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“...despite Australia’s economy performing so well in world terms, we are now 27 out of 27 OECD countries for people with a disability living on or below the poverty line and 21 out of 29 in employment participation of people with disabilities. ...Imagine the public outcry if we had dropped to 27<sup>th</sup> in the medal count at the Olympics. Politicians would soon get the message that something needed to be done to turn this around”, Peter Rickards, President, ADDE, acceptance speech on winning the Emerging Leader Award, at the 2012 Victorian Disability Awards.

**A WORD FROM THE EDITOR:**

ADDE has lost its funding from DHS. From mid August, 2012, we will be operating as a group of volunteers and the opportunity to run our attitude change workshops and Best of the Best disability employment forums will be lost. It seems that the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the be all and end all for the issue of disability in the community. The Victorian state government in its State Disability Plan 2013 - 2016, mouths all the right messages around disability employment, but one wonders how they can actually achieve the outcomes when they are defunding organizations such as ours. Furthermore statistics are showing that they are not achieving the goals set out in their previous plan let alone the future plan. And yet attitude change in the community is an ever present need and ADDE is well placed to continue this; to this end we are setting up a donations page on our website which will be up and running in the next few weeks.

In this edition of the ADDE Newsletter I wish to highlight the need for the community to not rest on its laurels with the introduction of the NDIS. The NDIS has kept people with disability and our needs in the news since our last newsletter. The Federal Government have a lot riding on the scheme as seen in the speech by Jenny Macklin summarized in this newsletter. However, the NDIS is not a cure all for the appalling level of disability employment in Australia, nor other issues and attitudinal problems, as noted by the following excerpt from a letter to *The Age*, 18 June, 2012: “It is absolutely imperative however that this scheme (National Disability Insurance

Scheme) is not seen as a cure-all for a society that is failing many people with disability..... We cannot lose sight of the broader reform and attitude shift that needs to happen if we really want to ensure people with disability get a fair go.” *Change attitudes: Stephanie Gotlib, Children with Disability Australia, letter to The Age, 18 June, 2012.* To read the letter online visit:

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/letters/four-sides-of-the-cardinal-20120617-20i2j.html>

The May federal budget addressed many disability employment issues including, the NDIS and allowing the uncapping of Disability Employment Services so they can now access as many people with disability looking for work as possible. Comments from the social services sector such as the following highlight the not so good stories from the budget: “... getting a job is the best outcome for a person receiving income support,” said Mr O’Callaghan, CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia, “But, the Budget offered no solace for those job seekers with chronic and multiple disadvantages, who are not able to access the basic support needed over time to participate in community life and, where feasible, get a job. The reduction in Job Services funding will only make this harder... We are especially concerned with the large number (100,000) of single parents who will move from the Parenting Payment onto Newstart as a result of this Budget,” said O’Callaghan. “They will join an increasing number of people with disabilities who are being moved onto Newstart and for whom there are too few available jobs.”

The Victorian State Budget has also created a storm. With the TAFE funding cuts comes the loss of specific funding for disability service staff assisting students with disability to attend, study and achieve in their TAFE courses as well as the end to the only AUSLAN course in Victoria. ADDE research has shown that a strong presence of people with disability in the professional and senior ranks of the workforce is important in lifting the attitude to this whole cohort of job seekers and workers in the eyes of the community. Road blocks such as this mean that the numbers of people with disability with tertiary qualifications will be reduced and people with disability who do work will be over-represented in low paid menial jobs.

This newsletter is not all bad news so have a look at the item about a new booklet put out by Ballarat University on assistive technology in the workplace and the article about how Australia’s GDP could be increased by \$43 billion over the next decade if more Australians with disability were included in the nation’s workforce. Also, read about Australia’s only software testing social firm that leverages the unique talents of people with Asperger’s Syndrome and the recommendations that came out of the ADDE Disability Employment Research Paper. Lastly read an enjoyable story from one of ADDE’s board members about his train trip to Queensland from the perspective of a wheelchair user.

Editor, Kathy Leitch

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

#### **Minister does a back flip on funding.**

At the recent disability sector awards Minister Mary Wooldridge made statements about supporting initiatives to provide greater employment opportunities for people

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with disabilities. Unfortunately her withdrawal of funding for ADDE and her own department's shameful employment statistics of people with disabilities show that her words and her actions are completely contradictory. On one hand Mary Wooldridge is commending the outstanding work ADDE has achieved but then does an about face by withdrawing funding to continue our work.

I was the 2012 winner of the "Emerging Leader Award", presented by Mary Wooldridge MLA, the Minister for Community Services. This award was presented as part of the annual Victorian Disability Sector Awards held at Federation Square, to recognize those who have made significant contributions for people with a disability. In accepting the award I said, "ADDE is a self advocacy organization aiming to increase employment opportunities for the more than 60% of Australians with disabilities of working age who are unemployed. I am happy to get this award but I believe there is a long way to go. I would like the public to be aware that despite Australia's economy performing so well in world terms, we are now 27 out of 27 OECD countries for people with a disability living on or below the poverty line and 21 out of 29 in employment participation of people with disabilities. Imagine the public outcry if we had dropped to 27<sup>th</sup> in the medal count at the Olympics. Politicians would soon get the message that something needed to be done to turn this around."

All levels of Government and the not for profit sector funded by government need to lead from the front and could follow the example of Brisbane City Council. They have an employment target for people with a disability of 10.7% by 2015 and currently 7.8% of council staff has a disability. While this example is the shining light on the hill, the first step on the journey is for an organization to commit to changing attitudes from the top to become a pro-active employer.

The key strategies to getting change are – setting disability employment targets, making line managers accountable for achieving those targets, measuring what you do and getting the right advice. I assume that the withdrawal of funding to ADDE will make it easier for the government to continue to do nothing to address the growing employment inequity for people with disabilities.

Peter Rickards, Current and Founding President, ADDE

Photo below: Peter Rickards, wins Emerging Leader Award at Victorian Disability Sector awards 2012, presented by Community Services Minister Wooldridge.



## **NEWS:**

### **TAFE Cuts Hit Those in Need of Help**

Benjamin Preiss, *The Age* June 22, 2012

WHEN Ben Carbonaro began studying at RMIT's TAFE he was paired with a "buddy" who helped with reading and taking notes. Mr. Carbonaro has Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, and he relied on support services throughout his TAFE studies that led to a journalism degree. Before starting his course, RMIT's disability liaison unit took him on an introduction tour so he would be comfortable in his new environment.

But TAFE institutes fear they might have to cut back support services because the state government has reduced funding to the sector...Some institutes might have to charge hefty fees for disability services...The TAFE sector is set to lose a total of about \$300 million.

Time management and reading fellow students' body language were among the greatest challenges for Mr Carbonaro. "I can't always understand their body language and if they're uninterested," he said.

The TAFE's support services were crucial to finishing his degree, he said. Mr Carbonaro, 26, said it was disappointing that support services might be cut. "People need support and obviously TAFE is for everybody," he said...

Adult Learning Australia chief executive Sally Thompson said she was worried services for disabled TAFE students would disappear. She said jobs such as disability liaison officers might be scrapped. "It's such a big cut so quickly and so dramatically. There's no business on earth that could absorb cuts of that magnitude," she said.

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To read the full story visit <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/tafe-cuts-hit-those-in-need-of-help-20120621-20qwq.html#ixzz1yWRo2cDf>

## **Assistive Technology in the Workplace for People with a Disability**

University of Ballarat

Exploring the use of assistive technology in the workplace can be the difference between getting or missing out on a job. This needs employees, potential employees and all those who help them getting to know about the wide range of assistive technology available, how to access it and how to source potential funding. Employers also need this information...This booklet includes sections on assistive technology for people who are deaf/hearing impaired, are blind/vision-impaired, are deaf/blind, have physical disabilities, and have a learning disability. It also includes a section on the accessibility features of smartphones/iPads/tablet computers section on JobAccess and the Disability Employment Service. To download a copy visit [http://www.adcet.edu.au/StoredFile.aspx?id=2648&fn=NDCO\\_WorkTechnologies\\_Booklet\\_LR.pdf](http://www.adcet.edu.au/StoredFile.aspx?id=2648&fn=NDCO_WorkTechnologies_Booklet_LR.pdf)

## **Report finds potential \$43 billion economic boost by raising employment for people with disability**

A report launched this month at the AND National Conference reveals that Australia's GDP could be increased by \$43 billion over the next decade if more Australians with disability were included in the nation's workforce. The report also demonstrates that increased employment participation would more than cover the costs for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The study, commissioned by AND and undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics, finds that GDP would increase by \$43 billion over the next decade in real dollar terms just by governments and employers increasing the current employment rate for Australians with disabilities by one-third over the next decade (from 54% to 64%).

At present, only half of the 2.2 million Australians of working age with a disability are employed, compared to nearly 80% of Australians of working age without disability.

The paper was presented to the Hon Jenny Macklin with the immediate call to Government to:

- Set a goal to improve Australia's performance on the inclusion of people with disability by ten percent over the next ten years.
- Engage industry and employers to develop effective demand strategies to achieve the goal
- Capitalise on the skills and talents of the many people with disability who want to work.

## **The Hon. Jenny Macklin's response to the paper:**

...In last week's Budget, the Treasurer announced the most significant single funding commitment to support people with disability in our history...that the Australian Government will deliver \$1 billion over the next four years for the first stage of a

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National Disability Insurance Scheme. This will directly benefit around 20,000 people with significant and permanent disability, their families and carers, in up to four locations around the country. And it will see an NDIS get up and running in Australia.

...this Budget is spreading the benefits of the boom... The Budget delivers extra assistance to those Australians, particularly low and middle income families, who aren't living life in the fast lane of the mining boom. It is equally true of our work to build a National Disability Insurance Scheme... too often today, disability equates to disadvantage.

### **The case for an NDIS**

The Prime Minister has described a National Disability Insurance Scheme as the biggest social reform Australia has seen since the introduction of Medicare....The system we know today encourages crisis, metering out support only when it's desperately needed, and with meagre and inadequate resources. The results are devastating for people with disability, their families and carers. People are forced into crisis. Ageing carers are left exhausted with the desperate worry of what happens to their children when they are too old to care for them. People are forced to accept anything for fear that they will get nothing.

Over the past few years, the disability community has come together around a call for change to this system. They have told their stories which, to those unfamiliar with a life with disability, can be harrowing...requiring enormous courage from people who ask only to live a life with dignity. And their stories have been incredibly important to crystallise for Australians how important change is if we are to hold our heads up as a nation. Through the Shut Out report of the National People with Disability and Carer Council, through the more than 1,000 submissions to the Productivity Commission's inquiry, through the media and through the Every Australian Counts campaign. People have told their stories in the interests of building awareness and understanding – and to build an impetus for change. In the telling of these stories though, an equally powerful economic case has been made for change.

...The sad truth of these stories is borne out by the evidence. The latest OECD report on Australia's record for employing people with disability ranked us in the bottom third of OECD nations – 21st out of 29 nations. Today, people on the Disability Support Pension have spent an average of 12 years on an income support payment. And more often than not, people who move off the DSP move onto the age pension -- it's become a destination payment. In the ten years to June 2011, the number of DSP recipients increased by 31.2 per cent, from 623,926 in June 2001 to 818,850 in June 2011. Over the same period, the working age population increased by 17.9 per cent. Increasingly, having or acquiring a disability has meant moving out of the workforce or never being able to enter it. It can be an end to participation. Not only does this situation leave people with disability feeling shut out, our economy suffers when we exclude a demonstrably valuable group of people. This will be even more so into the future, as population ageing puts significant pressure on the economy.

Today, there are five people working for every person aged 65 and over. By 2050 there will be 2.7. The workforce will become a smaller proportion of Australian society and we will experience more acute skills shortages. So we cannot afford to overlook the economic potential of Australians who want to participate in the labour

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market...As a community we need to unlock that economic potential. But today, each facet of the current system of crisis represents a barrier to the participation of people with disability, their families and carers in our economy – in school, in work and in our community. Our system focuses almost exclusively on what people can't do – and places barriers in the path of those who want to make the most of what they can do. Too often, the system we have today lets the talents and possibilities of people with disability and their carers slip through our fingers. Peoples' potential remains unrealised...

### **The foundations for change**

Since our election, we have worked to remedy this situation – not only in employment, but through a root and branch rebuilding of the system of care and support for people with disability. We have worked to address disadvantage... We have invested in supported accommodation for people with disability... We have invested in education for the 164,000 students with a disability in schools across the country. And we've worked to reform the area of employment for people with disability, by making sure that people who can work are helped into work...

We have introduced revised Impairment Tables that have a greater focus on a person's abilities, rather than what they cannot do, and provided additional funding for employment services to ensure people with disability get the support they need to find and keep a job. We are investing more than \$3 billion to uncap access to Disability Employment Services (DES). Previously, the number of places in these services was capped and people had to wait up to a year to access assistance. More than 148,000 people are now being assisted by DES providers nationally – a 43 per cent increase since the decision to uncap places...

And we have introduced new measures that will start in July this year to better support people moving from the DSP into work...from July, they will be able to work up to 30 hours a week and continue to receive the DSP... also included are financial incentives to employers to take on more DSP recipients – providing a critical foundation for a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

An NDIS is the centerpiece of a new way of thinking – and acting – to support people with disability to live good, active and productive lives...The Productivity Commission recognised the potential of this approach in its ground-breaking report into disability care and support. It suggests that there are currently around 60,000 adults who may be eligible for support and who see employment as a genuine possibility. Most importantly, the Commission details how obstacles to work may be surmountable through the care and support provided through an NDIS. As the Business Council pointed out in its submission to the Commission's inquiry, an adequate level of support will enhance participation in the workforce and the community for people with disability, their families and carers. And this is supported by the findings of the report commissioned by the Australian Network on Disability which shows that:

- the cost of recruiting an employee with disability is generally lower;
- productivity is equal or greater than other workers in the vast majority of cases; and

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- most workers with disability have better attendance records and lower occupational health and safety incidents than those without a disability.

... the barriers that have been placed in the way of people with disability...range from active and open discrimination to misconceptions and misunderstandings about people's needs. But I think it's important to point out the benefits of breaking down those barriers – for all of us.

In February, I met a young woman called Gretta Serov. Gretta is 21 years old, and like many young Australians her age has big dreams of attending university. She finished her HSC this year, and is currently attending a pre-study course to get into university. Gretta also has cerebral palsy, which means she needs her wheelchair and uses an iPad to communicate. Both are critical to her independence, and to her ability to participate in education – something she is driven to pursue and desperately wants. Gretta described to me the challenges of getting to university – there isn't an accessible taxi service in the area she lives in, which means that simply to go somewhere with her electric wheelchair is almost impossible. She is currently able to access some community participation funding – but much of this funding is chewed up simply by attending her day program. She's worried that spending more of this funding in getting to university will reduce the amount of funding available for attendant care – the consequence being less independence. Gretta has previously waited more than two years for funds for crucial equipment – like her wheelchair.

Yet despite the barriers in her way – that seem to tell Gretta to shut up shop, and live her life on the DSP - she's a very determined and an incredibly bright young woman. She keeps working away to realise her dreams, whatever obstacles the system seems to place in her way...the system we know today puts up barriers between Gretta accessing education and employment – and fails to connect Gretta with future employers who would love to hire her.

An NDIS will open up options for people like Gretta to get into the workforce...and would focus on her potential. For the first time, the system will have an incentive to get her through school, through university and into work so she could be more independent. It will see the value in investing in her early to see her realise her potential. This would have untold benefits for Gretta – breaking down the barriers she faces today. And for a potential employer, the courage and determination she shows could provide just what is needed. This is evidenced by AND's own experience, of the Stepping Out internship program, designed to close the employment gap for university students with a disability.

The legal firm Sparke Helmore said:

Our candidate brought a really fresh way of thinking to the firm ... he looked at problems from new angles and was very solution focused. He had an excellent level of legal knowledge and understanding... we would like to offer him an ongoing role in the firm...

What a great outcome for a young student, just what all interns hope for...graduates with disability generally have a 65 per cent chance of achieving employment in their graduate destinations, other students have a 75 per cent chance. For those participating in the Stepping Out program there was no gap. The success rate was the

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same as that achieved by other students - 75 per cent. An NDIS will support more young people to access university, to access these opportunities...

### **Building an NDIS**

...At the recent COAG meeting, all governments agreed to high level principles including that the development and implementation of the NDIS was a shared responsibility... But it will only be possible through a shared and coordinated effort. COAG has noted that it is critical that the states and territories take on their fair share of responsibility in both the design and implementation of the scheme... people with disability, their families and their carers must be at the centre of this reform. But business too has a role to play... As the chair of ACCI's Employment, Education and Training Committee, Peter McMullin said:

Hiring someone from outside the traditional pool of workers isn't about taking a risk or an act of charity. It makes sense from an economic as well as a business perspective.

Groups like the Australian Network on Disability have worked tirelessly to open employers' eyes to the value of employing people with disability and shown outstanding leadership. We need your voice and your continued support in our work to build an NDIS. Because in the words of Ramp-Up's Stella Young:

The success of the NDIS depends on looking at people with disability and seeing, not the problem, but the potential.

Thank you.

### **Software testing with a difference**

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are developmental differences that last throughout a person's lifetime. ASD is marked by difficulties with social interaction, communication and restricted and repetitive interests, activities and behaviours. ASD can vary greatly and includes autistic disorder, Asperger's syndrome and pervasive developmental disorders.

In 2011, [Infoxchange Australia](#), in partnership with [Social Firms Australia](#) and [Alpha Autism](#), established TestIT – Australia's only software testing social firm that leverages the unique talents of people with Asperger's Syndrome.

Social firms foster social inclusion by creating employment opportunities for people who are disconnected from the community, such as those who experience Asperger's Syndrome. In social firms, 25-50 per cent of employees have a disability or experience disadvantage.

Software testing requires long periods of concentration and the ability to recognise flaws in repetitive information. People with Asperger's Syndrome often have excellent memory recall, high attention to detail and a superior ability to identify defects and irregularities. This has proven to be a competitive advantage in software testing firms internationally that employ people with Asperger's Syndrome. TestIT employees hold international software testing qualifications and the team's focus is on

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quality, independent and cost effective testing services. Evaluations have shown that there is a significant return on the investment of the TestIT initiative.

Positive outcomes have been reported by TestIT employees. Work in the software testing social firm has helped to develop a sense of pride, purpose and accomplishment, reduce levels of anxiety and depression and increase financial security. One member of the team said, *'I feel like I finally found a purpose in my life. It is as if the barriers I faced before have been lifted and I can see great things on the horizon for myself.'* Employees reported a sense of relief at being able to secure on-going work that matches their skills and professional preferences.

Creating accessible and durable employment for people facing barriers to work is crucial to creating a more inclusive society. Recognising people's unique skills can mean improved services and products for organisations and fulfilling and positive opportunities for people who may struggle to find meaningful employment in conventional workplaces. For more information:

<http://www.testit.infoxchange.net.au>

<http://socialfirms.org.au>

### **No Disability Employment Improvement**

*AAP, June 12*

Employment participation levels of people with disabilities are not showing significant improvement, a new national report finds. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council, in a report released today, paints a bleak picture about barriers to securing employment and social participation. The report assesses progress on the national disability agreement using the latest available data covering the six-year period between 2003-2009. There was no statistically significant overall change in labour force participation for people with disabilities during that period. Western Australia bucked the national trend and the ACT and Northern Territory also had disabled labour force participation rates higher than the national rate.

COAG reform council spokesman Michael Frost said not much had changed.

"Despite an otherwise strong labour market there was very little improvement in workforce participation for people with a disability," he said in Canberra yesterday.

The report found some slight improvement in workforce participation for people caring for loved ones with a disability. There had been little progress in ensuring young people with disabilities in or at risk of entering aged-care homes were receiving more appropriate care, the report said. People with profound or severe disabilities had lower rates of social participation, the report said. One in four people with severe disabilities did not leave their home as often as they would like because of their impairment.

To read the story online visit <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/no-disability-employment-improvement/story-e6frf7jx-1226395010710>

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## **Victorian State Disability Plan**

Editor's footnote: I have summarized the plan and picked out mainly any references to disability employment. This introductory paper prefaces a call by the government for input from the community. For more information visit:

<http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/plans-and-strategies/disability-services/state-disability-plan>

### **GETTING A JOB AND BEING FINANCIALLY SECURE**

Most people with a disability would prefer to work, but face barriers to getting employment. Of those people with a disability who are employed, many work in low-paid, unstimulating roles that do not use their abilities to the full.

Employment provides a source of income that allows people to take part in a range of cultural, social and recreational activities. In 2009, the labour force participation rate of Victorians with a disability who were of working age was 52 per cent, compared to 83 per cent for Victorians without a disability. The disadvantage experienced by people with a severe or profound disability is even greater, with a labour force participation rate of only 32 per cent.

Having a job provides more than an income. It is an opportunity to make friends, develop networks, build confidence and a sense of self, develop new skills and contribute to the community. The low labour participation rate and the over-representation of people with a disability in menial jobs mean that we are not accessing the full potential of the Victorian workforce. Reducing barriers to employment for people with a disability will have benefits both for people with a disability and the community. Higher rates of employment of people with a disability and carers would significantly add to the economic health of Victoria.

Discrimination against people with a disability, their families and carers is a major barrier to participation. People with a disability report experiencing discrimination in every aspect of their lives including education, employment, health care and housing. In Victoria, complaints about discrimination can be made to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. In the three years from 2007 to 2010, most complaints received by the commission were in relation to disability. In the last two financial years (2009–2010 and 2010–11), over half of these complaints were about employment...

### **WHAT ARE OUR KEY ISSUES?**

The current system of support for education, jobs and employment is struggling to meet the needs of a growing population of people with a disability. The Victorian Government has received a strong message that these mainstream systems are still not providing the level of accessibility and support needed by people with a disability, their families and carers. We already know that when it comes to education, employment and health outcomes, people with a disability in Victoria, compared to the general population:

- > are less likely to complete school beyond year 10, and less likely to hold a bachelor degree or above
- > on average, have a lower income
- > have a lower labour force participation rate, despite a desire to work
- > have greater unmet health care needs
- > lack opportunities to engage in preventative health care activities.

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## WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The Victorian Government:

- > has increased support for students with additional educational needs through the Program for Students with Disabilities and the development of the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support resource for teachers of students with disabilities
- > supports post-school pathways for young people with a disability by building work skills and experience
- > has increased access to training and choice about providers and courses that meet the needs of young people with a disability

## WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO DO?

We know that education can transform people's lives by helping them to become confident, capable members of the community, and that the first years of life play a major role in the lifelong outcomes of all children. Because families with children who have a disability face additional stresses, the Victorian Government will increase its effort in working with families to develop a solid foundation for lifelong learning for children with a disability.

The transition from education into training and employment is a major life stage. Vocational education and training programs need to be enhanced to better prepare people with a disability to enter the workforce and build successful careers. Having a job creates long-term economic security and assists wellbeing. The large numbers of people with a disability who are not working are a source of untapped labour and lost productivity. We must strengthen pathways to employment so as to increase the employment and independence of people with a disability.

The Commonwealth Government plays a lead role in this area through the provision of employment services for people with a disability. We need to work closely with the Commonwealth, integrating and streamlining

The Victorian Government will lead by example through increasing our effort around the employment of people with a disability in the public service and the public sector as well as encouraging the non-government and private sectors to take a more active role in employing people with a disability.

## WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

1.1 Strengthen the capacity of universal education and learning services to respond to the needs and aspirations of people with a disability.

- > Strengthen early childhood interventions so that they are more effective, better targeted and more able to respond to the diverse and changing needs of people with a disability, families and carers.
- > Implement the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support resource across the Victorian school system.
- > Continue to build a positive culture of disability inclusion in school communities.
- > Strengthen the support system for the transition from school into post-school education, training or employment for people with a disability.

1.2 Strengthen the Victorian Government's approach to building sustainable employment pathways for people with a disability.

- > Build the capacity of the vocational education and training sector to deliver improved outcomes for learners with a disability.

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- > Strengthen pathways to employment for young people with a disability through an increased emphasis on building work readiness.
  - > Improve recruitment, employment and retention outcomes of people with a disability in the Victorian Public Service and public sector.
  - > Promote and support non-government organisations and the private sector to increase employment opportunities for people with a disability.
- 2.2 Develop a targeted approach to enhance community understanding and positive attitudes towards people with a disability.
- > Work with the media, government, community, private sector and tertiary education institutions to change how disability is portrayed.
  - > Build community and employer awareness about the benefits of recruiting and retaining people with a disability.
  - > Promote the contributions of people with a disability to the Victorian community.
- 2.4 Optimise the capacity of mainstream services and industries to deliver choice, improved experiences and participation outcomes for people with a disability.
- > Improve accountability of public sector organisations to meet their legislative obligations to develop and implement Disability Action Plans.
  - > Build the capacity of the sport and recreation, tourism and arts industries to include people with a disability.
  - > Promote participation of people with a disability on public and private sector boards and committees.
  - > Promote access and participation across the small business sector in local communities.

## **DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT: THE ISSUES**

The following recommendations which arise from this paper, are succinct and to the point and if implemented are highly likely to be effective in increasing employment of people with disability. They need to be addressed urgently in order to change the worsening employment situation for people with disability. :

### **1. Workforce measurement**

- ☐ Measurement – you can't manage what you don't measure. There is no point putting in place policies and strategies if you don't measure that these are making a difference.
- ☐ To measure employees with disability in the workplace, it is important that resources be allocated to develop a consistent and easy to use measurement tool that can be applied across all industry sectors, starting with all levels of Government and the not-for profit sector.
- ☐ The first step is to mandate, as part of funding conditions, that organizations collect base line data around disability employment.
- ☐ The measurement tool, independent advice and monitoring could be provided on a fee for service basis. (See Appendix 4)

### **2. Setting Disability employment targets**

- ☐ No targets lead to tokenism, and no real commitment.

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- Australia should follow the leadership of many European models for disability employment where targets are mandatory and penalties apply if not met.
- The UK “Two Tick” voluntary sign up approach is a step in the right direction.
- After two years of workforce measurement, each organization should set a reasonable target say 7% to be achieved over 4 to 5 years in two 3.5% steps.
- At this stage Governments should start to link funding for organisations, including not for profits, directly to disability employment targets/outcomes.
- All job applicants with disability should be encouraged to apply and interviewed.
- Once the not-for-profits and Government are “Leading from the front”, the next step should be implementing disability employment targets into for profit businesses. Tax incentives and penalties, such as those implemented in the OECD countries should be used.
- Targets and quotas are recommended for many diversity groups. If it is good enough for the Australian Human Rights Commission to recommend in 2010 ‘...mandatory gender diversity **quota** of a minimum of 40% of both genders within a specified timeframe, failing which penalties will be imposed.’<sup>3</sup> then it is good enough for the same expectation to be met by government and not for profits for employment of people with disability in their workforce.

### **3. Social procurement**

- In order to promote self employment opportunities for people with disability, a proactive approach should be taken by engaging people with disabilities to undertake consultancy services.
- All levels of Government should consider introducing EFT (Effective Full Time) exemption for people with a disability to be employed on contract. This provides employment experience for people with a disability and enables Government to deliver outcomes with reduced staff ceilings.
- Government tendering processes should stipulate: “Submissions from people with disabilities are encouraged” and organizations which employ people with disabilities to undertake work will be developed as preferred suppliers.
- Suppliers of goods and services meeting these criteria must be audited regularly to ensure that they are doing what they claim

### **4. Training on or about Disability**

- Disability training should be delivered by people with disability.
- Attitude change needs to start from the top of organizations, so senior management and Board members should be involved.



☐ Research such as that done by Dr. Kevin Murfitt<sup>4</sup> describes why negative attitudes still remain a major barrier to employment for many people with disabilities, and highlights the need to have people with disability working alongside able bodied people, in all areas of the economy. His thesis found experience of disability or interaction with people who have a disability leads to more positive attitudes and acceptance.

☐ People with disabilities should deliver this training.

☐ The first step is to have conditions attached to training budgets of Governments and not-for-profits to require compliance to phase in disability training progressively to be delivered by people with a disability over a 2 to 3 year period.

☐ Universities, TAFE, consultancies and private organizations deliver disability training courses; however most, if not all of the training, is carried out by able bodied trainers when there are many suitably qualified people with disabilities who could provide higher quality training through personal experiences.

☐ Further research to quantify the real situation in this area is recommended.

## **5. Politicians Leading**

☐ Politicians should lead from the front by employing people with disability in their electoral offices. They cannot expect all sectors of the economy to support employment of people with a disability unless they show leadership themselves.

To look at the complete report copy and paste the following:

[http://www.adde.org.au/pubs/Disability\\_Emp\\_Research\\_May12.pdf](http://www.adde.org.au/pubs/Disability_Emp_Research_May12.pdf)

## **MEMBER CONTRIBUTION:**

### **Trotty's Travels**

Queensland 2012

Planning for trip to brother in laws 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party in March 2012 started 6 months before, getting doctors approval to travel, accommodation (wheelchair friendly), financial resources to pay for everything, train ticket bookings including disability access confirmation (hooray for the internet), servicing the scooter (at \$720 for new batteries I am glad it is still under warranty!) and finally ensuring my travel bags were able to be 'carried' by my scooter. All looked under control (except for my itchy feet) until I got the phone call from Country link telling me that due to track works my train journey from home would be partly done by bus! (Scooter-friendly? Apparently so!)

Departure day arrived and I met my travelling companions – train travel for wheelchair users is quite commonplace and also a great way to meet new people ( I even managed to set up a date with a co traveler who was returning home and expressed disappointment that she hadn't been able to visit all the sights which I promptly suggested that next time she visits I would happily escort her to the sights she missed.)

### ***Shaping the future together***

*Our vision / mission is to increase employment opportunities in Australia for people with disabilities and from diverse backgrounds.*



Journey to Sydney went well until we were informed that due to track flooding the train would terminate at Redfern and everyone would have to transfer to another train except disabled passengers – we would stay on train and go back to Sydenham (which has disabled access) and change to another train. Oh well, a small hiccup and well sorted by staff with breakfast, coffee and small gifts provided as a thankyou for our patience. Due to rain falling all day in Sydney my only choice was to spend the day at Central station. Charging of the scooter batteries, laptop and phone took some organizing but plenty to see while waiting (trainspotting and reading).

Three days later I arrived at family home in Brisbane. Wheelchair users don't miss out on much when it comes to family gatherings including getting involved in ice fights! Childminding services are confidently provided and picnics and party's are inclusive but boat trips are not as accessible and time is needed for extra planning and preparation when you travel.

Departing for a sidetrip to Longreach I saw a train carriage that had damage at the front from hitting a cow earlier in the day – hopefully my train would not have the same experience. The train staff were very helpful, storing my scooter and bringing my meals to me.

Back to Brisbane and ready to board the bus that replaced the train, we discovered that the hydraulic lift that was meant to lift me and 'scoot' up into bus did not work. I had to get helped up the steps and three staff had to manhandle the scooter into the luggage compartment. A hard way for the driver to learn that such things should be checked before they collect passengers!

Train trip Sydney to Melbourne was one and a half hours late arriving in Melbourne but the amazing thing was that the many thousands of kilometers that I travelled was mainly trouble free except for the suburban train trip from Southern Cross to Frankston. I got on the Frankston train only to be told that we had to change at Flinders street. Having got there and scooted to the correct platform there was a 35 minute delay due to an 'incident' at Richmond. Happy to eventually get home and realized that nothing beats your own bed.

PS Now I need to decide on my next challenging trip. Let's see, Queensland completed. South Australia done. Western Australia travelled. Victoria completed. Tasmania no passenger trains. Northern Territory done but not with 'Scoot'. That leaves only New South Wales, so I guess that will be my next goal and maybe Darwin with 'Scoot'.

Happy training everyone. Do it while you can.