



Inclusion Australia

acting locally - representing nationally - connecting globally

Choosing Employment

The key to economic participation for people with intellectual disability

Part 3 - NSW TTW forums of people with intellectual disability and families



Version 1.0

30 June 2014

Inclusion Australia (NCID) has over 5,000 members representing all 8 states and territories. In addition to having people with intellectual disability on our Board, Inclusion Australia receives policy advice from Our Voice. Our Voice is a committee of NCID's Board, the membership of which is exclusively people with intellectual disability representing all states and territories.

Inclusion Australia is the recognised national peak body with the single focus on intellectual disability, ie, our actions and priorities centre on issues that affect the lives of people with intellectual disability and their families.

Inclusion Australia's mission is to work to make the Australian community one in which people with intellectual disability are involved and accepted as equal participating members. We do this by:

- listening to people with intellectual disability and their families
- promoting and upholding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- developing and promoting creative policies and practices
- speaking to politicians, public servants, business and community leaders about the lives of people with intellectual disability and their right to have equality of opportunity

Inclusion Australia is a social profit organisation. Inclusion Australia (NCID) was created in 1971 by parents and friends in an endeavour to improve the quality of life of people with intellectual disability and to fill the need for national unity and information.

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Statement of Principles

- ☼ All people have inherent dignity and worth and equal and inalienable rights.
- ☼ All people are valued members of the Australian Community.
- ☼ People with intellectual disability as equal participating members of the Australian Community have the same rights:
 - ☼ to respect for their individual autonomy and independence
 - ☼ to make their own choices
 - ☼ to participate in decisions which affect their lives
 - ☼ to pursue any grievance which affects their lives
 - ☼ to diversity of choice for housing, education, work, recreation and leisure
 - ☼ to equity and justice
 - ☼ to be empowered to take their full place in the Australian Community
 - ☼ to dignity and privacy in all aspects of their lives

Inclusion Australia will:

- ✓ work to make the Australian Community one in which people with intellectual disability have full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and are involved and accepted as equal participating members.
- ✓ promote and protect the human rights of all persons with intellectual disability, including those who require more intensive support.

Consultation Statement

Inclusion Australia consults people with intellectual disability and family members through our State and Territory Agency Members. In particular we:

- ➔ conduct an annual survey of members and stakeholders
- ➔ hold two meetings a year, rotating through all States and Territories
- ➔ present at the Having a Say Conference each year, attended by over a 1,000 delegates the majority of whom have a disability
- ➔ hold forums on specific issues
- ➔ sponsor actions and representations on issues of importance to people with disability

'This publication has been prepared by the National Council on Intellectual Disability Inc. for the Australian Government, represented by the Department of Social Services. The views expressed in this publication are those of the National Council on Intellectual Disability Inc. and do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government.'

Table of Contents

Preamble	5
Introduction	5
Forum Design	5
Forum Discussion	6
Feedback	7
Provider performance	7
Recommendations: -----	7
Program flexibility	7
Recommendation: -----	8
NSW Transition to Work and NDIS	8
Recommendation -----	8
Call for ongoing forums and information	8
Recommendation -----	9
Appendices	10

Preamble

In 2014 Inclusion Australia (NCID) undertook a number of activities to promote people with intellectual disability 'choosing employment'. Employment increases the incomes of people with disability, increases their superannuation, fulfils their citizenship responsibilities through the payment of tax and enables their participation in the social life of their communities.

The importance of employment for people with intellectual disability cannot be underestimated, and it also has the benefit of reducing their reliance on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) which enables revenue to be re-directed to the NDIS and other social programs of the Commonwealth Government.

We have combined our reports to the Department of Social Services (DSS) into 3 parts:

Part 1. Survey of the employment experiences of people with disability and their families

Part 2. Three (3) national forums of families and people with intellectual disability

Part 3. Six (6) NSW forums exploring the experiences of people with intellectual disability and families of the NSW Transition to Work (TTW) program

Introduction

The National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) hosted six forums in Sydney, New South Wales, on the topic of Choosing Employment, Youth with Intellectual Disability.

The forums were designed to introduce information on the employment outcomes of Transition to Work (TTW) and Disability Employment Service (DES) providers, and how to use this information to choose the best performing providers.

The forums were inspired by the recent release by the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Fifield, of outcomes of DES providers by disability type. This information allows individuals and families to choose providers who are best at supporting people with intellectual disability to get jobs and keep jobs.

The six forums were held at Castle Hill, Liverpool, Manly, Hornsby, Blacktown, and Kogarah from 17th June to 21st June, 2014. A variety of day, evening and weekend sessions were made available to allow individuals and families to choose a forum that could fit with work and family commitments.

Over 140 individuals, families, educators, and providers attended all six forums. The vast majority of participants were parents or secondary school teachers.

NCID would like to thank;

- the NSW Council on Intellectual Disability, the NSW Down Syndrome Association and Family Advocacy NSW for distributing forum flyers to their members,
- schools throughout Sydney for informing their students and families about the forums, and supporting some students to attend,
- NSW Clubs for providing meeting rooms at their clubs without charge as part of their support of community organisations, and
- the assistance and inspiration of Carol Bertie from Jobsupport, for sharing her 30 years of experience in guiding youth with intellectual disability and families in the fields of transition to work and open employment.

Forum Design

Each forum included;

- A presentation of;
 - NSW Transition To Work (TTW) open employment outcome data across Sydney.

- Star Ratings of providers in the Disability Employment Services program in Sydney.
 - Open employment outcomes by intellectual disability for each provider in the Disability Employment Services program in Sydney.
 - Open employment outcomes by people with moderate intellectual disability for the Disability Employment Services program.
 - The labour force and income status of people with intellectual disability in Australia.
- An introduction to the definition of intellectual disability and the notion of individual human difference across data.
 - An overview of the history and research of open employment assistance and people with intellectual disability.
 - A video by Jobsupport demonstrating how Transition to Work and Open employment can work seamlessly together.

Forum Discussion

The purpose of the forums were to help individuals, families and schools with how to make an informed choice when choosing Transition to Work or Open Employment services.

The NSW government publishes open employment outcome results of individual Transition to Work (TTW) providers.

The Commonwealth government publishes open employment outcome results of individual Disability Employment Services (DES) providers by intellectual disability.

The Commonwealth has published the outcome results of people with moderate intellectual disability specifically for Jobsupport¹ and the average for all other open employment providers.

The Commonwealth also publishes star ratings (1 to 5, 5 being the best) of employment service providers indicating the relative performance of providers.

This information enables people to choose the best providers in achieving open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability.

Many of the forum participants had experienced “expos” where providers set up stalls at which individuals and families can look at the range of providers that are available to assist them with transition to work and/or open employment.

Many providers will use marketing strategies to attract individuals to register with their service. These (legitimate) strategies may include (among other things) cups, pens, plants, lollies or celebrity endorsement. This is to encourage or entice individuals to sign up with a particular provider.

Funding provided by governments to assist people with disability with transition to work and open employment support is in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year. “Slick” marketing is, therefore, not surprising. In a competitive market where individuals and families have increasing power of choice and control, providers are trying to make their service as attractive as possible to register clients.

The publication of outcome results by providers allows individuals and families to “test” the marketing claims being made by providers and see the actual outcome performance of individual providers.

There is variability in the performance of transition to work and open employment providers from poor to excellent. The major message given to participants in the Sydney forums is that individuals/families are able to choose a provider with full knowledge and transparency of past employment outcome results.

¹ Jobsupport is the sole open employment provider which specialises in assisting people with moderate intellectual disability (i.e. IQ ≤ 60).

In this respect, individuals/families can 'vote with their feet' based on provider performance, rather than rely solely on provider marketing.

Feedback

The response from individuals and families was positive. Most people appreciated being shown provider outcome information and given an explanation of how to read and interpret the outcome data information.

Provider performance

Many participants were concerned by the variability of outcome quality across Sydney.

There was universal acknowledgement of the high performance outcome rates of Jobsupport as a transition to work and open employment provider for people with moderate intellectual disability. Individuals, families, and teachers regularly noted the high quality of service available to students and youth with moderate intellectual disability throughout Sydney. Families were surprised to hear that this specialisation was not available in all states, and is currently only available in Sydney and parts of Melbourne.

Many participants expressed concerns about the wide variability of quality of Transition to Work providers in general. Family members questioned why the NSW government was continuing to fund some providers which were achieving low numbers of open employment outcomes.

Many participants were also concerned that some DES (open employment) providers were achieving relatively low employment outcome rates for people with intellectual disability.

Many families were keen for NCID to report back to government their concerns about the poor employment outcome results of some TTW and DES providers.

The message to participants was to remember that the publishing of outcome results by individual providers meant that they could "vote with their feet" and could affect change through their own choices.

Recommendations:

1. The Commonwealth needs to action the recommendation from the evaluation of the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading for additional specialist services to better support people with moderate intellectual disability to obtain substantial employment in locations without this support.
2. The Commonwealth policy of consequences for poor DES provider performance, through star ratings and tendering, and informed choice through published outcomes by disability, responds to family concerns about continued funding of providers achieving poor employment outcomes.
3. The NDIA should consider a policy of consequences for poor performance of NDIS funded transition to work providers, as the NDIA will be responsible for this support into the future.

Program flexibility

Many families asked about the option to move from one NSW program to another.

Families want to know that if they choose Transition to Work do they still have the right to choose 'Community Participation' (non-work program) if they either change their goals or employment is not successful.

Conversely, families want to know if they choose 'community participation' do they still have the right to choose Transition to Work.

The good news is that the NSW Transition to Work guidelines provide much flexibility for young people with disability and their families.

Individuals can move from Transition to Work to Community Participation or from Community Participation to Transition to Work. They may even move back to Transition to Work if they have initially moved from Transition to Work to Community Participation.

Approval from the NSW department is, however, required. Providers attending the forums explained that they had not experienced any difficulties gaining approval following written advice explaining the need to change programs.

This issue was raised throughout the forums and may indicate the need for the TTW policy guideline to better explained to individuals and families.

Recommendation:

4. There is a need for better information about current NSW-TTW guidelines on moving between Transition to Work and Community Participation programs. This is a consideration for the NSW government in the short term, but also for the NDIA which will be responsible for transition to work support in the near future.

NSW Transition to Work and NDIS

Some families asked about the future of the NSW Transition to Work program in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Transition to Work support is part of the responsibility of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As a result, state funded Transition to Work programs will cease when the NDIS begins, and this has already occurred in the NDIS trial sites.

Families and teachers in Sydney were concerned about whether the same opportunity, support, funding and flexibility currently offered by the NSW TTW to year 12 students would be maintained under the NDIS.

Families were informed that the National Council on Intellectual Disability has presented a proposal to the Commonwealth Joint Parliamentary Committee on the NDIS recommending that the NSW-TTW program be replicated nationally as part of the NDIS.

This recommendation has been made on the basis that the NSW-TTW was identified by the Productivity Commission as an example of excellence that could achieve the economic participation and actuarial objectives of the NDIS.

The recommendation also acknowledges that many states do not have a state TTW program or provider sector.

Recommendation

5. Replicate the NSW TTW program (including its funding and policy approach) nationally to improve open employment participation and address the substantial gap in transition to work support for people with intellectual disability in other States.

Call for ongoing forums and information

Forum participants repeatedly asked if forums on choosing employment would be happening on an ongoing annual basis. Participants also asked if forum materials, presentation slides and provider outcome documents could be made available online.

Individuals and families were informed that this was the first set of forums NCID had conducted on the issue of choosing employment, and were organised on the basis of request from families in Sydney.

Families indicated that the forums offered a rare insight in making decisions about employment and employment providers which was different from the marketing 'hype' that they usually receive from providers.

This feedback underlined the value individuals and families put on objective information about programs of support and provider outcomes. Families enjoyed the opportunity to discuss employment programs and results in an environment independent of providers and departmental officers.

We are now presented with the challenge of how NCID can meet regularly with individuals, families and teachers across Australia, and provide good information to the next generations of school leavers, and continually provide updated information on TTW and DES provider outcomes.

Recommendation

6. Provide targeted resources to NCID to host annual Choose Employment forums, and provide information on provider outcomes, for youth with intellectual disability, families and teachers throughout all labour market regions.

Appendices

- Employment Outcomes by Intellectual Disability, Sydney December 2013
- Transition to Work (TTW) Open Employment Outcomes Sydney, 2004 - 2010
- Disability Employment Services, Employment Support Services, Star Ratings Sydney, March 2014
- Video: Transition to Work - Jobsupport, Sydney NSW. <https://www.youtube.com/ncidmedia>