



National Disability Services Ticket to Work Submission to the Select Committee on Autism

About National Disability Services

National Disability Services (NDS) is the peak industry body for non-government disability services. It represents service providers across Australia in their Work to deliver high-quality supports and life opportunities for people with disability. Its Australia-wide membership includes over 1,180 non-government organisations which support people with all forms of disability. Its members collectively provide the full range of disability services – from accommodation support, respite and therapy to community access and employment. NDS provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to State, Territory and Federal governments.

Introduction

NDS welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Select Committee on Autism. Ticket to Work is a national initiative of National Disability Services (NDS) focusing on improving school to work pathways for young people with significant disability.

Ticket to Work was established in response to poor and falling school to work transition rates for young Australians with disability. Unsuccessful transition from school holds lifelong economic and social implications for the individual, their families and society.

While not underestimating the challenges, Ticket to Work has demonstrated in significant numbers that young people can thrive in open employment when prepared and supported while at school through a coordinated approach. Ticket to Work ensures effective pathways from school into open employment, or further education and training. The model was developed by scoping 'what works' in other countries. That is:

Connecting a student with disability to the world of work before they leave school through a coordinated approach greatly improves the likelihood of securing ongoing open employment and creates better economic and social outcomes.

Ticket to Work's connected approach consists of 34 local networks; 205 schools; 145 local organisations and has delivered 1,621 jobs for young people mainly with significant disability. Approximately 38% were students with autism.



Empirical research is the basis of the Ticket to Work model

National Disability Services has collaborated with researchers and evaluators and has developed a large body of work regarding effective school to work transitions for young people with disability.

Recent evaluations on the elements of the Ticket to Work model have shown:

- The Ticket to Work model has many social and economic benefits¹.
- Post-school Ticket to Work participants are substantially more likely than a similar comparison group to:
 - work in open employment
 - complete year 12
 - participate in the labour force
 - be involved in the community and socially active²
- Ticket to Work's approach is working for critical stakeholders (evaluation of employers, parents and network members) and is in line with international good practice and research.³
- There is a need to focus on how to get different sectors working in concert to improve employment outcomes and raises expectations⁴
- Ticket to Work supports effective integration of mainstream and disability supports and reduces duplication⁵

¹ SVA, (2020)

² Atkinson et al., (2019)

³ Wakeford (2019), Kellock (2020), Atkinson et al., (2019)

⁴ Meadows, D (2019)

⁵ Atkinson et al (2019)

Employment, education and training outcomes post school

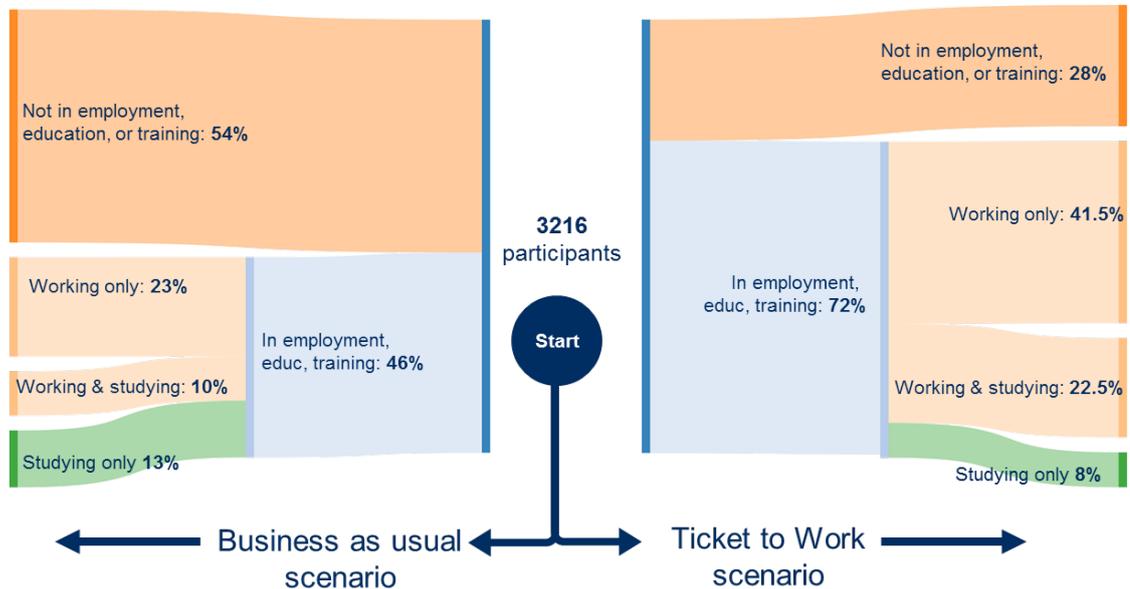


Figure 1 indicates the findings of a comparison study. SVA 2019

Ticket to Work participants with opportunities to participate in work and career development activities at school showed improved employment, education and training outcomes compared to young people that did not have Ticket to Work support (the business as usual scenario).

Characteristics of the Ticket to Work Model

Ticket to Work prepares young people for the world of work, providing them with an open employment pathway in their transition from school through a combination of vocational/career development and early contact with work environments.

Community networks are developed and leverage the power of cross-sectoral partnerships to provide individualised support, blending existing resources, coordinating and scaffolding all relevant supports for young people with significant disability.

The networks are coordinated by an intermediary, which supports the development of a local community partnership, including schools, employment services, training organisations, post school providers and employers.

Ticket to Work:

- brings together disability-specific and mainstream representatives from a variety of sectors to work strategically and collaboratively
- supports young people to gain access to early experiences that positively influence their views of themselves as workers
- prepares young people with disability for the workplace and gives them an employment pathway that is typical of other young adults
- meets the needs of employers, providing enhanced retention and profitability.



Interaction between services: The significance of collaboration

Ticket to Work demonstrates the significance of interaction and collaboration between education funded by state governments, disability supports through the NDIS and employment services funded by the Commonwealth. Programs are often 'siloed', in either schools or adult disability services, training or employment services, creating a dichotomous model whose division of service delivery is reflective of traditional funding arrangements by governments⁶.

Young people with disability need to have access to supports enabling them to transition effectively from school into employment. Just as the impact of disability impacts upon individuals on a continuum, there needs to be a continuum of service responses to address the barriers individuals face. Post-school services need to connect with individuals while at school, with the initiation of career development and pre-employment skills training commencing before school-leaving age⁷.

Interventions should include preventive and collaborative approaches that address the multiple causes of exclusion⁸.

Early intervention is vital. It is crucial for young people with disability, particularly those with autism, to receive the support they require to participate in the workforce as early as possible. It will drive effective long-term employment outcomes and maximise the benefits of improved standards of living and social inclusion that come with employment (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011)⁹.

Collaboration between schools and agencies preparing people with disability for the world of Work is a critical component in creating employment opportunities. Kohler¹⁰ identified interagency cooperation and collaboration as one of the most frequently cited "best practices" for transition planning and included it as one of five key practice areas in her seminal Work, the Taxonomy for Transition Programming.¹¹

Exploration, preparation and implementation for employment pathways needs to occur while students are still attending school, and there needs to be collaboration between key stakeholders. These include mainstream post-school services with expertise in vocational training, apprenticeships and the provision of work experience, along with disability specific services with experience in teaching employment skills, school staff, families and the students.

In the US it is acknowledged that:

Neither schools, nor workforce investment programs, human service agencies, or any other single system alone can pay for and provide the array of services needed to effectively meet the often complex needs of youth with disabilities. When collectively pooled, however, these resources can produce positive outcomes for youth, well beyond the scope of what any single system can hope to mobilise on its own.¹²

⁶ Winn & Hay (2009)

⁷ Kruger, Elinson, & Milfort, 2006; Winn & Hay (2009)

⁸ Dyson, Aston, Dewson, and Loukas (2005)

⁹ Deloitte Access Economics (2011)

¹⁰ Kohler, P., (1993).

¹¹ Kohler, P. D. (1996).

¹² National Governors' Association Center for Best Practice, 2004



Also in the US, collaboration is mandatory, and transition services/career decision-making take place in partnership with the post school supports.

In Australia, there is a need to support collaboration as in the Ticket to Work model to ensure sectors and systems work together to improve career development and school to work transition of young people with disability. Efforts to do so have been the mainstay of recommendations of multiple Australian government inquiries and agreements, and yet it remains unaddressed¹³.

After School Jobs Pilot

Between July 2017 and June 2020 Ticket to Work undertook a pilot program to create opportunities for secondary school students with a disability to engage in after school jobs. The pilot, funded through philanthropic sources and Jobs Victoria, demonstrated clearly the application of the Ticket to Work model for young people on the autism spectrum.

An evaluation of the pilot demonstrates that collaboration between stakeholders is essential to ensuring successful outcomes for students. By bringing stakeholders as parents, staff from schools and employment services together with employers, students can be matched to workplaces which met their diverse needs. Longitudinal studies have shown that engagement in work while in secondary school is the number one indicator of post school employment success. See our stories tickettowork.org.au/stories/?category=after_school

Conclusion

Ticket to Work demonstrates young people can succeed in open employment when prepared and supported while at school through a coordinated approach based upon empirical evidence. Career development and pre-employment skills training need to begin before school-leaving age¹⁴. Collaboration between parents, staff from schools and disability and employment services together with employers, is essential to ensuring this occurs.

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¹³ Children with Disability Australia, 2015

¹⁴ Kruger, Elinson, & Milfort, 2006; Winn & Hay (2009)



Ticket to Work evidence

We have commissioned and conducted a significant amount of research/evaluation evidenced based school to work transition for young people with disability.

Social Ventures Australia Consulting (2020) Ticket to Work Valuation of key outcomes (Melbourne) <https://tackettowork.org.au/resource/99/>

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Meadows, D (2019) *Collaboration in school to work transition*, (Melbourne) <https://tackettowork.org.au/resource/9/>

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