registration for disability services. Additionally, information on supports is not always communicated with clarity or in accessible formats, thus there is limited assistance to students in navigating disability disclosure and related services.\textsuperscript{118}

The additional costs associated with making adjustments for an individual’s disability in an educational context have been identified as a key barrier for learners participating in education and training.\textsuperscript{119} This barrier is exacerbated by students not being made aware of subsidies and financial assistance that are available to assist implementation of any necessary adjustments.

Learners with disability are sometimes precluded from undertaking VET at a pace and/or level that suits their learning needs because of funding limits. Current VET funding limits government subsidies for an individual undertaking vocational training to one course per certificate level. This means that for people with disability who may need: a longer time to complete training; more attempts to achieve competency in a qualification; to continue learning at the same level as the level above is beyond their capabilities; or to move laterally across training packages to re-skill, these individuals are forced to self-fund their continued studies. Anecdotally, this is not an expense that many people with disability or their families can afford.

\textbf{3.1.3 Level of ability and learning capacity of an individual with disability}

People with disability may have lower learning capabilities, impacting their ability to undertake certain VET courses.

A literature review has indicated that, on a general level, people with disability tend to be more lacking in basic competencies in literacy, numeracy, social skills, and time management.\textsuperscript{120} This means they may struggle more with completing course work, particularly group activities. In addition, learners with disability tend to take longer to complete their qualification courses, or require more chances to demonstrate achieving competency in a unit of study.


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Intellectual disability in particular may limit the ability of a student to complete a course above a Certificate I or II level. This presents a challenge for learners with disability looking to engage in studies in their field of interest, when the education provider does not offer a course below a Certificate III in specific industries (e.g. Hairdressing Services or IT).

The VET sector as a whole has a lack of lower certificate options, identifying a need to offer more appropriate level courses to support entry into VET for people with disability.

Spotlight on educational pathways to VET
Swinburne University of Technology is one example of a training organisation that recognises the need to create more effective education pathways for learners with disability. The institute offers a 12 month adult education program at a Certificate I and II level, that functions as a stepping stone for learners to then move on into further training. Swinburne also has a connection with Kew Neighbourhood House, providing pathways from pre-vocational, to vocational education.

In some cases, the existence of a disability may preclude a student from being able to fulfil course requirements. In some cases, a disability may prevent a learner from being able to meet the inherent requirements of a course. For example, occupational health and safety (OH&S) requirements or physical limitations may preclude people with disability from participating in certain core course activities. In these cases, it is necessary for RTOs to be able to screen all course entrants, identify individuals who may find difficulties in completing their preferred courses, and advise on alternative training and career options. It is the role of the RTO to ensure students are informed of the requirements necessary to complete a course, and where certain courses may not be suitable to a particular learner’s needs, suggest others that they will be able to successfully demonstrate competence in.

Information regarding the capability requirements for a course will benefit all learners, including those with disability, in becoming aware of inherent requirements and if the individual’s skills and abilities are a good match to fulfil these.

3.2 Supply side challenges

3.2.1 Lack of adequate knowledge and skills to cater to the needs of learners with disability

Vocational trainers are generally deficient in their understanding of disability and the impact that different disability conditions can have on individual learning needs.

Among training organisations that were consulted for the Environmental Scan, a consistently identified issue in VET was a lack of practitioner awareness and knowledge of the different types of disability and the additional learning needs that may result, or the different challenges for providing education support. The majority of trainers and educators consulted had minimal prior exposure to learners with disability and, for trainers themselves, there was often little or no onboarding regarding how to identify disability and cater to disability-related learning needs. There are insufficient provisions within the current TAE course to build understanding of trainers with regards to learners with disability. As a cohort, VET practitioners were perceived to be particularly deficient in understanding ‘hidden’ disabilities (disabilities that are not immediately visually apparent), and the growing complexities surrounding the occurrence of mental illnesses in VET students. In addition, trainers continue to struggle in cases where disabilities are not disclosed, or an imputed disability exists, and they are personally tasked with identifying where there are additional learning needs that may need to be met.

122 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, standard 5.
123 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, standard 5.
The sector, once strong in supporting learners with disability, has lost the practitioners who had the necessary knowledge and expertise to cater for their needs. Anecdotal evidence indicated that VET used to be one of the more capable sectors in terms of delivery of education to people with disability. However, with shifts occurring in the last 5 years in terms of provider privatisation and skilled VET practitioners leaving the sector, much of the skills, understanding and principles of good or best practice have been lost. Extensive personal experience and expertise is lost from the sector with the exit of trainers from vocational education providers. The accumulated years of practical experience and personal knowledge are difficult to replicate, and the current VET workforce is perceived to be largely deficient in the skills needed to support learners with disability.

Further adding to difficulties in meeting the needs of students with disability, VET staff do not receive onboarding and guidance for how to support learners with disability. The Disability Standards for Education (2005) state that ‘education providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the course or program is designed in such a way that...any student with disability is able to participate in the learning experiences (including the assessment and certification requirements) of the course or program...on the same basis as a student without disability’. However, general VET staff are rarely informed with guideline materials, or assisted by disability support officers, to know how to take steps to support inclusion of students with disability. Knowledge that trainers have in this area is typically the result of external training they have chosen to undertake of their own initiative. The average trainer has also not been informed about the resources available to assist them in implementing supports. This means that non-inclusive teaching practices persist, as practitioners are unaware or unsure of what changes to the learning environment need to be made, and how they can be made, to facilitate accessibility for learners with disability with varying needs.

**Spotlight on Plan International, in Bangladesh**
A project undertaken in Bangladesh, by Plan International in partnership with the Directorate of Primary Education, intended to promote the development of an inclusive, equitable, and quality primary education model. The initiative's aim was to improve access to education for frequently excluded groups, including children with disability. Approximately 50 schools across Bangladesh were empowered with skills and resources to foster inclusive education environments. These schools were intended to showcase how inclusion can still be successfully implemented, even with a limited resource base. A ‘train the trainer’ model was utilised, with a professional development program driving the project, and this focused on providing a framework for educators to promote inclusion: changing head (knowledge and skills), changing heart (belief in inclusion) and changing hands (actual classroom practice).

### 3.2.2 Lack of clarity in reasonable adjustment strategies and responsibilities

VET providers are unclear of strategies for reasonable adjustment, including accessible design. Accessible design involves three key elements: equity, independence and dignity. Of the training providers that were consulted for this Environmental Scan, design of the physical training organisation environment, provision of learning materials, and the development of classroom experiences did not seem to be consistently considered, creating ongoing accessibility barriers for learners with disability.

Another challenge for VET practitioners, and significant barrier to education for individuals with disability, is the provision of accessible learning materials. Educators are unsure of different formats to present course

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materials in, and how to technically format-shift existing materials. As several VET disability sector stakeholders elaborated, educators are often uncertain of copyright requirements, and adaptation process timelines, often leading to delays for learners with disability in receiving their course materials. Online learning has been heralded as a great opportunity for students with disability. However, online tools and platforms do not always meet the varying needs of students with disability. For example, hearing impaired students may struggle where audio recordings are the main source of materials, and students with autism may struggle with overstimulating online interfaces.\textsuperscript{127}

VET providers lack clarity in how to instigate actual adjustments to learning environments or change training delivery to cater to learners with disability, at both an institutional and individual level. Research suggests that vocational education providers are usually aware of the legal obligation to provide reasonable adjustment, but struggle with clarity on what this means in practice.\textsuperscript{128} In particular, for more ‘hidden’ or complex disabilities, VET practitioners can struggle with understanding what reasonable adjustments may need to be utilised. Provision of ramps for wheelchair access is one example for physical disability, but other types of disability may pose more challenging situations; for example, considering the learning environment for a student with autism who may struggle with environmental sources of overstimulation.

Individual trainers are usually unsure of their personal role in supporting learners with disability.\textsuperscript{129} There is no content included in the TAE package covering adjustment strategies and implementation. Anecdotally, we also heard some trainers believe they lack time to alter their teaching methods or materials, or are concerned about drawing attention to a student’s difference, or compromising the learning of others. Furthermore, they lack awareness of what resources are available, both informational and financial, to assist with the reasonable adjustment implementation process.

3.2.3 Difficulty accessing or understanding available disability support services and funding

The system of provision of disability supports in VET is complicated and inconsistent. Learners, trainers and disability support staff that were consulted for this Environmental Scan all reported that the processes for accessing and providing disability supports within a VET context are too complex and difficult to navigate. Concerningly, research suggests that even though all three groups agree that contact from disability services should be made as a direct and immediate outcome of a student disclosing a disability at the time of their enrolment, this contact was not consistently made.\textsuperscript{130}

Success for support services is largely dependent on the extent to which practitioners are on board with their support plans. Success outcomes for the provision of individualised support were reliant not just on the actions of staff within disability-specific support services, but on trainer attitudes and skills with regards to the actual process of implementing suggested support measures.\textsuperscript{131} Anecdotal evidence revealed instances where VET practitioners were unwilling to implement suggested reasonable adjustments, often due to perceiving them as a hassle, as requiring undue effort or time, or as unnecessary.

Funding limits also prevent training providers from implementing adjustments and supports to the full extent they are needed by learners with disability. Anecdotal reports from consultations indicated that RTOs often struggle with funding constraints, and are unaware of state funding available to assist implementing adjustments and supports. Budgets for adjustments and supports are often set and limiting. Disability officers had extensive skills, experience and knowledge in what assistance needed to be given, but were unable to fully and consistently act on this expertise due to budgetary limitations.

As an example, as part of its operational spending review in 2016, TAFE New England (now TAFE NSW) reported its intention to cut specialist services and move to a more generalist-service provision model. This decision was responded to by the local hearing-impaired student cohort with great concern and backlash, due to fear that their access to training courses may subsequently be consequentially limited and impede their ability to develop necessary skill sets to assist them in their future career aspirations.\(^{132}\)

A lack of understanding of the NDIS means opportunities to access additional resources are also lost. There is no obligation for VET practitioners to familiarise themselves with the NDIS framework and the implications for funding of vocational education courses and necessary reasonable adjustments for learners with disability at their institutions. This means that opportunities to access additional resources to fill support funding gaps may be missed, even though they do exist and are available to providers.

### 3.3 Potential skills gaps for VET practitioners

The findings presented in Section 3 imply potential skills gaps for VET practitioners in:
- Knowledge of how disability manifests in various forms and what learning needs these disabilities create, along with what resources and supports exist to assist facilitation of inclusion in a VET setting.
- Understanding of the case for inclusion; why it is important and necessary to ensure learners with disability have equal access to VET.
- Skills in communicating with students with disability, identifying and implementing necessary additional supports, reasonable adjustments, and recognising where to refer to specialist services.
- Skills in creating inclusive learning environments, including implementation of universal design principles in training settings and educational materials.

4 Challenges and barriers for the inclusion of people with disability in employment

This section of the report outlines the challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability in an employment context. These are framed from the ‘demand side’ (i.e., employees who seek employment) and the ‘supply side’ (i.e., employers who provide employment).

4.1 Demand side challenges

4.1.1 Inaccessible and inflexible recruitment practices

Job descriptions are sometimes unfairly discriminatory, and bias or inaccessibility in recruitment practices creates barriers for people with disability attempting to apply for job openings. Job descriptions and selection criteria for applicants in terms of capabilities or skills may often go beyond the inherent requirements of the job role, and unintentionally exclude people with disability who may have limitations in possessing these capabilities. For example, an advertised role may include a requirement that applicants possess a valid driver’s license, even though the ability to drive may not be a necessity in order to successfully fulfil the core activities of the job. The requirement to have a license automatically makes applicants with sensory or physical limitations that prevent them from being able to drive a car ineligible for the role.

Distinguishing between what is and is not an inherent role requirement, and making small adjustments to the position description, would remove unnecessarily exclusionary requirements. However, in practice, employers are often unwilling to remove these position requirements, even where they are not inherently necessary or where simple adjustments or alternatives are easily available. Furthermore, hiring managers and recruitment agencies as a whole tend to avoid shortlisting candidates with disabilities when presenting options to employers. Agencies exhibited bias and preference towards providing candidate pools that they deem ‘safe’ options.

Over-reliance on placements in sheltered employment programs is a key barrier to the successful participation of people with disability in the open employment market. Sheltered employment is a protected work environment, assisting people with disability to develop work-related skills and behaviours. One example is Barkuma, a food processing and packaging company that employs mostly individuals with mental disability. Barkuma aims to develop a sense of self-worth in its employees, and function as a stepping stone into the mainstream workforce. Sheltered employment is not intended to be a long-term solution, however, its circumstances may discourage desire or ability to transition into mainstream employment. Mainstream employment for people with disability has advantages in terms of being competitive in the job market, receiving a better wage, and social interaction with wider society. As such, it is important that dependence on sheltered employment is reduced, utilising it more as a short-term or transitional tool.

Spotlight on supportive employment pathways for people with disability

The CROWNability program launched in 2014 as an employment pathway into Crown for people with disability. The program considers pre-employment, recruitment, and post-placement support to support sustainable employment of people with disability. The program is based on a model for increased participation by matching abilities to real jobs. It brings together disability employment service providers (who refer talent and help prepare candidates for the job application and recruitment process); the Crown recruitment team; Crown managers; and the broader community. Crown has increased employees with disability from 45 in 2015 to now over 200, with a 70 percent retention rate.

4.1.2 Skills, education and experience of people with disability

People with disability may have lower education levels and skills, impacting their employment opportunities and ability to negotiate reasonable workplace adjustments.

Limited psychosocial skills and lower levels of completion of higher education present a challenge for people with disability in competing in the open labour market. To appropriately place people with disability in jobs, it is important to consider individual learning abilities, interests, skills and knowledge, and match those to appropriate roles.\(^{137}\)

Additionally, people with disability may be required to negotiate reasonable workplace adjustments with their employer. A National Disability Services study found that over 200,000 people with disability not in the workforce want to work, and have the capacity to do so, with the right support.\(^ {138}\) Difficulties in negotiating reasonable workplace adjustments with employers are a key barrier for people with disability in finding and maintaining employment.\(^ {139}\)

People with disability are often deemed lesser work candidates, as compared to those without disability, due to a lack of extensive work experience.

People with disability usually lack prior employment experience, often because their disability precludes them from working part-time concurrently with their studies. Furthermore, candidates with disability are often deemed less desirable or suitable for roles, due to more consistent long-term unemployment, and greater training needs in order to equip them with job-ready skills.\(^ {140}\) Work and volunteering experience was found to be an assisting factor for people with disability successfully finding paid employment.\(^ {141}\) However, the opportunities for people with disability to undertake work experience during their studies are limited by the fact that DES support is not offered to full time learners looking for part-time employment concurrent with their studies.\(^ {142}\)

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Ticket to Work aims to build better employment outcomes for youth with disability through fostering cross-sector partnership and collaboration. The initiative brings together schools, employment services, tertiary educators and providers to prepare young people with disability for employment, assist them with skill development, and provide them with work opportunities. Elements of the initiative include: providing opportunities for meaningful work experience, fostering disability confidence in employers, sharing knowledge and resources across sectors, and supporting career development processes.  

4.2 Supply side challenges

4.2.1 Lack of leadership and organisational support for the inclusion of people with disability in the workplace

The absence of leadership commitment and clear organisational strategy on employment of people with disability is a barrier to greater inclusion. More direction and support from senior leaders and disability champions, as well as the creation of a disability inclusion and action plan, is needed to help set and meet inclusivity goals. Preparation is the key to success, and the formation of a workplace environment that is ready to accept people with disability needs to start with a top-down process.

The Westpac Group is an exemplar for senior management support and active employer policies for recruitment of people with disability. Westpac works with specialist partners to source employees, and drives internal awareness and support for diversity and inclusion, with its CEO serving as the organisation’s ‘Executive Sponsor for Accessibility’. In 2012, Westpac reported that 12.1 percent of its employees identified as having a disability, well above the national estimate of 9.4 percent at the time.

Organisational policies (or the lack thereof) can limit the extent to which a proactive approach is taken, and organisational success is achieved, in employing people with disability. Only one third of organisations proactively source job applicants with disability. Clear policies on recruitment, support systems, and accessibility requirements are key for ensuring people with disability are included in the workplace. Formalised diversity strategies, self-imposed targets, and standards for monitoring and reviewing achievement of these targets feed into an organisation’s likelihood of achieving an inclusive environment. Furthermore, implementation of company policies or procedures for managers to follow can also build their confidence in supporting staff with disability. A key challenge, also acknowledged by employers in consultations, is that smaller employers lack the resources and organisational policies to support inclusive and accessible workplace environments. Larger organisations are more likely to have human resources dedicated to providing disability support, and are more likely to have disability recruitment policies.

As depicted in Figure 10 below, Business Council of Australia survey results indicate a clear connection between entity size, and how likely it is that the entity would have a disability.

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focus. Smaller organisations are limited by their resource base when looking to implement inclusive practices, and tend to employ a passive approach, only taking action to improve accessibility when it is requested of them.

Figure 10. Percentage of companies who reported an organisational focus on disability

![Organisational focus on disability](image)

Source: Business Council of Australia, Recognising Ability: Business and the Employment of People with Disability survey

Despite the plethora of government subsidies and programs available, limited availability of organisational resources pose a significant barrier for employers, particularly small business, from fully including and supporting people with disability in their workplaces. Limited organisational resources, or dedication of resources to promoting diversity in other key areas, presented difficulties in trying to improve the workforce inclusion of people with disability. Employers are concerned about recruitment and ongoing support costs, and lack a general awareness around what support organisations and programs are available for them to access, monetary and other, to assist their employment of people with disability.

It was consistently reported in stakeholder consultations that employers were unaware of the Employment Assistance Fund, which offers reimbursements for some work-related modifications, adjustments and services, the Supported Wage System, and JobAccess, an additional source of support funding. Disability employment service providers were not always proven to be effective in assisting employers in navigating recruitment procedures, government incentives, workplace adjustments and support provisions for people with disability.

In the cases that employers were aware and made use of funding opportunities, there was strong feedback that funding was usually insufficient to cover the true extent of supports needed to effectively enable the employee

with disability. Funding rarely stretched far enough to cover more expensive assists, for example, the provision of Auslan interpreters for hearing impaired employees.

### 4.2.2 Bias and stereotyping towards people with disability

Employer attitudes are one of the largest barriers to people with disability securing employment. A common thread highlighted from consultations with disability advocacy specialists and employment services was the pervasiveness of employers’ negative assumptions and stereotypes about people with disability, their capabilities, productivity levels, and the risks associated with employing them. Anecdotally, employers incorrectly assume that employing a person with a disability will result in higher costs and decreased productivity for their organisation, despite research to the contrary. The reality is that ‘regardless of how job ready a person with disability is, unless there is a job available and an employer willing to give them an opportunity, a positive employment outcome cannot be achieved’.\(^{154}\) Employers haven’t had exposure to ‘success stories’ in order to be informed of the opportunities and benefits that come with employing people with disability.

**Employment discrimination against people with disability is ongoing and systemic.**\(^{155}\)

Bias against mental illness is particularly rife, with 40 percent of small businesses stating they would not employ someone with a mental illness. The most prevalent reasons why given were: unpredictable behaviour (57 percent), possibility of a breakdown (54 percent) and too many sick days (43 percent).\(^{156}\) An adjustment in attitudes is necessary to shift the perception of employing people with disability as an act of goodwill or charity, that may have negative implications for workplace productivity, to focusing on the tangible benefits and value that people with disability bring to an organisation and a workplace.\(^{157}\)

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**Spotlight on the importance of educating managers about disability, diversity and inclusion**

**DFP Recruitment Services** is one of Australia’s leading recruitment companies, and DFP Recruitment is one of the first labour hire agencies to achieve the Australian Network on Disability ‘Disability Confident Recruiter’ status. DFP Recruitment seeks to educate line managers in diversity, inclusion and adjustment, and identifies ‘individual line manager bias’ as the biggest hurdle to improving employment outcomes for people with disability. The organisation works with managers during onboarding processes and on an ongoing basis, aiming to act as an ongoing inclusion consultant.

### 4.2.3 Inaccessible and inflexible recruitment processes

Inaccessible and inflexible employer recruitment processes are a challenge for employers who may wish to include people with disability in their workplace. A lack of flexibility in assessment processes or interview formats, and minimal efforts to implement reasonable adjustments for candidates in the interview process, are key barriers for people with disability. Employers as a whole do not consistently anticipate that people with disability may apply for their job openings, and do not consider the accessibility of their recruitment processes.\(^{158}\) Interview formats, for example, can exclude certain

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people with disability from the recruitment process. To illustrate: requiring a phone call interview can preclude deaf candidates from applying. This step in the recruitment process may not be completely necessary in order to assess an applicant’s eligibility, however, employers tend to be reluctant to adjust their recruitment processes to improve their accessibility.\textsuperscript{159} Furthermore, in the case that a firm’s human resource or recruitment team was open and willing to hire individuals with disability, they were often unaware of where they could look to find job-ready candidates with disability.\textsuperscript{160}

At recruitment and in the workplace, many employers are reluctant to ask a person’s disability status. Employers are aware that encouraging potential and existing employees to disclose any disability or condition will enable them to provide their workforce with the support they need to succeed. However, research suggests that many employers are reluctant to ask employees about their disability status,\textsuperscript{161} a sentiment that was echoed in initial stakeholder consultations. Commonly cited reasons for not asking about disability status include: being unsure how to ask, fear of saying the wrong thing, or concern that questions asked may be ‘too private’ or interpreted as discriminatory.\textsuperscript{162}

Even if they are aware of a person’s disability, employers often struggle to know how to interact with and support that person. Consultations with disability employment specialists and advocates indicated that employers are largely deficient in ‘disability confidence’; perceiving competency gaps in their own knowledge, awareness, and skills, surrounding how to effectively support employees with disability. Employers struggle with a ‘fear of the unknown’, mostly having had minimal prior interaction with people with disability. They are also afraid of making mistakes when interacting with coworkers with disability, being concerned with themselves or their employees saying ‘the wrong thing’. Their concerns surrounding ‘political correctness’ stifle the honest dialogue about assistance that is needed to effectively support an individual with a disability in an employment role.

\textbf{Spotlight on the Dandelion Program}
Swinburne has formally partnered with DXC Consulting to become the official provider of graduates into the ‘Dandelion Program’, an initiative which assists in the specific recruitment of individuals on the Autism spectrum into roles suitable to their unique skills, which are often very technical. The program offers ongoing mentoring and support for recruits. ANZ in particular has hired roughly 20 staff through the program. As well, PwC Australia announced a new pilot for the PwC Dandelion program, to start early in 2018 for a 6 month period. The pilot will provide employment opportunities to three individuals on the autism spectrum to work in the PwC Cyber Security and Forensics team.

\textbf{4.2.4 Lack of ‘disability confidence’ and training on inclusion}
Employers and staff are rarely trained on inclusion of people with disability and how to create inclusive and respectful workplaces, contributing to a lack of ‘disability confidence’ in the workplace.

The Australian Human Rights Commission ‘Willing to Work’ Inquiry found a consistent lack of training at a management level in diversity and inclusion, people with disability, and flexible work policies.\textsuperscript{163} Disability awareness training for employees, managers and recruiters can alter negative biases, foster understanding and belief in the importance of employing people with disability, grow a diversity-positive organisational culture, and build ‘disability confidence’, so that staff know how to effectively engage with diversity, and can support

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their co-workers with disability. In the United States, for example, Microsoft offers disability etiquette training, which serves to build employee understanding of their coworkers with disability, and develop their ability to effectively and respectfully communicate with team members with disability. In Australia, the Australian Network on Disability ‘Disability Confident Recruiter’ program assists organisations in building their aptitude in recruiting people with disability and removing barriers to inclusive recruitment processes. The program recognises and labels businesses who have demonstrated implementation of accessible recruitment and selection processes as ‘Disability Confident’ recruiters.

**Spotlight on disability confidence**

The Australian Federation Diversity Officer (AFDO) **Diversity Field Support Officer Program**, developed by ADFO in collaboration with Deakin University, is an innovative employer engagement strategy focused on building the ‘disability confidence’ of business to become more welcoming, confident and accessible. The project focuses on the needs of the business and offers personalised practical strategies around a more welcoming and accessible workplace culture, customer experience, and current employment practices, as well as connections to local support services. The 12 month pilot program was conducted with 50 organisations in Geelong, Victoria, across more than 15 industries. Evaluation metrics indicate that 75 percent were employing people with disability at the end of the pilot compared to 38 percent at commencement; and 42 percent are looking at ‘job carving’ - creating a set of tasks or role to match a job candidate with disability - as a result of the program.

A consequence of this, is that employers therefore lack understanding of reasonable adjustments and the changing needs regarding support for people with disability in the workplace. Employers lack understanding of the different types of adjustments, the process involved in implementing necessary adjustments, and have gaps in their awareness of the supports available to them to assist with the adjustment process. Furthermore, employers do not always undertake investigations of their physical workplace environment, either internally or through engaging external consultants, in order to identify access barriers. For example, physical accessibility is one area that people with disability particularly struggle with in their workplaces. Individuals with disability in the workforce have reported accessibility issues in areas of transport, technology and workplace design. Yet anecdotal reports from disability employment and advocacy groups indicated that formalised budgeting for instigating workplace adjustments is not always effectively utilised in organisations.

### 4.3 Potential skills gaps of employers

The findings presented in Section 4 imply potential skills gaps for employers in:

- Knowledge of types of disability and what additional support needs these disabilities create, along with what resources and supports exist to assist with the adjustment process.
- Understanding of the case for inclusion; why it is important to include people with disability in the workforce and what are the benefits to the organisation of hiring candidates with disability. This is necessary to facilitate attitude change and eliminate bias.
- Skills in communicating with employees with disability, identifying and implementing necessary additional supports, reasonable adjustments, and recognising where to refer to specialist services.
- Skills in designing and implementing equal access workplaces, including redefining job roles, promoting flexible working, and ensuring accessible recruitment processes.

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5 Challenges and barriers for delivering effective customer service to people with disability

This section of the report outlines the challenges and barriers experienced by people with disability in a customer service context. These are framed from the ‘demand side’ (i.e., people with disability seeking access to services) and the ‘supply side’ (i.e., service providers).

5.1 Demand side challenges

5.1.1 The need for additional assistance

People with disability often need additional support in a customer service context. People with disability may require specialised or additional support, such as a customer service representative who is fluent in AUSLAN to assist a deaf customer. In the case that a process or certain materials are not easily accessible for a person with a disability, the individual may benefit from having the service provider step them through a process and offering additional time, guidance and assistance beyond what is typically given. These additional needs present a challenge for mainstream service providers, who are not consistently equipped to effectively provide additional support. As previously identified, provision of services and support to people with disability cannot be achieved to a high quality standard without specialist training and the development of disability-specific skill sets. Mainstream customer service providers are unlikely to have staff trained to deal with the broad range of disability, and the various support needs that each limitation presents. However, customers with disability may still benefit from the assistance of non-specialist customer service professionals, so long as those providers understand the need to provide additional support, are able to communicate about where assistance is needed, and can identify opportunities to provide support in the service environment.

Spotlight on customer service in Japan

Japan is experiencing an increasingly ageing population, and the retail sector has recognised and responded to identified additional needs that older customers may have. More specifically, a program has been introduced to help shop assistants build the ability to recognise when someone with dementia has wandered off, or is spending money without full awareness of their actions, and respond accordingly to provide help. This is just one example of customer service provisions growing to cater to identified emerging needs of a certain customer population.

5.2 Supply side challenges

5.2.1 Asking for, listening and responding to customer needs

Anecdotally, service providers are afraid to say the ‘wrong thing’ to customers with disability. Consultations with disability advocates revealed that customer service professionals are limited by their ‘fear of offending’ customers with disability. Often, service assistants choose to say nothing rather than ask the individual directly what they need in terms of support or assistance. An attitude of ‘respectful curiosity’ is a key
enabler for positive customer service outcomes for customers with disability. However, providers are concerned that asking questions may offend or single out a person with a disability.

Additionally, instances of poor active listening and responsiveness to people with disability limit how well services are able to meet their needs. In theory, the process of listening to, and acting on what a person with disability expresses in terms of additional support needs, should be straightforward. However, anecdotally, service professionals often make assumptions about what a person with disability wants or needs in terms of customer experience, products or services, instead of asking them, and responding accordingly. Consultations indicated that the best approach to supporting people with disability is open dialogue. The individual knows best about what provisions will be of most benefit to them. This open dialogue however, continues to be stifled by service provider hesitancies and assumptions about what people with disability require.

5.2.2 Lack of forethought and planning for accessibility

Foresight in identifying areas where people with disability may need more support in interacting with their business is consistently lacking. Anecdotal evidence revealed through initial stakeholder consultations indicated that organisations that serve people with disability in a customer context do not often think the customer experience through in advance, from the perspective of different people with disability. Businesses are not as accustomed to reflecting on people with disability as a customer base, and therefore do not anticipate varying customer needs and how they may need to alter their service in order to meet those differing needs.

**Spotlight on usability and website accessibility in Europe**

The European Commission has adopted the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](https://www.w3.org/standards/accessibility/WCAG20) as the standard it requires all its websites to achieve. These guidelines comprise of four principles for improving online accessibility:

1. Perceivable - information presented in a way that users can view and comprehend
2. Operable - interface is easy to navigate
3. Understandable - operation and content can be understood
4. Robust - can be utilised by a variety of users with a range of needs and assistive technologies

Businesses do not always consider accessibility factors when planning their customer service processes. Stakeholders provided many examples of instances where businesses failed to consider accessibility in their customer service process. For example, the system of a banking customer taking a number and waiting for that number to flash on a screen before being served detracts from the customer experience of someone who is blind. As another example, poor placement of ‘accessibility’ tabs on websites can make for a very difficult user experience for those using a screen reader. Often, products and services contain fundamental design flaws, due to not considering from the outset where there may be accessibility gaps.

5.2.3 Quality concerns within NDIS service provision

Reports were heard that disability support specialists do not always deliver a high quality level of service and support. People with disability accessing and engaging with disability support services reported that quality is inconsistent across different service providers. Tailoring of provisions to meet the unique needs of individual service participants was not consistently delivered at a high standard. For example, anecdotal reports were received of disability career advisors being unaware of the full range of options available for people with disability in regards to suitable education and career skill development, limiting the extent of the advice they could offer. Furthermore, career advisors and other disability services often did not have full understanding of

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the scope of supports and funding available to assist people with disability in their daily lives, education or careers. Anecdotal reports also indicated that disability services exhibited difficulties in referring clients to appropriate specialist services to address their individual needs.

These issues with the quality of disability services may in part stem from a lack of regulation and established quality standards. NDIS service providers are not subject to any government-mandated qualification requirements, or regulatory standards, despite recognition that these service providers require training and specialist skills in order to effectively meet the needs of people with disability. This means that support staff are not required to demonstrate any set level of knowledge or capability in providing support to people with disability. The implication is that many disability service providers have limits to the extent of support, advice and assistance that they can offer their clientele.

5.3 Potential skills gaps for customer service providers

The findings in Section 5 imply potential skills gaps for customer service providers in:

- Knowledge of how disability manifests and what assistance needs these disabilities create.
- Understanding the case for inclusion; why it is important and necessary to ensure customers with disability have equal access to services, and what benefit this poses to the organisation.
- Skills in communicating with customers with disability, identifying and implementing necessary additional supports, reasonable adjustments, and recognising where to refer to specialist services.
- Skills in providing accessible services, including implementation of universal design principles in service environments, and advance planning to minimise accessibility limitations in services.
- Skills specific to disability support service providers (including NDIS providers) in delivering effective disability services and assistance.

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6 Opportunities and implications for future training product development

The earlier sections of this report point to three key issues inhibiting the inclusion of people with disability in education and training, employment, or service provision contexts. At their core, these are:

1. Low levels of awareness and understanding of what disability is, different types of disability, and what impact disability has on individual needs and supports;
2. Low levels of awareness and understanding of what resources are available and different strategies for how to support people with disability; and
3. Poor implementation of accessibility and inclusion in practice, contributing to often unintended exclusion of people with disability.

In this section of the report, the focus is on opportunities to address these issues and the related skill gaps and possible implications for future training product development. Section 6.1 presents opportunities that are considered in the scope of this cross sector project; Sections 6.2 and 6.3 present opportunities that require further consultation and may sit beyond the scope of this cross sector project.

6.1 Issues, opportunities and implications for future training product development

6.1.1 Addressing issues in low levels of awareness and understanding of what disability is

Opportunity to develop a nationally supported disability awareness training program - for VET practitioners, employers and customer service providers.

Training aimed at raising awareness and understanding of disability, different manifestations, and implications for individual learning, employment or support needs could be of major benefit. Content cover why it is important to create inclusive and supportive environments, and what opportunities there are to employ different communication strategies for understanding people with disability. Training could help to foster empathy, drive organisational proactivity in their inclusion and diversity initiatives, and help break the biases and misconceptions that many people have about people with disability.

For any incoming VET practitioner workforce, national disability awareness training might be delivered as specific units, skill sets or qualifications within the TAE Training Package, possibly as specialisation for those who want to deliver disability-specific training. For existing VET practitioners, this training might involve professional development programs, or upskilling through disability-specific skill sets. For the broader workforce (specifically employers and their staff, customer service providers), there may be potential updates to existing training package components to include a disability specific unit, skill set or qualification, or a potential common bank of training products that could be used across multiple industry sectors to raise awareness and understanding of disability.

6.1.2 Addressing issues in awareness and understanding of resources and support strategies

Opportunity to develop a nationally supported training program to educate about disability support strategies, including strategies for reasonable adjustments, funding and other ancillary supports.
Early indications from preliminary stakeholder consultations suggest that there is an opportunity to raise awareness and cover knowledge gaps regarding supporting people with disability in an education and training, employment or service provision context. This could include improving awareness of available supports - financial and other - that exist to facilitate the inclusion and adjustment for people with disability, and different strategies for reasonable adjustments. Content coverage could be expanded to include legal obligations and standards; frameworks for behavioural, mindset and cultural change; or teaching people the skills to research available government subsidies, government support services and resources, not-for-profit support and advocacy organisations, and inclusion and accessibility consultants.

6.1.3 Addressing the issue of poor practical implementation of accessibility and inclusion

Opportunity to develop training in universal design principles: Non-disclosure of disability can limit implementation of reasonable adjustments. To circumvent this, consideration should be given to usability for people of all needs and contexts.

Design of education programs, job environments and roles, and service offerings, needs to focus on maximising suitability and accessibility for individuals of all abilities. People of all backgrounds, disadvantaged or otherwise, have different learning needs, abilities, and style preferences. The seven principles of universal design can be incorporated into training, and is applicable in educational contexts, workplaces and job descriptions and customer service settings. Refer to Appendix E for more on universal design including practical applications.

6.2 Additional opportunities to promote inclusion of people with disability

Although requiring further exploration and stakeholder consultations, including with Industry Reference Committees (IRCs), there are additional opportunities that imply potential future training product development. These opportunities could be considered within the scope of this cross sector project or may be better considered by specific IRCs in future project work.

There may be an opportunity to review existing training for disability support staff, both to build their capability and build the workforce (requires further stakeholder consultation, including with IRCs).

Anecdotally in consultations, individuals with disability, and those who interact with disability support providers, reported concerns about the variability in quality of support received. One example given was career development professionals, who struggle to provide adequate guidance to meet the differing career needs of young people with disability. The Victorian Government is already looking at introducing an accreditation registration scheme for disability support workers. As introduction of the NDIS grows demand for funded disability services, many new professionals will enter the disability support sector, and existing workers in the field will need to consider further building their skills or specialising in provision of a certain NDIS-funded service. Further consultation is required to better understand any potential skills gaps specific to disability support staff, and potential implications for training package components.

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172 SkillsIQ, Client Services Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work
173 PwC’s Skills for Australia, Education Industry Skills Forecast and Proposed Schedule of Work
There may be an opportunity to further enhance flexibility and equity in training packages, or give improved guidance on reasonable adjustments and inherent requirements (requires further stakeholder consultation, including with IRCs).

Training package language is often very prescriptive and can contain discriminatory descriptions that may impress that competence can only be demonstrated in certain ways. Often, trainers who are accountable for ensuring training quality and competency standards are met do not always see opportunities for flexibility, or training package structure precludes flexibility in training or assessment. Consultations suggested such rigid adherence to guidelines for competency demonstration may unfairly and unnecessarily discriminate against certain learners with limitations. Anecdotally, trainers do not see opportunities for alternative competency demonstration, or do not believe that it is within their realm of responsibility to be able to make alterations to assessment formats and means of indicating competency.

Companion volumes often lack clear guidance on competencies, which create inconsistencies in RTO practice in terms of adjustments. However, flexibility in assessment formats can and should be built into courses without compromising the training package. Anecdotal examples of successful assessment adjustments included allowing one student with Autism to write a script instead of performing a roleplay, in order to demonstrate their understanding in a particular unit of competency.

Along similar lines, inherent requirement statements can add clarity to the skill and ability requirements for certain training packages, and assist with student informed choice in determining if a course is suitable.\(^{175}\) When implemented correctly, they can highlight where a student may struggle to demonstrate competency. They can also assist trainers in determining where there are opportunities to implement reasonable adjustment in assessment to enhance accessibility. However, noting that inherent requirement statements are not commonly used within the VET sector, there may be other possibilities to outline opportunities for equity and flexibility in course delivery, by improving the policy guidelines for the development of: performance or knowledge evidence guidelines, assessment requirement statements, companion volumes, or units of competency themselves.

There may be opportunities to better leverage existing foundation and employability skills to address more basic skill needs that some people with disability have and facilitate their entry into education or employment (requires further consultation, including with IRCs).

For learners with a lower level of ability, it can be important to start them at a foundation skills level, teaching broad skills that offer adequate preparation for an adult education environment.\(^{176}\) For some people with disability, there needs to be a focus on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills first, as a pathway into higher level courses in specific areas of training.

Several stakeholders also mentioned that training in complementary life skills, such as taking public transport, may also be of large benefit to learners with disability. As well, there may be potential benefits to training in resume writing, interviewing and communication skills. Whilst foundation skills training and employability skills training already exist (e.g., Foundation Skills Training Package, Certificate I in Gaining Access to Training and Employment), there were suggestions that these could be better leveraged.

Potential opportunity to increase offerings of lower level courses to improve access to education, particularly for those with intellectual disability, multiple disability or more severe activity restrictions (requires further consultation, including with IRCs).

The specific needs of people with disability need to be considered when designing education pathways and course offerings.\(^{177}\) RTO offerings of lower level qualifications (Certificates I and II level) are insufficient,

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174 PwC’s Skills for Australia acknowledge that the AISC is undertaking another project aimed at building awareness of reasonable adjustments and therefore aspects of this additional opportunity may be better considered outside the scope of the Inclusion of People with Disability in VET cross sector project


especially considering that these certifications are more attainable and realistic for people with disability, particularly intellectual disability or severe activity restrictions, who are not ready for higher level courses.

Potential opportunity to provide training in job redesign and role redefinition to open up opportunities for applicants with disability (requires further consultation, including with IRCs).

Designing jobs, work locations and hours to be flexible can improve inclusiveness. For example, employees with mental illness can benefit from role modifications to reduce stress, and accommodate temporary limitations they may experience. Furthermore, employer revision of job requirements, and what is an inherent necessity and what is not, may minimise the extent to which people with disability are unnecessarily precluded from applying for certain roles. This may have implications for existing training package components or may require the creation of new common units to address this skill opportunity.

### 6.3 Other considerations

Although outside the scope of this cross sector project, there are a number of considerations identified through this research and initial stakeholder consultations that enable the inclusion of people with disability in education, employment or service provision.

**Funding is insufficient and limits the extent to which VET institutions can facilitate inclusion of learners with disability.**

Multiple consulted RTOs and disability support specialists indicated that the level of funding received by the vocational sector to facilitate inclusion and support for learners with disability was not enough to fund the full scope of additional support required by learners. As an example, for students who required AUSLAN interpreters, allocated funds did not stretch far enough to cover ongoing provision of this resource. Furthermore, due to receiving less funding per student enrolled in a lower level qualification as opposed to higher qualifications, profitability concerns led training providers to cut many Certificate I and II course offerings. This reduction in lower level certifications has implications for the accessibility of VET courses for students with disability, particularly intellectual disability, with lower learning capabilities. Funding models are beyond scope, however it is clear that funding mechanisms and incentives play an important role in enabling inclusion.

**Barriers exist within programs encouraging the uptake of apprentices with disabilities.**

Whilst the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program and the DAAWS provide incentives for employers to accept apprentices with disability, issues with the funding model were raised in stakeholder consultations, as well as complexities in the application process posing accessibility challenges for learners seeking to be involved.

**Specialist skills and knowledge may be required to support people with more severe forms of disability or more severe activity limitations.**

It is important to note that the opportunities identified in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of this report may not be fully adequate to support inclusion for people with more severe activity limitations. Support for people with more limiting disabilities may require additional specialist skills and training, which is beyond the scope of the potential common bank of units to be developed for this cross sector project.

**Addressing inaccuracies and limitations regarding data collection on disability rates is an important factor for consideration for the future success of any initiatives in this area.**

This Environmental Scan has outlined that data and analysis on disability prevalence and impacts is reliant on an inaccurate baseline, due to tendencies towards under-reporting of disabilities. Changes to research and data collection methodologies that promote more accurate data sets could have a positive effect on the extent to which issues and opportunities for improving inclusion can be accurately identified, and the impact of initiatives can be evaluated and tracked over time.

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Business-to-business inclusion of people with disability campaigns may also serve as an effective method to raise awareness. Stakeholders agreed that education to raise awareness and understanding is important, and some suggested business-to-business campaigns as an effective mechanism to change mindsets about the capabilities of people with disability. Employers anecdotally mentioned the success of having people with disability act as ambassadors of employer programs, or the benefit of employer focussed awards that encourage organisations to better support and include people with disability in their workplace.

Apprenticeships present a strong opportunity for providing pathways from education and training through to successful employment. Apprenticeships combine on the job training, accredited qualifications, and paid employment. They can be of particular use for students with disability, who often struggle to find employment due to lack of work experience. However, consultees reported that traineeships and apprenticeships are underutilised in Australia as an opportunity for employers and VET students with disability, with a lack of awareness of disability apprentice programs preventing more widespread uptake. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) in the United Kingdom has created a toolkit to assist employers in taking on apprentices with disability. The toolkit explores the benefits of hiring disabled apprentices, highlights available government subsidies, and advises on recruitment and ongoing support processes.

Offering whole-of-life, systematically connected support will help to improve the service experience for people with disability. Stakeholders mentioned that current support for people with disability is disjointed, with many describing anecdotal stories of people being “bounced around” the system. People with disability often need to access multiple types of support (medical care, education support, employment transition assistance, income support, etc.) and a common concern is that a lack of connection between these support systems leaves many individuals with disability vulnerable of falling ‘through the cracks’. This is beyond the scope of this cross sector project, but highlights an important consideration for effecting system-wide positive change.
# Appendices

## Appendix A. Terminology

Acronyms used in this Environmental Scan are summarised in Table A.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAC</td>
<td>Augmentative and Alternative Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADCET</td>
<td>Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFDO</td>
<td>Australian Federation of Disability Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AISC</td>
<td>Australian Industry and Skills Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>Business Council of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB</td>
<td>Business Services Training Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC</td>
<td>Community Services Training Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Property Services Training Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRPD</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAAWS</td>
<td>Disability Australian Apprentice Wage Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Disability Employment Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP</td>
<td>Disability Support Pension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology Training Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Industry Reference Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCVER</td>
<td>National Centre for Vocational Education Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDS</td>
<td>National Disability Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIACE</td>
<td>National Institute of Adult Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH&amp;S</td>
<td>Occupational Health &amp; Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRG</td>
<td>Project Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small to Medium Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO</td>
<td>Skills Service Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAE</td>
<td>Training and Education Training Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UoC</td>
<td>Unit of Competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix B. Key Stakeholders**

The Project Reference Group (PRG) provides important oversight of, input into and direction for the Inclusion of People with Disability in VET cross sector project. Table B.1 below lists the current PRG members as at 27 December 2017. These include a mix of IRC members and subject matter experts from around Australia.

**Table B.1. Project Reference Group members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation name/affiliation</th>
<th>PRG member</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential Employment &amp; Training</td>
<td>Amanda Calwell-Smith*</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITIC Pacific Mining</td>
<td>Annie Holt*</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV)</td>
<td>Bernadette Gigliotti*</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)</td>
<td>Darlene McLennan</td>
<td>TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability in the Arts Disadvantage in the Arts (DADAA)</td>
<td>David Doyle</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Skilled Access</td>
<td>Dylan Alcott</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DXC Technology</td>
<td>Ian Sharpe*</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE WA (North Metropolitan Tafe)</td>
<td>Jane Goodfellow</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation</td>
<td>Jodie Davis*</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Skills Advisory Council NT</td>
<td>Judith McKay</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
<td>Kim Hawkins*</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums Australia</td>
<td>Lee Scott*</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Stephens Council</td>
<td>Lise Petersen*</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSMI Group</td>
<td>Michael Magelakis*</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute</td>
<td>Noel Hamey*</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>Robyn Culbert*</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Disability Network</td>
<td>Shaun Corcoran</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes that PRG member is also a member of an Industry Reference Committee
Telephone consultations were conducted in November to December 2017 to inform the Environmental Scan. These included consultations with a mix of employers (small and large), training providers, government bodies, disability advocacy and peak body associations, and subject matter experts from around Australia.

Table B.2. Initial stakeholder consultations conducted November to December 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation name/affiliation</th>
<th>Individuals consulted</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Disability Discrimination Commissioner</td>
<td>Graeme Innes</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Advocacy Network Australia</td>
<td>Mary Mallett</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDCO Program</td>
<td>David Swayn</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Care Queensland</td>
<td>Lynette May</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Network on Disability</td>
<td>Amy Whalley</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabled Employment</td>
<td>Jessica May</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Perth</td>
<td>Damir Kuncan, Ian TsolakIs</td>
<td>WA, VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadasca</td>
<td>Gus Koedyk, Judy Roberts, Raeoni Turner</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavlov Training</td>
<td>Nancy Pavlovic</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
<td>Tom O’Brien, Iain Barr</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Disability Insurance Agency</td>
<td>John Walsh</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Directors Australia</td>
<td>Craig Robertson</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE Disability Network</td>
<td>Shaun Corcoran</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability</td>
<td>Anthony Gartner</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Federation of Disability Organisations</td>
<td>Jessica Zammit</td>
<td>VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion Australia</td>
<td>Veronica Wain</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Council for Private Education and Training</td>
<td>Joy De Leo</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Skills Advisory Council NT</td>
<td>Judith McKay</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Metropolitan TAFE</td>
<td>Jane Goodfellow, Carolyn Gerrans</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
<td>Michael Arthur-Kelly</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Umesh Sharma</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Training</td>
<td>Les Shaw</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE SA</td>
<td>Stephen Manson</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE NSW</td>
<td>Adam Cox, Maya Spannari</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C. Training Package Analysis

Methodology for identifying existing units of competency relevant to this cross sector project

PwC’s Skills for Australia undertook an initial training package analysis of existing units of competency for their potential relevance to the Inclusion of People with Disability cross sector project. The process for identifying existing units is outlined below.

1. Broad keyword search of current units listed in training.gov.au using the following search terms (including variations): inclusion, disability, equity, equality, health, impairment, safety, adjustment, wellbeing, support, accessibility. This search returned 93 units of competency.

2. Results were then refined by assessing the unit Application and Performance Elements components. We removed units from our scope in situations where:
   ○ The unit Application was deemed industry specific or not applicable across multiple industry contexts or organisations (e.g. SISCAQU012 Assist participants with a disability during aquatic activities)
   ○ The unit Performance Elements were deemed industry specific or not applicable across multiple industry contexts (e.g. TLIC3011 Transport passengers with disabilities)

3. After refining the initial broad unit search, we arrived at a final number of 51 units of competency related to the inclusion of people with disability. These units spread across 12 training packages, 12 IRCs and 5 SSOs. Also included are 8 accredited courses or units.

Table C.1 Summary table of existing units of competency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training package</th>
<th>Examples of Units</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHC Community Services</td>
<td>● CHCECD007 Maximise participation in work by people with disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CHCEDS025 Facilitate learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● VU20878 Promote disability awareness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CHCCCS011 Meet personal support needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CHCEDS027 Support flexible learning in an education environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CHCMHS001- Work with people with mental health issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP Property Services</td>
<td>● CPPACC5019A Coordinate the development and implementation of Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CPPACC8001A Research and analyse access and use requirements for people with diverse disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● CPPACC8005A Develop and advise on policies and procedures to enable access for people with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF Defence</td>
<td>● DEFGEN010 Supervise equity and diversity in the workplace</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLT Health</td>
<td>● HLTAHA016 Support the fitting of assistive equipment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● HLTAHA014 Assist and support the use of augmentative and alternative communication systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIS Sport, Fitness and Recreation</td>
<td>● SISXDIS001 Facilitate inclusion for people with a disability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Information and Communications</td>
<td>● ICTWEB402 Confirm accessibility of websites for people with special needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Business Services</td>
<td>BSBHRM405 Support the recruitment, selection and induction of staff 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNS Financial Services</td>
<td>FNSPIM506 Promote the health benefits of returning to work 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF Furnishing</td>
<td>MSFID5008 Design for people with disabilities and the elderly 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIR Retail Services</td>
<td>SIRXHWBO02 Promote workplace health and wellbeing 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAE Training and Education</td>
<td>TAELLN412 Access resources and support to address foundation skills in vocational practice 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI Transport and Logistics</td>
<td>TLIL4032 Implement equal employment equity strategies 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited courses or units</td>
<td>VU20879 Deliver systemic disability advocacy 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D. Existing Government Initiatives and Supports

Requirements for reasonable adjustments in education and employment

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 outline that reasonable adjustments must be made where necessary to ensure that learners with disability are treated to the same standard of education experience. Adjustments must not bestow learners with disability with an unfair advantage, and must not be too resource-intensive for institutions to implement. Reasonable adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment is necessary to ensure learners with disability can participate in VET and achieve vocational qualifications. It involves modifications to the learning environment, how training is delivered, and/or assessments. Reasonable adjustment encapsulates inclusive practice (teaching strategies that recognise different types of learners), and universal design (maximising accessibility and usability for learners of all abilities).\(^\text{179}\)

Reasonable adjustments also need to be implemented in an employment context in order to assist employees with disability in fulfilling their role requirements. In both an education and employment setting, implementing reasonable adjustments involves multiple processes:\(^\text{180}\)

- Promoting disability disclosure and registration for disability support services
- Assessment of support needs
- Identification of reasonable adjustments and development of a support plan
- Ongoing liaising with staff to facilitate adjustment implementation
- Referral to appropriate supplementary services

Employment services

Australia has three main employment services catering to people with disability:\(^\text{181}\)

1. Jobactive - a mainstream employment service that focuses on assisting those who encounter barriers to employment.
2. Disability Employment Services - the Australian Government’s specialist employment service for people with disability looking for jobs in the open employment market.\(^\text{182}\)
3. Australian Disability Enterprises - provision of supported employment for people with disability, predominantly intellectual, who may not be able to compete for open employment.

Also of relevance to note is the Work Assist program, formally ‘Job-in-Jeopardy’. The initiative exists to assist people with disability already employed, but struggling in their current role.

Disability Employment Services (DES) provides an example of how to improve open employment outcomes for people with disability. DES provisions include: assisting with job search and applications; resume preparation; support for employee upskilling; disability training for employers; assisting employers in accessing wage subsidies, apprentice wage support, and reasonable adjustment funding; job redesign and workplace modification; and ongoing workplace support. Australia has 119 DES providers, including both for and not-for-profit organisations.\(^\text{183}\) DES in particular assists about 3,600 secondary school learners through the School Leavers Employment Scheme, which is funded through the NDIS in order to support young adults leaving school in becoming job ready.\(^\text{184}\) DES aim to help people with disability find long term, sustainable work.

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However, only one in three DES participants find and maintain a job for 26 weeks or more. Changes are being implemented to DES to improve the incentive system for providers, to promote longer-lasting employment outcomes and improved job-to-person matching. DES utilises a Star Ratings system to assess the provider's relative performance and assist participants in choosing their service provider.

Resources available to assist VET institutions and educators with inclusion and support of people with disability in education include:

- Guide for VET practitioners in Reasonable Adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with a disability, developed by the Queensland VET Development Centre Strategy and Research (Equity).
- ADCET Disability Specific Adjustments guidelines: provides a broad overview of majority of types of disability, how they impact the individual, and suggests some adjustments that can be implemented.
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005 (under the DDA 1992).
- The Australian Quality Training Framework: Essential Conditions and Standards for Registered Training organisations.
- Additional Support for Learners with Disabilities: funding to education providers to assist with costs of support and/or equipment for learners with disability.
- NCVER Good practice Guide: provides advice on supporting tertiary learners with disability or mental illness, including factors for consideration when implementing reasonable adjustments, utilisation of supports available for all learners, and example reasonable adjustments and institutional-level supports to consider for the benefit of learners with disability.
- The Web Accessibility Initiative: assistance with format shifting and awareness of copyright requirements.

Resources available to assist employers with inclusion of people with disability in the workplace include:

- ADCET overview of Disability Specific Adjustments: a useful starting point for outlining some disability and health conditions, and suggesting some adjustments that can be implemented.
- The Australian Employers Network: can assist in informing and supporting members on disability employment.
- People with Disability Australia Incorporated: A disability rights and advocacy organisation that can provided disability rights-related training and education for organisations, to help improve disability competency and understanding of types of disability, how to communicate about disability, and access considerations.
- The Education to Employment Toolkit: designed both for graduates with disability and employers, to build understanding of the transition needs of graduates with disability, awareness of employment services, awareness of supports available to assist hiring graduates with disability, and understanding of statutory obligations. It includes resources and advice on negotiating workplace adjustments, communicating with people with varying disabilities, and disclosure of disability in the workplace.

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Appendix E: Principles of Universal Design

The seven principles of universal design are:

1. Equitable use - equal access for all
2. Flexibility in use - accommodates all abilities and preference
3. Simple, intuitive use - easy, with minimal barriers
4. Perceptible information - can be communicated through different modes
5. Tolerance for error - mistakes will have minimal impact on usability
6. Low physical effort - easy to access without major disruption to regular activity
7. Size and space for approach and use - accommodates any physical requirements users have

In an educational context, practical application of universal design principles include: flexibility in assessment formats, extended assessment deadlines, study skills assistance services, work-space alterations, flexibility in work hours, flexibility in work location. Circulating information on institutional options and reasonable adjustments proactively provided to all learners, not just those who disclose a disability, will ensure that all individuals with learning needs are made aware of how they can be supported. Format shifting is an example of one tool that trainers should be made familiar with in order to embed the principles of universal design and make their teaching materials more accessible. Provision of materials in the form best suiting the learner’s needs will promote higher learner engagement and successful completion. Different disabilities may require different modes of presentation of training content, and it is important that trainers know the different means through which they can provide materials to ensure all students can learn effectively.

In employment and customer service contexts, universal design also has important implications for ensuring accessibility of jobs and customer service environments for people with disability. Employers should be made aware of how to outline and define job roles to maximise the opportunity for candidates of all abilities to apply. Organisations also need to build knowledge and capabilities in creating workplaces and service delivery environments that embed the principles of universal design, to remove barriers for full and equal access for their employees and customers.