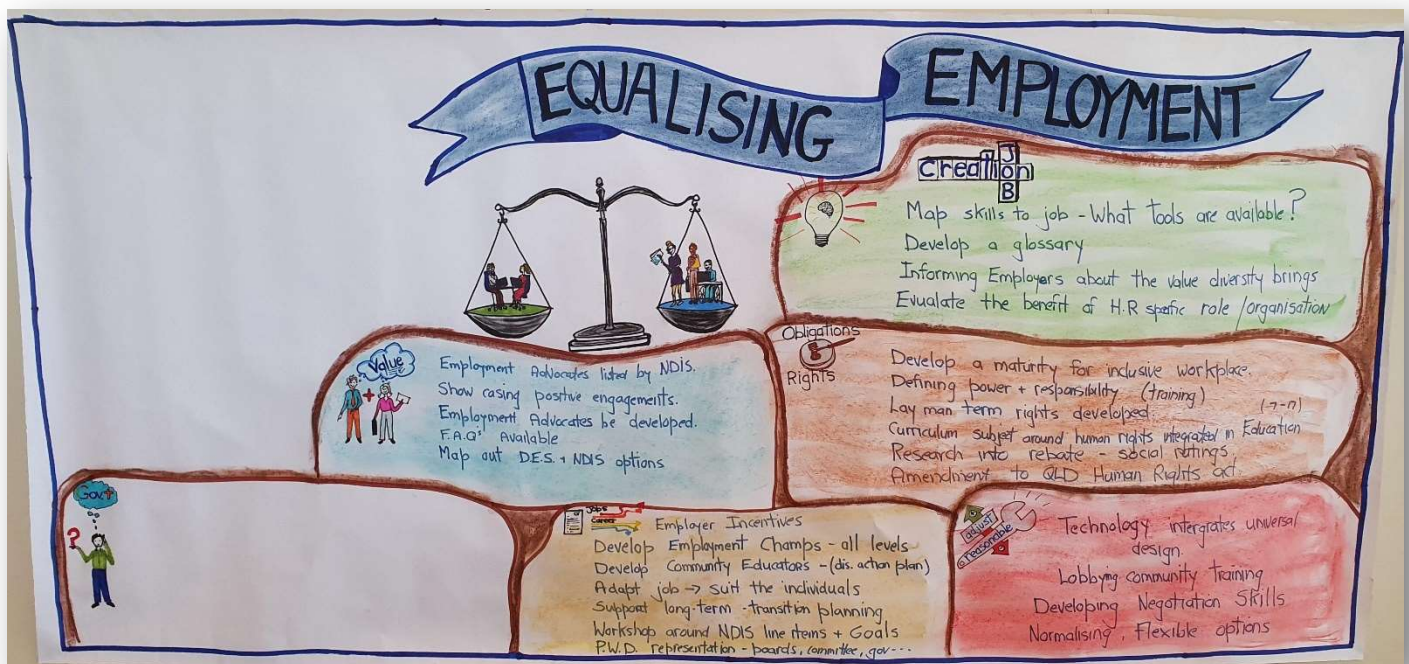


Equalising Employment Opportunities

Forum – 19 November 2020



On 19 November 2020 Social Scaffolding and partners held the Equalising Employment Forum for people with disability and businesses to create positive and innovative solutions for increasing employment opportunities.

People with disability have told us that they want to engage in a job that they are passionate about, where their skills, knowledge and experience will be valued and utilised. They also want to be challenged to grow their skills and grow professionally. These are goals we all want to achieve in our work life.

The forum focused on understanding and uncovering enablers for people with disability and businesses - that will make it easier for people with disability to be engaged in meaningful employment. We discussed a range of topics that are key in reducing barriers that both people with disability and businesses may be encountering throughout the employment journey, and how we could tackle these.

The topics discussed during the forum included:

- Employment, jobs and career pathways - the importance of all three for people with disability
- The shared value exchange for people with disability and employers



- Understanding employers and employees' legal obligations and rights
- Understanding and reframing reasonable adjustments
- Job creation and innovation

What did we learn?

Employment, jobs and career pathways

Forum participants told us that people with disability have a determination and drive to succeed in life and in their careers, and this needs to be fostered. People with disability are too often seen as a homogenous group with no differentiation in their knowledge, skills, abilities, or aspirations. If we are to move forward and create employment equalisation, people with disability must be seen as individuals.

Vision

That people with disability:

- have a broad range of career opportunities and outcomes
- have well-fitting, meaningful careers rather than perfunctory jobs
- have access to assessments that help uncover aptitudes and career pathways
- live in communities where differences are visible and employees and employers understand and are realising the shared values and benefits that can be created in working together

Issues	Solutions
<p>Lack of Career Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of promotional and careers opportunities experienced by people with disability • PwD are typically employed in low skilled manual labour or generally lower skilled roles – despite their ability to undertake more meaningful and skilled roles • More permanent job opportunities for PwD are needed in addition to opportunities for employment more broadly. • Increased opportunities for PwD to obtain career progression opportunities internally <p>Complicated career processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career processes are complicated leading to the creation of further barriers • No career development opportunities or processes are put in place <p>Low level of expectations by employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers underrate or underestimate what PwD can achieve • No expectation or push for PwD to pursue a career • No concept of career progression • There is an unspoken assumption that PwD want to stay in the same job <p>Lack of skills matching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PwD seen as a homogenous group resulting in non-individualistic approach applied for recruitment 	<p>Awareness raising and breaking down misperceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employer's knowledge of the career aspirations of PwD - that PwD can progress, change jobs and get more out of life • Reduce biases and stereotypes about PwD in the workforce • Community educators - educating organisations • Evidence to showcase the shared value of employing PwD • Evidence that by employing PwD the economic spend by government is reduced • Breaking down myths and increasing knowledge about reasonable adjustments <p>Advocacy and Support for PwD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a national body to advocate • Increase opportunities to access advocacy support • Provision of mentoring, life coaching guidance to empower PwD to build their knowledge and recognition of their skills and abilities • Support, linking, empowerment • Opportunity to explore what you want to do and what you are naturally good at • Peers with disability sharing their stories about their career path journeys to demonstrate that success is achievable <p>Career Pathway Support - Help to find the right path to be on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports that help develop career pathways and work with people long term

Issues	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misalignment between the skills PwD possess and the types of roles they are given • PwD not operationalising their true potentiality • Job matching to skills is inaccurate and does not promote career pathways <p>Power imbalance between employee and employer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PwD feel that they have less negotiating powers than employers <p>Biases and Stereotypes about PwD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative biases and lack of understanding by employers and recruiters when it comes to engaging PwD in employment and career pathways • Belief that PwD should be grateful for their job at all • Corporate Social Responsibility is used as the reason to employ PwD rather than the person's skills and abilities • Deeply ingrained inequality in relation to diversity and inclusion of PwD in employment <p>Lack of understanding about existing supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDIS enables innovative solutions but PwD and employers do not know how to access these • Existing supports that can assist PwD to participate fully in employment are not well known and not utilised to the full extent that they could be <p>Limited connection with peers who have had success in navigating career pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited promotion and awareness of how PwD have successfully navigated the employment pathways to obtain successful career • You can't be what you can't see – having connections with peers to enable PwD to gain confidence and knowledge that career progression is attainable • Employers – having evidence-based disability actions plan that show the impact being achieved for employees and employers <p>Lack of individualisation in the recruitment process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DES providers - would benefit from spending more time getting to know the person to facilitate better job matches between the employer and employee. E.g., Disability Action at Work through the Brisbane City Council built the confidence and skills of both PwD and the Council • Entry level employment programs which offer 16 weeks career peer sessions are helpful in assisting PwD with obtaining a job. However, for someone looking for a career pathway there needs to be a plan for career progression at the end of the 16 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to see what options available, build resume Outcomes achievement of Maslow's hierarchy • Transition planning • Advocates delivering a message - fill gap between employer and PwD • PwD creating connections to build opportunities - courage and support to connect. <p>Review recruitment and career processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt jobs to suit people - environment rather than job • PwD take over the process to employ people in an organisation • Person centred recruitment processes • Increasing knowledge about "What do we as an employer need to do?" <p>Create employment parity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity, opportunity (same as abled person) parity, professional development, broadening of experience <p>Collaborative relationships between employer and employee's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both ways communications of expectations being set with the right job representation in government policy • Incentives to employer • DES is results orientation funded that is not working for people with disabilities • Creation of mutually beneficial relationships between employer and employee founded on shared outcomes not gratitude <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment agency that advocate for PwD around their skills, talents and goals

Issues	Solutions
Broad awareness raising of the people with disability in the workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the benefits broadly and breakdown misperceptions • View the right that PWD have to a career through social lens • More visibility of disability potential 	

Outcomes

- Employment is recontextualised to be about a skills match between an individual and the employer, rather than about filling diversity quotas
- Employers have increased awareness, understanding and knowledge about engagement with and employment of people with disability
- People with disability have access to peer supports and champions to increase their knowledge and capacity to engage with employers in meaningful and progressive career opportunities

Shared Value Exchange Employees/Employers

Issues	Solutions
<p>Biases and Stereotypes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across the world PwD are less likely to be employed and be underemployed than their counterparts without disability. The primary reason is the pervasive and long-held negative perceptions held by employers about hiring PwD Employers harbour pessimistic biases across a number of employment dimensions (recruitment, selection, career advancement etc) about the work-related abilities and benefits of employing PwD <p>Compliance perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment of PwD is often seen through a compliance lens (i.e., meeting diversity targets) rather than seen from a skills and talent perspective where the PwD's skills and talents would support the organisation to meet their overarching goals (including economic outcomes) <p>Additional Work for the Employer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employing PwD is often seen as being extra work in terms of making additional accommodations (adjustments). Different to in a negative way <p>People with Disability Not seen for their Abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PwD want to be seen for their abilities and how they can contribute to society not as inspiration porn (to quote Stella Young – <i>'I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much'</i>.) Employees - people with disability as the employer 	<p>Flipping Existing Negative Perceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normalise PwD in the workforce – showcasing the individualistic skills that have delivered outcomes for employers Deliver positive stories and challenge assumptions <p>Highlight the unique skills that are beneficial to today's and future employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PwD are solving problems innovatively every day, seeing and doing things in a different way. These are the soft skills that are needed by employers now and into the future PwD are agile and resilient - young people are lacking these things. PwD bring in new skills and experience that others in the workforce can learn and develop from. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AUSLAN friendly, inclusion lens, forward learning for others [mgrs., peers], work and life and experience and knowledge <p>Diversity and Inclusion from the top down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase buy-in from organisational leaders by showcasing the benefits Supporting a positive inclusion culture in the organisation to enable PwD to be their best Remove the US and from employment culture and mentality - It can/ B impact us all; It is a human condition/ it is the norm Employees - storytelling and link to outcomes and link to job interview profile <p>Benefits to the Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness that through employing PwD it will increase their organisation's recruitment reach The experience of COVID-19 has shown organisations that the traditional office-based models of working are being expanded to include more flexible arrangements. These 'new' work approaches are highlighting that staff work performance remains high or sometimes higher. Need for innovative work approaches that will meet the needs of PwD as well continue to deliver on organisational outcomes.

Outcomes

- The shared value created by employing a person is viewed as equal regardless of whether the person has a disability or not
- Increased trust and willingness of people with disability to disclose nonvisible disabilities
- More awareness by employers of the benefits of hiring and developing the careers of people with disability
- Reduction in employers' negative perceptions about hiring people with disability (e.g. that is a connection between disabilities and lack of success)

Understanding employers and employees' legal obligations and rights

Issues	Solutions
<p>How do you find out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair Work Commission • It is everyone's responsibility, but the information is not easily accessible • It is often when an issue happens that you find out what your legal obligations and rights are <p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers avoid risk • Risk reputation, staff customers • What are the costs, money = unknown [small business]? • Employers don't know the right language to use or how to behave • Have responsibilities to give this information proactively to employees • Whilst it is everyone's responsibility to be aware of their legal obligations and rights there is often a power imbalance regarding knowledge, understanding and capacity to engage in the process <p>Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min. Viable knowledge • Disengaged employer/ employee rights • Don't comprehend the seriousness of understanding their legal rights and obligations or know what they can do • Lack of understanding about what their obligations and rights are when a situation occurs – "what do I do - support leave" • Info is available but is often not accessible and people may not be motivated to access as they lack understanding of the importance 	<p>Increase awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs more awareness lifting • Provide specific training/ barriers around disability e.g., Basic "Min – off the shelf" disability topic • Host businesses to undertake this awareness training - Australian network of disability training, online, face to face • Orientation workshop/ info - know and exercise rights • All on same page; achieve equality - understanding, see change – recruitment • Increase awareness that understanding and being compliant with employment legal obligations and rights is everyone's responsibility <p>Education for employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing education in high school about understanding your rights / year • Increase employee knowledge - pay levels, Anti-discrimination Act, Human Rights Act etc • Provide training on the job – induction and professional development training, TAFE / community network • Building the capacity of employees to make their own risk assessment • In place support <p>Employers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training resource for employers - relearning • Engage unions/ agency • Review values of the business and how they are integrated into business processes - value diversity, inclusion, human rights, UN Charter on PwD • Include human rights within restitution • How leaders embody values • Enforced the rights e.g., ABN. Have some certification - rights carp. • Compulsory training through support agencies • Embed a culture from the top down that builds the capacity and knowledge of staff <p>Improved accessible and user-friendly information and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more accessible and user-friendly information that demonstrates benefits and mitigates risk • information so that both employees and employers know and understand their rights • Provide training modules either on-line or face to face] • Simplify legal documents <p>How do we get the information out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified system which is inclusive of all diversity • News headlines - Equal Employment ad • Third party promoter - DES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more education – social media; Inclusion at work “website” self-evaluation <p>How do we get by in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable agency • Social rating - individuals • More employee feedback with annual pulse survey • results impact government procurement ability • Education process which holds high standard of human rights • Organisational audit to optional standards >80% - reward and recognition <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got to amend legislations - power to infer • Step gap method to going backwards - how to keep organisations and individuals accountable: need more teeth in our human rights bill • Single national standards
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Outcomes

- Diversity is common sense / good knowledge
- Information leads to acceptance and support and a more inclusive society
- Qld Human rights Commission to develop survey [human rights prize]
- Employees are seen as assets within the organisation

Understanding and reframing reasonable adjustments

Issues	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone works the same way - reasonable adjustment makes things equal • Reasonable adjustments are often considered to be design flaws in access, where, when altered by the adjustment become more frequently used by everyone not just PWD. That is because they on now accommodating all human use. • Language of reasonable adjustment creates a power imbalance <p>Job Access and Reasonable adjustment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DES requires too much paperwork no reasonable adjustment available • No equipment with appropriate disability options • Accessibility support limited by distance, time etc. • Includes disability awareness training • Reports open for 12 months for extra assessment <p>Perception of high cost to the organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of understanding and misunderstandings about reasonable adjustments • There is a perception from employers that making adjustments are expensive and always a large cost to the employer • The number one reasonable adjustment request is around flexible work hours rather than equipment • Reasonable adjustments are typically perceived as those to the physical environment when they can be a range of things that assist the employee to perform his job role and responsibilities • There is a misperception that a PwD will need a large amount of support to do their job when in fact a PwD may only need support for 10% of their role <p>Question of Fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can create a fairness question from other employees who then question why they cannot get a workplace adjustment <p>Complexity in the process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very fragmented approach • Structure of support is complicated - multiple people involved • When reasonable adjustment report is provided – it must be actioned - 48 hours for assessment to be initiated • Employers may fill in forms, but procedure not undertaken • Support services are there but not accessible when needed. • There a large knowledge gap in organisations tools and resources requiring a solution to close gap <p>Lack of understanding about reasonable adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDIS participants and employers don't know how to ask for funding 	<p>Before the job:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding a way/ a different way to allow people to demonstrate what they can do - what they can offer <p>After the job:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise cancelling headphones sensory issues • Accessibility regarding information required for the job/ orientation/ guidelines • Universal design / housing should be for every house and public space, as every human needs it • Office buildings and emergency exits/ access, often omit PWD as the affect is two different <p>Dispel myths and increase understanding of adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information to employers about workplace adjustments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ supports available to employers and employees ▪ changing the mindset of workplace adjustments (e.g., Flexible work arrangements are used to help employees balance work and personal needs. The cost to implement flexible work doesn't change depending on who requests it.) The cost and benefits in making adjustments are similar whether they are for a person with disability or without. • the process for engaging with employees to discover what strategies could be put in place, including knowing how to ask PwD what they need rather than make assumptions. • Assist PwD to get their job done in the same amount of time as their colleagues • Valued employees - belonging / trusted • Improved community perception of PWD • Creates economic benefit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More taxpayers ○ Less leasers more lifters

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High turnover of employees resulting in knowledge base leaving the organisation• Employers need to understand how to maximise all employees and reasonable adjustments can facilitate this• The existing business software used by some organisations is often not accessible for PwD to enable to perform their job effectively, necessitating some adjustments to be made to enable them to perform their role | |
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Outcomes

- People with disability are authentically engaged in design and implementation of adjustments
- Employers are more aware of how to engage in discussions about making adjustments with people with disability
- People with disability are able to access innovative adjustments that will enable them to perform their role and responsibilities in their job

Job creation and innovation

Issues	Solutions
<p>Disability not seen as a positive in recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers make choices about employees based on an algorithm 'fit' and friendliness How you make them feel = age, gender, accent/ and ethnicity, disability, [apparent or not] Awkwardness of interviewer creates a situation where people are rejected Job seeker must be in ways that are never apparent in the job criteria and P.D. <p>Being hired for skills and talent not as a disability quota</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited - Dis specific Undervalued Power imbalance - lack of accountability Policy - reinforces imbalance and inequity Can't even get in employers' door <p>Inflexible and outmoded recruitment processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment processes are not flexible to meet all PwD's needs. The issue restricting change is the prevailing view that to create a recruitment process that is not about bias but about equity and fairness, it must be all about implementing a structured one-size fits all process which does not consider innovative thinking. These traditional approaches do not consider the different needs of PwD and how to bring out the best from them in recruitment. <p>For example, traditional recruitment approaches often rely on the candidate to 'tell' the recruiter about themselves. For PwD this is often difficult either because of the person's particular disability condition and/or difficulty in talking about themselves etc.</p> <p>Interviewers that approach recruitment through methods such as, "show me not tell me", enable PwD to showcase their talents and skills more effectively. The result is that PwD are then hired for their skills and talents not as a disability quota.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creative thinking regarding recruitment methodologies Not enough job protection More room for improvement Segmented employer [silos] so no one does the role of investigating 'job creation' Some companies are innovative in meeting market needs but mostly absent 	<p>Showcase innovative solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual storytelling Air tasker / good tasker Transferable skills - Max Q joystick Existing relationships - Freya <p>Review existing recruitment and selection processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to review/adjust approach to screening and interviewing potential candidates to get the best out of each individual and ultimately hire the best candidate for the job <p>Develop heightened understanding of diversity in the workplace from the top down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better/ greater leadership and matured/ comfortable understanding of disability <p>Rethink approaches to recruitment and selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide education and information to employers and recruiters to open up new, innovative thinking in recruitment for PwD Showcase examples of innovative thinking, for example, recruitment methods being used with neurodiverse individuals Recruitment agencies that advocate, educate, up-skill, inform, and use strength-based approaches to represent PwD <p>Rethinking employment opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change language and open to new ways of working - employment by organisations is not the only option. Need to make NDIS and others understand self-employment Innovative approach acknowledges micro self-employment Exploration of new job markets as well as revitalisation of previous markets such as manufacturing, e.g. sewing/ clothing

Outcomes

- Develop a scale of disadvantage to use in lobbying government, create the material for information dissemination
- Assist in developing a pathway for employment in schools

Our Facilitators

Brendon Donohue - Brendon is a disability Advocate that Advocates on behalf of issues that affect the disability community - especially employment, Transport and the NDIS.

Stephanie Dower - Stephanie Dower is passionate about creating a more inclusive world and normalising the experiences of people with disability.

Leigh-ann Elliott - Leigh-ann Elliott has been an active advocate for her son who has complex disabilities for the last 40 years. She has had additional formal roles within disability advocacy organisations.

Charmaine Idris - Charmaine acquired a disability in her forties which has been a life changing experience for her. This combined with being a hands-on parent to a male and a female has allowed her to view life from a different lens.

Karin Swift - Karin Swift is a consultant with over 25 years' experience in the disability sector and advocacy. Karin is passionate about inclusive service responses for women with disability in relation to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) and women's health.

Our Supporters



Attendees

- Declan Hart
- Michael Dobbie
- Jim Haywood
- Marisol Lynch
- Alison Bennett-Roberts
- Michael Guymer
- Elizabeth Kendall
- Sirani McNeill
- Laura Lewis
- Annette Maguire
- Emma Dunlop
- Jade Williams
- Nikki Combes
- Maxine Thornton
- Shane Devereaux
- Christos Papadopoulos
- Colleen Papadopoulos
- Brad Swan
- Trish Ennis
- Paul Musso
- Alex Hooke
- Lesley Richardson-Winifer
- Thomas Skennerton
- Anais Urbano
- Cody Skinner
- Judith Hemingway
- Sandra Lerch
- James Christie
- Aron Mercer