



**Queensland University of Technology**  
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Marston, Gregory, Stafford, Lisa, Chamorro-Koc, Marianella, Beatson, Amanda T., & Drennan, Judy](#)

(2017)

*Seamless Journeys to Work for Young Adults with Physical / Neurological Disabilities. Stage 1 Report: Disability employment policy and program influences on education-to-employment transition for young adults.*

This file was downloaded from: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/110731/>

**© Copyright 2017 [please consult the author]**

**Notice:** *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

# Seamless Journeys to Work for Young Adults with Physical / Neurological Disabilities

## Stage 1 Report

Disability employment policy and program influences on  
education-to-employment transition for young adults

2017

Gregory Marston<sup>1</sup>, Lisa Stafford<sup>1</sup>, Marianella Chamorro-Koc<sup>2</sup>, Amanda Beatson<sup>2</sup>, Judy Drennan<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>

*This research is supported under Australian Research Council's Linkage Projects funding scheme (project number LP150100168) and research partners - Jobs Australia and Disability Employment Australia.*



Jobs Australia



---

<sup>1</sup> Affiliation The University of Queensland

<sup>2</sup> Affiliation Queensland University of Technology

## Acknowledgment

We wish to acknowledge the many organisations and individuals who committed their time to participate in this study. We are grateful for the knowledge and experiences you have shared with us. We also wish to thank our industry partners Jobs Australia and Disability Employment Australia, as well as CoAct for promoting the study and CPL for their additional ethical approval and support of the study.

## Contents

Acknowledgment.....	2
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Aims of the Project.....</i>	8
<i>Methodology.....</i>	8
<i>Research Participants.....</i>	10
<i>Methods .....</i>	11
<b>Stage 1 Research Plan.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Literature Overview: Young people with disabilities and Transition.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Enablers in transition .....</i>	13
<i>Barriers to a smooth transition.....</i>	14
<b>The Australian context of employment and transition services .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Transition in policy.....</i>	16
<i>The Australian experience of employment services .....</i>	17
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Disability Employment Services.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Political-economic influences on DES .....</i>	22
<i>Performance measurement.....</i>	23
<i>Regional adjustments.....</i>	30
<b>The DES system, Young People and Transition.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Eligible School Leavers program (ESL) .....</i>	32
<i>Young people outside of ESL - Barriers to employment support.....</i>	35
<i>Moving Forward .....</i>	41
<b>Intersection between income support and disability employment services for under 35 years in receipt of DSP.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>The crudeness of mutual obligation.....</i>	43
<i>Work capacity assessment – The determination of mutual obligation .....</i>	49
<i>Designed out - Tightening eligibility of DSP and DES.....</i>	55

<b>Intersection of social-cultural attitudes toward disability and psycho-social barriers</b>	58
<b><i>Fragmented education-employment systems</i></b>	62
<b>Solutions /strategies - What’s making transition to work more successful for young people with disabilities</b>	63
<b>Creative resistance</b>	63
<b><i>Building expectations</i></b>	64
<b><i>Peer support helps to understand what is achievable and right</i></b>	66
<b><i>Individualised and tailored approach to job placement support</i></b>	66
<b><i>Specialist knowledge of work place modifications and assistive technology - showing what is possible</i></b>	70
<b>Intervention points - Moving forward</b>	71
<b><i>Broadening the policy understanding of education to employment pathways</i></b>	73
<b><i>Transition to Work –Cutting Across Multi-Systems</i></b>	73
<b>Summary</b>	74
<b>References</b>	76
<b>Appendices</b>	82
<b>Appendix 1 - Theme book</b>	82
<b>Appendix B - Interview Schedule</b>	94
<b>Appendix C - Analytic approach to the different data sources</b>	96

## **Executive Summary**

The findings described in this report relate to stage 1 of a larger Australian Research Council Linkage project: *Seamless Journeys to Work for Young Adults with Physical / Neurological Disabilities*.

Stage 1 of the study takes a deeper look at Disability Employment Services (DES) and intersecting service systems to understand policy and program influences on the transition to work for young adults with disabilities, with a specific focus on those with primary physical and neurological impairments.

The intention was to identify not just what the policy and program rules say about transition and young people with disabilities, but importantly, how implementing organisations (e.g. service providers) experience, understand and practice the policy and program logic as well as the potential implications and conflicts that exist with regard to supporting young adults with disabilities in their pathways to employment. The data informing the analysis were interviews with 22 participants (from organisations - DES providers and peak body/systematic advocacy organisation), as well as 16 publicly available submissions to the Australian Government's 2015 discussion paper on DES reform.

The analysis has revealed that young adults with disabilities encounter extensive barriers that hinder their education-to-employment pathways and employability. The barriers are wide ranging and include:

- policy and programmatic derived barriers pertaining to transition itself and more broadly disability employment,
- social-cultural barriers, such as negative attitude/prejudices, low expectation, poverty
- spatial barriers, such as regional areas, housing and other forms of built environment and transport.

The foundations of these barriers connect to prejudicial conceptions of disability and subsequent forms of social, economic and spatial marginalisation encountered universally by many people with disabilities (WHO, 2011).

This study has also shown through examining the main disability employment service systems available to 'eligible young people' how the pathways to employment and one's employability is tightly prescribed through an inflexible program underpinned by broader influences of marketization on service delivery (Lantz and Marston 2012), and stereotypical views of disability and attainment.

The findings have also revealed that study participants have found ways to overcome barriers to support and enable young adults with disabilities in their transitions. We have deemed these workarounds 'creative resistance'. Some key strategies included:

- building work attitude and expectation with schools, individuals and families;
- developing localized partnership models to facilitate appropriate school-based traineeships; as well as
- work immersion programs to build a career outlook.

However, while these ‘creative resistance’ practices to service restrictions are helping young people with disabilities build their employability, these services are only made possible through the initiatives of workers and organisations, such as the participants in this study. To be truly effective, these practices need to be accessible to all young people with disabilities. A way this can be achieved is through DES recognising and incorporating these practices into a suite of services for education-to-employment transition.

Moving forward, there are philosophical and operational changes needed in DES to make the transition between education and employment more seamless for young adults with disabilities. These include:

- Recognising that transitions takes time – it’s more diverse, lengthy and complex in the contemporary Australian economy where paid work is becoming less secure. As such, transition support in DES needs to be widened beyond the Eligible School Leavers (ESL) program to reflect this reality.
- Allowing permeable pathways between education, pre-employment and employment to recognise that young people are at different points in the journey (particularly important for those with complex needs).
- No exclusion of who can access employment support through DES, including eligibility in the ESL program if a young person with a disability wants help finding employment.
- DHS Assessment could be based more on a more interactional model of disability that captures complexity of needs to ensure appropriate level and type of support as well as being age appropriate (like the two versions of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) International classification of Functioning, Disability and Health - ICF adult version and ICF-CY child and youth version).
- Allowing DES ESL providers to:
  - help raise expectations *early on* with schools, individuals and families as a way to build expectation and intrinsic motivation. Showing open employment is possible for people with a disability early on is critical to which pathway is decided post

school. Earlier intervention is critical.

- support quality and various work experiences along with paid after-school job while at school to help enhance employability and build a career focus.
- To acknowledge the specific needs of Recent School Leavers (RSLs) in DES who did not go through or who were not eligible for ESL but have transitional support requirements e.g. development of employability skills and experiences. Being handled in the adult systems /process (assessment process and compulsory activities) without appropriate adjustment is not helpful.
- Remove restrictions in supporting young adults in the tertiary education - employment pathway, so like ESL, they can have a seamless transition to work by being able to have access to employment support and specialist knowledge with practice placements, graduate job readiness, unpaid internships (length to be self or co-determined).
- Career development and career transition support for people post-placement.
- Encourage individualised tailored approaches e.g. customized jobs, social enterprises, localized partnerships models to support employment success.
- Foster peer group support and sharing of success stories (not just on government websites – needs to have authenticity).
- Specialist providers providing knowledge to generic organisations of affordances/modifications (building, jobs, technology) and assessment /planning.

To improve employability of young adults with disabilities requires a client driven holistic approach that supports their complex, diverse and lengthy education-employment pathways. As it stands the transition to paid work as defined in DES is too narrow and restrictive, and essentially it is not capitalising on the opportunities, knowledge and practices that are shown to enhance young adults with disabilities in their pathways to employment and their employability (Rausch et al., 2014; Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). Australia needs a change of thinking and practice towards young adult with disabilities and transition to facilitate genuine employability for a group of people who have a high degree of self-determination and agency.



## **Introduction**

Education-employment transition is critical for the economic futures of young adults with disabilities (Punch et al 2004; Rusch et al 2014; Wakeford & Waugh 2014). A successful transition to work can help towards persons achieving full social and economic participation, a key ethos underpinning the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006*, of which Australia is a signatory. Article 27, specific focus is on the right to work and employment, outlining that:

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

However, it is well recognized that in many countries (Critten, 2016; Vogtle 2013), including Australia (Punch et al 2004; Wakeford & Waugh 2014), the right to work, choice and employment for young people with disabilities is not well actualised.

To enhance employability of all young people with disabilities and their transition success, the international and national research suggests there needs to be a seamless journey between education and employment that offers a suite of individualized services across the systems (e.g. Rusch et al 2014; Wakeford & Waugh 2014).

### ***Aims of the project***

The overall aim of this project is to help make the transition to work more seamless for young adults with physical/neurological disabilities (aged 17-30 years) by understanding their experience of transition to work and identify blended interventions (policy, physical, social and technological) to improve:

- person-centred service delivery
- facilitating choice and self-determination
- sharing of experiences in their journeys to work.

### ***Methodology***

Studying transition as a journey, requires a system approach to understanding disability and employment. A human ecological systems approach recognises the complexity of interactions between people, their environment and the context in which this interaction plays out. The context, involves multiple layers of structures all of which can have an influence on one's experiences. Interpreting the meaning of this experience and the process that leads to these experiences, can help identify intervention points moving forward.

Framing this systems approach is the concept of Journey, the Interactional model of disability and the System Ecological Model.

### *Journeys*

Journey is understood here as the habitual time-body-space routines and processes that people go through in pursuit of participation in everyday spaces, and the felt meaning of that lived experience (Stafford, 2013, Stafford, 2014). In this study, the focus is on work participation, and the journey young people go through in their transition from education to work to become and be involved in work. This included: the pathway taken, pre-planning, past reference points, and the day to day routines practices related to gaining and keeping work (Adkins, Chamorro-koc & Stafford, 2015; Chamorro-koc, Stafford & Adkins 2015). The concept of seamless is about connecting the dots in the fragmented, complex and often difficult interactions young people with disability face in their day-day living to help improve participation.

This way of thinking is informed by Geographical Phenomenology, where the focus is on understanding how people experience their environment and seeking to identify and describe “complexes of pattern and meaning which outline the underlying, continuing order of things, process and experiences” (Seamon and Mugerateur, 1985, p. 9). These underlying structures, revealed through our habitual time-space-body acts, “identify and describe those networks of relationships marking out essential dimensions of experience” (Seamon and Mugerateur, 1985, p. 9).

### *Interactional Model of Disability*

This research adopts the position that the production of disability is an ongoing and complex interplay that exist between people and their sociocultural -physical environments. This thinking reflects the Interactional Model of Disability. This idea brings together the person (body-mind-emotions), the environment (social, cultural, temporal, and political) in the context its occurring (space and act). Framing the production of “disability” as an “interplay” helps to understand how to improve circumstances of people (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 60). Theorists such as Shakespeare (2006) and Hughes and Patterson (1997, 329) proposed this interactional model to address the gap and shortcoming of other models of disability in recognizing body and agency and understanding the complexity of experience of disability and disablement.

### *System Ecological Model*

In the case of workforce participation, it is important that when exploring these interactions that we do in a way that captures the many everyday spaces that comprises the broader spatiality of workforce participation – not just the end location, rather the practices, process

and routines performed that construct it and its interactional context. As such an interpretive research design is adopted to explore the concept of journeys to work for people with physical disabilities.

Complementing the development of the interactional model is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST). This systems approach to understanding people's experiences examines the interplays between people (individual characteristics) and environmental-contextual influences at different levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro, chronosystem). This includes family, peers, community, institutions and laws and policy, as well as societal attitudes, beliefs and expectations. These interactions are dynamic rather than static. This theory has been applied widely to understand many complex areas including child wellbeing (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's systems approach is applicable to advancing the interaction model of disability and understanding journeys to work, as it recognises the complex environment and its parts (socio-cultural, physical, temporally, virtual, institutions, economic-political), which individuals, in this case young people, interact with and are influenced by.

### ***Research participants***

Young adults with physical /neurological disabilities (17-30 years), service providers, peak organisations, disabled people's organisations (DPOs), government and employers.

*Rationale for young people participant selection.* The age of the young adults was expanded beyond 25 to 30, in recognition that some young adult's transition may be delayed due to transition being via further study, and completion of this study may take longer due to intersection between person's impairment (health status, interruptions), secondary education attainment and tertiary pathway, and the time to complete tertiary studies or vocational training.

The focus on neurological and physical impairments is due to less information being known about their journey. We understand from international literature that this diverse group of young people can experience multiple barriers in their education to employment pathways. Furthermore, young people with physical impairments with more severe forms of conditions (Huang et al. 2013; Jefftha, 2015; Michelson et al, 2005), those with dual physical and cognitive impairments (Huang et al. 2013; Lindsay, 2016; Rutkowski & Riehle, 2009); additional complex health needs ( such as epilepsy -Michelson et al, 2005 or hydrocephalus-Shaw, 2006); life-limiting conditions (Abbott et al. 2012; Abbott & Carpenter, 2014), and complex communication needs (Huang et al. 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle, 2009) have higher risk of unemployment.

## Methods

This study offers an in-depth, multi-disciplinary and mixed methods understanding of the complexity of the journey to work for an under-researched group who experience everyday discrimination in regard to economic and social participation (Productivity Commission Report 2009 a & b). The project has four interrelated aims with corresponding research questions. This report focuses on Stage 1. Stages of the Research: 4 Stage, 3 year study.

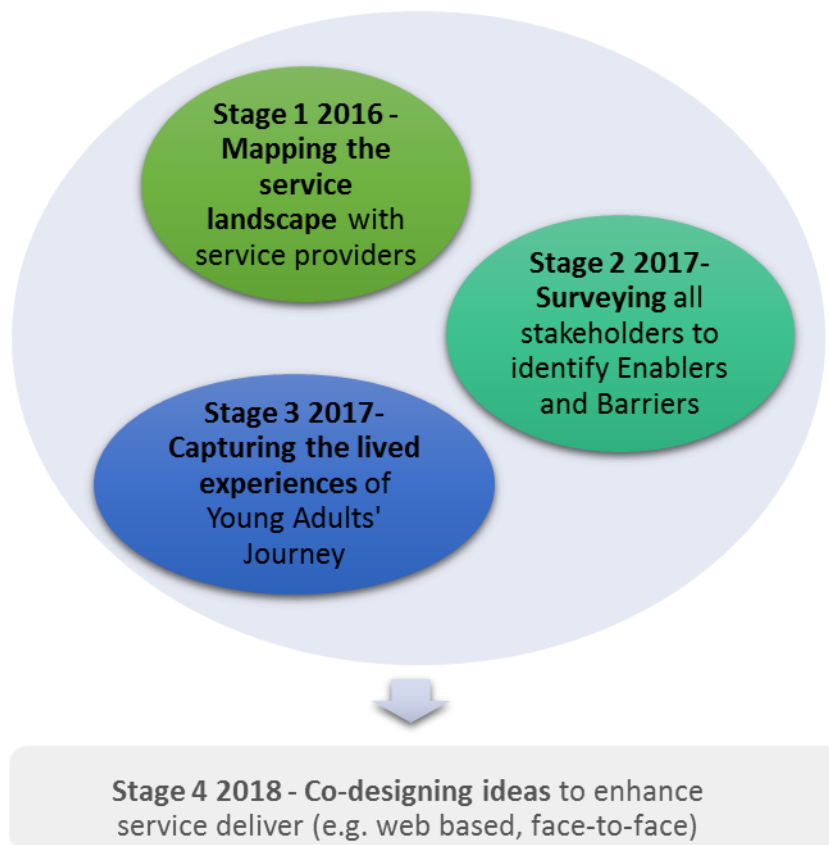


Figure 1: Project Stages

### Stage 1 Research plan

Stage 1 of the research examines Disability Employment Services and the intersecting systems to understand policy and program influences on the transition to work for young adults with disabilities, with a specific focus on those with primary physical and neurological impairments. The analysis identifies not just *what* the policy and program rules say about transition and young people, but importantly *how* implementing organisations (service providers) experience, understand and practice the policy and program logic, and the potential implications and conflicts with regard to supporting young adults with disabilities in their pathways to employment.

The reason for this focus on employment services, is that secondary schools have and continued to be a focus of much of the transition research, yet less focus has been on employment services such as DES, its role in supporting young people in different points in the diverse education-to-employment pathways, as well as DES interface with education systems.

*Data selection and collection.* Participants from systematic advocacy organisation and DES services providers were invited to participate in interviews using an in-depth approach guided by semi-structure interview schedule (see Appendix B). 22 people participated in the interviews, six of these participants also have a disability. The participants held various positions in these organizations – such as CEO/Directors, Managers, Policy/Project Officers, and specialist professionals. Their experiences with disability employment ranged from one year, through to extensive experiences, where many had involvement with disability employment when it was previously the disability employment network (DEN). The interviews were conducted in person or via the telephone (due to national span of the study), and the durations of the interview were between 45min to 1 hour. The interview explored transition to work for young people with disabilities across three areas: barriers to transition, solutions/strategies, and needs moving forward at the policy and program level. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcription services.

Secondary data in the form of 16 organisation's submissions to the National Disability Employment Framework were utilised to inform analysis and theme identification. These submissions were accessible on the DSS Engage Department of Social Services website. 41 academic papers from 2005 upwards were also reviewed and analysed (see Appendix C) to inform stage 1. The papers were identified by keyword search terms: physical disability, young people, transition, school to work transition, employment, workforce participation, conditions types.

*Data analysis:* This stage applied the interpretive policy analysis protocol (Yanow, 2011) to the interviews and documents. Table 2 identifies the approach and questions framing the analysis of the different sources of data. Coding was assisted through the use of NVivo 11. To help confirm consistency in interpretation of themes and subthemes, two coders reviewed the initial transcripts. A table of themes with sub-themes and descriptions was produced from the iterative process of review and refinement (see Appendix B).

*Ethics:* Stage 1 of the study received ethics approval from human research ethics committees of QUT and UQ (universities) and CPL (non-government organisation).

*Limitations:* The generalising of the findings are limited to the data collected and documents reviewed in this study. It doesn't present young people's own experience in this stage of the study. Rather it is the understanding and experience of individuals in organisations.

## **Literature Overview: Young people with disabilities and Transition**

Transition itself is varied and complex. Young people encounter more diverse, lengthier and complex education to work pathways in advanced industrial societies (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; McDonald, Grant-Smith & Marston, SI forthcoming). These pathways are more fragmented and unpredictable, and have a greater emphasis on post-secondary education (Furlong & Cartmel 1997; McDonald, Grant-Smith & Marston, SI forthcoming; Punch, Hyde, Creed, 2004). All the while underemployment and over-employment is intensifying in Australia (McDonald, Grant-Smith & Marston, SI forthcoming). These complexities mean it is likely that some young people will experience difficulties in their transition to work.

Young people with disabilities generally are particularly at risk, as it is well established that they experience universal poor work outcomes (Hemmeter, Kauff, and Wittenburg, 2009; Cocks & Thoresen 2013; Meadows, 2009, Miles Morgan 2012, Wakeford and Waugh 2014). They also experience higher rates of unemployment than their peers without disabilities in Australia (AIHW 2011; Honey et al 2014) and in other OECD countries (Huang et al. 2013; Malviya et al. 2012; Michelsen 2005; Magill-Evans et al. 2009; Rutkowski et al. 2006).

There are many reasons for low levels of social and economic participation experienced by young people with disabilities. These include socio-cultural, political-economy, physical, and psycho-social factors. Understanding how these factors play a role in the employability of young people with disability, needs to be understood from the social location of disability and associated forms of disadvantage and oppression such as ableism and othering (Gleeson, 1999), as well as intersectionality. The method of identifying the intersection of multi-dimensions (such as age, disability, class, ethnicity, locality and gender characteristics) and the impact this has on life chances (intersectionality) (Williams, 2016).

### ***Enablers in transition***

Due to young people experiencing more complicated and drawn out education-to-work pathways, life course theory (Mayer 2009) and employment literature suggest that it is important that this transition is made as easy as possible. This is particularly the case for young people with disabilities, as a smooth transition between education to employment is considered to be a key determinant in achieving open employment participation success (e.g. Rusch et al 2014; Wakeford & Waugh 2014).

For a smooth transition, the international literature suggests that young people with neurological /physical impairments require services systems that offer: multiple pathways to employment that are permeable (inc. tertiary education to life skilling programming) (Huang et al. 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009); offer supports and services that are person-centred—client focused' involving self-determination and/or self-efficacy (Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Test et al. 2009); provide work experience opportunities and support to prepare for transition

(Lindsay 2016; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009); access to specific transition planning input and advice (Lindsay 2016; Shaw 2006); and integrated systems of services that straddles the fields of secondary school, post-school education, health and employment (Abbott and Carpenter 2014; Diaz-Mendoza et al 2015; Huang et al 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Shaw 2006; Vogtle 2013).

Such approach to supporting transition requires input from all persons and groups concerned, as transition is everyone's business. As Winn and Hay (2009, 112) note: "Transition is not only the responsibility of the person with the disability, their families and educational authorities, but also that of legislators and employers".

### ***Barriers to a smooth transition***

Recognition of the importance and complexity of education-to-employment transition in policy and legislation is not new. Countries like US (e.g., Novak, 2015; Rusch et al 2014) and UK (e.g. Abbot and Carpenter 2012; Critten, 2016) have invested and regulated transition planning for some time. However, what should be done and what is being done, does not necessarily correlate. This is evident in the reported fragmentation of services in the pathways to work experienced in different countries, such as United States (Rusch et al 2014; Novak, 2015; Rutkowski & Riehle, 2009), UK (Abbott and Carpenter, 2014), and within Australia (Children with Disability Australia (CDA) 2015; Winn & Hay 2009). It is also understood where transition planning is mandated for all young people with disability, like in UK, some young people, like those with life limiting conditions such as Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, are missing out on receiving "structured" transition planning (Abbott and Carpenter 2014, 1196).

Furthermore, the international literature identifies that young people with physical/neurological disabilities face significant challenges in their pathways due to a lack of supports and approaches that promote a smooth transition. These challenges include:

- complicated and disconnected government programs and policies (Diaz-Mendoza et al 2015; Huang et al 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Shaw 2006; Vogtle 2013);
- lack of appropriate work experience programs (Lindsay 2016; Shaw 2006; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009);
- low expectations to work held by society, schools, families, individuals (Abbott and Carpenter 2014; Baker, Mixner & Harris 2009; Vogtle 2013; Lindsay 2016; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Shaw 2006)
- inadequate transition planning (inc. lack of integrated approached between systems – education, health and employment) (Abbott and Carpenter 2014; Diaz-Mendoza et al 2015; Huang et al 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Shaw 2006; Vogtle 2013)

- poor career advice within allied health and schools (Abbott and carpenter 2014; Diaz-Mendoza et al 2015; Huang et al 2013; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009; Shaw 2006; Vogtle 2013).

Research has also suggested that young people with severe or dual disabilities (e.g. physical and cognitive) are considered to experience poorer employment outcomes due to multiplicity of barriers – e.g. social-cultural, psychosocial, physical and programmatic barriers (Huang 2013; Jefftha 2015; Lindsay 2016; Michelsen 2005; Rutkowski & Riehle 2009).

Young people with disability not only face barriers in their pathways, they also report experiencing discrimination. In Australia, 20.5% of 15-24 years reported experiencing discrimination (Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC, 2016).

The international literature identifies that stigma and prejudicial attitudes continue to be encountered by young adults in their post school pursuits (Abbott & Carpenter 2014; Baker, Mixner, Harris, 2009; Lindsay, 2016; Shaw, 2006; Rutkowski & Riehle, 2009). Part of this stigmatisation is young people with physical and neurological impairments being medicalized (the perception of disability being viewed as a personal tragedy -Riddell, 1993, p. 448) and being seen as *patients*. The literature suggests that when young people are described as patients it is difficult for them to be seen by others as a legitimate participants in society (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014) and potential employees (Rutkowski & Riehle, 2009).

The consequence for focusing on cure and treatment without focusing on participation, can greatly influence young people's access to appropriate advice (Diaz-Mendoza et al 2015; Malviya et al. 2012; Shaw 2006) and opportunities to gain preparedness skills and training (Huang et al. 2013). Both are considered key predictors to employment success and one's employability.

### **The Australian context of employment and transition services**

Australia has a particularly poor record for employment rates for people with disabilities generally, ranking 21st out of 29 OECD nations (OECD - Soldatic and Pini, 2009). Of the one in five Australians with a disability, over 1.3 million persons are of working age (15-64 years) are not in the workforce (ABS, 2011). The situation is also low for young people with disabilities, compared to their peers without disabilities (ABS, 2012). Between, age 15 to 24 years, the labour force participation rate for young people with disabilities is 56.6%, where as their peers without disabilities rate is 70.8% (AHRC, 2016).

Improving workforce participation of people with disabilities is a key policy priority of the COAG endorsed National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, and is considered crucial in helping to improve both the economic security and the personal wellbeing of Australians living with a disability (ABS, 2012). Hence, the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (principles), identifying both Employment (policy area three) and Learning - Education (policy area five)



as key policy areas to improve the social and economic participation of Australian with disabilities.

### ***Transition in policy***

The national disability strategy notably recognises the important relationship between educational outcomes and economic contribution for people with disabilities. Specific recognition is given to education to work transition. As outlined in Key Policy Strategy 5.5, there is a need to “Identify and establish best practice for transition planning and support through all stages of learning and from education to employment.” However, the national strategy also clearly identifies that to see improvements require policy interventions that seek to change attitudes towards disability—improve employment rates, remove barriers and disincentives for people, and improve accessibility of buildings, transport, information and telecommunications to enhance the contribution of people with disability. As such, increasing economic participation requires the intersection and improvement of all policy areas.

Effort to streamline roles and responsibility between federal and state government, has been attempted through efforts such as *Roles and Responsibility in Education Issues Paper* as part of the Reform of the Federation (CDA, 2015; Wakeford and Waugh 2014). However, the responsibility for education and thus transition still rests with state and territories (CDA, 2015; Wakeford and Waugh 2014). As such there is a lack of national coordination and responsibility for post-school transition policy and programming (CDA, 2015; Wakeford & Waugh 2014). Only two nation program exist - National Disability Coordinator Officers (NDCO) and eligibility limited Eligible School Leavers (ESL) situated as part of the Federal Disability Employment Services. Pre-vocational programs such as post school services program from states, are in the process of transferring to National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), like Transition to Work (TTW – NSW government model) as the scheme rolls out nationally. However, access and model of delivery is still being resolved as NDIS progresses. Despite these efforts, there is still divide and fragmentation in services delivery policy surrounding education to employment transition.

Whereas in the US, over two decades of commitment to transition, has resulted in more clearly delineated roles and responsibilities between level of government (e.g. CDA, 2015; Rusch et al 2014; Punch et al 2004), underpinned by evidence-based practices and indicators to continuously improve transition support for students with disabilities (e.g. Rusch et al 2014; Punch et al 2004). This has been particularly the case for those with severe disabilities, where the transition to work is most greatly affected (CDA, 2015; Wakeford & Waugh 2014; Meadow 2009).

From the review of the literature, it appears, that as it stands in Australia, the success an individual's transition to work or education post school comes down to one's social supports

(family, friends), where you live (state and territory), what school you go to, what the culture of the school is and their available resources (time, knowledge, and networks) to support transition.

### ***The Australian experience of employment services***

In Australia, policy and service systems play a significant role in shaping pathways to employment for young adults with disabilities, as well as attitudes and practices within these systems. Similar to other western countries (e.g. UK-Betty and Fothergill, 2015), managerial and marketised approaches to social services and income support in Australia over recent decades has influenced the logic of many programs, including disability employment services, and associated rules and guidelines around income support payments (Lantz and Marston, 2012).

The 2006 welfare to work changes were particularly significant as it brought closer scrutiny and attention to the situation of people with disabilities on income support. Since this time, the government continues to follow OECD's recommendations to target and regulate new recipients, address the rules of eligibility to benefits whereby governments are encouraged to enforce 'work availability' requirements for receiving benefits, and implement sanctions for non-compliance (Marston and Lantz, 2012). For persons who are already in receipt of disability-related benefits, the OECD recommends more frequent reassessing of work capacity.

A recent example of such an act is in 2014, where the Australian government undertook an 18 month review of all person under 35 years on DSP to determine work capacity (see 2015 Disability Support Pension Recipients Compulsory Requirements guidelines). Anyone under 35years of age deemed to have a work capacity of eight or more hours per week (without a youngest child under six years) have compulsory requirements tied to income support. To this end, the governing of welfare in Australia has become highly conditional and contingent on the fulfillment of obligations and the pursuit of employment.

Invariably, this policy paradigm emphasizes individual responsibility, and enacts punitive responses to control those people who are perceived as failing to contribute economically. However, successive Australian governments over the past 30 years have failed to reduce the number of disability support pensioners by simply tightening the eligibility criteria where there has not been a simultaneous increase in available jobs. Part of this demand-side failure also relates to what Goggin and Newell (2005) describe as the disability apartheid, where the government of the day does not accommodate for impairment thus disabling the individual. Although people with disability often face personal challenges living with their disability, societal and workplace attitudes are often negative and employer activity is typically minimal (Galvin, 2005).

### *Disability Employment Services (DES)*

Australia's employment service for people with disability has undergone many changes over the past 30 years. In 2006, the Australian government introduced the current model of support, Disability Employment Services (DES). DES is a quasi-market model of employment services that operates nationally on the basis of contestability and funding for outcomes, similar to the mainstream employment services system in Australia, Jobactive. Prior to 2006, disability employment services operated differently; as a recurrent funding model with voluntary engagement with clients, and was referred to as Disability Employment Network (DEN).

Within the current DES model, there is significant diversity among DES providers, in terms of size, age and type of service. Most services are generalist, assisting people with a range of different disabilities and some specialist organisation assisting people with particular disabilities, the most common being intellectual disability and psychiatric disability. DES providers operate in all Australian states and territories, and operate in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote settings. While there is diversity in terms of client group, there is uniformity in regard to outcomes and key performance indicators (performance framework and star ratings).

However, due to concerns over stagnant employment rates, the Australian government in 2015 embarked on another review of DES. The reform aims to address key issues with the program, such as: the lack awareness of the program by people with disabilities and employers; the focus on job placement not on job training, job stratification and suitability; and prescriptive administration limiting flexible individualised service deliver (Disability Employment Issues Paper, 2015: 6).

The DES reform also seeks to align more tightly with CRPD 2006; and national key disability reforms – National Disability Strategy and National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. This change toward rights-based person-centred approach is reflected in the seven principles of changes in the Disability Employment issues paper 2015 outlined in Table 1.

Yet, submissions to the issues paper from a variety of organisations question how these principles can be operationalise, particularly: choice and control when mutual obligation requirements are in place; as well as provision of whole-of-government coordination when there are various levels of governments involved in various service systems that don't readily intersect to enable employment (e.g. transport, health, education) and there is a deterrence of dual servicing. This mirrors similar concerns in 2006, when terms such as 'independence', 'access' and participation' were incorporated into the 2006 welfare-to-work reforms and used to sell welfare reform to the Australian public (Galvin 2004: 346).

Table 1: 7 principles of changes in the Disability Employment issues paper 2015 (Disability Employment Issues Paper, 2015: 6).

Principle	Benefits
Individual funding based on needs and aspirations	Choice and control to the individual
Market-based service provision	Flexibility, innovation and responsiveness to individually based consumer choices
Long term career planning and capacity building	Sustainable employment outcomes that meet current and future labour market needs
Understanding of employer needs	Better match between job seeker and jobs, leading to better, longer term employment
Whole-of-government coordination and use of technology	Improved service pathways and reduced 'red tape' for clients and service providers
Increased open employment options	Social and economic gains for the individual and broader community
The person is supported through the life-course	An integrated approach that maximises lifetime wellbeing

### *DES and Students*

A focus on employment services when considering employability of young people with disabilities is important given the Australian Government's DES is the main national program that helps to achieve improved economic participation for people with disabilities. The NDIS does include employment activities, though access to NDIS is limited to people with only

severe disabilities. Within DES, there is a provision to support young people with disabilities in their school-to-work transition – referred to as DES Eligible School Leavers (ESL)

However, in 2012, significant changes were made to the ESL part of DES, limiting the eligibility of who can access ESL to those with severe disability, as well as when and how disability employment services can engage with secondary students in ESL. The restrictions were espoused as safeguarding to protect school leavers from leaving earlier and impacting their education attainment.

The eligibility restriction on students accessing ESL has been acknowledged in the Australian Government's Disability Employment Services Reform paper released in 2016. However, the proposal only mentions the potential to expand eligibility to include more students, but only in year 12, not earlier to avoid "taking over responsibility" from the education system. The proposal does not acknowledge any need to address timing or models of interventions:

DES could provide transitional assistance to students who are about to leave school and enter the workforce, for example Year 12 students who aren't currently able to access DES. Targeting this group would ensure that DES focuses on its strength in providing employment assistance while not taking over responsibility for educating people from schools or providing incentives to students to transition to work before they have completed their schooling. (pp. 44-45)

Outside of ESL, there is no age-specific support for young people in other education-employment pathways. This is evident in the program rules currently preventing DES providers engaging with tertiary students with disabilities in the education-to-employment pathway, until they have exited or completed university.

It is this somewhat narrow conception or one size fits all approach to employability and job placement for young people with a disability that requires critical attention, particularly in light of international experience that illustrates the advantages of making options available, including work experiences while at school (e.g. Huang et al., 2013; Wakeford and Waugh, 2014), customised employment, self-employment (Critten, 2015) and post-secondary education (Lindsay et al., 2016; Shaw 2006)

## **Findings**

The research in stage 1 of this study has revealed that young people with disabilities encounter extensive barriers that hinder their education-to-employment pathways and employability. The barriers are wide ranging and include:

- policy and programmatic derived barriers pertaining to transition itself and more broadly disability employment,

- social-cultural, such as prejudices and low expectation
- spatial, such a regional areas, housing and other forms of built environment and transport.

Underpinning these barriers are prejudicial conceptions of disability and subsequent forms of social, economic and spatial marginalisation encountered universally by many people with disabilities (WHO, 2011). Furthermore, the narrowness in how transition is viewed and approached within DES is also disrupting opportunities and seamless of transition, particular for those outside of ESL, that is the Recent School Leavers (RSLs) and tertiary students.

The analysis has also revealed that study participants have found ways to overcome some policy/program barriers to support and enable young adults with disabilities, particularly in the school to work pathways. We have deemed these workarounds ‘creative resistance’. Some key strategies included: building work attitude and expectation with schools, individuals and families; developing localized partnership models to facilitate appropriate school-based traineeships; as well as work immersion programs at school to build a career outlook. These strategies and practices point to policy and programmatic changes that are needed to move forward.

The findings section will begin by outlying policy/programmatic issues that study participants (providers and systematic advocacy organisations) have identified to impede or disrupt transition. The findings will then turn to discuss the broader social-cultural and spatial barriers that have been identified to contribute to disruptions in the pathways to employment. The section ends with description of solution and strategies such as “creative resistance” practices that have been employed to address gaps and restrictions to help young people succeed in their transition.

### **Disability Employment Services**

As outlined earlier in the report, the Australia government has identified economic participation of people with disabilities as a key policy area in the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. The Australian Government’s Disability Employment Services (DES) is a key program strategy that helps to deliver and achieve improved economic participation for people with disabilities. As noted earlier, DES is currently undergoing a review to better align the program with the rights and choice based principles that underpin CRPD (2016) and national key disability reforms – National Disability Strategy and National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. To achieve this change the new DES, will require conceptual and procedural shift towards holistic and individual support. As pointed out by a study participant, such shift is possible:

*Let's look at an individual and have a range of different supports, it's not about choosing one or the other. That will take a thinking shift as well as a policy shift, but*

*it's been done overseas, it's not as if this is completely new – research participant #8  
– Manager*

However, a political-economic paradigm shift is needed to achieve this approach to social-economic support.

### ***Political-economic influences on DES***

While the intent under the new reform is to move to a person-centred, choice orientate program, DES still operates within a marketised service delivery framework. In Australia, these approaches have influenced the logic of disability employment services, and associated rules and guidelines around income support payments (Marston and Lantz, 2012). In both the interviews and written submissions, the influence of managerialism and marketisation on program logics and rules were affecting service delivery. This impact was articulated through providers' accounts of the level of administration and compliance based activities expected of service providers that had increased overtime, whilst government funding has not been increased in line with CPI:

*We're finding that it's taking away from the business of the day and the grassroots stuff. – research participant #11 – CEO/ Director/GM*

*There's no flexibility, so if I was going to say at a program level, what you would need is a person-centred approach, and not just lip service to that. But a real dinky-di person-centred approach.... – research participant #1 – Policy/project officer*

*...in the five years before that you lost your flexibility through bureaucracy and then in the next five to 10 years you lost your viability through lack of CPI or any sort of growth. – research participant #15 – CEO/Director/GM*

Increasing caseloads were viewed as one of the consequence of the lack of funding, as increasing caseloads increased potential revenue to cover the true cost of service delivery.

*...possibilities and the government in its narrative right now is talking a lot about - they're doing these big changes or floating these big changes with the disability framework, and the main reason they're floating them is because disability outcomes have gone backwards over five years. I have a very simplistic view of that. It's actually because you've reduced - in real terms you've reduced the investment dramatically and the only thing that can happen when that happens is caseloads can increase because it's the only real lever you've got in the costs of your business that you have. . –research participant #15 – CEO/Director/GM*

In 2016, the issues of red-tape and administrative burden has again been identified as needing to be resolve in the new DES to commence in 2018. How this will be achieved is yet to be understood fully.

However, what is clear from the study participants who are providers of DES, is that providers need to be funded accurately e.g. adjust annually according to CPI. They need less compliance and more flexibility in supporting young people to address various barriers and build skills to enhance their employability. At the same time, providers need to be funded appropriately to provide these pre-employment supports or purchase specialist supports required.

*...you need that flexibility to be able to just support them with their barriers and their health, as well as support them in the employment side of it but also support us to sort of continue operating. –research participant #21 – Manager*

### **Performance measurement**

Performance measures can become a barrier for young people when the pressure to perform on providers impacts on service delivery. Whilst measures are identified as needed by study participants to ensure value and quality of services, what has been questioned is what is being measured and how it is measure it. There was a number of study participants who felt the measures were too narrow and did not capture other important aspects of the program – importantly quality/client satisfaction and pre-employment journey.

The danger of a performance rating system is it can become the main focus of service delivery. These concerns were raised and observed in practice:

*The performance framework, the indicators in there are far too narrow compared to the objectives of a program. It's those indicators - whatever's in star ratings, or whatever's in there, becomes the focus of service delivery. Not necessarily the goals and aspirations of the individual, which leads to many, many legitimate concerns around, these services are just not relevant to me. .... – research participant #1 – Policy/project officer*

This was further evidence in study participants' interpretations about how DES has just become 'a numbers game':

*Yeah and look, it is a tough one because it is a shame to see DES reduced to a numbers game. But at the same time, I was back there at the start where it probably was over funded to be honest. .... – research participant #3 – CEO/Director/GM*

*It's easier to count the beans rather than to re-measure complex outcomes. So we just go into the side's easy, the benefit side, the outcome side is much more complex. So we'll just stick with the bean counting side and we know how much it costs. That's where the policy framework needs to move from, needs to actually look at total societal benefits that come from greater participation of people, disability and*



*then start measuring that against what the costs are. .... – research participant #4 – CEO/Director/GM*

Pressure to reach outcomes has evoked practices of *Churn, Creaming and Parking and Bulk service delivery*, which are not unknown practices, as they have been reported in previous studies (e.g. Lantz & Marston, 2012). These practices were also found to be commonly used in practice-language and were currently occurring in practice:

*Yeah, still it's a numbers, get them in, get them out and hopefully get them into the right environment. You want that fine line of saying you're person-centred and you follow the standards of disabilities, but in reality, you are processing people through and getting them into a job as quickly as possible. If you don't, then your business closes down and there's no one there to support anybody. – research participant #9 – Manager*

Each of the practices are briefly outlined below.

#### *Churn.*

The practice of churn is reported to occur due to the restrictions supporting people with disabilities long term in their employment. Being churned through the system is experienced not just by people who may have lost their job, but also for people wanting assistance to change their job or change careers:

*The DES provider that they're connected with, can't assess them to find another job. So there's no provision in DES for even career transition, not necessarily even career development. But just helping them find another job while they're still employed. So that person at Ingham's Chicken's actually has to leave their job, resign, and go back on benefits and back through the DES churn, to get some more assistance to find another job. Which I think is an absolute disgrace. Yeah and again once they're back in there, the focus is on finding them another job that just gets them in the door. – research participant #5 – Manager*

It was suggested that being able to continue to work with people for whatever employment needs they have post-placement (including looking for another job or career transition) along with a more secure safety net for people would help to avoid churning:

*So sometimes you can end up with this - we're trying to break that cycle of - what we're finding in the cycle of that is we're doing great, we're getting them to 52 weeks or just below, whatever, and then they're becoming independent, but then we're seeing them again six month later. There's no safety net after us, so we're trying to work out with another company of some kind of safety net afterwards. – research participant #17 – Senior Manager*

This is an important consideration as ongoing-support provision is part of the reform agenda of the new DES. Making career/job transition support an allowable services of ongoing support may help to resolve some of the churn.

*Creaming and Parking.*

Study participants spoke about how the practice of creaming and parking continues to occur in DES as government continues to focus on outcomes and ratings. The practice of parking was particularly apparent with people who were not as job ready as others, and who often had more complex needs or severe impairments. Whereas the practice of creaming, involves working with those that are the most job ready, thus likely to get a job.

*Yeah, creaming and parking. Which is sort of, in some ways, that's what goes on with outcome-based funding, depending on how you structure the payment system. But if people are getting paid on outcomes, they're going to focus on, who is going to give me the outcomes and how do I focus my resources on getting them. Rather than channeling my effort into people who are a lot further away, perhaps, from employment. – research participant #2 – Project/Policy Officer*

*But often if the incentive is to get a certain percentage of people in employment, and it's the same old categories, is that you're only going to support those people who are most likely going to get a job. Whereas those people who society would greatly benefit in the longer term, if some investment was made over a series of - a period of time to actually get them placed in a job so they build their own skills and their capacities and their confidence and their particular behaviours; society would hugely benefit if that person was placed. ... why would you invest all that time and energy into what's going to be a problematic outcome which might have huge rewards. When you can actually just do the more standardised, bread and butter stuff that will get people who are easier to place within a standardised system of support. – research participant #4 – CEO/Director/GM*

The pressures of operating in a tightly prescribed performance framework creates the environment for such practices of creaming and parking.

*Bulk service delivery.*

Another practice that has emerged is the practice of bulk service delivery. This practice is being seen with some ESL young people in traineeships.

*Yeah. You set small timeframes, you're tying kids in to a route which, yeah, you're going to - your success rate's going to drop because of that. What's happening with a lot of the programs at the minute is they're doing bulk, which doesn't - all right, there's a few programs out there, I've got to say, that are very, very dodgy. You've probably*

*came across a few of them. They're actually putting kids through traineeships in bulk, but they're not actually training the kids to actually do anything. It's all about money making. Within the sector I'm seeing that happening at the minute, but it's always going to happen... if you're working large numbers rather than individualised and tailored. – research participant #17 – Senior Manager*

Such practices are believed to be surfacing because of the pressure and desperation to perform:

*The government's pushing them that way. It's the star ratings. It's everything going on that's pushing people into having to get desperate, having to do those kind of measures. So it's very hard to walk that line of values and funding at the minute. – research participant #17 – Senior Manager*

These practices are alarming. The consequence for young people with disabilities is significant, as they are potentially detrimental, setting people up to fail, or underachieving. Such damaging practices are the unintended consequence, when predetermined outcomes become the key measure of service delivery.

*Well yeah, people are told what the definition of success is. So providers are told what the department will pay for in terms of their outcome. So they have a speculative assessed work capacity, devoid of any work context that might go right, for this person, you've got to get them 23 hours a week - so 199 - or 299 hours in 13 consecutive weeks of employment. If you do that, you can have a full outcome, subject to 100 and other - 100 and other one conditions being met. So that becomes the focus of service delivery. People see jobseekers walking around with 299 on their head, or 195, or 104 rather than hours needed to get an outcome. Or they'd say 4400, 5500 on their heads. Rather than - and the way that the performance framework works, it puts providers in a sprint across the finish line. Every 13 weeks, you've got to give as many people as possible anchored into outcomes that might - anchored into jobs or education that's going to trigger an outcome in 13 or 26 week's time. The faster you can do that - and there are no quality measures in here. It's simply a quantitative count. The faster and more volume you do, in a relative performance assessment, you actually push the performance of others down by going faster. So you can be - you can get more people into really, really crappy jobs and be seen as a higher performer. – research participant #1 – Policy/project officer*

*There has been - there has been since they changed the KPIs for the star ratings because it's now - every single measure is now after you get them a job, whereas previously it was how quickly you got them on to your case load, how long it took you to get them a job from when they started but there was a bit more allowance there for*

*just that support side of it because probably 90 per cent of your work is done before you get them into the job and then you just have to support them after that but that's where the measures start cutting in. – research participant #21 – Manager*

*52 week sustainability indicator.*

The introduction of the 52 week sustainability indicator has in some ways promoted longer-term thinking about employment and careers by providers. The problem, however, there is no financial incentive attached to this outcomes for provider or individuals.

*But I think the 52 weeks thing is probably another positive feature or strength of DES, perhaps in relation to jobactive, because it has a longer term focus and a longer time horizon and more focused on sustainable jobs than jobactive. But we would argue that you're expecting people to - you're expecting providers to get people into jobs for 52 weeks. Well, you should be paying them to... – research participant #2 – Policy/project officer*

*Then we've got a 52-week that's a performance tick but not a financial. All of these are financial. This is some financial in here. But mainly, this is the biggest area of your performance, is basically get someone in a job and get them to six months. Then you get a 52-week indicator that we know it's sustainable. Clearly, the Department is saying, alright DES you're crap. You've done a reasonable job over the years but you can't get them long term. So we want to measure you. We're not actually crap. The system's crap and I'll tell you why. – research participant #14 – Senior Manager*

*Yeah and look I don't mind under that model if some of the outcome payments were extended there, okay, this is the quality. If there is a greater time lag, you know, instead of a 52 week bonus we'll push that out. That would maybe help in terms of the funding model and would be fair as long as it was loaded up a bit at the front and there was some sort of quality controls around the percentage that do make it through. – research participant #20 CEO/Director/GM*

The other issue with the 52 week indicator, is that it is not adjusted for people with more complex unstable conditions – such as in mental health, and because the 52 week sustainability indicator is used as part of star rating determinant, some study participants felt the ratings can be impacted due to lack of adjustment for the complexity of some people's situation.

*I think that they built in the 52 week sustainability indicator, so if someone's episodic and the chances of them not having an episode over a year, the KPIs to me are flawed. I don't mind them because it gives you direct measures, but they apply*

*regression to them. So you could be performing at the highest level, but then an algorithm's applied that changes your rating when you could practically look at it and go they're one of the highest performing most supportive, look at how long their job seekers have been in jobs. – research participant #22 –Senior Manager*

*No adjustment for people with episodic changeable conditions.*

The measures in generally were felt by some study participants to not be suitable for people with chronic, episodic or changeable conditions. There was felt to be no adjustment for such changeability, and its influence on work capacity.

*If the program - the way the DES program is set up, and I'm assuming all the star ratings are right, so you commence someone in the program today and tomorrow they start dropping [unclear] denominator [unclear] star ratings. Now that may be appropriate but it's certainly not for someone who has these episodic barriers that comes and goes and you might - you know, you might be able to have them with employment but they might only last for four or five weeks before they have a bit of an episode and that comes [unclear]. Now even if the employer is open to holding that position for them for a couple of weeks while they get back on track it doesn't really work with the program for us to achieve the outcomes and the goals that we need to achieve to show that we're. Yeah, so as an example in the [DEN] contract, the previous contract, you could accumulate the hours for your outcomes. So even if they had seasonal work or if you had six weeks' worth of work here and two weeks' worth of work there, the person is still working and you could accumulate those hours to reach your outcomes and your star rating, whereas now that criteria of that is continuous weeks of work, you have to have your 13 weeks continuous to get that outcome. – research participant #21 - Manager*

*You could work for four weeks and fall out of work because of medication change or you had a psychotic episode. The clock would stop. Okay, we'd have pissed an employer off, or hopefully not, because we've done a lot of work. But it would still get the goat and it wasn't all the time. At least the clock stopped. Then we'd go back and go, right, what did we get wrong. Okay. There was pressure in that environment and that's when you fell apart. So let's look at something a bit more suitable. Let's take the pressure off ourselves. Okay, filling shelves of a night isn't your ideal job, but you're working. You're mixing with people. There's not the pressure there. Then when you've done that for a bit, let's try and get you back into the fruit and veg department where you're dealing with customers and there's a bit more pressure. So you could work with - so in DEN, IEP, it was still an impact but it didn't have the*

*impact on the performance that DES does. – research participant #14 – Senior Manager*

What has been recommended moving forward is more time working with people and financial support to help them in their recovery:

*I understand that and that still at the end of the day ongoing employment is the goal and it's got to be achieved. However so that they don't pull out of jobs and give it the best chance and they're not coming back through the system, there needs to be more support financially and time given at the pre-employment stage to help them on their recovery. – research participant #20 – CEO/Director/GM*

*No Specific measuring young people in transition*

Education to employment transition is a major life stage change, where young people are working out career goals and spending time developing their employability. It's like the cliché – it's a time for exploration and growth. The performance indicators however does not support young people moving between education and employment to try things, explore and figure out what they want to be doing.

*Yeah. I think it's - even if halfway through, they transition back to full education, great. Because whenever I took an ESL on and still do, for me, education's the most important thing - to get that. When I was a transition officer, they'd come in, hate school, and want to leave. I'd be working hard to just find them a job to keep them occupied, so they didn't leave school. It was just look, try, and don't leave. Let's try this. So yeah, the ability to go back if they decide that education is the right thing and there's no penalty for them, whatever program's been supporting them. Because that's that in and out that screws your data or screws your performance, not your data. – research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

Some providers who have long term experience working with students and transition, have worked out ways to allow students time, whilst not affecting ratings. These included working with people pre-DES (off the books) to ensure young people are ready and that this is the pathway they want to take.

*If you build those relationships with parents and young people, then they're more likely to - they get outcomes with school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. We've got mechanisms where we only sign them up once they're about to start school-based apprenticeship and traineeships, so they don't affect their star ratings and all those sort of things. But we do have an expectation that they will put in extra above what their contract requires them to, so some DES providers just look at me like - why would we do that? – research participant #8 - Manager*

### ***Moving forward.***

Many study participants felt that as part of the reform there was an opportunity to rethink how employment is actually measured. This included: the process of getting a job, the long term focus on career, and the value of other forms of employment such as social enterprises, self-employment, and an after-school job. The need for revision is somewhat captured in the statement below:

*So the policy, we need in terms of the KPIs we have star ratings and payments. We need greater thought for well how do we get them - and you consider things like social inclusion. How do we refer them and the payments for a service at that period of time is very low. It's very weighted towards outcomes. Look I understand government is looking for different solutions. They want better outcomes but you've got to understand the business. As I say if we took a bit more time in pre-employment and really had a look at the things that assist people to address their barriers and their goals it can work. But in terms of the KPIs for contracts it's too short a time and there's not enough money for intervention there. It's probably an initial higher investment from government up front but the results would come. . – research participant #20 CEO/Director/GM*

Other consideration in a review and revision of performance assessment include:

- Move to performance benchmarks and undergo a paradigm shift in outcome calculations.
- Captures and reflects long term career thinking. Ways perhaps to encourage this is through incentives and career development. Need to avoid rewarding just job placement.
- Measuring quality should be a factor. The quality framework is positive as it is and should be linked to star ratings. Client satisfaction is an important measure to capture.
- Potential different measures for young people in transition – measures consistent with life-stage/experience.

### ***Regional adjustments***

One of the gaps within the disability employment policy that is impeding people in regional areas, in particular, is the complex intersection with other social-spatial factors that can impact a person's employability. These factors include people of lower income living in fringe areas of outer suburbs and inner regional areas due to housing affordability, but where job availability and social infrastructures such as transport can greatly vary. In many locations, there are often poor and costly services. However, it appears that this

relationships between location, housing, transport and employment is better understood at theoretical level than at programmatic level.

In practice, these disadvantages and difference are evident. Study participants discuss the influences of social-spatial disadvantage in regional areas and the influence on participation. There is also a noted lack of flexibility, adjustment and resources within DES to develop strategies to address these intersecting disadvantages to improve employment opportunities and employability for people with disabilities living in these areas.

*Again we have areas outside of X, X type area which is about a 40 minute drive, it's a cheap area to live and the people on the lower income live there because they can afford to live there but it's also 40 minutes out of town. So you're expecting them to come into town for their appointments and all that sort of stuff and if they don't have transport and there's no public transport, so they're trying to hitchhike on the highway and all that sort of stuff. It's quite a call to make - you know, to ask someone to do that. – research participant #21 - manager*

*There's a lot more support available in urban areas compared to regional or remote areas. ...I would say just in terms of support and assessment services, they're an issue. ..But also transport, that always is an issue for people in regional areas and the access to public transport or a driver's license, in general. The viability of labour markets of labour markets, often in regional areas the labour market is smaller and there's fewer opportunities. But it does vary enormously across the country. Some regional areas have quite healthy labour markets, others, a lot of them don't. . – research participant #2 – Policy/project officer*

What was also noteworthy, is the clear inconsistency between employment services – DES and Jobactive, in responding to social-spatial disadvantages. Providers of both programs (Jobactive and DES) in the same regional area, experienced first-hand the illogical differences in the programs. That is Jobactive provides a regional loading to respond to the known social-spatial-economic issues encounter, but DES doesn't.

*Yeah, the regional and remote areas, yes. Now I know that in jobactive they've already introduced the 25 per cent loading on funding for some regions and the remote areas. But that doesn't exist in DES....it came in on 1 July last year jobactive - the regional loading. I'd say well it's just recognising the obvious. So why would that not then apply to the DES program? – research participant #18 – CEO/Director/GM*

Addressing the regional barriers and establishing consistency across the employment program is considered critically important moving forward.



Another area that needs further exploration moving forward but outside the scope of this study, is remote areas and the impact of DES not operating in remote area on people with disabilities. Since July 2013, DES was rolled into mainstream remote services, which could be affecting the effectiveness of services for people with disabilities.

## **The DES system, Young People and Transition**

### ***Eligible School Leavers program (ESL)***

As mentioned in the introduction, DES has provisions to support young people with disabilities in their school-to-work transition. However, when analyzing this provision, a number of service restriction and rules exist in supporting transition. From the accounts (interviews and in the written submissions), these restrictions can, and have, impacted on young people's transition pathways. When analyzing these restrictions, it became very clear that part of these restrictions is how the policy views transition to work and the underlying assumptions and structures that is interpreted to shape this view. This was understood through documents, accounts and what we have labelled the "creative resistance" practices that organisation have undertaken to help circumvent or bridge these restrictions.

### ***Benefits of ESL***

The DES eligible school leavers (ESL) changes in 2012 has been reported by study participants as restricting the rules on when DES providers can engage with secondary school students with disabilities. The restrictions are understood in context of the benefits ESL provides to young people, particularly prior to 2012 changes. Study participants involved in ESL, considered the benefits to be significant to transition success. These included:

- Bridging the gap in transition skills, resources and knowledge in schools, particularly in regional areas.
- Prepping /setting young people up for work in timely and supportive ways.
- Helping to provide a seamless process from school to work for those who select that pathway.

This is further reflected in the below quotes:

*It was a definite bridging gap and just even doing the pre-work while they were still at school. We'd send consultants in that were working in the classrooms with a group of eligible kids, and then starting to even transition them through to apprenticeship centres because we'd see a vocation that we could help support with. So it was really setting up the transition out of school into a trade. ...It was a seamless process and regionally it was just filling the gap. Because in the bigger centres obviously there's more supports around, but definitely regionally it was a great program that we had huge success with." - research participant#22 – Senior Manager*

*You could get them work prepped before you took them on traineeships and apprenticeships, et cetera, as well. ...It could just be getting some work experience or work trials just to get them the taste of working, get them used to working, because it's a whole different atmosphere, work to school. Kids don't get that.” - research participant #17 - Senior Manager*

Participants also spoke about the personal (psychosocial) benefits young people receive from good transition support. In particular, being able to experiment with work experience and try things to develop a career focus in a supportive non-pressure way. This helped to build confidence and self-belief. For example:

*I considered looking at their futures and where they wanted to do this. Yeah, the beauty of doing it in school is that they can stuff up a little, it's not like - so we do slowly, slowly, it depends on the individual. But some of that career development, looking at skills, and aspirations, and those sorts of things, then work experience... – Research participant #8 – Manager*

Additionally, the transition support helps young people to start to think about a career, and adopt a long term future employment outlook.

*Sometimes quite thoughtful they would - okay well this industry's not going to give me any stability in my life, I need to look at something else - research participant #8 – Manager*

#### *Restrictions in ESL*

Study participants involved in ESL, believe that the benefits described above have lessened since the 2012 service restrictions were introduced. These restrictions included tightening of eligibility criteria (restricted to severe impairment only) and reducing the timing of when services can engage. For example:

*...one of the big differences over the last few years is, they actually stopped people coming onboard from year 10 and 11. It's now only year 12s in DES... Yeah, the ESLs. That's made a huge difference, especially to us and the success of the kids because that made a huge difference when you could work with them in year 10, year 11 and progress them through proper apprenticeships and traineeships... Huge difference. That's affecting kids all over the place because of that.” – research participant #17 – Senior Manager*

*The hindrance is the criteria that the Federal Government sets for them to be deemed an eligible or early school leaver. We used to do fantastic work of working in with the schools while the kids were still at work even prior, before them coming on to DES. But I think from a cost perspective because those kids automatically defaulted in the policy system to a level two funded client with an eight hour benchmark, and from macroeconomics the government that was a way to save money. So they shut that eligibility down.” - research participant #22 – Manager*

Given the noticeable impacts, is it no wonder questions are being raised as to whether these changes were really about safeguarding young people to ensure they stay in school as long as possible or cost-saving. Taking into consideration neo-liberalism logic of the DES program, mutual obligation underpinning income support and the erosion of dual servicing over time, suggests that the meaning of the policy rule may be in fact more about cost saving.

Accounts from participants in this study points to the need for an extensive approach to transition within employment services. This is to ensure all young people with disabilities, anywhere in their pathway, can received a balance of education /learning and future preparation information and support to help set them up to make informed choices and enhance their employability.

*It's really important that you get the balance right between helping young people with disabilities set long term career goals, which might involve sticking at school, completing school and getting maybe a higher level qualification or training, but also helping them get access in the short term to work experience and employment. So it's about doing what's right and helping people make informed decisions, informed choices, alongside with their carers and parents. research participant #1 – Policy/Project Officer*

Ongoing restriction in DES, is the inability for DES providers to assist young people with after-school job support. This is not deemed as an outcome. This is despite the literature clearly identifying that having an after school job while at school significantly aided young people's employment success (Hemmeter et al. 2009). This is further supported by study participants, who reported early intervention helps, as evident in early excerpts as well as in the excerpt below.

*But there's a number of people in the sector have said that people with disabilities are disadvantaged and you really need to - it's from that early intervention perspective - give them every opportunity that they can to get support, to do things like part time and casual work alongside their peers without disabilities. Just to try and give them a bit of a leg up and help them perhaps to compete a little bit more*

*on a level playing field while they're still at school. Just to get that early work experience and begin their world or their career - enter the world of work and begin their working career while they're at school, as most kids do who don't have disabilities. It's just trying to open up opportunities for them, and access to the supports earlier than currently available. research participant #1 – Policy/Project Officer*

Whilst the reform paper 2016 acknowledges its restriction to students and the barriers this may create in their pathways to work, the reform proposal only mentions the potential to expand eligibility to include more students, but only in year 12, not earlier to avoid “taking over responsibility”

DES could provide transitional assistance to students who are about to leave school and enter the workforce, for example Year 12 students who aren't currently able to access DES. Targeting this group would ensure that DES focuses on its strength in providing employment assistance while not taking over responsibility for educating people from schools or providing incentives to students to transition to work before they have completed their schooling.” DSS, 2016 - pp. 44-45

While eligibility widening will be beneficially, it needs to be done in conjunction with earlier intervention and widening of services in DES to build employment mind set and employability skills while at school. DES ESL needs to adopt a much more holistic approach to direct school-to-work pathway. Others suggestions by study participants included:

- a specific transition specialist in DES (like the old days) who understand the complex intersection between the systems and transition itself.
- support and fund more partnership-based models and individualised tailored approach to traineeships and apprenticeships for all young people with disabilities. The ticket to work model for example has been shown to be effective with young people with intellectual impairments (see Artd consulting Ticket to Work 2016). As such it may be beneficial to open up/trial the model with other impairment types.

### ***Young people outside of ESL - Barriers to employment support***

Outside of ESL, there is no real acknowledgement of and specialist support for young people with disabilities in accessing employment support in DES. Three issues have been identified with narrow approach to transition from the analysis:

- Recent School Leavers (RSLs), 18-21 year olds who didn't go through or were not eligible for ESL, but have transitional to work needs. As it stands they are handled/processed in DES adult systems inc. assessment process and compulsory

activities, which has been suggested as not the most appropriate method for supporting RSLs.

- Restrictions in supporting young people in the tertiary education - employment pathway inc. unpaid internships and
- Lack of career development and career transition post placement.

### *Recent School Leavers*

Recent School Leavers (RSLs) who didn't go through, or were not eligible for ESL are having their transitional needs processed/supported in DES generic streams. There is no age adjusted assessment process or compulsory activities for these young people. Yet, these young people has transitional support needs e.g. development of employability skills and experiences.

Study participants spoke about the significant gap in support and the inappropriate assessment/entry process for the recent school leavers.

*There's a huge gap there, because if someone's - if they've not been picked up at school, once they - we try and pick them up at school, because once they get in that system, it is a nightmare to try and get them out that cycle. Once they go to Centrelink, they get the compliance and, oh, it actually makes it a lot harder than it does at school. You've got more resources while they're at school. Once they get out of school and they're going on to - say they're going on to DSP or Newstart or whatever, it starts to get more difficult....Yeah, they're under obligation when they access the funding generally. They generally go from level 2 to level 1. I don't know why. It's harder to get the funding as well. - research participant #16 - Senior Manager*

*Again younger people who may not have support from parents or aren't close to their families. Sometimes it's the just negotiating Centrelink, if it's the first time they've been there. So even for younger people who've worked before and maybe went straight from school to a job and are now out of work, and are dealing with Centrelink for the first time. It's tough, mentally to get yourself prepared to go to Centrelink, because that's where you go when you're really on the bones of your arse. - research participant #5 - manager*

Moving forward this gap in tailored supports and services for RSL needs to be address. An RSL component like ESL may be a way to help meet specific transition needs of young people in enhancing employability as well as gaining and keeping work. The new mainstream youth Transition To Work program model may also be a potential option, with adaption, for RSLs. There is a need for future study of this group of young adults with disabilities.

### *DES Service Restrictions with Tertiary Students*

The tertiary education - employment pathway has become a significant pathway for many young people (e.g. Furlong & Cartmel 1997; McDonald et al – editorial; Punch et al 2004). The post-industrial knowledge economy has accelerated this demand for “Credentialism” (Brown, 2001), placing higher demand on tertiary education as a factor of employability within this modern workforce (Punch et al 2004). At the same time, the United Nations CRPD 2006- Right to Education, and State responsibilities and regulations (such as Australian Government Disability Standards for Education (2005) have help to open up access to higher education for young people with disabilities. However, unlike in secondary school where engagement can be made with students in their last year, if deemed eligible, it is not until a student completes /exits a tertiary course (this is both TAFE and University) that a DES provider can engage a young person.

Study participants who had experience in this pathway (either as a student with disability themselves, or from a provider’s perspective) felt the DES program rule that does not allow DES providers to engage with students in this pathway, is impacting on creating a seamless tertiary to employment pathway for this group of young adults and their “employability”. This is because study participants in this area felt that tertiary providers are not fully aware and appropriately set up to support young people with disabilities to succeed post-university.

When exploring this restrictions with study participants experienced in this area, they reported that not only can they not engage with a student, DES providers cannot help disability support officers and students placement officers with identifying suitable placements or work experiences – thus potentially impacting on young people being able to maximize their placement experiences, and thus their employability. This is reinforced in an excerpt below.

*Yeah, like another one, a big one for uni students especially, or any longer vet course, where they need to do a prac placement. Certainly from our end we've found that people don't - either don't get a lot out of their prac placement, because it wasn't very accessible or there were a lot of things they couldn't do. That the university staff in charge of coordinating prac placements, just don't either have enough time, or the expertise to actually liaise closely enough with the placement provider, to sort of nut through... please don't get me wrong, they do their best with the time they have. But as you're probably aware, DES providers can't get involved with people doing study, until they've actually finished their course. But it would have been great, and this is something that we used to do in the old days. Where we could actually work with people while they were still at university, liaise with the uni around their prac*

*requirements and find a host employer that met their disability related requirements as well as the requirements of their study. – research participant #5 – Manager*

The stakes are high with placements as they can lead to employment.

The same study participants, also revealed that there is lost opportunity to help young people in this transition pathways, and felt it can be too late when they are out of the tertiary education system.

*I think there's a real - an opportunity to work together that is lost. Because by the time someone's been out of uni for six or 12 months and has had no luck finding a job on their own. They're also on the cusp of missing out on some of the graduate programs that would have been great for them to get involved in. Yeah, so there's again just a bit of a lost opportunity there, where DES could get involved a little bit earlier. Get to know the person and get through all the paperwork and all the crap that you have to do, before you really get to know the person and know what it is that they want. – research participant #5 – Manager*

Furthermore, whilst access to courses are opening up in tertiary education (colleges and universities) they are not necessarily well placed to ensure the best support and outcomes for young people in terms of their employability post university. Study participants revealed there are still attitudinal barriers as well as vocational and modification knowledge deficit, impacting on student placements. For example:

*Everyone else at uni, all my - all the staff at uni were pretty terrible. I had some support from uni, but we just kept on getting knock-backs because the faculty was just not supportive. They - everything we tried just blew up in our faces. ....They just didn't - they said no, no, no, no. Not - too hard, not going to have a bar of it. Eventually I got - they - I got kicked out of the course. I failed the placement. So I had to go through a whole committee through the university, going why did you fail? What would you do if you did it again? So the uni kind of had to admit that they were at fault, but I don't think they did. – research participant #7 - policy/project officer*

The interview data and international literature points to the need for DES to develop a broader understanding of young people's pathways to work. This included supporting people whilst in tertiary-education pathways. This isn't duplication of service, it is a needed service. Though specialist providers was felt to be needed in this area, as many DES providers have also not work in this area, and have a limited understanding of what is possible.

*Most DES providers too, like, although again they try really hard, working with somebody who's just finished a university degree is very different to the trolley pusher in Coles. Even understanding what it is that they are wanting to do in terms of job*

*opportunities, it's a whole different realm of employers as well. So you're not looking at Coles in your local area, you might be looking at Coles Head Office, if they've done international marketing or something like that. – research participant # 5 – Manager*

DES needs to have a flexibly approach to supporting young people with their employability whilst in this pathway, so as to ensure opportunities are not missed, and to capitalized on programs that can lead to employment participation success post studies.

*Unpaid internships* are another area needing to be mentioned in relation to tertiary-to-work pathways because they are used by young people (Owens & Stewart, forthcoming) as a means to improve their employability through work experience exposure. Whilst this is a contentious area, because of the exploitation concerns of young people and current court cases pertaining to the exploitation and unpaid internships (Owens & Stewart, forthcoming), the choice to participate in internships is something that many students and new graduates are still taking up.

However unlike young people without disability, young people with disabilities don't have as much choice in taking up an unpaid internships if they have completed studies and are within the DES rules. This is because no more than four weeks of unpaid work is allowed in DES, this included internships. There is very much a one-size fits all approach within DES policy.

Whilst the intent is to safeguard people with disabilities from being exploited; risk-taking, flexibility and informed decision making have been removed. Young people who want to participate in an internship for longer are not permitted to – there is no choice due to consequences of the rules. This is evident in the case example below shared by a study participant.

*..three months of fulltime experience was what they were basically offering. If he couldn't come to work one day because his pain levels were too bad or if he was a bit stiff the night before and he had to come in late, they were like we don't care, that's fine. It's just this yeah, this amazing opportunity that he couldn't take up, because of - and he even said look, if I leave your DES service, and basically exit and then go and take this up on my own, could I do that? But then because he wasn't covered for insurance, he couldn't do that either. It was just so frustrating. So sometimes when people are really motivated, the employer is as accommodating as they could possibly be. It's all of the stuff around the guidelines that sometimes still get in the way, and especially that unpaid work experience. I think that's probably one of the worst decisions the department ever made.” – research participant #5 – Manager*



The consequence of this opportunity not being realized, was significant for the young person:

*Yeah, and he ended with some pretty significant depression after that, just thinking well, really, ....why would I even bother doing this, I may as well just stay on the dole.” – research participant #5 –Manager*

The whole notion of safeguards is about putting in place measures that enable young people to be supported to make informed decisions and weight up benefits and risks, the freedom to make choices. In this case, very little freedom is afforded to young people with disability because of what Lantz and Marston (2012) note as a paternalistic approach to welfare governance.

The hope moving forward, is the introduction of path internships which will allow internships of greater than the limit of 4 weeks under current guidelines.

#### *Post placement - Career trialing and transition support*

Support with career development and transition was reinforced by study participants as a needed inclusion in DES. It was felt to be particularly important for young people who have been placed in employment. A report on the trialing of career development with young people also showed it as effective in helping people to think long term about work and careers (Miles Morgan 2012).

At present, once you're placed in a job there are not options for career development or support to find another job while being employed.

*Again for young people, I think one of the really big, well one of the big issues in DES is this notion that once people have been placed in to a job, that that is where our assistance ends. ....So as soon as they've gone through the post placement support, as soon as they're independent, we exit them, and that's basically where our assistance ends. But even if the person stays in the DES program, and after the first year decides, look that was great to start with, but I'm really not enjoying it and I think I'd like to try something else. The DES provider that they're connected with, can't assess them to find another job. So there's no provision in DES for even career transition, not necessarily even career development. But just helping them find another job while they're still employed. – research participant# 5 - Manager*

The lack of provision of career development within the current DES model has been considered problematic by submission to the reform and has been identified as a discussion point in new DES 2016 discussion paper. The findings point to a need for the provision of both career development and career transition support being available for people with disabilities. This needs to be open to people already placed, not just pre-placement.

*I mean more so for young people that there needs to be access to assistance to help people move between jobs, without having to leave the job they're in. Because as we know, young people transition between careers so often, and young people without disabilities. – research participant #5 - Manager*

### **Moving Forward**

A significant problem with DES as is, is the lack of individualization and flexibility of support for all people with disabilities.

*They're saying it's individualised and tailored. It's not individualised and tailored, because the minute you use dropdown boxes and only set things you can do with people, that's not individualised and tailored. – research participant #16 – CEO/Director/GM*

For young people in particular, there is a lack of flexibility to respond to the complex, diverse and lengthy transition needs of young people in their education-to-work pathways. As it stands there is only one part in DES that specifically recognises transition, and that is in ESL, and this is extremely limited. There is no recognition beyond ESL of transition needs of young people and the many pathways to work for young people as well as their needs post-placement. Particularly, RSLs - young people who have recently exited school and who are finding transition challenging.

*I think what is really needed to make a significant difference, particularly for young people with physical disabilities. I think it needs to go back to the days of having a dedicated transition person, who understands the employment market. Who understands the DES system well enough to be able to at least educate people about what to expect in a DES service. ...But somebody who also understands the needs of employers, that can hopefully get people linked in with employment before they need to go to a DES service. Or if it was a person within the DES, someone who specialises in transition from school work. We had one, it worked fabulously. – research participant #5 –manager*

The key message going forward is that the current restrictions within DES are not in line with what international literature reports is needed to make the education –to-employment transition successful. That is: early intervention, support with work experience and part-time job support while at school, and individualised flexible models that helping young people into career based work. The DES program has also forgone the benefits that were being achieved prior to 2012, and instead has helped to create more barriers created for young people in their education-employment pathways.

While it is positive the eligibility to ESL is being considered to be extended again in the New DES. There is no real intention to address the other issues, including changing the timing of

service intervention, approach and type of job support (after school job). There is also no recognition and access to specific transition-focused employment support for young people like RSLs or Tertiary students. Such changes are needed moving forward to enhance young people with disabilities transition to work and employment success.

### **Intersection between income support and disability employment services for under 35 years in receipt of DSP**

The analysis of disability employment policy landscape pertaining to transition cannot be complete without understanding it within the broader framework of income support. This is because there is a clear intersection between income support and disability employment services for under 35 years with disabilities. If a young person has not come through DES ESL component of the program, they will be subject to an assessment of work capacity to determine if they have mutual obligation. As outlined in the 2015 DSP guidelines:

“In most cases, DSP recipients who are under the age of 35 years with a work capacity of eight or more hours per week (without a youngest child under six years) will have compulsory requirements.

The compulsory requirements are Full time Study or Employment Seeking. The interesting terms used in the document here is “negotiate”, however when you look at the guidelines there doesn’t appear to be much choice or room for negotiation by the person with disabilities regarding compulsory activity or the right not to work:

*The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the DSP recipient with compulsory requirements will negotiate an appropriate activity for the DSP recipient to undertake to meet their compulsory requirements. Where it is determined that this compulsory activity will be participation in employment services, DHS will register the DSP recipient as a Fully Eligible Participant.*

*If that activity is employment seeking, thus seeking access to employment services, DHS (or consultants to DHS) will undertake an assessment of the DSP recipient’s circumstances through:*

- *the application of the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI), and/or*
- *an Employment Services Assessment (ESAt) or Job Capacity Assessment (JCA).”*

*From this assessment, people are allocated to a particular employment provider services:*

- *Jobactive (Employment Provider Services) – Stream A, Stream B or Stream C*
- *Disability Employment Services (DES) (not covered by this Guideline), or*

- *Community Development Programme (CDP) (reformed of the Remote Jobs and Communities Programme (RJCP) (not covered by this Guideline). (Source: DSP Guidelines - Referral to Employment Provider Services , Deed clause reference, Clause 77, Clause 83)*

Most people with disabilities are placed in the jobactive service.

A person with mutual obligation, has ongoing requirements to meet regularly with DHS and participate in the compulsory activities as set out in the Job Plan in order to receive their Income Support Payments. There is very little choice and control for people with disabilities in working, how much work is suitable or the nature of work.

### ***The crudeness of mutual obligation***

Study participants spoke about the ongoing stigmatised language conveyed about people on income support that influences policy directions and program rules. This is evident in the terms used such as 'bludger' and 'rorters' and in more recent times, 'leaners' introduced by Joe Hockey<sup>2</sup> in reference to people on disability support. This stigmatised perception towards people receiving income support is evident in the adversarial approach to work for welfare introduced in 2006, and 2015 work capacity reviews of people under 35 years on DSP. This deliberate targeting of young people was seen to be connected to the idea of intervening early to cost-save on income support provisions:

*So it'd be interesting to see if that could possibly have an impact on young people with disabilities. But it tends to favour younger people, because I suppose you get a bigger saving over the life course, if you successfully intervene early and get them off income support. – research participant #2 – Policy/project officer*

Overwhelmingly, providers tasked with implementing and enforcing income support rules in DES, felt that the approach and underlying attitude towards people requiring income-support was demoralising and unjust. Many spoke of such acts as alienating people.

*Just look at it as a bureaucracy and all these different sort of categories. What bucket this fits into. It's just bean counting. It seems like we've - there's two things; one that people with disability are always there or their families are always there to rort the system... But evidence suggests that that is not the case, and when it does happen, it's at very minor scale. – research participant #4 –CEO/Director/GM*

*..Yeah, to say that somebody who generally has an issue that stops them from working, or stops them from working as much as they would like to. That they don't*

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/australian-economy/the-big-myth-about-dole-bludgers/news-story/74a32245f846e0d439446e67c14cec22>

*deserve to be supported by the government, I think is sending a really bad message. Just the fact that it's constant, every newspaper you pick up, it's about these DSP bludgers. It's like really? Is that really how we should be talking about people with a disability, who really do have some significant barriers to work. – research participant #5 - Manager*

*Stick approach – removes choice and control*

Furthermore, study participants suggested no choice or control could be exercised by people with disabilities in relation to mutual obligation – it is compulsory participation or face the consequence of no income support. The Income Support and DES program interface, was understood to be operating under the *stick* approach to get people off welfare and into work. This is conveyed in the accounts of study participants:

*Well I mean it works for some people. But I guess their question is, what works better. The carrot and the stick. The go to response has increasingly been the stick, the stick, the stick, the stick, unless - but then you look over what's happening in the NDIS, and it's much more carrot. Much, much, more carrot. Why do - one of the big concerning developments - or not - or one of the ones that we are trying to - I'm trying to wrap my head around is, why do some people with disability get a certain approach. A person-centred approach, where it's control and choice, and their decisions are respected. Others do not, or are told what is best for them, and what a successful employment outcome looks like. – research participant #1 – Policy/project officer*

*So it's not all about choice. If you don't make the choices that government wants you to make, look for jobs, get a job and keep it, you can get penalised. So it's not completely all about the consumer, there are other competing goals there as well, other stakeholders in the mix there. ...Which means they have to enter into agreements to do certain things in order to get their income support, in order to get DSP in the future. I think the whole thing - I mean, they don't have complete choice and control, it's a bit of a nonsense. – research participant# 2– Policy/project officer*

For many they felt that there needed to be balance regained, as too much emphasis has been placed on the stick, whereas most people only need incentives and encouragement to look for work.

*It's the carrot and the stick idea too, and for most people a carrot is all they need. There are always going to be people who will work with the system, no matter whether they're young or old, whatever. But I think we've gone too far down the stick and it really needs to come back a little bit. – research participant #5- Manager*

The incongruity with the coercive approach was evident, as study participants reported that most people actually do want social and economic participation:

*Most people want to work, or they want to participate, they want to be included. - research participant #1– Policy/project officer*

*To recognise that people actually do inherently want to be moving themselves forward. They don't actually want to be unemployed, mostly. Most people want to be contributing and moving further up their career path. This whole idea that everyone's out to wrought the government, is just so. – research participant #5- Manager.*

Amongst study participants, there was a more favoring towards the carrot approach in helping people achieve economic participation. Supporting people to build their own intrinsic motivation towards work was viewed as a more positive empowering approach to workforce participation.

*We think that that move towards consumer choice and control has great potential to build on people's intrinsic motivation and get them motivated to participate in the workforce and look for employment, to be empowered and to make decisions, make career choices and have career planning. We think that that's a much more powerful way to go, rather than having too much emphasis on extrinsic motivations and the threat of penalties and complying with rules. So for that reason, we like that shift towards the consumer-driven sort of approach. ....I guess there's a risk involved with giving them the choice and control and how do you balance that with mutual obligation requirements? – research participant #2– Policy/project officer*

Recognition and encouragement was also seen as a particularly important approach to supporting and building young people's self- beliefs and intrinsic motivation.

*especially for young people, who need that encouragement and positive recognition. A big reward, like that would be a nice idea. That if somebody actually does a great job and finds themselves some work, that there's a little incentive. Rather than this if you don't do it, we'll cut your benefit off and you'll be homeless. – research participant #5 - Manager*

The carrot approach of encouragement and building-up people's intrinsic motivations needs to be coupled with a total benefit from participation. That is, the cost to work is sufficiently covered to avoid being the *working poor*, as well as the provision of a better safety net for people so they don't have difficulty getting back on the DSP if employment doesn't work out. This requires appropriate level of work and non-work related supports with safety nets to take risk.

*How many hours you work is how you're being supported at that time to work, and whether the investment in actually your work is going to be - payoff for you long term. If it cuts out all your pension, you can't get your pension back and then you're sort of like oh, I know I could go down that path. Then - it's sort of like it gets in the way of making decisions based on your own particular self-interest. How do you get self-interest? Really rampant self-interest to actually rule people with disabilities' individual lives. We want to be self-interested just like everyone else. That means being supported to work long hours and earning shit loads of money, .... great. But if it's also about we need absolute support for six months because we're in quite a situation where we need that support, and we cannot work, then that's required as well. So I just find that the funding models and the numbers of hours you can work just get in the way of actually supporting people properly. - research participant #4 - CEO/Director/GM*

Moving forward, Incentives rather than punishment was felt to create a more positive outlook to work, with the potential of raising intrinsic motivation to enhance employability. However, people also need to be supported appropriately, whatever their work and non-work needs are to enhance employment. This includes responding to the complex intersection between education-education systems, socio-spatial and social-cultural enablers and barriers, as well as broader political-economics, that all influence a person's opportunities to develop employability and secure suitable employment.

*Enforcing of mutual obligation:*

A significant conflict for study participants, particular those providing DES was the task of "breaching". Many study participants were displeased that government moved monitoring of people's compliance to the responsibility of providers of employment services. This displeasure related to added administration burden, as well as creating conflictual relationship between provider and job seeker.

*Because that's resources you're spending that could have been used elsewhere. That's what compliance is forcing you - the Centrelink's using less resources, because they're putting the compliance on to the providers. But it means less resources that you're using for actually doing the work with people to find them work. ...They're making it more and more compliance for people who are not ready to work, so what you become is you actually become Centrelink's conscience. – research participant #16 – CEO/Director/GM*

*Well, oh, you mean in terms of the obligation with Centrelink. Look that is a big one. It's just been dumped onto us and it makes it an even more grudge relationship. - research participant #18 –CEO/Director/GM*

Some study participants found the whole notion of breaching conflicting and challenging to their values and practice.

*Yeah, well it's interesting because from my perspective, I've worked in disabilities for a really long time and that's where I want to be. I don't want to be compliance based employment consultant type of thing. I got out of that world and focused on disabilities for personal reasons. Yes, I do find it conflicting and a struggle and a lot of stuff do. - research participant #9 - Manager*

Others noted that shifting responsibility of breaching of people to providers, has been adversarial and has created perceptions of people with disabilities with compulsory requirement as perceived risks /threats to providers. As such there has been an observed shift in focus on security in the sector.

*I mean its heightened anxiety and we've had to increment special training dealing with aggressive aggression and you come into our places and we've got signs up, not tolerating aggressive behaviour. We talk about reducing stigma. We're trying to create friendly, warm, professional offices for these people to come and to be treated no different to anyone else and yet you walk in there and you think what the - you've got the disability service thing know your rights up on the wall. Here's the complaints box. Here's the service. Any aggression and we're going to call the cops. It's just so contradictory to the sort of thing I'd like to build. - research participant #18 – CEO/Director/GM*

However, a study participant spoke about how important it was to challenge this perception of safety risk by keeping workplaces open:

*It is getting worse though. It is getting - [I need to look at] - but one of my big bugbears is making sure our offices are more open, more open plan, more - because the way the sector's going now, when someone walks in the door, they look at the risk. They don't look at the person. -research participant # 16 –Senior Manager*

The act of breaching is itself contentious. Despite being required to breach people if they have not meet their requirements, some study participants providing DES spoke about avoiding breaching people:

*I never - despite - I even said this to the department anyway. I never impose non-payment periods on clients. I thought it would be just absolutely counter-productive, just because they wouldn't come in, or they wouldn't conform to the performance framework. I let my staff threaten them with it. But I never let it go through. -research participant #1 – Policy/project officer*



Study participants who had a long history of working in the field, discussed why breaching wasn't the best approach and that many new providers out there didn't understand the complexity of some people's impairments/situation and how it may impact on turning up for appointments:

*Where at least we have an open policy too, that if someone - and my policy, was that if someone's taking medication for pain and they shouldn't be driving, that they ring me, and say I've taken my pain medication and I'm really not safe, or I don't feel safe to be on the road. To me that's a did not attend valid reason. Where other employment services that I know, will not accept that as a valid reason. - research participant #5 - Manager*

The act of showing up for appointment was a real issue not just in terms of people's impairments/ circumstances, but often because there was no purpose for people except to turn up so they get a tick in the box for complying with the compulsory activity. To change this, study participants talked about trying to make positive experience out of the compulsory appointment, such as ensuring when they come in they get something out of it.

*I am very particular about making sure that no one is wasting their time by coming to here. Every time they come here something's being done for them. Every time they come here they're going away to do homework. When they come in we revisit that. People aren't wasting their time in coming here. – research participant #15 – Manager*

The 2016 New DES discussion paper raises the question of whether face to face requirements, beyond the initial meeting, should remain as part of the DES service delivery. The responses to the discussion paper would suggest that the requirement be removed, and determination of whether face-to-face or phone contact is more suitable should be determined with the individual, because some may prefer or need one or the other. The importance is having regular meaningful contact that is goal orientated.

Because of the power differential that has been created, some provider took the power seriously and treated people poorly. This was evident in study participants' accounts, when describing how long it takes people who have moved services from elsewhere, to develop trust and understand that you are being supportive. The reason provided related to bad practices some employment services used that treat clients as just a number or in some descriptions as "cattle".

*Like as a service, we kind of took on an approach with people too, that yes you have to come here under Newstart, but when you come in, we're going to try and do everything we can to help you. This is supposed to be a positive experience, we*

*want you to feel good about coming here, and that you want to come. Not just that you have to. But it often takes three months to get through to them, to get through that message, especially if they've been to other employment services. Where they've been treated like cattle, I'm trying to use a much worse word than cattle. But yeah just treated like a number, where if they haven't turned up once because their carer was late, or because their mum had to take time off work to bring them to their appointment. They've been made to feel like a criminal. - research participant # 5- Manager*

*Like as a service, we kind of took on an approach with people too, that yes you have to come here under Newstart, but when you come in, we're going to try and do everything we can to help you. This is supposed to be a positive experience, we want you to feel good about coming here, and that you want to come. Not just that you have to. - research participant #15 - Manager*

Moving forward, study participants felt mutual obligation needed to move to an incentive base system and DHS Centrelink taking back compliance checking/breaching of compulsory activity.

*Yeah, a job ready stage and the post-employment needs a whole system rework for compliance to take it away from - well not totally take it away I guess but there's got to be less reliance on us in terms of the employer relationship and also the Centrelink relationship. Otherwise it's just a - [it becomes a difficult] relationship between us and the client. - research participant #16 – Senior Manager*

### **Work capacity assessment – The determination of mutual obligation**

The determination of one's capacity to have compulsory requirements is through work capacity assessments. The assessments have been identified in 2016 New DES discussion paper as an area requiring improving following the issues raised in the DES reform submissions in 2015. This need for reviewing the assessment was reinforced by study participants.

*The simplest things is that is just to make the eligibility and the assessment correct. It's just a hindered process..., because it just puts numbers back into systems and then reassessments and just churns things all over again. - research participant #22 - Senior Manager*

Like the reform submission, study participants spoke about the problems with the assessment. The analysis of these accounts identified the following issues:

- based on a deficit model
- intake and assessment for post-school leavers is confronting

- assessors often unsuitable
- inappropriate referrals
- work hours determination are hit and miss
- Face to face assessment disappearing, worse in regional areas.

One or more of these issues encountered in the assessment process can have the potential to greatly influence attaining the employment outcome set and meeting compulsory requirements.

The *deficit nature* of the model was particular seen to be detrimental to one's worth:

*Think the two biggest problems people with disability have with DES is they don't have any say, really, over the type of work they do, or how fast, or when. It's patronising to them. What's wrong with you? All the deficits with people. It's not focus - it's not strengths-based, and it's - almost, in a way - and sometimes - is this deliberate? It's not meant to be supportive. – research participant # 1 - Policy/project officer*

*I guess historically there's been very much a focus on your deficits, I suppose, rather than - and what you can't do and your lack of capacity, rather than the things that you can do and your ability. So there's been a focus on disability rather than ability. I think that seems to be an issue that needs to be addressed, in terms of income support and eligibility for that, and eligibility for employment services as well. – research participant #2 - Policy/project officer*

There was also significant concern over how the assessments were being carried out, and by whom:

*Face to face are very, very thin on the ground. Frustrating if you've got someone with a psychological problem or even depression and anxiety, if you're doing a private [phone] or something it's very hard to get that - I believe it would be very hard to get that core information. So we always try and get a face to face if there's one available but yeah, they're getting fewer and fewer. – research participant #16 – CEO/Director/GM*

The 2016 new DES discussion paper indicates a separate review of the assessment will be undertaken, but it will not be in line with the 2018 new DES. This is disappointing, as there are some specific issues pertaining to assessment that interface directly with DES. Specific issues for young people have been raised in this study, and these are highlighted below because of the entry pathways into DES and the implications these can have on their future participation.

### *Assessment processes and work capacity determination for Young people with disabilities*

There are two entries for young people with disabilities: ESL and non-ESL. The ESL has no work capacity assessment; its direct registration for people who meet ELS criteria set under DES. The ESLs are automatically assigned a level 2, 8 hrs benchmark. This process was felt by providers to be quite an easy non-daunting process for young people and their families. This process was reported as a positive stress-free experience.

*Yeah, so we bypass that, because you don't have to do that if a young person is accessing DES while they're still at school, they don't have to go through that assessment process. – research participant #5 - Manager*

*So in the DES field, the transition - obviously in the DES program, we have the early school leavers section of our program. That works quite well from I think the participant's point of view, so the early school leaver, because there's none of that Centrelink, ESA referral system. So therefore, they're not going through to some scary allied health person, no offence...in Centrelink. They're not having to reveal too much. So we can bring the ESLs onto the program, I think quite easily. – research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

Outside ESL, study participants commented how the process is more daunting and confronting for young people who are recent school leavers who did not go through ESL.

Study participants spoke about the significant gap in support and appropriateness of the assessment/entry process for the recent school leaver still in the process of transition.

*because there was a big gap, those ones that have left school, those 18 to 20 year olds...Yeah. There's a huge gap there, because if someone's - if they've not been picked up at school, once they - we try and pick them up at school, because once they get in that system, it is a nightmare to try and get them out that cycle. Once they go to Centrelink, they get the compliance and, oh, it actually makes it a lot harder than it does at school. You've got more resources while they're at school. Once they get out of school and they're going on to - say they're going on to DSP or Newstart or whatever, it starts to get more difficult...Yeah, they're under obligation when they access the funding generally. They generally go from level 2 to level 1. I don't know why. It's harder to get the funding as well. – research participant #16 - CEO/Director/GM*

Young people need support to understand the process and navigate the system:

*Even things like setting up an employment services assessment and realising that they need to bring information, like evidence for their medical conditions. Again with the co morbidity of mental health issues too, somebody might have a pretty significant anxiety*

*or significant depression. That either their doctor's kind of been treating with them and that's never really been diagnosed, but they're just working through it. Or even if they have, sometimes they don't want to say, they don't want to disclose that to an assessor that they've only just met. Yeah, and that can have significant carry through in terms of things not being picked up and not getting the appropriate services that they need. – research participant #5 - Manager*

The implications of not being informed or supported could be conveyed in an inappropriate work capacity determination, stream, or service referral.

*Yeah and I think too, the job capacity assessment - or the indicator, the [JSI] really needs to be looked at more closely, from a national perspective, if we're going to appropriately place young people to services, for service delivery and good outcomes. – research participant #11 - CEO/Director/GM*

The other issue is that the assessment has no allowance for age and experience. This is surprising given many scales or assessment instruments recognise there are differences between young people and adults. The World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is an example of this, where the ICF-child and youth version was introduced in 2007 to recognise the different life stage needs and circumstances.

*Just this artificial kind of thing that we can determine, if someone looked at me, and also it's not an age based tool. When you're looking at young people, they haven't had a whole lot of experience, so this idea that you're assessing them the same as someone that's 40 that could've had an acquired disability, and had a whole range of different experience is ridiculous. But if someone looked at me when I was 16, 17, and said - okay well this is your pathway, I'd be horrified, I wouldn't be here. This idea that you're making these choices when someone so young, about what their pathway for the rest of their life is going to be. Once you've made that decision you can't move off that pathway, and not even looking at - say okay you're under eight so you go to do an ADE, but you're not even looking if the work in that ADE is suitable for your disability, or what you want to do. – research participant #3- CEO/Director/GM*

*Totally inadequate. I actually had a meeting in Canberra earlier this year with one of the minister's advisers about the remodelling of DES. I said until you fix the referral system that's the biggest weakness in the system, inappropriate referrals. – research participant #22 - Senior Manager*

*Looking at youth in general that come through the Centrelink system, I mean they shouldn't be, they shouldn't be. I mean when I left X and got the transition to work*

*position at X High for six months, I remember saying to the guys, actually, it'll be my job to stop you getting any through the Centrelink portal. Because the fact that you leave school, go on a benefit, you're unemployed, you're not in education, is really sad. Really sad. – research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

#### *DES Eligibility - 0-7hrs exclusion*

What DES reform doesn't seem to be dealing with is the prevention of people under 8 hours work capacity from accessing DES –the disability employment specialists. Yet a person with lower than 8 hrs could purchase employment support if they have an individual disability support package in state or under NDIS.

The criteria raises questions about the level of contribution judged to be of value that underpins DES policy.

*Well there's a bit of an issue I think with eligibility for Disability Employment Services, and eligibility for core supports through the NDIS. If a person is assessed as having a future work capacity of zero to seven hours, then based on a statistical calculation, they are unlikely to benefit from any program, which means you're not eligible for Disability Employment Services. But if you are eligible for reasonable and necessary supports under the NDIS, you can purchase employment supports if you're not eligible for employment supports. ....Seven hours or lower. The thing is with those assessments of that work capacity, it's a speculative assessment, devoid of any work context. The irony is many of these people who have this assessment, zero to seven, are unlikely to benefit from a program. That makes them eligible to work in a sheltered workshop where on average, they'll work about 20 hours a week. So go figure. - research participant #1 - Policy/project officer*

As it stands, DES is not open to all people with disabilities, as illustrated above with those deemed under 8hrs work capacity. There is an identified need to open up access to DES for people deemed under 8 hours who are interested in being supported to gain and maintain employment.

*Another thing is that if you've got zero to seven hours work capacity, you're not eligible for DES. So that's another issue - the issue with DES, that it's not open to all people with disabilities. I think the eligibility criteria need to be opened up, as far as that goes. - research participant #2 - Policy/project officer*

The other problem for young people is being deemed permanent 0-7 at 16 years. While the benchmark exist because of mutual obligation and one can be re-assessed. Such an assessment early on can send the wrong message - that your “never going to be able to get a job”.

*but for our kids it probably won't because they would be viewed by Government as unable to work. ...No, it's like the assessment, they just look at them and go - oh no. ... that just means once they've decided that pathway at 17, 18, that's it. That's 40 years of Government support. – research participant #3 – CEO/Director/GM*

Resolving the anomalies with DES access is an important need moving forward.

*Well, that's right, because there could be people in the NDIS who have 8 to 14 hours and they actually have to come to DES. Unlike their colleagues who might be zero to seven hours who can't go to DES, have to go outside it, they actually have to go to DES. So there's a different set of options that are presented. I get a sense that the existing - that part of the reforms is they're trying to address that and get rid of some of those strange rules and anomalies and around eligibility, which could be a good thing. – research participant # 5 - Manager*

#### *Work capacity*

Determination of work capacity is a particularly concern raised by study participants. The concern related to the meaning and accuracy of the benchmarks. The implications of an inappropriate determination has on people with disabilities was also expressed.

*I don't know what eight hours means. For so many disabilities, it's not - it means bummer all. – research participant #4 - CEO/Director/GM*

*...on a person's hours. You do wonder sometimes where they've got [sighs] and how they've made that decision and often we'll ask for it to be reviewed or take the person in and try and influence, especially with this new 30-hour benchmark, it's just...*

*Facilitator: Can you explain that to me?*

*Interviewee: No [laughs].....No, I don't think any of us can. – research participant #9 - Manager*

Providers gave examples in practice of benchmark allocation that questioned the correctness of determinations made. Many were felt to be inappropriate according to age and conditions.

*So if we have those honest conversations, but not actually set them up to fail in this as well. We've got to get you in at your 15 hour - you're on Newstart. It's actually gone up to 23 hours. How on earth are they going to get to 23 hours in the first place...It 's kids. – research participant #14- Senior Manager*

The benchmark changes were particularly questioned. Some study participants commented about how no one understood the rationale of the benchmark changes. Some felt the increased in hours were inappropriate and unfeasible for many.

*This is another thing, hours; how many hours can you work. I find that bizarre. I just think there may be particular disability groups where this might be quite a good measuring tool. But for many people with physical disabilities, you can work normal hours, you work shorter hours, you can work flexible hours, you can work - but why would it be less than or] greater than eight hours. I just think that's - see there's this arbitrary numerical figures come up which almost have no meaning, and yet they're done there as to count the beans. It doesn't actually have anything to do with the actual - the outcomes for the individual concern. – research participant #4 – CEO/Director/GM*

*Yeah, if you haven't had experiences you fall below the eight, and you look like you're not capable. It's not as scientific, I always thought it was some sort of scientific, and I actually looked at the tool and stuff. It's just like - well someone's just making a judgement call. - research participant #3 - CEO/Director/GM*

*All of a sudden, overnight, we had people who are about to start working 15-hour-a-week jobs or 22 hour and all of a sudden overnight they went to 30 hours. It was like, oh okay, great. - research participant #9 - Manager*

While a review of the benchmark allocation was identified as a need moving forward. Some study participants also felt that what was needed is a greater sense of a safety net regarding the DSP.

*Interviewee: They would come into DES on the program. We'd get them six months' employment. They come off benefit or get very partial capacity. They lose their job. They go into jobactive, because they've had six months' employment.*

*Facilitator: So they're not coming back through DES?*

*Interviewee: Not all the time, no. ...They become stream C and then shit hits the fan really. There's so many. I mean the proportion of suspensions in the system now must be phenomenal. – research participant #14 – Senior Manager*

### **Designed out - Tightening eligibility of DSP and DES**

Study participants noted that the tightening of eligibility for both DSP and DES (i.e. the exclusion of people with under 8 hours work capacity) over the past years has resulted in an observed change of clients.



*DES eligibility tightening.* Participants spoke about a perceived reduction of people with intellectual and physical/neurological, particular those with more severe impairments in DES. This could directly relate to 0-7hour exclusion criteria:

*Yeah, I mean some will come through the Centrelink system and they need - I don't think they've got a choice whether they take them or not. But I mean you can see in the data that we focus a lot on intellectual disabilities, but that - the amount of young people, or people with intellectual disabilities within the DES system has really reduced overtime. Probably you would see physical as well. – research participant # 8 - Manager*

Some study participants felt people with significant impairments are being designed out of DES, that is: “the system will let people down - or potentially won't even let them in.” (P1). This was understood through the observed absence of young people with more severe impairments, which raised concerns over the quality and long term futures for these young people.

*Even back then, I was encouraging a lot of our kids with Duchenne to consider work, like even if it's just something that you do because you are contributing, because you feel like you've got a bit of a purpose. We kind of were getting a few people with Duchenne and other muscular dystrophy's as well. But it has kind of petered off a little bit, and again I wonder where those people are going now?*

*Yeah, and I think it's kids with the more severe physical disabilities are the ones that are really being excluded from the current system. Yeah, and like I said we're just not seeing them. We're not seeing them here, I don't know whether X is maybe seeing more of them. – I mean I've worked with some people with very significant physically disabilities and dual disabilities. People who there's no way you would ever see in the DES now. I really just wonder what's happened to those people, where are they? hopefully they're not sitting at home doing nothing, and that there's somebody out there who's helping them work. – research participant #5 – Manager*

Reasons for this observed change connects back to the introduction of income support mutual obligation for under 35yrs and the cut off of 8hrs for compulsory activity. Again, the policy and program logic has a distinction of deserving/non-deserving, as well as determined ideas of the value and worth of contribution:

*...think that's where it comes from, that this expectation that if you can't sustain a career, then work is not really something that you should be putting your energy in to. On some level I kind of get that, if people make that choice, then that is entirely up to them. But to say that. – research participant #5 – Manager*

The difference in access to employment support for people with severe or dual disabilities is further understood in comparing to the previous program rules, or as one study participant described the “good old day”, where people only had to have a disability and a need for help to find a job in order to access disability employment services.

*Its also I think getting through Centrelink too, just that [unclear] again. I think would probably stop a lot of people who really do want to work and who want to just have a go. Yeah, like I know I the old days, this is going back again to the old days. Which I'm sure had all of their things that were terrible. But one of the great things, was that if somebody wanted to try work, all they had to do was to come to an employment service and say, I have a disability. There was basically two questions they had to answer, do you have a disability and do you want some help to work. Come on in. They had to go through the panel, all that sort of stuff, but that was the only two questions that they had to answer. – research participant #5 - Manager*

Revisiting early criteria may be a more positive step forward for people with severe disabilities. It is important people with severe impairments have the choice to access DES if they want, and not be forced to have to access support through another system (e.g. NDIS). How people are being perceived in this system – DES, can perpetuate low expectation and negative attitudes towards disability which influences decisions about post-school pathways. This is further illuminated in the low expectation section.

*DSP eligibility tightening.* While people with severe impairments are designed out/or not permitted to enter DES, young people with undiagnosed or unstable mental health conditions are ending up on Newstart not DSP, which has consequences on compulsory requirements.

*Unfortunately, since the beginning of this year, only 50 per cent of DSP applicants were successful, whereas it used to be about 80 per cent....Yeah, it's really - it's unfair. Of course, kids that don't have that diagnosis - because hopefully it is a phase and part of adolescence but at least if they are diagnosed with a long term or life illness, like schizophrenia, bipolar or similar. It lets them live in that with our help but not, not 23 hours a week. Not Newstart. Not mutual obligation, going for a jobactive environment where you have to apply for 20 jobs a fortnight. – research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

Such decisions need to be questioned further in another study for this group. Such as: How is forcing young people with undiagnosed mental health condition on to Newstart and its compulsory requirements, unhelpful in their recovery and future career thinking.

Taking a more incentive-based approach rather than the current coercive dividing approach, is needed to appropriately support and empower people with such diversity of needs into employment.

### **Intersection of social-cultural attitudes towards disability and psycho-social barriers**

The international and national literature, highlights that young people with disabilities, like their older counterparts, continue to experience prejudicial attitudes and discrimination in their pursuit of employment. Similar to the literature, study participants described negative attitudes and low expectations as being critical sociocultural barriers to employment.

#### ***Stigma and negative attitudes***

Stigma and negative attitudes towards disability continue to be a significant barrier to employment for all people with disabilities, particularly young people. These attitudes are not just held by employers, they are systematic of broader community perceptions of disability.

*We say that Australian businesses have negative attitudes towards people with disability. But business people are members of the community as well. I think it's such a complex issue to look at. You can do yourself a disservice by focusing in too much on one particular area of it.— research participant #1 – Policy/Project Officer*

As such, a focus on changing perceptions need to occur not just at an employer level, but at a community level. This was evident in the attitudes and language still encountered toward disability today: that is patronizing, pity and disgust.

*I still get surprised sometimes about either of those attitudes you know, either the oh my God, I'm horrified or the oh isn't this lovely, pat them on the head. — research participant #3 - CEO/Director/GM*

Lack of understanding of disability in general and limited experience with engaging with people with disabilities was understood as one of the reason these attitudes prevail. As one study participant highlighted:

*So many people don't understand about disabilities, or a person with a disability. My partner, for example, he'd never experienced anyone around him with a disability. I'm like, seriously? So for him, he was really concerned about meeting my niece for the first time. I'm like, you're a 56-year-old man and you've never had anyone, not at work? He works in council, he's worked in government; never. Okay, so you know, I think it's still commonplace that a lot of people don't have much experience and then no understanding. – research participant #9 - Manager*

In the context of work environments, attitudinal barriers are still consider the greatest barrier to getting work.

*I think in a workplace environment, or in any environment particularly workplace environment, it's attitudinal barriers which are of the greatest - by far the greatest. It's how not just the initial contact or the engagement with decision makers within employment - within an employing organisation that's just government or small business, it's also how those employment contracts or that employment is maintained.” — research participant #4 CEO/Director/GM*

Perceptions that people with disability will cost more, or hinder productivity and thus impact profit is one perception still encountered:

*How that currently plays out in reality I'm not quite sure because we know that people with disabilities are constantly overlooked when it comes to [unclear]. There is the perception that they are - they'll be more costly or - [as well as the] risk to employ someone with a disability. The research shows that that's not the case. – research participant #6 – Manager.*

Study participants also highlight how practices of DES workers such as how they present people with disabilities to employers can perpetuate negative attitudes. That is, whether they are presenting their strengths and thus challenging attitudes, or adding to negative perceptions by “advertising” a person’s disability and taking a paternalistic approach to support.

*One of my biggest bugbears is about making sure that you're not advertising someone's got a disability. Working with kids is the worst thing with that. – research participant #16 - CEO/Director/GM*

One of the strategies moving forward, was the need for much higher profile public awareness campaign such as the *Every Australian Counts* campaign. Such a campaign could help to evoke more positive perceptions of people with disabilities by employers and community broadly. Showing what is possible and the benefits to employing people with disabilities could help to shift employer minds and make them more open to employing people.

*I think if there was more of an education and awareness campaign funded and run by government, I think it would have to be - to address attitudes. I don't think employers are reluctant because they're - they don't want to give people a go. I just think they see it as a bit hard. They're busy, busy people. They just see this as something that's going to be difficult. But if we had an information and education campaign and they saw the benefit and they turned their mind to it ahead of when they are actually faced with a particular situation. So they'd be more open to it I think it could be very effective [inaudible] campaign... Yeah and I do think a public awareness campaign. I*

*think that would help... I looked at the effectiveness of the Every Person Counts I think it was - Every Australian Counts - for NDIS. That was a powerful example of a public awareness campaign. I think if we can harness that and going up a level and have the same impact on employers it would make a massive difference. – research participant #18 - CEO/Director/GM.*

Embedded disability awareness training was also identified as a need to improve the understanding of disability, and the benefits of diversity in both a social and economic sense. More emphasis on the human story, may be a potential way forward to help change attitudes and see the value of inclusion and diversity.

*we seem to be in sort of - a clinical culture or something that's so competitive and so rationalist, but we're losing track of the human stories that really make our society - make it work, make it tick. So maybe it's time to bring that back again, I don't know. Just a thought. Maybe [unclear] maybe it's something to do with why so many people with disability just can't seem to make it through any employment. There seems to be a general lack of understanding about the benefits of including diversity. It's something that's there. – research participant #4 - CEO/Director/GM*

### **Low expectations**

The effect of stigma and negative attitudes held towards people with disabilities, creates/perpetuates low expectations of what people with disabilities can do. While these perceptions have been contested by disability activists for some time, the entrenched view of low expectation persists.

Study participants identified that some schools had low expectations about the future prospects of young people with disabilities, particularly those with severe disabilities.

*Yeah, the schools - I guess the expectation, their attitude towards people with disability and life after school. A lot of them, they pretty much tell their - the parents or whoever, teachers or parents, just go, oh my son or daughter can't do anything. or my student can't do anything when they leave school. So it's just easier to put them in a day program. So a lot of schools just go, oh we've just got all our students in a day program, you're wasting your time. I get a lot of that.” - research participant #7 – Policy/project officer*

These low expectation about future prospects, narrows thinking about what can be achieved post school for different groups of students.

*That was - a lot of their kids have physical disabilities. It was just really - it was really, really hard. They were like, oh our kids don't go to TAFE. Well why don't they go to TAFE? Where do they go? Do they like where they're going? Who has the choice in*

*that, is it the kids or the parents? So can we look into other things? Can you look into other programs that might be available? – research participant #7 –Policy/project officer*

Such low expectations about ones future can become an entrenched belief accepted as “true” by some young people and their families.

*Yeah, I think that one of the biggest barriers to young people with a physical disability - or any disability obtaining work is the low expectations of their family and themselves....So if you asked me what is one of the significant barriers to young people with a disability successfully transitioning to work? I would say the expectations of their carers and families. I see it all the time.” - research participant #18 – CEO/Director/GM*

And with low work expectations comes narrow post-school pathways that are oriented towards day programs and ADEs, rather than open employment.

*he's really - a really switched-on girl, really wants to help people problem solve and do stuff. The day service is like, no can't give you the support worker to go out to TAFE or uni, so therefore you might as well stay here. For her, that's just so degrading. She's only 23. She's going to be at that day service until the day she dies, another 60 plus years, if you think - yeah if you go in that direction. I go, what a life. How boring. So she wants to do stuff, but just everyone else says no. – research participant #7 –Policy/project officer*

*Yeah, that and - so rather than waiting post-school to look at employment, this is changing how people view employment. I think that - I'd like to see that employment first policy that pathways into day services and ADEs are restricted, that's probably not very choice orientated. – research participant #8 – Manager*

*Even Beyond the School Gates, which is something I've learnt is about doing in-school apprenticeships for students with disabilities, to at least give them that experience. The ones who have done it have done really well with it, but they're - even - they've been saying to me, when they've been promoting it to schools, that they've said, we've had the same problem. We've got this apprenticeship; we've got businesses on board. We've got supports for them on board such as day - not to put them in a day service, but have a disability provider on the side just to help them with the learning - with the learning side of things, and making sure that they're able to learn whatever it is that they need to in that job. A lot of people just go, no, not going to happen. You know where - they're happy to go - because the day service is easier in their eyes. So it's a very interesting. – research participant #7 -Policy/project officer*

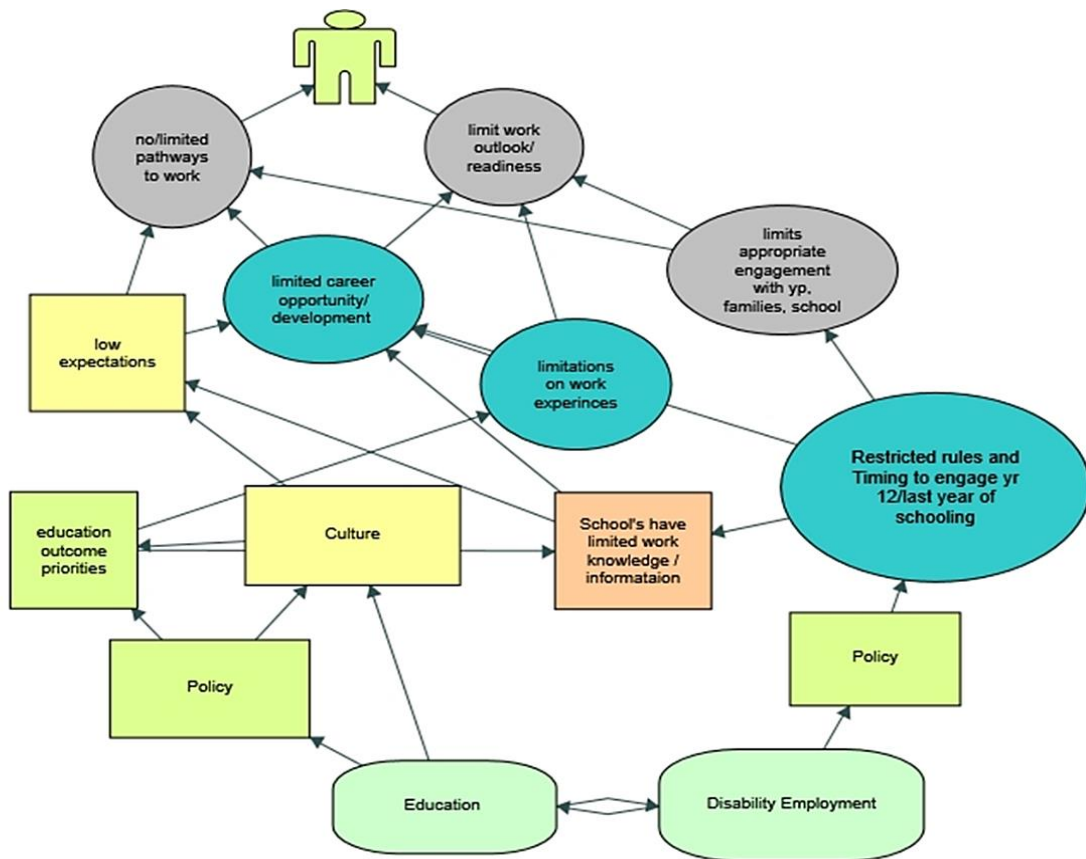
Challenging low expectations early on is critically important to build a culture of an “employment first” outlook. Such an approach is necessary to improve workforce participation.

*It's very important to get that culture of work at that age, culture of work and creating independence, because at that point, we can either make them dependent the rest of their life or make them independent. It's a very important stage for that, I think - research participant #5 – Manager*

### **Fragmented education-employment systems**

The pathways to work for young people with disabilities is shaped by a complex web of service systems (disability support, health, education, income support and employment) that do not readily connect to create a seamless transition to work. While in recent times there has been a national commitment to improve post school transition for young people with disabilities, reports indicate that the ease of the journey has not got better in Australia (TTW, 2016; CDA, 2015). Analysis of study participants transcripts, academic literature, organisation reports and public submissions to reforms and inquiries reveal that disjointed and silo programming produce many barriers in the journey to work. These barriers are interconnected and systemic. The diagram below represents a map of the key themes and the intersection of the themes pertaining to system fragmentation of employment and secondary education, and the impacts of these on young people’s opportunities for employability identified from the analysis.

The intersection of attitude, low expectations and restrictions in DES engagement with schools, and the amount of resources available in schools to inform and support young people and families, shape the level and type of career development, skill development and work experiences young people are exposed to. This level of exposure subsequently influences work/career outlook, post school pathway and overall employability.



**Figure 2: Fragmented interface between DES and Education (Secondary)**

However, study participants also revealed that some schools were overcoming the fragmentation and disconnections through building strong culture of expectation and experiences, with both career and vocational programs.

*Yeah, one of the best cultures I ever seen is one down the road here called XCollege. It's just round the corner from here, a Catholic school, but it's also got - it's all kids with disabilities, but it's not a special school as such.... There's a woman there. They've got a great vocational program that we've worked together for years. There's a woman there called X who's just fantastic, and [X] and people like that, they've been doing it for years. But they're fully invested. I mean, they do the work experience. They do it right. They do the work experience with kids. They do the career routes in one of the schools. It's actually all in on the vocational side. – research participant #14 – Senior Manager*

## **Solutions /strategies - What's making transition to work more successful for young people with disabilities**

### **Creative resistance**

Whilst the DES system is problematic and restrictive in how young people can be supported to develop employability, people from various organisations, including DES providers,



reported finding ways to support and enable young people with disabilities to have successful transitions. We have deemed these workarounds 'creative resistance'. The key practices employed include:

- Building work attitude and expectation with schools, individuals and families - Employment first focus.
- Providing quality and various work experiences and paid after-school job while at school
- Building localized partnerships to enable quality school-based traineeships and work immersion etc.

There are also clear employment approaches that are helping young people in getting and keeping a job. These include:

- *Flexible tailored programs- social enterprises, customized jobs - building a career not just a job*
- *Specialist knowledge of affordances/modifications (building, jobs, technology)*
- Peer group support and success stories

### **Building expectations**

Building expectations, is a practice being employed by advocacy/information organisation and DES providers, to work with student in schools to break down assumptions about disability. Participants spoke about the need to provide tailored individualized focus programs with parents and schools that help to open up conversations about work possibilities. Some of the study participants volunteered their time to do these programs, others spoke about the cost to run such programs were taken from the bottom line of the organisation, outside of DES, as it was realized such investment was needed given the current restriction and impact on young people's transition. It is also acknowledged that schools need help, they aren't experts in this area.

*Well the feedback is that it's just so hard for them that they want to be doing it earlier, but they can't fit it into their schedule and that's why they're trying to get different providers in to do that kind of work. It's really things around interview skills, how to dress for interviews, how to put your resume together." - research participant #9 – Manager*

*...there's so many different avenues for careers now that's been quite a significant change in probably the last 20 years of being able to, you know, different pathways into tertiary educations or trades or other vocational training. I just don't think career teachers, and nor is it their role, that they can really have the finger on the pulse of everything that's happening out there. They're also housed within the school system; they're not actually working in the workforce as such, so their exposure is limited in that way, if that makes sense?...they're still in that secondary system where really out*

*in the real world at how business and things operate is very different. So I think that was the beauty of where DES and other employment providers could help be that bridge because understanding a business's needs versus what the skills of a student or young person coming out with had, and appropriate support for training. – research participant #10 – CEO/Director/GM*

Showing what is possible is an effective way to challenge low expectations. For example one participant describes a program that is run in school to raise awareness of the possibilities with students with disabilities:

*Well I guess with what I'm running is that a lot of students have never - don't realise that they can actually look for work or go to university or TAFE or whatever. They're - most of them have been told that you can go to a day service, and that's it really. So our program is to really look at other types of - that they can actually go to TAFE and be employed, and these are the supports that you can tap into if you decide to do that. – research participant #7 – Policy/project officer*

The other impacts noted by working with schools and students, is that younger students see and learn from the older students engaging in employment programs, thus stimulating vocation thinking for themselves.

*The other benefit seen was the role modeling effect for younger people - “kids in year seven and eight seeing the older kids going out, and the parents are seeing those kids going out and going into normal employment, so they're changing their aspirations about what that young person does.” - research participant #8 - Manager*

Working earlier helps build relationships. Like the academic literature, participant also commented about working earlier helps break down barriers and attitudes. This is because early engagement is helping to provide timely information to raise expectations and to build relationships and trust.

*I think because when you start working earlier you also are building a relationship with the family and the carers. You're not doing that when you're not working with them. - research participant #18 –CEO/Director/GM*

Building confidence through coaching sessions was reported by some study participants as an effective way to help increase self-esteem.

*They have - they come with very low self-esteem. We do weekly coaching sessions with every young person who is on our books at the moment. They all participate in delivery day or deliver workshop. We've now got them to a point where they're doing peer support with each other and you can see them coming in as Negative Nancys*

*but are now quite puffed up and quite proud of themselves. – research participant #11 – CEO/Director/GM*

### **Peer support helps to understand what is achievable and right**

Peers supporting each other can be helpful in increasing expectations and esteem as well as knowledge about work. Study participants spoke about the benefits young people can learn from peers by seeing what others are doing, the path already travelled by some and learning from those experiences. Peer support can also provide encouragement, validation but can also be just a frank peer conversation and support - the kind that just isn't the same with a provider.

*So I actually got them working together and working through that as a group and it worked. ...they were able to challenge one another a bit too I think, in ways that I couldn't. - research participant #3 –CEO/Director/GM*

*I guess also - well we don't know how much support they get from other people with disabilities, other peers with disabilities, who have been to work, been to uni. What other stories are out there that they can actually tap into. I think the peer group for me has been - it allowed me to I guess develop personally, professionally, in the sense that I had people who've had similar experience to me, and go hey, this has happened today, or this has happened in my workplace, or at uni. Has anyone else been through it? Can I get some help; can I get some tips? ... So other than my parents, my peer group have - my, I guess, disability peer group have been really helpful in just knowing what's around, and knowing - if they weren't there to tell me, right from the early years that it's discriminatory for someone with - for people with disabilities to be discriminated against, if they didn't tell me that I'd probably take it on face value, and just go yep okay, fair enough. You wouldn't think to stand up for yourself until someone tells you that. – research participant #7 – Policy/project officer*

### **Individualised and tailored approach to job placement support**

Study participants spoke about the importance of individualised and tailored approach to job placement support. There were many examples of such an approach to support young people with disabilities to achieve employment participation, regardless of impairments. Taking individualized approach seeks to empower people, as they are actively part of driving and directing strategies and support to help them succeed. Moving forward, participant-centred and driven approach needs to be the minimum standard of practice in DES. Below are some examples of the kind of approaches and strategies that are working.

#### *Participant-driven Job plans*

Job plans are a compulsory activity as part of income support mutual obligation requirements. However, what isn't compulsory is that the plan be completed with the people

with disabilities themselves. Study participants revealed that often it is done for them. This “to” approach, which is considered common practice for some providers, is in line with the coercive power over practice underlining DES and income support, as highlighted in previously findings sections.

However, as some study participants below highlight, for true person-centeredness, job plans must be developed with people with disabilities and where relevant with their family member or advocate. These plans need to articulate clear strategies to achieve the individualized goals and address their needs:

*So it's all about tailoring the packages to what the client wants. When we do our job plan, which are a requirement with Centrelink, we actually do it in conjunction with the client because it's actually their plan. It's nothing - I mean yes, we have to do it because it's partly government, but it's their plan to work or move to employment or how are they going to cope? We do a thing called in work support plan as well which really targets how the client wants to be contacted; where the client would like to be contacted, how often they want to be contacted, so that everyone is involved. It's not me dictating to them that they're going now go duh duh - we're going to do this process and if it doesn't suit you, too bad because this is what I want to do. We involve them and that evolves. – research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

The above example, reinforces the need to ensure person-centered job planning. This links directly to Discussion Point 3: Job Plans, in 2016 new DES discussion paper.

Leaving it to the participants to change providers if unsatisfied, is not a sufficient measure given that not everyone can just leave and find another provider that easily. This is not an effective measure. Consumer satisfaction may be a better measure. The new DES needs to recognize the important role planning and engagement plays in building intrinsic motivation and self-direction. There needs to be more of an emphasis place on a more NDIS planning approach and a move away from totalitarian mutual obligation approach to planning.

#### *Individualised and tailored career-focused apprenticeships and traineeships*

One of the successes of employment of young people with disabilities, has been school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. A key to this success has been individualised, localized and tailored approach to traineeships. The particularly focus on career rather than “any job will do” is an important attitude underpinning the approach.

*Yeah. Each traineeship's individualised and tailored. For example, we've got - I don't know how many - honest to God - how many different routes. We've got joiners. We've got brickies. We've got people working in cinemas - [because that's] they want*

*to do - in offices, accountants. There's so many - it's about doing it individual to suit what that person wants to do. – research participant #16 – CEO/Director/GM*

Local partnership models with a clear facilitator was considered another important model to the success of school-based traineeships.

*well we'll just implement what we know works within a partnership approach, and that was one of the things that came apparent, that it wasn't a problematic approach, it was more a strategic looking at available resources.... We developed the ...network, and then the idea was that network would work collaborative and strategically to support individual young people. It was very much looking at an individual, all the resources - research participant #8 - Manager*

The network works with both schools and DES being fully engaged.

*Each network's a little bit different in that it's very much place based, and depends on who's part of that network. Obviously schools are essential because we need - the school's engaged, and not just engaged in a program, some of the schools wanted things done to them. Rather than that we'll come and take their kids, and get them jobs, and isn't that wonderful. Whereas it is very much around - no this young person needs some more career development, they need to build their independence while they're at school before they're ready to do some work experience. Which we can put some supports in through a DES, and then we can look at a school. It's very messy but it tends to work. - research participant #8 - Manager*

There was support for engagement and promotion of these models/approaches to traineeships and apprenticeships is needed.

#### *Customized roles*

People with severe or dual disability can experience significant barriers to employment. The practice of customized roles (evident in US, and here in Australian) however, is helping to remove these barrier for people with severe impairments seeking employment. The practice focuses on the strengths/talent of individuals, and designs job around these. Such an approach is not only providing employment success but are challenging preconceived notions of employment and who is employable.

*So the whole idea for us is to - why we call them job development officers is they actually create roles, because a lot of the time our guys couldn't go in and do the full aspects of the role. They just cannot - just physically not able or cognitively can't do it.” - research participant #17 – Senior Manager*

*So we can do the job tailoring and actually create a role that suits them so that it's taking pressure off other people who can then do other aspects. That's easy to do*

*with a smaller employer, because they can say, Jim, you do this and then let him do that. That's a lot easier to do. But if you do that in a big company, they've got that - their tailoring of roles, kind of quite difficult. – research participant #8 - Manager*

*I mean, we've got a non-verbal - two non-verbal, but young. One's reasonably young, one's in his early 20s but there's an older guy, he's worked for us for 20 years, who's none verbal in a wheelchair. He handles our complaints and resolutions, grievances. Really lovely guy. His office is all set out with winches and all sorts. Then we've got another guy from Mackay who does - types our resumes. He - it's by obviously the technology - it's blinking. He has an on the job support worker. It probably takes him four hours to do a resume, but you know what, he just comes in week after week. Showing that we're actually capable of doing it. – research participant #12 - Senior Manager*

Small businesses were particularly leading the way in embracing customized Jobs and providing opportunities.

*So the whole idea for us is to - why we call them job development officers is they actually create roles, because a lot of the time our guys couldn't go in and do the full aspects of the role. They just cannot - just physically not able or cognitively can't do it. But what they can do is do aspects of other roles. So we can do the job tailoring and actually create a role that suits them so that it's taking pressure off other people who can then do other aspects. That's easy to do with a smaller employer, because they can say, Jim, you do this and then let him do that. That's a lot easier to do. But if you do that in a big company, they've got that - their tailoring of roles, kind of quite difficult....That's why the small - you've also got the community's perspective of the smaller employers. ... you do get those employers that are pure community based that actually want to be involved in the community. They're your gold. These are the ones you know you can work with and tailor jobs. - research participant # 16 Senior Manager*

Support and outreach for small businesses, is an important need moving forward. Currently DES and other employment related programs have more emphasis on support and education of larger business/government, yet many study participants revealed how it is often small businesses that are willing to give people an opportunity.

*With physical, with both, any kind of risk, still bigger employers are quite hard to come by. The smaller, more community based providers are the ones that'll give opportunities. They'll have the patience to do workplace modifications, et cetera, productivity, wages. Yeah, DES [disability employment services] if you look at DES*

*overall, smaller employers would be the big thing. Now we're working with some big companies on stuff. — research participant #14 - Senior Manager*

***Specialist knowledge of work place modifications and assistive technology - showing what is possible***

What is also helping, and needed moving forward, is specialist knowledge about what is possible for people and their impairments. Some study participants reported that too often providers can't see the possibility beyond the impairment – particularly given the program is based on a deficit model. Specialist knowledge shows what is possible, this needs to be shared and embraced more with generic providers moving forward. This is particularly important as technology improves and attitudes change.

*That will be a big part of our agenda, is giving DES providers tools to understand what it is that people with physical disabilities can achieve, if they're given the right support and access to the resources that they need. - research participant #5 - Manager*

However, the skills and knowledge need to be present and available to appropriately capitalize on workplace modification and assistive technology. Funding specialist organisation and their professional staff to support generic DES and Jobactive services in training and advice on assistive technology and workplace modification is a potential strategy to maximize employment success.

This was further understood through examples where the combination of workplace modifications, assistive technology and willingness on part of employer equaled employment success.

*Technology is wonderful. So I've made sure that now all the leaders have educated their staff around workplace modifications...Like I got a dude a carbon fibre leg - he always said, I'd like a leg like the Olympians. So I got him one. Got the trucks modified. I've got a guy who broke his spine, he was an apprentice and he was doing a diesel fitting mechanics apprenticeship. I got hoists, I got a forklift and I got special flooring. The employer did have to pay towards the forklift, because obviously he wasn't going to keep the forklift as his personal thing. But he came to the party with \$1800 towards the forklift. But the actual, you know, he carried on and indeed has finished his apprenticeship.... I love workplace modifications. The opportunities are endless. – research participant #14 – Senior Manager*

Understanding what is possible is important, as the physical and practical environments of many workplaces continue to be exclusionary for many. However, supports and funding for work place modification and assistive technology along with willingness of employers is

opening up opportunities for people with physical disabilities. However, it was also noted that more training of generic DES and Jobactive providers is required along with funded access to specialist provider knowledge to fully realize these opportunities.

### **Intervention points - Moving forward**

Moving forward, there are philosophical and operational changes needed in DES to make the transition between education and employment more seamless for young adults with disabilities. These include:

- Recognising that transitions takes time – it's more diverse, lengthy and complex in the contemporary Australian economy where paid work is becoming less secure. As such, transition support in DES needs to be widened beyond ESL, to reflect this reality.
- Allowing permeable pathways between education, pre-employment and employment to recognise that young people are at different points in the journey (particularly important for those with complex needs).
- No exclusion of who can access employment support through DES, including eligibility in ESL if a person with a disability wants help finding employment.
- DHS Assessment could be based more on a more interactional model of disability that captures complexity of needs to ensure appropriate level and type of support as well as being age appropriate (like the two versions of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) International classification of Functioning, Disability and Health - ICF adult version and ICF-CY child and youth version).
- Allowing DES ESL providers to:
  - help raise expectations *early on* with schools, individuals and families as a way to build expectation and intrinsic motivation. Showing open employment is possible for people with a disability early on is critical to which pathway is decided post school. Earlier intervention is critical.
  - support quality and various work experiences along with paid after-school job while at school to help enhance employability and build a career focus.
- To acknowledge the specific needs of Recent School Leavers (RSLs) in DES who did not go through or who were not eligible for ESL but have transitional support



requirements e.g. development of employability skills and experiences. Being handled in the adult systems /process (assessment process and compulsory activities) without appropriate adjustment is not helpful.

- Remove restrictions in supporting young adults in the tertiary education - employment pathway, so like ESL, they can have a seamless transition to work by being able to have access to employment support and specialist knowledge with practice placements, graduate job readiness, unpaid internships (length to be self or co-determined).
- Career development and career transition support for people post-placement.
- Encourage individualised tailored approaches e.g. customized jobs, social enterprises, localised partnerships models to support employment success.
- Foster peer group support and sharing of success stories (not just on government websites – needs to have authenticity).
- Specialist providers providing knowledge to generic organisations of affordances/modifications (building, jobs, technology) and assessment /planning.

To improve employability of young adults with disabilities requires a client driven holistic approach that supports their complex, diverse and lengthy education-employment pathways. As it stands the transition to paid work as defined in DES is too narrow and restrictive, and essentially it is not capitalising on the opportunities, knowledge and practices that are shown to enhance young adults with disabilities in their pathways to employment and their employability (Rausch et al., 2014; Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). Australia needs a change of thinking and practice towards young adult with disabilities and transition to facilitate genuine employability for a group of people who have a high degree of self-determination and agency. To improve employability of young people with disabilities requires a client driven holistic approach that supports their complex, diverse and lengthy education-employment pathways:

*Let's look at an individual and have a range of different supports, it's not about choosing one or the other. That will take a thinking shift as well as a policy shift, but it's been done overseas, it's not as if this is completely new – research participant #8 – Manager*

### ***Broadening the policy understanding of education to employment pathways***

There is a need within DES to expand how young people and transition is viewed. The pathways post school to open employment are more varied and can include:

- School to Work
- School to Vocational Training to Work
- School to Tertiary Education to Work
- School to pre-employment programs to work (e.g. state-base/NDIS TTW)
- School-based traineeships /apprenticeship to open employment

People may move between these pathways as well.

However, from a policy context, DES operates on the premises of straight school to work transition, which is not the case for all young people with a disability. The interface between other education institution such as colleges and university is not well considered from a transition perspective. It is also well acknowledged that for many students with disabilities, the post school pathways have not always had an open employment focus, particularly for people with more severe or complex needs. A general pathway has been: complete secondary schooling (or equivalent) and enter into a post-school program such as pre-employment program – e.g. NSW's transition to work, day service programs or Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). The culture of work or even seeing open employment as a possibility has not been a traditionally strong focus (Winn and Young 2009).

### ***Transition to Work –Cutting Across Multi-Systems***

In Australia, the transition from school to work cuts across areas of Education, Employment, Income Support Health, Inclusive environments and infrastructure and Disability Support services. All of these key service areas are key policy areas in National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 – and play a role in the journey to work. It is acknowledge that some services systems play more of a role than others depending on the age of the young adult, their needs and what pathway they are on and where they are at on the pathway. It is important to acknowledge the intersection of these services, when trying to improve the seamlessness of the journey to work.

Education cannot be solely held responsible for young people developing the necessary employability skills. As the DES providers have highlighted, schools need support. Furthermore, the NDIS will not be the stop gap or solution for all young people with disabilities. Like the National Disability Strategy suggests, what is needed to improve workforce participation of young adult with disabilities, is a multiple system response that is integrate and supports overlapping of services, which mirrors the overlap nature of transition.

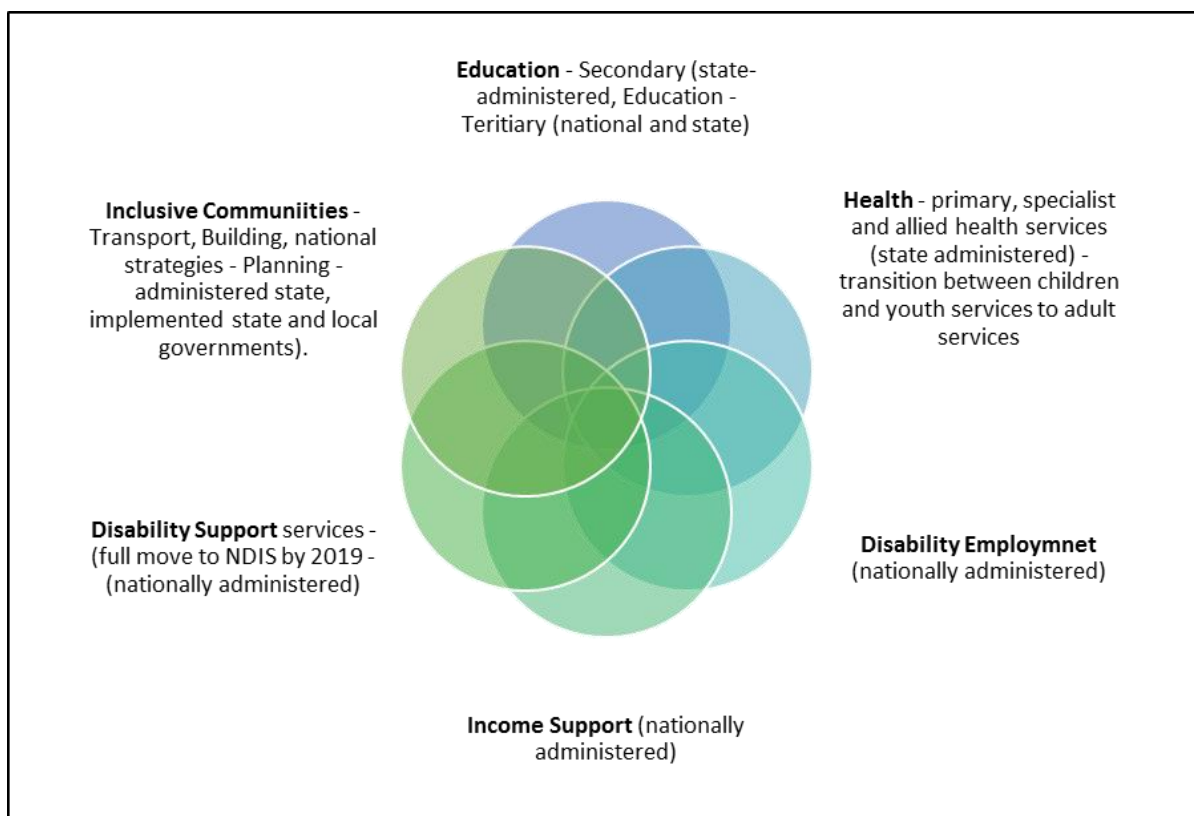


Figure 2: The many service systems involved in supporting people to achieve workforce participation.

## Summary

The education-to-work transition of young adults is complex, and interconnects multi-dimensions. This is no more evident than from the social position of young adults with disabilities, whose education-employment pathways and one's employability are influenced through the socio-cultural dimension of disadvantage and oppression (such as ableism, disablement) and the broader currents of the political economy (Gleeson 1999). This report has shown through examining the main disability employment service systems available to 'eligible young people', how pathways and one's employability is tightly prescribed through an inflexible program underpinned by broader influences of marketization on service delivery (Lantz & Marston 2012), and stereotypical views of disability and attainment.

Specific to DES in Australia, there are philosophical and operational changes needed to make the transition between education and employment more seamless for young adults. Ultimately, to improve employability of young adults with disabilities requires a client driven holistic approach to supporting young adults in their complex, diverse and lengthy education-employment pathways. As it stands the transition to paid work as defined in DES contracts is too narrow and restrictive, and essentially it is not capitalising on the opportunities, knowledge and practices that are shown to enhance young adults with disabilities in their

pathways to employment and their employability (Rausch et al. 2014; Wakeford and Waugh 2014). Australia employment service delivery settings need a change of in relation to young people with disabilities so that they can enjoy meaningful employment, which can be facilitated by appropriate and timely support, underpinned by greater recognition of the agency and self-determination of young people themselves.

## References

- Abbott D and Carpenter J (2014) 'Wasting precious time': Young men with Duchenne muscular dystrophy negotiate the transition to adulthood. *Disability & Society* 29 (8): 1192-1205. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2014.916607
- Adkins, Barbara A., Chamorro-Koc, Marianella, & Stafford, Lisa (2015) [New mobilities for accessible cities : Toward scenarios for seamless journeys.](#) In Arraya, Daniel (Ed.) *Smart Cities as Democratic Ecologies*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire New York, pp. 200-218.
- Artd consulting (2016) *Ticket to Work pilot outcomes study. A quasi-experimental evaluation of pathways from school to economic and social inclusion.*  
<http://www.tickettowork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ticket-to-work-pilot-outcomes-study-2016.pdf>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, March Quarter. *Disability and Work*. Available at:  
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40March+Quarter+2012>
- Australian Government (2015) *Disability Support Pension Recipients (Compulsory Requirements) Guideline*. Available at:  
[https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/disability\\_support\\_pension\\_recipients\\_compulsory\\_requirements\\_1.pdf](https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/disability_support_pension_recipients_compulsory_requirements_1.pdf).
- Australian Government (2015) *Disability Employment Framework – Round One – Issues Paper*. Available at: <https://engage.dss.gov.au/disability-employment-framework/issues-paper/>
- Australian Government (2016) *Disability Employment Services Reform – Discussion paper*. Available at:  
<https://engage.dss.gov.au/disability-employment-services-reform/disability-employment-services-reform-discussion-paper/>
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2016) *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability*.

Available at: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/publications/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing*. Cat. no. PHE 140 Canberra: AIHW. Available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=10737419259>

Beatty C and Fothergill S (2015) Disability benefits in an Age of Austerity. *Social Policy and Administration* 49(2): 161:181.

Bronfenbrenner U (1979) *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown D (2001) The Social Sources of Educational Credentialism: Status Cultures, Labor Markets, and Organizations. *Sociology of Education* 74: 19-34. doi:10.2307/2673251

Children with Disability Australia 2015 *Post School Transition: The Experiences of Students with Disability*. Available at: <http://www.cda.org.au/post-school-transition>

Clarke M and Patrickson M (2008) The new covenant of employability. *Employee Relations* 30(2): 121 – 141.

Chamorro-Koc, Marianella, Stafford, Lisa, & Adkins, Barbara A. (2015) [Seamless journeys : enhancing accessibility to work through digital technologies for people with mobility-related impairments](#). In Popovic, Vesna, Blackler, Alethea L., Luh, Ding-Bang, Nimkulrat, Nithikul, Kraal, Ben J., & Nagai, Yukari (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 6th IASDR (The International Association of Societies of Design Research Congress)*, IASDR (The International Association of Societies of Design Research), Brisbane, Australia, pp. 298-310.

Cocks E and Thoresen S (2013) Social and economic outcomes from VET in schools for people with disabilities: initial findings from an Australian national longitudinal study'. In: *16th Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association Conference*, AVETRA, Melbourne.

Commonwealth of Australia (2011) *National Disability Strategy: An initiative of the Council of Australian Governments*. Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/national-disability-strategy-2010-2020>

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (United Nations). Available at:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/disabilities-convention.htm>

Critten V (2016) Expectations and realisations: the employment story of a young man with cerebral palsy. *Disability & Society* 31(4): 573-576.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Australia) (2014) *Roles and responsibilities in education part B: reform of the Federation White Paper issues paper 4 Vocational education and training and higher education*. Available at:  
[http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/issues\\_paper\\_4\\_part\\_b\\_vocational\\_and\\_higher\\_ed.pdf](http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/issues_paper_4_part_b_vocational_and_higher_ed.pdf)

Díaz-Mendoza AC, Modesto Caballero C and Navarro-Cendejas J (2015) Analysis of employment rate and social status in young adults with childhood-onset rheumatic disease in Catalonia. *Pediatric Rheumatology* 13:29. DOI 10.1186/s12969-015-0026-8

Furlong, A & Cartmel, F. 1997. *Young people and social change*. Buckinghamshire: Open University Press.

Galvin R D ( 2005). Researching the disabled identity: Contextualizing the identity transformations which accompany the onset of impairment. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 27: 393-413.

Gleeson B (1999) *Geographies of Disability*. London: Routledge

Goggin G and Newell C (2005) *Disability in Australia: exposing a social apartheid*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Hemmeter J, Kauff J and Wittenburg D (2009) Changing Circumstances: Experiences of Child SSI Recipients Before and After Their Age-18 Redetermination for Adult Benefits. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 30(3): 201–221.

Honey A, Kariuki M, Emerson E and Llewellyn G (2014) Employment status transitions among young adults, with and without disability. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 49 (2):151-170.

Huang IC, Holzbauer JJ, Lee EJ, Chronister J, Chan F and O'neil J (2013). Vocational rehabilitation services and employment outcomes for adults with cerebral palsy in the United States. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* 55: 1000-1008.

- Jetha A, Badley E, Beaton D, Fortin PR, Shiff NJ and Gignac M A (2015) Unpacking Early Work Experiences of Young Adults With Rheumatic Disease: An Examination of Absenteeism, Job Disruptions, and Productivity Loss . *Arthritis Care & Research* 67(9): 1246–1254. DOI 10.1002/acr.22601.
- Lantz S and Marston G (2012) Policy, citizenship and governance: the case of disability and employment policy in Australia. *Disability & Society* 27(6): 853-867. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2012.686881
- Lindsay S, McPherson AC and Maxwell J (2016) Perspectives of school-work transitions among youth with spina bifida, their parents and health care providers. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, DOI: 10.3109/09638288.2016.1153161
- McDonald P, Grant-Smith D and Marston G (forthcoming 2018) Employability: Pathways from education to work for young people, SI. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 60(2).
- Magill-Evans J, Galambos N, Darrah J, Nickerson C. 2008. Predictors of employment for young adults with developmental motor disabilities. *Work* 31:433–442.
- Malviya A, Rushton SP, Foster HE, Ferris CM, Hanson H, Muthumayandi K and Deehan DJ (2012) The relationships between adult juvenile idiopathic arthritis and employment. *Arthritis & Rheumatism* 64:3016-3024.
- Meadows D (2009) Where Have All Our Students Gone? School to Post-school Transition in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Special Education* 33 (2): 87-108  
doi:10.1375/ajse.33.2.87
- Mayer KU (2009) New Directions in Life Course Research. *Annual Review of Sociology* 35: 413-433.
- Michelsen SI, Oslash Uldall P, Kejs A M T and Madsen M (2005) Education and employment prospects in cerebral palsy. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* 47: 511-517
- Miles Morgan (2012) 'Trialing the CICA: Guidelines for Facilitating the Career Development of Young People with Disability. Final Report'. Available at: <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/CICA-Trial-Report-Career-Development-of-Young-People-with-a-Disability-Final.pdf>



- Novak J (2015) Raising expectations for U.S. Youth with Disabilities: Federal Disability Policy Advances Integrated Employment. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal* 51(1): 91-110.
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (Cwealth) No. 20, (2013). Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013A00020>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011) *Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Tertiary Education and Employment, Education and Training Policy*. Available at : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264097650-en>
- Owens A and Stewart A (forthcoming) Regulating for Decent Work Experience: Meeting the Challenge of the Rise of the Intern. *International Labour Review* 155(4).
- Punch R, Hyde M and Creed PA (2004) Issues in the School-To-Work Transition of Hard Of Hearing Adolescents. *American Annals of the Deaf* 149(1): 28-38.
- Rusch FR, Dattilo J, Stodden R and Plotner AJ (2014). Transition from School to Work: New Direction for Policy and Practice. In Heyman, J, Ashley Stein, M. and Moreno, G (eds) *Disability and Equity at Work*. Oxford Scholarship Online, pp. 197-212.  
DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199981212.001.0001
- Rutkowski S and Riehle E (2009) Access to Employment and Economic Independence in Cerebral Palsy. *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America* 20(3): 535–547. doi:10.1016/j.pmr.2009.06.003
- Shakespeare T. (2006). *Disability rights and wrongs*. Routledge, New York.
- Shaw KL, Hackett J, Southwood TR and Mcdonagh JE (2006). The Prevocational and Early Employment Needs of Adolescents with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis: The Adolescent Perspective. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 69: 98-105.
- Stafford, L. M. 2013. "The Journey of Becoming Involved: The Experience of Participation in Urban Spaces by Children with Diverse Mobility." Unpublished doctoral diss., Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.
- Stafford, L. (2014). "Journey of Becoming Involved in Urban Spaces by Children with Diverse Mobility". In Buccieri, K. (ed.). *Body Tensions: Beyond Corporeality in Time and Space*. Oxford: Interdisciplinary net. ISBN: 978-1-84888-286-7

- Test D W, Fowler C H, Richter S M, White J, Mazzotti V, Walker A R, Kohler P and Kortering L (2009) Evidence based practices in secondary transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* 32(2): 115-128.
- Vogtle L K (2013) Employment Outcomes for Adults With Cerebral Palsy: An Issue That Needs To Be Addressed. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology Commentaries* 973. doi: 10.1111/dmnc.12241.
- Wakeford M and Waugh F (2014) *Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Disability and the Ticket to Work Initiative*. National Ticket to Work Network. Available at: <http://www.tickettowork.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Transitions-to-Employment-of-Australian-Young-People-with-Disability-Full-Report.pdf>
- Williams F (2016) Critical Thinking in Social Policy: The Challenges of Past, Present and Future. *Social Policy & Administration*, 50(6): 628–647. DOI: 10.1111/spol.12253
- Winn S and Hay I (2009). Transition from school for youths with a disability: issues and challenges. *Disability & Society* 24: 103-115.
- World Health Organization. (2011). *Global Report on Disability*. WHO: Geneva.
- Yanow D (2000) *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis*. Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods, 47. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Theme book

Stage 1 (Local knowledge Interviews)

**Large Themes-** informed by literature review undertaken on young people with physical disability (YPWPD) and transition to work.

**Details of the themes emerged from local knowledge communities' interviews - service providers and advocacy organisation (information and advocacy for pwd).**

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed Needs moving forward
Social Systems	Social supports – informal and formal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fragment support between government agencies and systems</li> <li>Adolescent to adult service transition isn't always smooth</li> <li>Family and friends can create dependence rather than independence</li> <li>Unmet needs in various support – including access to aids and equipment, school support, transport</li> <li>Invisible conditions may not have access to supports –not seen as needed – “coping”</li> </ul>	Family supporting the young person to pursue an appropriate career	Building relationships with families early and schools  Creating independence through building confidence and soft skills over time including travel training  Specialist services( voc rehab & diagnostic orgs) linking with schools and des – to show what is possible	Holistic services that work together to support the person in the journey to work goal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Person-centred</li> <li>- Allow dual servicing</li> </ul> All young adults wanting to work can access DES.  Specialist services( voc rehab & diagnostic orgs) linking with schools, medical specialist and des – <i>to show what is possible</i>  Permeable multiple pathways to allow for varying needs, stage, and situations of young adults in their journey.

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed Needs moving forward
	Fragment services/ supports – health, education, employments	Integrated – multi-disciplinary team approach, has a specialist understanding of disability types – where the focuses is on capability - strengths, and focusing on these benefits and positive.	Integrated holistic services/supports – health, education, employment	See what works. Communities of Practice.
	Rarely in communication Lack of speciality Limited funds, Fed/state turf war Focus on treatment /cure– than on work participation with ypwd.	Wrapping supports to enable success – modification, assistive technology.	Post school transition – where realistic goals setting	Collective Impact Work Partnerships – education, employment, health
	Low take up of employment assistance support and workplace mods, wbpa.	Peer Stories/Support	Ticket to work model –Partnerships models with facilitator “Collective Impact Work”	Tailored, flexible services
	Individuals’ - without transport and tailored-flexible services — success comes undone quickly.		Communities of Practice, like the new TTW (generic young people program)	Alterative entry then Centrelink assessment, for a period of time for young adults with disability - direct registrations, in recognition of the complex and changing transition period (potentially till 21)

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
Socio-cultural	<p>Stereotypes, prejudice, stigma (Ableism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At community level - significant stigma tied to disability</li> <li>• Discrimination and negative attitudes towards employing people (employers) – discourse - language</li> <li>• At employer level, there were evidence that negative perceptions and attitudes regarding employment still perpetuate and play a role in preventing people with disability into workforce.</li> <li>• Specific difference in attitudes noted for people with Invisible conditions could be viewed as “suspect”.</li> </ul>	<p>Relationships with small business – more open if they have an open attitude.</p> <p>Some employers you will never change negative perceptions.</p> <p>Long way still to go.</p>	<p>Some notice changes, e.g. Paralympics help to make this change.</p> <p>Building relationships and slowly educating small and medium employers.</p> <p>According to interviewees, - this is where sustainable employment is being made – at small – medium businesses.</p>	<p>Education Advertisement on mainstream tv /social media and prime time to promote pwd and work force participation.</p> <p>Wage subsidy amounts like Job access.</p> <p>Raising the understanding that it is not okay to talk just entry level jobs. Pwd can contribute to all levels of employment.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low expectations (by others and oneself). This was evident in Parents, Schools, Allied Health, Employment Agencies.</li> <li>• Schools played a significant role here.</li> </ul>	<p>Where schools are open, education and information sessions provided by systematic advocacy groups on work (right to work, what is work, various forms of work potentials) has helped to shift thinking in schools, and to plant</p>	<p>Early work with schools and families to challenge and set expectations around work.</p> <p>Realistic, goal planning, multiple permeable pathways.</p> <p>Peer stories</p>	<p>Revisit ESL program rules restriction</p> <p>Support for systematic advocacy groups in delivering program in schools that show what's</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is variability in how schools see work capability of ypwd. Some resistance and hostility encountered by programs trying to build work attitude and employment as a viable option in some schools.</li> <li>• Reduction in ESL program has implication on changing expectations.</li> <li>• Often ADE and Day program pathway being seen as only option for yp with more severe and or complex disabilities.</li> <li>• Lack of time to build relationships with families and school to overcome barriers re: expectations.</li> </ul>	<p>the idea of work and tertiary education as an options for individuals and families. e.g. YDAS in school work education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting employment as an options</li> </ul> <p>Ticket to Work partnerships model school based traineeships (limited to people with mild-mod ID) Peer stories</p>	<p>Building independence by building skills and confidence</p>	<p>possible – right to work, what is work, various forms of work.</p> <p>Peer stories – the real pathways.</p> <p>Partnership models, Individual tailored response not programmatic driven.</p> <p>Time to build relationships with individuals, families and school –before the last year of schooling</p> <p>Permeable pathway options – not fixed once chosen. In recognition that young people grow and develop over time.</p>
	<p>Medicalised views and approaches towards people with disabilities adds to low expectations.</p> <p>Illness or impairments is focus – not what is possible.</p> <p>May not have access to assistive aids and equipment, because of not knowing what is possible.</p>	<p>People's use of assistive aids and technologies, accessible environments show what is possible – challenge the negative views of impairments</p> <p>Showing that belief and self-determination along with having appropriate affordances are enablers.</p>	<p>Assistive Technology NDIS – is covering some of the newest more expensive AT, such as newest prosthetics</p> <p>Educating others – medical specialist through to Des providers and employers – know what's possible and the benefits</p> <p>Customised, individualised approaches.</p>	<p>Employment first focus – don't go straight for day programs and/or ADEs.</p> <p>Holistic approach- wrap the services around the person – not make the person fit the program.</p> <p>Access to the range of assistive technologies –</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	Program is based on a deficit model - Des and "Work capacity"			not just standard – basic minimum, people need to have access to newest technologies and that means being paid for by programs.  Interactional model of disability approach adopted in assessments – biopsychosocial - captures complexity of needs
Poverty	<p>Poverty trap - Income support vs low wages</p> <p>Disincentives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost of working is more than the wage received – works out less than the pension</li> <li>- Risk of things not working and can't get back on the DSP – lack of safety net. - Fear of having to start over</li> <li>- Lack of control over the situation – forced</li> <li>- Intergenerational poverty and income support</li> </ul> <p>Cost of living – fringe outer suburbs and regional impacts affordability and work options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change/Increasing work attitude</li> <li>• Ensure sufficient resources to motivated people to work – not disincentive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer success stories – what is achievable</li> <li>• Investing in clients earlier/upfront – paying for trainings, clothing etc, that are barriers to skill development and employment.</li> </ul>	<p>Providing a Safety net income support (perhaps universal basic wage?)</p> <p>Social-spatial issues intersecting with employment are addresses–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affordable transport and housing</li> <li>- – needs to recognise outer fringe suburbs and inner regional areas cost and infrastructure</li> <li>- Personal care needs are meet.</li> <li>- Funding transport costs properly.</li> </ul>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
Psycho-social	<p>Limited Intrinsic motivation to work – ties to societies low expectations for pwd to work, and intergenerational issues</p> <p>Limited Confidence – in ones abilities and the talents they offer. (deficit model)</p> <p>Limited skills and opportunity to develop Independence in daily tasks.</p>	<p>Showing people what is possible (peer stories, rights etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generate belief in self</li> <li>- Identify strengths and capability to contribute</li> <li>- Skill development to build confidence that can lead to developing independence and employability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generating belief in self</li> <li>- Identify strengths and capability to contribute</li> <li>- Skill development to build confidence that can lead to developing independence.</li> </ul> <p>See programs in schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- YDAS, CPL, Ticket to Work</li> </ul>	<p>Dual servicing that supports programs aimed at generating belief, identify strengths and capability, and build life skills that lead to greater independence.</p> <p>Timing - This needs to happen in school and after school = Continuum of support relevant to the needs of the person, and stage in the journey.</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
Environments	<p>Transport Dependent on where you live. Outer Suburbs (fringe) and Regional areas are greatly affected by accessibility, availability and connectivity of public transport and cost of commuter/transport.</p> <p>This has a significant implication on work opportunities.</p> <p>Disincentive to work – cost more to work due to transport cost – go backwards.</p> <p>Where one lives is determined by affordability of housing – many pwd do live in</p>	No a lot.	<p>Staff interventions – pick up but not sustainable</p> <p>Transport schemes in local communities, but these are limited – now heavily focused on hospital appointments and shopping only, one off.</p>	<p>Social-spatial issues intersecting with employment are addresses–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable transport and housing</li> <li>• outer fringe suburbs and inner regional areas infrastructure investment</li> <li>• Personal care needs are meet.</li> <li>• Funding transport costs properly.</li> </ul> <p>All level of government strategic action plans for transport and housing affordability</p>



Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	outer fringe and inner regional areas (SDAC)			<p>State and Local Govt. have a role in Hard and Social infrastructure investment.</p> <p>Perhaps inclusive Uber "cluster" pickups is the future?</p>
	<p>Workplace environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accessible Buildings/workplaces (inc toilets)</li> <li>• Unwillingness to adapt environments</li> <li>• Businesses can be tenants of buildings, so it requires owner to be willing as well.</li> <li>• WPHS issues pwpd could create</li> <li>• Time with access to workplace modification scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Any one of these can mean an opportunity can be lost.</p>	<p>Workplace modifications when done well opened up workplace opportunities.</p>	<p>Educating employers on workplace modifications and discussing concerns re workplace health and safety etc.</p>	<p>Continual invest in workplace modification</p> <p>Continual strategic implementation and compliance of inclusive buildings and landscapes – NS Access to Premises.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost restrictions and the time of the process to access assistive technology and work mods.</li> <li>• Other people attitudes towards equipment-stigma associated with equipment PWD used (headpointers, communication device, amount of equipment)</li> </ul>	<p>When it could be accessed, Assistive Technology was making a difference in opportunities. - So much possibilities.</p> <p>Schemes – workplace mods and Jobs in jeopardy</p>	<p>Educating on the benefits of assistive tech /modifications with employers</p> <p>Access to funds to help access newest AT</p> <p>Advocate for the need and benefit for funding AT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing investment in full funding of AT and workplace mods (inc adaptive equipment – forklifts)</li> <li>• Promoting the opps AT can bring with medical specialist</li> <li>• Stronger education of the benefits of AT for employers.</li> </ul>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
		NDIS - is also helping to fund AT.		
	<p><i>Geographical – Regional</i> Where one lives is often determined by affordability of housing, particular when in receipt of income support or are low income earners. Affordability has been a known problem influencing poverty and economic participation. It intersects with social infrastructure availability – inc. public transport.</p> <p>Cost to access training was also noted.</p> <p>Job opportunities are also greatly impacted in regional areas. This was a common theme noted in regional areas. The type and sustainability of jobs. Sometimes smaller areas could have more positives.</p>	<p>Innovative employment options – social enterprises</p> <p>Local community network and relationships to help open and sustain jobs</p> <p>Local council regional development</p>	<p>Innovative employment options – social enterprises</p> <p>Local community network and relationships help to open and sustain jobs</p> <p>Local council regional development (varied)</p>	<p>Social-spatial issues intersecting with employment are addresses–</p> <p>Recognise and supplement outer fringe suburbs and inner regional areas re: cost and availability to social infrastructure and services as well as training.</p> <p>Investing in regional development to strengthen and capture changing work economy.</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
Function and Disability	<p>Severity of condition –if deemed under 8 hrs capacity – you are exempt/excluded from DES.</p> <p>The underlying assumption is 8 hours or more is valued under isn't–</p>	<p>Customised tailored jobs</p> <p>Ongoing support when in a job.</p> <p>Access to resources.</p> <p>Attitude shifts with all concerned (ind, employer, support</p>	<p>Customised tailored jobs - has been successfully applied in US and Australia with people with more severe disabilities – ID and PD.</p> <p>Career focus - Job match – job type success</p>	<p>Customised tailored jobs</p> <p>Reward Innovative employment – social enterprises as outcomes and rewarded these outcomes as such</p> <p>Invest early in people – focus on long term benefits and keep ongoing support.</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	<p>no focus on the value of contribution.</p> <p>Lots of questions of hrs to work – deficit focused</p> <p>It was noted that the practice of Creaming and parking was occurring for those just over 8hrs who were seen as having high support need – not work ready. (this is tied to outcomes of the program.</p> <p>Also noted is the less visibility of people with more severe disabilities in Des - Effects of work hr capacity assessment on access and participation in work support programs.</p>	<p>staff) and peer support – what's possible, what's the advantages</p>	<p>Spending money on clients initially pays off in terms of employment in long term – long term focus.</p> <p>Ongoing support when in a job – this has had significant benefits for both employer and employee.</p> <p>Technology opening up doors</p> <p>Attitude – peer support – what's possible</p>	<p>Invest in specialist des advice – educating and showing what is possible</p> <p>No work hr capacity required to access DES – all who want to work are eligible to access DES –</p> <p>Needs to recognise and adjustment for complexity of needs/factors – e.g. imbursements for yp, people with severe or (episodic) dis, regional.</p> <p>Complexity is important focus – understood from Interactional model approach</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
Transition Support Planning and Preparedness	<b>Secondary Education</b>			
	<p>Inconsistent access to, type and level of transition planning Varies – school to school, state to state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some students overlooked at needing transition support – particular those seen to be</li> </ul>	<p>Engendering work attitude and career thinking at school</p>	<p>Programs run at schools with students and families about work possibilities and rights , peer stories</p> <p>Tailored planning Persons are supported to have involvement and</p>	<p>Expert independent facilitators</p> <p>Relook at Des engagement with schools - pre employment support service provided to schools.</p> <p>Expand ticket to work trial for all disability types not just ID, who are</p>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	<p>coping at school or invisible conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gatekeeping in the sharing of information about supports that can be accessed</li> <li>• Timing of access to information</li> </ul>		<p>ownership over their own plan, setting expectations.</p>	<p>interested in school based traineeships and apprenticeship.</p> <p>Develop a national program to use in schools by external group such as advocacy orgs and des providers - to promote employment /career thinking with student with disabilities - work is possible - many pathways to get there. – peers stories of success (YDAS model )</p> <p>Appropriate information early</p> <p>Dedicated transition person for young people Funding for transition programs</p>
	<p>Differing, often inadequate Career planning /advising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not having honest conversations about work and work possibilities</li> </ul>			<p>Specialist career advisers who understand and operate within disability voc. counselling – know impairments and environmental effect-means they can tailor career advise/planning This also needs to be link with exposure to experiences. Early career planning</p>
	<p>Limited work experience – unsuitability of experiences</p> <p>Amount of work experiences</p>	<p>Various exposures to real work experiences,</p> <p>Work immersion</p> <p>Work trials</p> <p>Voluntary jobs – volunteering</p>	<p>Various exposures to real work experiences, to determine interests/talents and to get understanding of the nature of work and work culture.</p> <p>Work immersion experiences</p>	<p>Community of practice is encouraged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual servicing for those student in voc stream at school</li> <li>• Schools are supported by independent facilitators (e.g. lac's) and orgs like <i>Des youth specialist</i> that facilitate work experiences.</li> <li>• DES providing after school job support</li> </ul>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
				for students seeking jobs
	<p>Different/variable Voc. training and work preparedness skill development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VET Inappropriate funded training courses (not focus on modern work)</li> <li>Variability in work readiness of students based on the exposure and experience above plus their personal needs</li> </ul> <p>Inability to engage deeply with des</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School based internships – ticket to work (only for ID)</li> <li>Certificate training that are trade focused</li> <li>Vocational foundation training through tailored programs for school</li> <li>As well as on the job training for individual in school based traineeships (helps meet des esl criteria)</li> <li>Pre-des transition program for young people with mental health plans (focus on keeping well)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-des transition program for people with IEP – mental health plan</li> <li>Certificate training that are actually for trades</li> <li>Developing vocational foundation skills (soft skills) through tailored programs for school</li> <li>On the job training for individuals in school based traineeships (helps meet des esl criteria)</li> </ul>	<p>Sufficient time to do quality work assessment and linkages</p> <p>Appropriated tailored training for modern workforce– career focused e.g. trade</p> <p>Funded pre-employment program - part of a continuum of support</p>
	<p><b>Tertiary Training</b> Des cant engage with students while in uni</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prac. Placement issues due to limited access to specialist des knowledge to negotiate access to environments</li> </ul>			<p>Uni students can access Des prior to leaving to ensure smooth transition from uni to work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help with placement support whilst at uni by specialist des providers</li> <li>Help build up employability</li> </ul>

Key Theme	Barrier Sub themes	What's working	Strategies/ Interventions Solutions	What's needed - Needs moving forward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limits on work experience internships - particular new grads</li> <li>• Limit on uni linkages with DES</li> <li>• Impacts on employability /work readiness due to above restrictions</li> <li>• Loss of linkages with uni's since program restrictions</li> <li>• Cost of tertiary training</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help with access to and applying for graduate positions</li> </ul> <p>Expand work experience internships for new grads to 3 months – with safeguards – (informed decision making to participate) facilitated through DES /independent facilitator</p>

## **Appendix B - Interview Schedule**

### **Stage 1 – Service Stakeholders**

#### ***Within the current disability employment service system:***

1. What are the key issues facing young adults with physical disabilities in:
  - a. their pathways to paid work
  - b. accessing training
  - c. in getting a Job
  - d. in maintaining their jobs
  
2. To what extent does the policy environment contribute to the issues encountered by young adults with physical disabilities in their workforce participation?
  
3. From your experience, what would you say are the key barriers they encounter?
  - a. Have these increased with changes to the employment services or income support system?
  - b. What about employers?  
Prompt: Can you give an example of this? (what, when, where, who)
  
4. What opportunities exist for young adults with physical disabilities within the current DES environment?
  - a. Have these increased or decreased with changes to the service system?  
Prompt: Can you give an example of this? (what, when, where, who)

#### ***Reflecting back over your time in the disability employment service system:***

5. From your experience, what programs have worked well for young adults with physical disabilities in supporting their pathways to paid employment?  
Prompt: Can you give an examples of these? (what, when, where, who)
  
6. From your experience, what programs haven't worked as well for young adults with physical disabilities in supporting them obtaining and maintaining employment: Why haven't they worked so well?  
Prompt: Can you give an examples of these? (what, when, where, who)
  
7. What have been some of the negative changes in the system over this time?
  
8. To what extent have these changes impacted on this group of young adults? In what ways?  
Prompt: Can you give an examples of these? (what, when, where, who)

9. What have been some of the positive changes in the system over this time?
10. To what extent have these changes impacted on this group of young adults?
  - a. Pathway to employment
  - b. Getting a Job
  - c. Maintain a job?

Prompt: Can you give an examples of these? (what, when, where, who)

### ***Looking Forward***

11. Looking forward, what do you feel is needed at a policy level to improve workforce participation for this groups of young adults?
12. Looking forward, what do you feel is needed at a program level to improve workforce participation for this groups of young adults?



## Appendix C - Analytic approach to the different data sources.

<p>Literature &amp; Document Data</p>	<p>Organisation's Submission of National Disability Employment</p> <p>Identify through a thematic analysis :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What influences policy and programs have on young adults with physical disabilities relating to:</li> <li>• What has been some solutions, strategies, success in terms of program and systems</li> <li>• What future focuses or directions are being conveyed</li> </ul>
	<p>Interview Transcripts - Data Source (local knowledge) -</p> <p>Identify through a thematic analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What influences policy and programs have on young adults with physical disabilities relating to:</li> <li>• What has been some solutions, strategies, success in terms of program and systems</li> <li>• What future focuses or directions are being conveyed</li> </ul>
	<p>Academic papers. <i>Keyword searches:</i> physical disability, young people, transition, school to work transition, employment, workforce participation, conditions types.</p> <p>Identify through a thematic analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What influences policy and programs have on young adults with physical disabilities relating to:</li> <li>• What has been some solutions, strategies, success in terms of program and systems</li> <li>• What future focuses or directions are being conveyed</li> </ul>