



Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment (ADDE) Inc.

ADDE Update

April 2013

This update is for ADDE members to keep informed about the current work of ADDE. It comes out approximately every two weeks. Please feel free to distribute to your appropriate networks. Items of more general information will be placed on the ADDE website and face-book page. We encourage you to visit www.adde.org.au and join ADDE's face-book page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/28577322674/>

Employment Discussion Paper

On 3 December 2012 Bill Shorten, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, released the Discussion Paper: *Improving Employment Participation of People with Disability*.

ADDE responded to the discussion paper with a submission. The paper, Disability Employment in Australia – “The Way Up”

Following is the executive summary of the document.

Executive Summary

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)¹, one out of every six people in the world (around one billion) has a disability. The Australian Network on Disability states that ‘over four million people [around one-fifth of the total population] in Australia have a disability’². The Australian Human Rights Commission noted in March 2005, that ‘People with disability represent a significant proportion of Australia's working age population (16.6%), yet they participate in the workforce at lower rates, are less likely to be employed when they do attempt to participate, and will earn less if they do get a job. This has been the case for a long time and the problem is not just ongoing, it seems to be getting worse.’ Indeed, this prediction became fact: in 2009, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that there are two million people with disability of working age, but more than half of those are not in

¹ <http://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities/lang-en/index.htm>

² <http://www.and.org.au/pages/products-services.html>

the workforce compared to around 5% of the working-age population as a whole.³ (see Appendix A for further information).

It is sound economic practice to include as many people in the workforce as possible. Having more people participating and contributing to the economy leads to productivity gains and higher economic returns for the whole community.

Conversely, this also results in lowering infrastructure, resourcing and financial requirements, as well as lessening the costs currently met by business and taxpayers to maintain non-productive and outdated management systems.

People with disabilities are also people who have a diverse range of abilities that are currently not being utilised; they are also people who can develop new skills and further enhance their potential through gainful employment, particularly in the skilled trades, professions, including leadership roles.

Many countries around the world have implemented structural changes which have had a positive impact on the number of people with disabilities employed. Governments in Australia have, for the past four decades, paid attention to the lack of equality in employment of people with disabilities; a great deal of research has been undertaken, working parties convened, schemes and programs put into place, and organisational entities have sprung up to address the needs of people with disabilities. And yet, despite all of these efforts, the situation regarding the employment of people with disabilities has not improved – in fact, it has got worse! Employment of people with a disability in the federal public service has dropped 50% over the last 11 years and currently sits at just under 3% of the total workforce. *Australia* ranks 21st out of 29 *OECD* countries in *employment participation rates* for those with a *disability*⁴.

The Australian **Human Rights Commission inquiry that was chronicled in *Employment and Disability***⁵ (2005) made no less than 30 recommendations. This massive and well researched document laid out a plan on how to proceed on increasing disability employment in Australia. Some of these recommendations have been implemented (such as the internationally awarded website www.jobaccess.gov.au), and some are in train (including the first stage of the National Disability Insurance Scheme), however many more still await attention. In October 2011 Graeme Innes, the, Disability Discrimination Commissioner spoke at the ADDE Best Practice Forum, and again in November 2012 at the Australian Association of Graduate Employers' annual conference, of the 'shameful' disability employment statistics and poor recruitment practices in Australia.

Why does this situation persist? The exact reasons are unclear, but in part they relate to perceived complexities and costs (all of which are in fact damaging

³ <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40March+Quarter+2012>

⁴ *Disability Expectations, Investing in a better life a stronger Australia*, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Nov. 2011 – accessed Nov 2012 at <http://www.pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf>

⁵ Workability2: Solutions. Final Report of the National Inquiry into Employment and Disability, accessed Nov 2012 at http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/employment_inquiry/final/exec.htm#recs

misperceptions). In part also, this relates to a range of misconceptions about disability (for example, related to the outdated understanding of disability as a kind of sickness). It is well and truly time to put to rest the damaging mythology that has no substance, and to move forward deliberately and affirmatively, so that we can turn the tide and create a more positive employment experience for all Australians.

There is one fundamental reason for the lack of progress: Australian programs have failed, and continue to fail to address systemic inequality. While other countries' employment policies and programs have matured, operating across all levels of the labour force, programs in Australia are still largely aimed at specific groups and are implemented through another agenda (mainly, in terms of reducing the number of allowance recipients), and operate in 'pockets', addressing the needs of small groups rather than attacking the more widespread issue of inequality.

For example, in 2013 the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will begin to provide assistance for people with disabilities in two regions in terms of training, equipment and personal support, which may well improve their employability; however this scheme will, arguably, not of itself deliver better employment outcomes. Likewise, the Disability Employment Services will continue to provide a service that will assist a small percentage of people with disabilities to get mainly low level jobs. Large areas of disability remain untapped and underutilised, particularly in the skilled and professional areas, and unless an investment is made to seriously address the range of career, employment and training issues, the current situation in Australia is doomed to persist.

The full version of the document can be found on the following link.

<http://www.adde.org.au/pubs/ADDE%20-%20The%20Way%20Up%202013.pdf>

On the recent ABC Q&A program Bill Shorten was on the panel and he expressed some of his views on the issues around disability employment in Australia. He is a strong advocate on setting targets for the number of people with disability employed in organisations larger than 100 employees. Listen to what he has to say on the link below.

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s3695401.htm>

Disability Employment Broker Project.

The project is well on track as we now have nine firm bookings for workshops during April and May. These include:-

Lake Macquarie Council

Geelong City Council

Golden Plains Council

Surf Coast Council

TAC, (2 workshops)

Deakin University

Newcastle TAFE

Newcastle University

The forum for Newcastle is booked into the "IDEAS Expo and we have one hour with Graeme Innes and the Regional manager of the NDIS launch site on May 3rd

Graeme and the launch manager for the NDIS in Barwon will be hosting the forum at Buckleys entertainment centre at 11.00am on May 30th followed by a light luncheon..

Graduate transition to work project is progressing well and Helen Cooke has been confirmed to run two workshops in Melbourne, one for students and one for employers. These will be held on May 20th and 21st at RMIT University and the ANZ bank at Docklands.