



**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY  
AUSTRALIA**

**A voice  
of our  
own**

# **Federal Pre- Budget Submission**

**JANUARY  
2020**

# About PWDA

**People with Disability Australia (PWDA)** is a leading disability rights, advocacy and representative organisation of and for all people with disability. We are the only national, cross-disability organisation - we represent the interests of people with all kinds of disability. We are a non-profit, non-government organisation.

PWDA's primary membership is made up of people with disability and organisations primarily constituted by people with disability. PWDA also has a large associate membership of other individuals and organisations committed to the disability rights movement.

We have a vision of a socially just, accessible and inclusive community, in which the human rights, belonging, contribution, potential and diversity of all people with disability are recognised, respected and celebrated with pride. PWDA was founded in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, to provide people with disability with a voice of our own.

PWDA is a NSW and national peak organisation and founding member of Disabled People's Organisations Australia (DPO Australia) along with Women With Disabilities Australia, First Peoples Disability Network Australia, and National Ethnic Disability Alliance. Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) are organisations that are led by, and constituted of, people with disability. The key purpose of DPO Australia is to promote, protect and advance the human rights and freedoms of people with disability in Australia by working collaboratively on areas of shared interests, purpose, strategic priorities and opportunities.

**Postal address:**

PO Box 666  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

**Street address:**

Level 10, Tower 1  
Lawson Square  
Redfern NSW 2016

**Phone:** 02 9370 3100

**Fax:** 02 9318 1372

**Toll Free:** 1800 422 015

**NRS:** 1800 555 677

**TTY:** 02 9318 2138

**TTY Toll Free:** 1800 422 016

**TIS:** 13 14 50

**Email:** [pwd@pwd.org.au](mailto:pwd@pwd.org.au)

**ACN:** 621 720 143



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# Overview

Many people with disability face significant barriers to getting and keeping a job. This contributes to the high numbers of people with disability who do not have access to paid work.

Only 53% of people with disability of working age are in paid work, compared to [82% of our non-disabled peers](#). This gap has not changed over decades. When compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, Australia ranks 21 out of 29 in employment [participation rates for people with disability](#).

Less than 25% of people with disability with an NDIS plan are in work, and [half of those people](#) are working for a few dollars an hour in sheltered workshops, or Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs).

We believe that the measures outlined in this submission will contribute significantly to removing these barriers, tackling discrimination and making it possible for many people with disability to enter employment.

# Recommendations

To improve employment of people with disability in mainstream employment, PWDA proposes that the Australian Government invest \$100m in the following three actions:

## **1. Create a National Jobs Plan**

Cost: \$30 million

## **2. Develop a national advertising campaign to tackle discrimination and attitudes toward people with disability at work**

Cost: \$60 million

## **3. Increase funding for Job Access to improve access for people with disability at work, and extend accessibility supports to job seekers.**

Cost: \$10 million

# 1. Create a National Jobs Plan to increase employment of people with disability in mainstream work

People with disability have been shut out of work for decades, with our employment statistics barely moving. This shows that we have to address the barriers we face in a systematic, well resourced, evidence-based manner, that takes previous findings and inquiries into account.

In 2016, the Australian Human Rights Commission prepared a comprehensive report about the barriers that people with disability and older people face when looking for and keeping a job.

This report, called *Willing to Work*, contained multiple extensive recommendations, grounded in extensive consultation with people with disability, and strong evidence. To date, many of these recommendations have yet to be implemented.

One of the key recommendations is to develop a National Jobs Plan that will bring together the disparate elements of government, as well as the private and not-for-profit sectors, to get serious about making sure we can access fair paid employment.

A National Jobs Plan must be based on human rights principles of the [right to fair and equitable wages](#) and conditions of employment in the mainstream workforce. It must also provide practical tools for identifying and addressing systemic and structural barriers we face in finding and keeping work.

## **Disability Employment Services (DES) system**

Currently DES support approximately 160,000 jobseekers with disability. This represents only a small proportion of us seeking employment. However, for those of us who do use DES, the system is not working. [Only one in ten DES participants find a job.](#)

Under a National Jobs Plan, we need DES to strengthen their focus on pathways and outcomes for young people with disability who are leaving school and moving to vocational and tertiary education and employment. We want higher expectations for school leavers with disability and a stronger focus on career planning, not just for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants, but for all young people with disability.

Despite the reforms to DES over the last 18 months, we still don't have a system that meets our needs. Independent advocacy and information is required to support us to make informed decisions around our choice of DES providers and assist us to navigate the system.

## **Segregation of people with disability in Australian Disability Enterprises**

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) are a form of segregated employment where employees are paid as little as a \$1 an hour. Less than 1% of the 20,000 people with disability who currently work in an ADE get the [opportunity and support](#) to move into mainstream employment. This has to change.

The National Jobs Plan should include measures and timeframes to transition all ADE workers into mainstream employment, or where workers are older, plans should look at a transition to retirement.

### **Employment goal setting in NDIS plans**

The NDIS is designed to support us [to pursue our social and economic goals](#). Therefore the NDIS has a pivotal role to play in enabling us to find and keep a job we want.

Under a National Jobs Plan, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) should focus on strengthening employment goal setting in NDIS planning and reviews, with a focus on providing a supported career pathway for participants. This should take a long-term, life-time approach putting in place the support we need to transition through our school, training and employment journeys.

### **Recommendation**

Create a **National Jobs Plan** to address the multiple and systemic barriers people with disability face in finding and keeping a job. This Plan must implement **recommendations from the [2016 Willing to Work Inquiry](#)** into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability, including the following priority initiatives:

1. introduce specific targets for employment, beginning with a **minimum quota** of 15% for employment of people with disability in the public sector, with the NDIA minimum quota to be set at 51%
2. set **specific targets, performance indicators and timeframes** for increasing the workforce participation for people with disability **across all sectors, including the private sector**
3. address **intersectional barriers** that make it harder for many of us to find and keep work, such as gender and cultural discrimination and rural and remoteness
4. strengthen the transition of **young people** with disability from the school education system into tertiary education and into open/mainstream employment
5. build capacity within the **social security system** to support those of us with episodic disability who may move in and out of employment
6. have a **monitoring and evaluation framework**, with key milestones, and specified dates for public reporting on progress.
7. transition all workers with disability in ADEs into mainstream employment.

**Cost:** \$10 million for the National Jobs Plan plus \$20 million for ADE transition with a total cost of \$30 million.

## 2. Develop a national advertising campaign to tackle discrimination and attitudes toward people with disability at work

We know that many employers aren't confident about employing a person with disability, and are unaware of both their legal obligations, as well as the support available to improve accessibility. The Australian Network on Disability Employer Confidence [latest employer survey](#) "found that there has been **no change** in Small and Medium Enterprises' (SME) ability to be accessible and inclusive of people with disability in the last two years."

We need a national advertising campaign that targets the barriers we face when trying to look for, get and keep a job, across multiple channels. The campaign needs to be designed and led by people with disability.

Attitudes towards people with disability continue to be often negative, outdated and can negatively influence employer attitudes towards us. Negative, paternalistic and patronising attitudes towards people with disability leads to outdated ideas that can perpetuate stigma and negative attitudes towards people with disability.

As part of reviewing the NDIS proposal from the Australian Government in 2011, PWC made the [following statement](#):

*"The biggest challenge for Australia is to provide an environment for change which allows for a cultural shift across all parts of our society. Active participation of those with a disability in society generally can only occur with a change in attitude."*

Social marketing and advertising campaigns can change these negative attitudes, with [previous campaigns](#) about people with particular disability (psychosocial/intellectual) being successful in improving community views.

We propose to design and implement a national social marketing and advertising campaign to increase the number of people with disability in work, by changing attitudes towards people with disability. This campaign will use people with disability to talk about what it means to live with disability, and what it means to be working as a person with disability.

### **Recommendation:**

Create a **comprehensive national advertising campaign to promote** employment of people with disability within the mainstream Australian workforce.

**Cost:** \$60 million

### 3. Invest in increased resources for access at work, and extend accessibility supports to job seekers

Many workplaces are not accessible, and neither are recruitment processes. In addition, when people with disability get a job, employers are often unwilling or have difficulty in understanding how to provide the required adjustments for people with disability to do their job. Some employers want to do the right thing and improve access and inclusion of people with disability but they are unaware of the supports available for those adjustments.

The Australian Government program [Job Access](#) is designed to provide information and direct support to “drive disability employment”. However, many employers are unaware of the services and supports available through Job Access.

**Recommendation:**

Increase funding for Job Access to improve access for people with disability at work, and extend accessibility supports to job seekers.

**Cost:** \$10 million





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