



National Disability Services (NDS) Ticket to Work response to National Youth Commission into Youth Employment and Transitions

We welcome this opportunity to have input into this Inquiry

Introduction to Ticket to Work

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.

Since 2014, over 1,400 1st time jobs have been created.

The Ticket to Work model is based on extensive research into what works.

National Disability Services and its research arm the Centre for Applied Disability Research have collaborated with researchers and evaluators, and have a large body of work around effective school to work transition for young people with disability.

<http://www.tickettowork.org.au/research-evaluation/>

The issues that affect young people as they embark on pathways to employment and attempt to build sustainable careers;

Young people with disability are one of the most disadvantaged groups of young people transitioning from education to employment (Winn & Hay, 2009).

Emerson and Llewellyn (2014) identified over a ten year period the education and employment gap between young people with disability and those without had widened. They noted a 10% decrease in the number of young people with disability in employment and an 8% decrease in the number of young people with disability being fully engaged in education or work although Year 12 or equivalent attainment for young people with disability is on the rise, it is still much less than their non-disabled peers.

The employment of those disabled people with high support needs has declined, and the labour force participation of women with disability has not increased Davy et al. (2019).



Successful transitions are critical to ensuring their social and economic futures. Successful transition to work can help towards them achieving full social and economic participation, which is a key underpinning of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006 (Stafford, Marston, Chamorro-Koc, Beatson, & Drennan, 2017).

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) stated students with disability should receive the support to ensure the effective transition from learning at school to vocational and tertiary education, and work. Likewise, the National Disability Strategy (NDS) (key policy strategy 3.1) identifies the need for greater employment opportunities as a key to improving economic security and personal wellbeing for people with disability.

‘Economic security is critical to the wellbeing and empowerment of people with disability and underpins the ability to make progress in all other outcomes and areas of life (Department of Social Services, 2018, p. 42)’. The Strategy (key policy strategy 5.5) also identifies the need for high quality programs designed to create smooth transition from education and employment (Department of Social Services, 2016). Without support to successfully transition for school to work, young people with disability are more likely to be excluded from social and economic participation.

Young Australians with disability have similar career and financial aspirations and priorities to other young people, yet are more than twice as likely as other young people, not to be employed or satisfied with their employment opportunities and job prospects (Emerson, Honey, & Llewellyn, 2008; Yu, 2010).

During the transition from school, all young people can encounter great uncertainty and tremendous developmental challenges. These issues are likely to be even more stressful for young people with disability, which further increases their risk of social exclusion (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Winn & Hay, 2009; Yu, 2009).

Unsuccessful transition from school into further training or employment is often indicative of long term, even often life-long disadvantage. Young people with disability are more likely to drop out of school early, face exclusion from the labour market, obtain fewer educational qualifications, are more likely to experience poverty and be socially isolated.



Improving these outcomes is both a social and economic imperative; enabling all people to participate fully in society as active citizens, addressing impending labour shortages due to an ageing population, reducing individual dependence on social security and improving their overall financial and emotional wellbeing.

Types of barriers young people with disability face

Young people with disability face a multitude of barriers preventing them from successfully transitioning from school to the workforce. A range of studies identify the barriers they face preventing them from entering and remaining in the workforce (Shakespeare, Watson, & Algaib, 2017; Stafford, Marston, Chamorro-Koc, Beatson, & Drennan, 2017).

The needs of young people with intellectual disability are of particular concern. Only 56% of young people with intellectual disability complete year 12 or its equivalent. Siperstein, Parker, and Drascher (2013) claim if young people with intellectual disability do not engage in mainstream employment by age 21, it is unlikely they ever will.

Improving the transition from school to work for young adults with disability has been a mainstay of many inquiries in Australia, however, it has not been well actualized and the actual process of post school transition has remained ill-defined (Children with Disability Australia, 2015).

In Australia, there is a pervasive culture of low expectation, resulting in a lack of opportunities for students with disability, particularly in relation to genuine, sustainable employment. This view is sometimes held by the young people themselves, as well as parents, employers, disability providers, educators and government (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012; Dell'Armo & Tassé, 2019; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011). To make a significant difference in employment for people with disability, there is a need to build the capacity of all key stakeholders, including mainstream services.



The adequacy of the various service systems that are implicated in the transition of young Australians from education to employment;

It is our contention that the various service systems supporting young people with disability to transition from school to work need to collaboratively work together to ensure success. Often programs are ‘siloed’, in either schools or adult disability services, pre-employment or employment services. This creates a dichotomous model whose division of service delivery is reflective of traditional funding arrangements by governments (Winn & Hay, 2009). 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 prior to school-leaving age (Kruger, Elinson, & Milfort, 2006; Winn & Hay, 2009). Key stakeholders such as schools, families, employment services and employers need to commence working together collaboratively while students are in their middle years of secondary school to ensure effective transition outcomes.

Opportunities to break down barriers

Young people with disability need to have access to effective supports, which enable them to effectively transition from school into employment.

The transition from school to adulthood is a time of particular vulnerability for young people with a disability. Interventions should include preventive and collaborative approaches that address the multiple causes of exclusion (Dyson, Aston, Dewson, & Loukas, 2005).

Early intervention is key. It is crucial for young people with disability to receive the support they require to participate in the workforce as early as possible. This 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).

The Ticket to Work evaluation found those young people that have over 3 different meaningful career and work development activities from year 10 onwards where much more



likely to be in work post school (Atkinson, Christian, Cassidy, Rutherford, & Hawkins, 2019).

Currently, many Australian students with disability receive prolonged exposure to “horizon-limiting views and experiences which can see these beliefs become internalised and the person’s capacity to recognise their potential diminished (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011)”. The earlier young people gain access to experiences and support networks that positively influence views of themselves as workers and active citizens, the better the long-term outcomes achieved.

The coordination of collaborative practice is essential

There is a need to ensure relationships are developed and sustained between schools and post-school service providers, educational institutions, training agencies, workplaces, and businesses with that students will eventually find employment to ensure effective outcomes. In other jurisdictions, ‘intermediaries’ act as a mechanism, to create more effective linkages between these range of stakeholders. Through aligning and brokering multiple services across institutional and funding sources, intermediary organisations play a critical role in improving employment outcomes for young people with disability (Kruger et al., 2006) .

Coordination is essential, no single system or agency is capable of providing all the required support. Instead, as young people move from the classroom into the workplace and adulthood, they often need to access services from multiple services at once to have their needs fully met (Federal Partners in Transition Workgroup, 2015). Therefore, cross-agency collaboration needs to occur, to meet effectively the diverse and complex needs of young people with disability.

The effectiveness of existing policies and programs that are directly relevant to the transition from school to work;

NDS has been trailing a network approach to school-to-work transition using collective impact approach called Ticket to Work, which uses intermediaries to coordinate and support school transition. According to independent evaluations of Ticket to Work, Network members feel they achieve better outcomes for young people with disability, in collaboration



with other services than they could independently. Members do not duplicate existing processes; instead, practices are coordinated and built on the expertise of network members.

Collaboration supports the smooth transition from school-to-work for young people with disability (ARTD Consultants, 2017; Atkinson et al., 2019; Hawkins & Rasheed, 2016). The coordinating function of intermediaries in Ticket to Work includes a significant role in building the capacity of key stakeholders in the local region, including local schools, employers, employment and training services, parents and families.

According to the most recent independent evaluation of the Initiative, young people with disability who had the opportunity to build their employment skills and participate in paid work experience during secondary school were more likely to have successful transitions (Atkinson et al., 2019). They were 94% more likely to be engaged in employment upon completing school, 82% more likely to complete secondary school and go on to further education or training opportunities compared to their peers who did not take part in Ticket to Work. The students reported being more independent and leading happier lives (Atkinson et al., 2019).

Education and training needs to support disadvantaged jobseekers transitioning into work

Promotion of an employment first response

It is our contention that young people aged 14 should receive an 'employment first' approach, regardless the severity of disability. School should offer school-to-work transition support automatically, with an 'opt-out' clause dependent on the individual's circumstances. An 'employment first' approach is the preeminent vocational disability practice in many overseas countries (Blamires, 2015; Monteleone, 2016).

In comparison to this employment first approach, the evidence indicates the extent to which young people with intellectual disability are excluded from the workforce. In 2014, an Inclusion Australia survey of 541 participants, either with intellectual disability, or a family member, found only 46% reported being in paid employment. Only 27% reported working in open employment, and only 28% had participated in work experience while at school. In comparison, of those not in paid employment, 65% had a goal to work in open employment.



Similarly, according to data from the National Disability Insurance Agency (2019) only 17% of all people with disability aged 17-24 and 19% of people with intellectual disability in the same age cohort entering the Scheme reported being in paid employment.

School-to-work supports should be based on individualised needs; not group support, in line with evidence-based practice. The most effective means of supporting this group is to provide on the job training. For example, countries with apprenticeship based technical vocational education and training systems have lower youth unemployment rates of compared to those with predominantly school based VET systems (Dougherty, Grindal, & Hehir, 2018; International Labour Organisation, 2018, p. 2).

Correspondingly, the 2019 evaluation of Ticket to Work showed 67% of participants were enrolled in vocational education or training (VET) as part of their senior school certificate. The majority (82%) completed their VET qualification as part of an Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (ASBAT) (Hawkins & Rasheed, 2016, p. 26). Of those who participated in an ASBAT, 78% were employed, 15% were unemployed and 7% were not in the labour force in 2018. These findings compare to 46% employed, 38% unemployed and 17% not in the labour force, for those who did not participate in an ASBAT. These findings support the contention that participation in school based apprenticeships/ traineeships enhance the likelihood of successful transition outcomes.

Measurement of school to work transition outcomes

Governments need accurate quantitative data to measure school to work transition outcomes for young people with disability. However, in Australia overall there is limited consolidated data regarding the experiences and transition outcomes (past, present and projected) of young people with disability.

The 'Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)' is considered the foremost research program tracking young people as they move from school to post-school options. Since 2007, LSAY collected data on students with disability in mainstream schools and not those in specialist disability schools.

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) identifies the number of school students with disability and their level of reasonable



adjustment. However, this data does not consider educational accomplishments, post-school outcomes or longitudinal progress; therefore, it is difficult to determine if these adjustments lead to better post-school outcomes and improved quality of life for these young people.

Australia also participates in International Assessment Programs providing researchers and policy makers with information to guide planning and facilitate comparisons with other nations (Heldsinger & Humphry, 2010). Unfortunately, these assessments also exclude students with disability, which led Schuelka (2012) to conclude: ‘this exclusionary discourse establishes that students with disability do not belong in a culture of achievement and educational evaluation, which has an impact on policies concerning educational equity and maintains the oppression of low expectations.’

The incomplete collection of data on students with disability collections sends a regrettable message to policy makers that the attainment of students with disability and, by implication, their preparations for employment is not important.

Stakeholders need to evaluate whether the data they collect is adequate to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts to transition young people with disability from school to employment. Potentially, their failure to collect data reflects the pervasive culture of low expectations that this group of young people do not belong in the workforce

Summary of recommendations

- It is crucial for young people with disability receive support they require to participate in the workforce as early as possible, to ensure effective long-term employment outcomes.
- There needs to be a collaborative approach bringing all stakeholders such as potential employees, parents and support services and employers together. To enable collaboration, effective coordination is needed.
- A Work First approach where employment is the expected outcome for all young people regardless of disability,. Government policy should encourage every young person with disability to have the opportunity to follow an employment pathway.
- The educational performance and school-to-work progress of students with disability need to be accurately measured to support accountability and ensure the development of evidence-based policy.
- There is a need to learn from overseas and Australian experience, including Ticket to Work regarding evidence based practice.

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National Disability Services 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 around 1000 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.

Ticket to Work is an initiative of NDS that aims to improve open employment participation in Australia by galvanising local resolve, advocating for systemic change, and providing an architecture for optimal employment and career achievement for young people with disability. This paper has been informed by the experience, research and evaluations of Ticket to Work.



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