Next steps in Supported Employment: Submission to the consultation on the way forward

Language Note

This submission is informed by and reflects the lived experiences of women and gender diverse people with disabilities. It draws on two consultations in May 2025 and eight survey responses from women and gender diverse people with disabilities.

We acknowledge that while some concerns raised are shared across gender-marginalised communities, the experiences of gender diverse people warrant specific and direct exploration, particularly regarding safety, discrimination, and systemic barriers in employment. Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) does not seek to speak for or replace the role of organisations led by and for LGBTIQA+ people with disabilities. Instead, we aim to work in coalition with them and amplify areas of shared concern.

This submission uses 'person first' language (women and gender diverse people with disabilities). We acknowledge that people describe their experience of disability in different ways, and for many people, 'identity first' language is a source of pride and resistance. WDV supports people with disabilities to use language around identity that they are most comfortable with.

Acknowledgment of Country

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work, rest, and continue to benefit from. We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Victoria and acknowledge that their continued strength and resilience is built upon more than 60,000 years of history. The WDV community is committed to honouring the unique cultural and spiritual relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and waters, and their rich contribution to society.

Submission Contact

Julie Kun
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Women With Disabilities Victoria (WDV)
E: julie.kun@wdv.org.au

About the Authors

WDV is a not-for-profit Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) representing women and gender diverse people with disabilities in Victoria. The organisation is operated by and for women and gender diverse people with varied disability experiences. WDV has a diverse membership of people from different backgrounds. Women and gender diverse people with disabilities face intersecting forms of structural gender and disability discrimination. WDV actively advocates for our rights to safety and respect, with particular emphasis on disability policy, health services, violence prevention, workforce development, and leadership. WDV envisions a world where all women and gender diverse people are respected and can fully experience life.

At WDV, we are dedicated to advancing employment opportunities and fostering inclusion for women and gender diverse people with disabilities in Victoria. Our comprehensive approach encompasses advocacy, employer engagement, direct support, and leadership development. We work closely with employers to dismantle barriers in the workforce, offering tailored resources and training. Our Sharing Our Expertise program, funded by the Victorian Government until August 2025, is a key initiative of WDV.

Additionally, we deliver leadership programs, community education, and professional training that raise awareness about the intersection of gender and disability in the workplace. These initiatives build the self-advocacy capabilities of women and gender diverse people with disabilities, the knowledge of people without disabilities and provide the ingredients to create more inclusive and accessible workplaces throughout Victoria.

Key Contributor

Helen Freris BA, BSW, Grad Dip. FDRP, VocGradDipCommSecMgt

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The evidence and recommendations in this submission are underpinned by WDV's values and principle stance that the rights of women and gender diverse people with disabilities to contribute to their communities and achieve economic independence through fairly remunerated and accessible employment within mainstream society, free from violence and abuse must be upheld and actively supported by government, employers, the industrial relations system, educational institutions and all facets of the society and its infrastructure.

This submission responds to the Inquiry into Next Steps in Supported Employment, Consultation on the Way Forward. It is informed by consultations with our Gender and Disability Experts by Experience Advocates and wider WDV membership, and a survey open to WDV members and other women and gender diverse people with disabilities with an interest in the supported employment sector (See Appendix 1). We aimed to explore how the supported employment sector responds to the needs of women and gender diverse people with disabilities and what changes they wished to see in its future direction.

WDV welcomes the focus on supported employment and the opportunity to comment on its future direction, supporting the implementation of recommendations 7.30,7.31 and 7.32 made by the Disability Royal Commission, strongly urging the reframing of policies, programs and services to shift from a deficit to a strengths-based paradigm regarding people with high support needs, thereby creatively exploring and expanding open employment opportunities, human rights based remuneration and full community participation.

The recommendations below aim to embed a human rights centred, and gender-responsive approach to policy and programmatic initiatives in supported employment, prioritising choice, opportunity and safety for women and gender diverse people with high support needs.

Recommendation 1: Transition supported employment from employment provision to upskilling for open industry employment as its core focus.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that providers of supported employment comply with mainstream occupational health and safety and other workplace legislation regarding safety and positive duty to guard against violence, abuse and harassment.

Recommendation 3: Raise subminimum wages with the ultimate aim of minimum wage parity.

Recommendation 4: Creatively explore opportunities for employment in all aspects of open industry, utilising a strengths-based approach.

Recommendation 5: Fund peer, advocacy and workplace support.

Recommendation 6: Reframe policies, programs and services to shift from a deficit to a strengths-based paradigm regarding people with high support needs, thereby creatively exploring and expanding open employment opportunities, human rights-based remuneration and full community participation.

Recommendation 7: Engage in sector-wide transition from employment provision to a focus on upskilling for and expanding and sustaining open employment pathways. Reorienting supported employment infrastructure, funding models, and the disability employment workforce towards active support, mentoring, and skill development will widen genuine employment choices for women and gender diverse people with disabilities.

Recommendation 8: In orchestrating this transition, principles of person-centred and strengths-based practice apply an outcomes focus.

Recommendation 9: Key frameworks, such as the Australian Disability Strategy, should include specific outcome measures related to open employment, with corresponding data collection requirements to capture disaggregated outcomes by gender and other characteristics, as well as the longevity of employment placements.

Recommendation 10: For as long as supported employment providers continue to operate, a multi-layered approach to safeguarding workers from gender-based violence and abuse should be implemented, including:
• Clear and Enforced Policies
• Comprehensive Staff Training
• Robust Reporting and Support Mechanisms
• Regular Safety Audits with a Gender and Disability Lens
• Promotion of Leadership and Advocacy
• Mandatory Compliance with Employment Law

Recommendation 11: Implementation of gender transformative workplace practices and policies promoting gender and disability equality, aligning with primary prevention gender and disability frameworks such as [Workplace E]quality and Respect Standards from Our Watch, and [Changing the Landscape].

Recommendation 12: The Commonwealth to move away from the Taylor Fry wage assessment model, as outlined in the Inquiry's discussion paper, and instead consider alternative approaches supported by organisations of people with disabilities—such as the model developed by Impact Economics and commissioned by Inclusion Australia.

Recommendation 13: Shift the focus of supported employment from simply providing low-paid tasks to actively preparing people for open employment as the ultimate goal.

Recommendation 14: Coordinated efforts among disability service providers, both mainstream and segregated educational settings (while they continue to exist), employer groups, and vocational education providers to integrate the full range of employment-based training, voluntary and paid employment and career development opportunities into the educational and career journeys of young people and adults with high support needs across the life course.

Recommendation 15: Both state and Commonwealth governments to maintain recognition of, and investment in peer support activities and networks. This includes support delivered by both disability service providers and organisations led by people with disabilities.

Introduction

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) is pleased to respond to the consultation of the Commonwealth government on the Next Steps in Supported Employment. Our response is based on survey and interview feedback from our members and will address key submission questions based on organisational expertise and member interest. This submission particularly refers to the specific needs and experiences of women and gender diverse people with high disability support needs, noting that minimal data exists on the experiences of these groups within supported employment settings.

From Employment to Upskilling

Question 2
What is your ideal future state for the supported employment sector and employment of people with disability with high support needs?

WDV Member Insight
"Focus should be on mainstream employment, their (Australian Disability Enterprises) existence is discriminatory, people should be supported to access open employment opportunities, with support, supported employment as pathway, segregated and doesn't expose people to opportunities for progression or interaction with others."

Similar to the Commissioners of the Disability Royal Commission, respondents to WDV's consultations and survey were divided in their views regarding the continued existence of supported employment, some identifying advantages of peer contact and accessibility support, while others highlighting the restrictive nature of work tasks, heightened risk of co-worker and staff perpetrated abuse, low wages and minimal opportunities to access open employment. A common theme in member responses was the desire for greater focus on upskilling and support for transition to open employment.

While WDV acknowledges that some women and gender diverse people with disabilities have made informed decisions to work in supported employment settings based on the information available to them, we advocate for a sector-wide transition from employment provision to a focus on upskilling for and expanding and sustaining open employment pathways. Reorienting supported employment infrastructure, funding models, and the disability employment workforce towards active support, mentoring, and skill development will widen genuine employment choices for women and gender diverse people with disabilities. This approach will not only enable more inclusive and meaningful work opportunities but also help shift public discourse from a deficit focus to recognising and welcoming the value that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce when provided with appropriate support and training.

Question 3 What additional actions do you consider are necessary to increase employment of people with high support needs in open/inclusive settings?

In orchestrating this transition, WDV recommends adherence to the following principles:

Person-centred

This recognises the individual attributes, circumstances, social identity, strengths and needs of each employee, and tailoring employment programs accordingly.[i]

Strengths-based

This mindset challenges prevalent narratives of the incapacity and economic burden of people with disabilities and reframes them as possessing skills, talents, attributes and qualities of value to employers and society.[ii] Such an approach is effective when applied not only within interactions with people with disabilities, but also as a lens through which to design and implement programs, services, policy responses, and employer engagement initiatives.

Outcomes focus

Ensuring people with disabilities are the primary beneficiaries of meaningful change in employment requires a strong outcomes focus. To be genuinely impactful, these outcomes must prioritise employment options that offer economic security, appropriate support, and long-term sustainability. This means avoiding churn through empty short-term or narrowly defined roles, and instead fostering meaningful, lasting value for both people with disabilities and the employers who engage them. [iii]

Additionally, key frameworks such as the Australian Disability Strategy should contain specific outcome measures relating to open employment, with resulting data collection requirements to capture disaggregated outcomes by gender and other characteristics, as well as longevity of employment placements.

Safety from Gender-based Violence and Abuse

WDV's survey and consultation found that 27% of respondents identified emotional, physical, and sexual abuse by workplace supervisors and managers, along with discrimination based on gender, sexuality, or other characteristics, as issues faced by women and gender diverse people in supported employment settings. These findings align with those of the Disability Royal Commission, which highlighted numerous factors that increase the risk of violence and abuse in such environments. These include power imbalances between workers, staff, and leadership; unsafe physical and environmental workplace conditions; a culture of impunity for worker mistreatment; inadequate responses to abuse; poor communication about workers' rights and complaints processes; and weak enforcement of legal protections and minimal oversight mechanisms.[iv]

Given the higher prevalence of gender-based violence against women and gender diverse people with disabilities, particularly within segregated environments with fewer external and independent oversight mechanisms, WDV raises concerns regarding the occurrence of, and fewer safeguards against this form of violence within supported employment settings, perpetrated by staff and by co-workers.[v]

For as long as supported employment providers continue to operate, WDV recommends a multi-layered approach to safeguarding workers from gender-based violence and abuse. This approach should include:

Clear and Enforced Policies:

Establish and enforce gender transformative comprehensive policies and procedures that promote gender equality and uphold zero tolerance for all forms of violence, abuse, and harassment. These must be communicated to all employees and staff in accessible formats, with clear reporting pathways and consequences for breaches.

Comprehensive Staff Training:

All leadership, board and staff should receive a disability and intersectional framework-based training on inclusion that includes gender equality, LGBTIQA+ inclusion, and the intersections of disability, gender, and LGBTIQA+ status. Training should also address the recognition of abuse, respectful workplace behaviours, and bystander intervention. Crucially, it should incorporate primary prevention frameworks such as 'Changing the landscape', and their relevance to supported employment settings. To ensure relevance and impact, training should be co-designed and, where possible, delivered by people with lived experience of disability and workplace gendered violence.

Robust Reporting and Support Mechanisms:

Strengthen internal and external reporting processes to ensure safe, confidential, and accessible pathways for victim-survivors. This includes clear access to independent bodies, legal and advocacy services. Reporting mechanisms must be perceived as trustworthy, supportive, and non-punitive.

Regular Safety Audits with a Gender and Disability Lens:

Conduct regular workplace safety audits that consider the physical environment, nature of work tasks, and workplace power dynamics, framed within an intersectional gendered analysis. Risk assessments should lead to proactive measures such as improved lighting, adjusted layouts for greater safety, and strengthened behavioural protocols to support psychological safety.

Promotion of Leadership and Advocacy:

Elevating the leadership, self-advocacy, and peer advocacy of women and gender diverse people with disabilities is essential to preventing gender-based violence. Beyond building individual agency and confidence, their inclusion in service leadership helps challenge the gendered and ableist attitudes and practices driving violence and abuse.

Mandatory Compliance with Employment Law:

All supported employment providers must adhere to industrial legislative and regulatory frameworks that protect all Australian workers. This necessitates a shift from viewing supported employees as service users to recognising them as workers with enforceable rights. Employers must comply with their positive duties and obligations under gender equality and anti-discrimination legislation.[vi]

More broadly, WDV recommends the implementation of gender transformative workplace practices and policies promoting gender and disability equality, aligning with primary prevention gender and disability frameworks such as Workplace Equality and Respect Standards from Our Watch, and 'Changing the Landscape'.

Question 5

How could the sector best increase wages for people with disability while avoiding job losses?

Are there examples that currently exist that can be leveraged? Are there new approaches that could be tested?

WDV Member Insight

"Disability enterprises are currently tantamount to slavery. Raising wages to be commensurate with minimum wage for all other forms of employment would be a good first step towards recognising the value and contribution that people with disabilities make to the employment sector."

WDV is deeply concerned by the continued justification of subminimum wage payments to supported employees as both inevitable and unchangeable—a stance rooted in ableist assumptions that devalue the work of people with disabilities simply because of its categorisation as such. While such payments are currently legal under the Supported Employment Services Award, they have been identified as incompatible with Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Disability Royal Commission addressed this issue directly in Recommendation 7.31, calling for an immediate increase in supported employees' wages to at least 50% of the minimum wage, with a clear commitment to achieving full parity with minimum wages by 2034.[vii] We also dispute the binary thinking equating wage increases with unavoidable job losses, pointing out the contribution of numerous factors to the erosion of employment opportunities, including changing market conditions. In turn, higher wages contribute to greater economic activity and demand for goods and services, fuelling job creation.

WDV urges the Commonwealth to move away from the Taylor Fry wage assessment model, as outlined in the Inquiry's discussion paper, and instead consider alternative approaches supported by organisations of people with disabilities—such as the model developed by Impact Economics and commissioned by Inclusion Australia. This model is supported by a roadmap for transitioning to minimum wages within a defined timeframe, grounded in meaningful collaboration between people with disabilities, peak advocacy bodies, unions, and supported employment providers. [viii,ix]

Transition to Open Employment

When asked to identify methods and strategies to expand opportunities for women and gender diverse people's employment within mainstream settings, some WDV respondents made these comments which reflects other comments made;

- o "Reframing work to create opportunities, creating training opportunities, flexible schedules"

- o "Training, pathways from specialised to open employment, funded training, enact inclusive employment policies in open settings supported by leadership, greater role for lived experience."

These insights reflect the core of WDV's recommendation to shift the focus of supported employment from simply providing low-paid tasks to actively preparing people for open employment as the ultimate goal. Achieving this transformation requires a reimagining of what open employment can be, driven by flexibility, creativity, and innovation in both policy and practice.

We recommend the following approaches in reimagining employment for people with disabilities and high support needs.

Life-course approach to vocational opportunities

Access to appropriate educational opportunities is a critical first step in reorienting students with disabilities toward open employment. As with all students, expectations around future employment are shaped through the education system, via the formal curriculum and the implicit messages conveyed via social skills training and broader school culture.

Research highlights a clear trajectory from segregated education settings to subsequent employment in supported environments. Pre-vocational work experience and related programs often guide young people and their families directly into roles within Australian Disability Enterprises, frequently without exposure to or consideration of mainstream employment pathways.[x,xi] There is then a very limiting expectation that young adults with disabilities will remain within the same supported employment setting for their entire working lives, despite changed circumstances, life transitions or acquisition of new skills and knowledge sets.

WDV instead advocates for coordinated efforts among disability service providers, both mainstream and segregated educational settings (while they continue to exist), employer groups, and vocational education providers. This collaboration should integrate the full range of employment-based training, voluntary and paid employment and career development opportunities into the educational and career journeys of young people and adults with high support needs across the life course.

Such an approach can reimagine possibilities and reshape expectations of skill growth—supporting genuine pathways to open, inclusive employment.

Customised employment

Unlike traditional job-centred employment, which requires people to conform to standardised role requirements, customised employment takes a person-centred approach. It focuses on creating roles that align with each person's strengths, abilities, and interests, while also meeting the specific needs of employers.

Customised employment involves analysing job roles, workplace contexts, and organisational practices to identify gaps that can be effectively filled by people with high disability support needs. [xii] Its success relies on a strong commitment to person-centred planning, active collaboration with employers, openness to entrepreneurial solutions, and the provision of post-employment support. To embed customised employment more widely within Australia's employment landscape, greater integration into policy and legislative frameworks is essential.[xiii]

While its uptake has been gradual, there are promising examples of implementation by organisations such as Scope Australia, Ability WA and Imagine More Ltd. The latter has demonstrated particular success in using micro-enterprise and self-employment to create meaningful work for people with disabilities, while also delivering valuable products and services to the broader community.

WDV contends that customised employment, grounded in values promoting person-centred and strengths-based approaches, commitment to partnership and coordination and outcomes measurement, as identified by National Disability Services has significant potential to re-orient the landscape toward open employment for people with high disability support needs.[xiv]

Question 7
How could the benefits of supported employment settings be reflected in open employment settings?

Access to Peer Support and Advocacy

WDV Member Insight
When asked to identify any benefits deriving from supported employment, 40% of respondents highlighted the value of contact with peers with disabilities in such settings. One respondent suggested that such settings, when operated effectively "Recognise employee strengths, social interaction, independence, confidence building, sense of achievement and contribution."

WDV recognises the peer connections fostered among employees within supported settings but contends that such peer interaction should not be used as justification for the existence of these settings.

The Australian peer support and advocacy landscape is extensive, comprising numerous support groups, service organisations, networks of disability peak and representative organisations, and Commonwealth and state programs to fund disability advocacy.

Peer support involves people with shared lived experience coming together to offer mutual support and drive social change.[xv] Advocacy can take many forms—it may be undertaken by individuals, peer groups, or professional advocates, and can be directed at supporting individuals or advancing systemic policy changes that benefit a broader population group.[xvi]

Ensuring continued access to the benefits of peer support is essential as the focus of employment transitions from supported to mainstream settings. WDV strongly urges both state and Commonwealth governments to maintain recognition of, and investment in peer support activities and networks. This includes support delivered by both disability service providers and organisations led by people with disabilities.

Such support must be backed by sustainable, long-term funding models; integration within service systems like the NDIS and foundational supports; and the promotion of user-led service co-design, research, and evaluation to build and share best practice. It is critical that people with disabilities—particularly those with high support needs—are not left socially or emotionally isolated as they move into open employment, where the peer networks available in supported settings may no longer be present. We especially highlight the role of social and peer support in reducing isolation for women and gender diverse people with disabilities, and the clear link between community participation and the reduction of risk factors associated with gender-based violence.

Provisions to ensure continued access to the benefits of peer support are vital as the focus of employment shifts from supported to mainstream environments. We urge the continued state and Commonwealth recognition of and support for peer support activities and networks, both by disability service providers and organisations of people with disabilities, through dedicated and sustainable long-term funding models, integration within service frameworks such as NDIS and foundational supports, and support for user service co-design, research and evaluation to advance best practice. It is imperative that people with disabilities with high support needs employed in open environments are not socially and emotionally disadvantaged by the withdrawal of employment-based networks previously derived from their support employment setting. We particularly note the importance of social and peer support in reducing isolation for women and gender diverse people with disabilities, and the direct link

between social and community participation and reduction in risk factors associated with gender-based violence. [xvii]

Participants in open employment will require access to peer and advocacy support to help navigate diverse workplace environments, uphold their rights, and ensure employer compliance with relevant human rights, industrial relations, and anti-discrimination laws and policies. Peer support and advocacy are also critical to safeguarding individuals from gender-based violence, abuse, and discrimination in the workplace. At a broader level, systemic advocacy is essential to drive progress in government policy, program design, and legislative implementation to support a meaningful transition to open employment. This includes the development and monitoring of outcomes frameworks that prioritise the needs of people with high support needs, with a strong focus on eliminating gendered and other intersectional barriers to safe, inclusive, and sustainable employment.

Appendix 1: Member Survey Data

Purpose and Structure

This appendix supplements the submission made by WDV to the Commonwealth Government Consultation on Next Steps in Supported Employment, presenting insights from members of our organisation based on their lived experience of or interest in supported employment.

Comments and responses are presented to illustrate member experiences and to share their suggestions for system improvement firsthand.

Methods – Data Collection and Participant Recruitment

Two short surveys comprising nine questions were developed, in standard and plain English, based on the questions posed in the consultation discussion paper, and additional questions on the needs and experiences of women and gender diverse people with disabilities. The surveys were disseminated via WDV's member newsletter and social media, and via email to staff and lived experience experts' consultation groups. A focus group was also offered to WDV members and to members of WDV's employment related lived experience group. The surveys remained open for two weeks. The combined surveys received eight responses, two in plain English and six in standard English. Two members participated in the member focus group, and five members of the aforementioned lived experience group participated in a separate focus group. The focus group participants were asked questions from the standard English survey.

Limitations

The number of respondents (15) is well below WDV's total membership, so does not reflect the breadth of experience of the organisation's membership as it relates to supported employment. Most respondents did not identify having personal experience of supported employment.

Member Insights

1A What has been your experience of the supported employment sector?

(Tick All that apply)

- As an employee 20%

- As a supervisor within a supported employment provider organisation 0%

- A family member, friend or someone I provide care for works in a supported employment organisation 13%

- As a peer or individual advocate for anyone working in supported employment 33%

- As an advisor, systemic advocate or policy-maker for the supported employment sector 27%

- I have no direct experience but have knowledge of the sector 47%

- Other 0%

- Comments
    - My adult child and myself are both unemployed and disabled

1Bb If you have worked or are working in an Australian Disability Enterprise, how satisfied are you with your wages?

- Very satisfied 0%

- Satisfied 0%

- Neither satisfied or dissatisfied 0%

- Dissatisfied 0%

- Very dissatisfied 13%

- Not applicable 87%

2 What issues affect women and gender diverse people in supported employment settings? (Tick all that apply.)

- Being separated from the community 53%

- Low pay 60%

- Boring work 33%

- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse from supervisors 27%

- Emotional, sexual or physical abuse by other workers 20%

- Sexual harassment 20%

- Discrimination due to gender, sexuality or other characteristics 27%

- Other (Please specify)

- Comments:
    - "All of the above"
    - "Being seen as second class citizens or "them", or others"
    - "Transport"

- o "Restrictive employment, physical strain, mental health and anxiety of group members can exacerbate each other, lack of social awareness and mutual care, staff neglecting employees/ emotional needs and group dynamics, poorly trained staff, limited opportunities, lack of upskilling"

- o "Exploitation, undervalued work, physical and mental strain, paternalism"

- o "Lack of career advancement, restricted roles"

- o "Limited opportunities"

- o "No mentoring"

- o "Not understanding the needs, less awareness"

3 How could the supported employment sector best increase wages for people with disabilities while avoiding job losses?

Comments:

- "Depending on severity, having a support person on the job"

- "Have a UNION!"

- "Realise everyone in society is a person who deserves a decent life, not just to survive. Then prioritise all government spending with this in mind for all spending decisions"

- "Actually putting them into work where other people do"

- "Use a percentage of profit to go to wages, make it that there must be at least a reasonable minimum wage"

- "More funding from the government"

- "DEA currently is tantamount to slavery. Raising wages to be commensurate with minimum wage for all other forms of employment would be a good first step towards recognising the value and contribution that people with disabilities make to the employment sector"

- "Pay cut to managers and politicians, increase wages and assess impacts on productivity, make supported employment competitive"

- "Run providers as business, direct commercial revenue in to wages, consolidate income streams, divest links with NDIS funds, complex connections with disability pension rates and sliding income scale, mentorship, social skills training, education, independent living skills, traineeship model, upskilling"

- "Widescale change, make mainstream industry more accessible"

- "Government should increase wages, providing the money for this, subsidise the employers to pay higher wages, greater transparency to ensure distribution of profits to workers, legislative change"

- "Legislative change, partnership between government and business, government incentives to induce higher wages, greater wage transparency, increase wages according to wage regulations, greater incorporation of people with disabilities in mainstream industry, enabling greater employment choices"
- "Alter legislation to prohibit underpayment, implement support structures to facilitate job progression, remove disincentives of loss of pension"

4A Should workplaces which provide specialised employment opportunities for people with disability continue to exist?

- Yes 53%
- No 20%
- Unsure 27%

4B If yes, what should these workplaces offer or be like for women and gender diverse people with disability?

Comments:

- "They should be erased entirely and be in the community"
- "They offer opportunities and connection that otherwise may not exist"
- "Yes, but need to be overhauled. More education for other workers regarding the LGBTQI community. More support."
- "Inclusive, accommodating and supportive environments that meet employees where they are at and through which both parties can benefit from and add value to each other. This requires supportive leadership and policies that champion disability and recognise the value and importance of embedding lived experience into their practice."
- "Provide opportunities for participation and contribution, creating more optimal social environment, standard wages rather than piece rates, social programs, buddy system to support employees training each other"
- "Changed model, upskilling environments, peer mentoring and training, skill progression"
- "System reform"
- "Wage increases, opportunities for upskilling, pathways to leadership, legislative changes in compliance with industrial regulations"
- "Complete reform, peer mentorship, upskilling"

- "Attention to women's progression, upskilling according to ability and removal of gendered assumptions, policies to eliminate sexual and other gender-based abuse, policies around dealing with disclosures"

- "Gender wage parity"

- "Gender inclusive policies, reproductive leave, regular reviews of pay gaps and progression opportunities to ensure gender equality"

- "Helpful for people beginning the employment journey, stepping stones"

- "Focus should be on mainstream employment, their existence is discriminatory, people should be supported to access open employment opportunities, with support, supported employment as pathway, segregated and doesn't expose people to opportunities for progression or interaction with others"

- "Training and education, tailored to disability support needs"

- "More inclusive, accreditation to ensure safety from abuse or sexual assault, or violence and assault"

- "Tailored training of staff to be more disability responsive"

- "Getting rid of Centrelink disincentives and updating policy, greater use of plain English in documentation, update legislation to remove discriminatory policies and underpayment, implement support structures to facilitate job progression, remove disincentives of loss of pension"

5 How do you think open employment for women and gender diverse people with high support needs can be increased?

Tick all that apply.

- Free job training 47%

- Paid work placements 33%

- Support to start or run a small business 33%

- Support to find work in a social enterprise 60%

- Support to look for a job in open employment 33%

- Advocacy for work-related issues 40%

- Information about your rights at work 40%

- information about employment options 40%

- Help to connect to employers looking for staff 40%

- Education for employers about employing women and gender diverse people with disability 53%

- Flexible work arrangements 67%

- Support and mentoring in the workplace 67%

- Accessible transport to travel to and from work 40%

- Assistive technology 33%

- Inclusive workplaces 47%

- Other (please specify)

- Comments:

  o "NDIS funded social enterprises finding work"

  o "Ongoing support and check-ins (if need be, maybe a call in service) for structural or symbolic issues that arise in the workplace and may not be so obvious at first"

  o "Inclusive recruitment processes"

  o "Social skills and independent living training"

  o "Support staff funded by government, similar to education aids model"

  o "Access to support workers"

6 What benefits within supported employment settings would you like to see in open employment settings?

- Support for my accessibility needs 47%

- Support to learn new skills 27%

- Contact with other people with disabilities 40%

- Other (please specify)

- Comments:

  o "Access to PD opportunities, Access to networking opportunities"

  o "All above and actually staff trained in disability"

  o "Recognise employee strengths, social interaction, independence, confidence building, sense of achievement and contribution"

  o "Greater openness to hiring people with disabilities, inclusive environments"

  o "Personal development, sense of community, recognition of diverse workforce benefits"

  o "Individualised support"

  o "Retain as starting point and entry to employment, focusing on young people"

7 Do you have any suggestions for other ways for women and gender diverse people with high support needs to be employed?

Comments:

- "Providing the employers with training to ensure they have what they need to best support employees. Creation of a network"

- "Program to increase confidence to apply for roles, open volunteer options to facilitate learning, creation of short-term roles"

- "Aged care sector and maximising workers' strengths, early childhood sector"

- "Reframing work to create opportunities, creating training opportunities, flexible schedules"

- "Training, pathways from specialised to open employment, funded training, enact inclusive employment policies in open settings supported by leadership, greater role for lived experience"

- Other Comments:

- "Apologies, I wish I was better informed on the topic to have been able to provide further feedback/commentary"

- "Links to individual NDIS packages act as incentives for providers but not the participant, NDIS plan use should be linked to outcomes for participant"

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