



**Australian Government**

# **AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO EMPLOYING SOMEONE WITH DISABILITY**

## **Introduction**

Australia's workforce is constantly changing to prepare for, and respond to our future economic, environmental and social goals. The population is ageing and people are staying in the workforce for longer. Many industries are experiencing significant skill and labour shortages, especially in growth areas.

Increasingly, employers need to consider accessing a diverse range of skilled and talented people and to take advantage of Australia's untapped workforce to meet the needs of business. Smart employers recruit and welcome talent with disability.

In the vast majority of cases, people with disability are able to work and want to find a job. They simply need to be given the chance to show what they can do.

This guide brings together information on the wide range of Australian Government resources, which are free of charge and available to help you successfully employ people with disability, injury or health condition. We want to help your business thrive and give people with disability the opportunity to contribute to our economic future.

People with disability are often characterised by a high degree of dedication and commitment to their role. Employers can access valuable employees who are reliable, skilled and have a great attitude and desire to work when they employ people with disability.



## The business benefits of employing someone with disability

Employing people with disability makes good business sense.

There are significant business benefits when employing someone with disability—benefits beyond just filling a job. These advantages have been confirmed in both Australian and international studies.

Employees with disability are:

- **Reliable**—people with disability take fewer days off, take less sick leave and have a higher retention rate than other workers. The costs to business of absenteeism and sick leave for employees with disability can be as low as 34 per cent of the cost incurred by their colleagues.<sup>1</sup>
- **Productive**—once in the right job, people with disability perform equally as well as other employees.
- **Affordable**—recruitment, insurance cover and compensation costs are lower. People with disability have fewer compensation incidents and accidents at work in comparison to other employees.
- **Good for business**—people with disability build strong relationships with customers and boost staff morale and loyalty by helping to create a diverse workforce. Teamwork is

enhanced. Real cost savings are realised through reduced turnover, recruitment and retraining costs. Hiring people with disability contributes to the organisation's overall diversity. It enhances the company's image among its staff, community and customers with positive benefits to the employer's brand.<sup>2</sup>

For more information about employing someone with disability, visit

**[www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)** or phone **1800 464 800**.

As an employer, a major concern when recruiting staff is getting the right person for the job. Sometimes the right person will be someone with disability.

People with disability bring a range of skills, talents and abilities to the workplace. They work in all sorts of jobs and hold a range of tertiary and trade qualifications. Some hold senior managerial positions, while others are employed in customer service, manual or technical jobs.

1 Australian Safety & Compensation Council report "Are People with disability at Risk at work?" May 2007

2 International Labor Office "Disability in the workplace: Company practices" 2010

The majority of employers who have hired someone with disability can testify to the benefits of doing so. However, if you have not recruited or worked with staff with disability, you might be unsure how to go about it.

There are two major Australian Government funded employment services programs available to employers who wish to recruit people with disability. They are Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia. From 1 July 2013, employers in remote Australia will have access to the Remote Jobs and Communities Program, which will be a new way of delivering employment services to people living in remote areas.

## What are Disability Employment Services?

Disability Employment Services are a national network of organisations funded by the Australian Government to help employers recruit and retain employees with disability. Disability Employment Services help job seekers with disability, injury or health conditions in around 2000 sites across Australia.

A key distinguishing feature of Disability Employment Services is their capacity to support and manage a person's condition in the workplace, along with providing ongoing support in the workplace for as long as it is required.

Disability Employment Services help job seekers with disability to access individually tailored employment services, with strong

links to training and skills development, including in areas of skills shortages.

Providers offer a range of free services to employers of people with disability, injury or health condition including:

- professional recruitment advice and job matching
- help with job design for employees with disability
- on-the-job or off-site support to ensure new employees with disability settle into their job
- ongoing support for as long as it is required, for employees and employers who require support to maintain their employment
- training information and awareness activities for employers and staff
- help for employees whose job may be in jeopardy as a result of their disability.

Providers of Disability Employment Services are encouraged to work with employers to:

- build local linkages to meet employer needs and enhance sustainable employment outcomes for people with disability
- meet their labour needs, including working with individual employers to identify job vacancies and matching suitable candidates to those vacancies while sustaining quality outcomes for people with disability
- continually meet and adapt to their needs and the needs of and people with disability.

Disability Employment Services can also help employers to access a range of financial support, such as workplace modifications, assistive technology, disability, deaf and mental health awareness training, Auslan interpreting and wage subsidies.

A list of Disability Employment Services providers in your area can be found at **[www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)**.

Information about the performance of Disability Employment Services is available on the Labour Market Information Portal at **[www.deewr.gov.au/lmip](http://www.deewr.gov.au/lmip)**.

For more information about how Disability Employment Services can help you, visit **[www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)** or phone a JobAccess adviser on **1800 464 800**.

## What is Job Services Australia?

Job Services Australia is Australia's largest government funded employment service with offices located in more than 2100 locations across Australia. They are a mix of large, medium and small for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

Job Services Australia providers work closely with employers to assess their staffing requirements and help them find work-ready employees, particularly in an industry or sector experiencing skills in demand. Job Services Australia providers work with employers to ensure candidates are suited to their business. In addition to job placement services, Job Services Australia providers can help employers and job seekers to access relevant apprenticeships and traineeships.

Your local Job Services Australia provider can help your business with:

- high quality recruitment services
- referral of job seekers to your vacancies
- skills training that is relevant to your business
- access to the Australian Government's free online JobSearch database.

All Job Services Australia providers deliver assistance for disadvantaged job seekers, including people with disability.

In addition, across Australia there are locations where Job Services Australia providers specialise in services for people with disability. Talk to your local Job Services Australia provider to find out how they can meet your staffing needs.

Opportunities for wage assistance and subsidies may also be available for the provision of ongoing employment.

A list of Job Services Australia providers in your area can be found at **[www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)**.

For more information about how Job Services Australia can help you find the right person for your job, visit **[www.deewr.gov.au/JSA](http://www.deewr.gov.au/JSA)** or phone **13 17 15**.

## Help for employers in remote Australia

The Remote Jobs and Communities Program commences on 1 July 2013, replacing the four main programs that deliver employment and participation services and community development in remote Australia. The program will deliver employment services in 65 remote regions and provide a simpler, integrated and

flexible approach to employment services in remote areas of Australia.

Employer engagement is central to the Remote Jobs and Communities Program. Providers and communities will engage with employers so that all realistic job opportunities are identified and ensure those who are job ready are placed in jobs.

For more information about the Remote Jobs and Communities Program visit [www.deewr.gov.au/rsr](http://www.deewr.gov.au/rsr).

## National Disability Recruitment Coordinator

Some large employers may find it difficult to deal with multiple local employment services when recruiting.

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator works with large employers and Disability Employment Services to:

- promote the employment of people with disability
- help large employers recruit staff with disability and disseminate vacancies
- help employers and human resource officers understand and use the available employment support services
- give employers advice and support.

For more information about the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator visit [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or phone **1800 464 800**.

## What is jobsearch.gov.au?

JobSearch is a free online jobs website.

Employers can advertise jobs directly on JobSearch, or phone the Employer Hotline on **13 17 15** for assistance and advice about job vacancies. The hotline can also advertise jobs on behalf of employers.

JobSearch offers employers:

- free advertising—construct and advertise your jobs free of charge
- an application tracker—manage your applications from job seekers online through the application tracker tool
- help to find staff—browse for staff to fill your jobs, including resource sector jobs
- high visibility—JobSearch ranks high among the top job boards
- 'my profile'—create and manage your new and previously advertised jobs autonomously

- workforce and recruitment information—find information on the types of government employment services
- easy access to information on how successful each Job Services Australia and Disability Employment Services provider is in placing job seekers into employment in industries that are relevant to you
- the ability to find out which providers work in your community and how they will assist with your recruitment needs.

JobSearch also includes a blog for employers. This blog is used to highlight new or updated services and events, announce changes to the system and explain and clarify issues.

## Other services for employers

There are other Australian Government initiatives to help you if you employ or are thinking about employing a person with disability.

### Employment Assistance Fund

The Employment Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for work-related modifications, equipment and services to help people with disability get employment and perform their work as independently and productively as possible. The assistance is available to new and existing employees with disability.

For employers, the Employment Assistance Fund makes accommodating workers with disability in the workplace easier.

It can help cover the costs of modifications to the physical work environment, modifications to work vehicles, adaptive technology, a wide range of information and communication devices, Auslan interpreting and specialist services for employees with specific learning disorders or mental health conditions.

The Employment Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for disability, deaf and mental health awareness training.

The assistance is tailored to the individual needs of the person with disability, their job requirements and work environment. The Employment Assistance Fund is managed

through the JobAccess service which may arrange a free workplace assessment to recommend necessary adjustments.

To find out more about how the Employment Assistance Fund can help you, or to make an application for funds visit [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or phone **1800 464 800**.

### Wage Subsidies

#### Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Wage Subsidy Scheme offers financial assistance of up to \$1500 to employers who employ eligible people with disability who are registered with a Disability Employment Services provider. The subsidy requires employers to employ the person for a minimum of eight hours a week for 13 weeks, with the intent of achieving sustainable employment.

#### Enhanced Wage Subsidy

The Enhanced Wage Subsidy provides up to \$3000 for employers who assist eligible people who are registered with a Disability Employment Services provider. It is aimed at assisting people who have had difficulty obtaining employment, to get a job of at least 15 hours a week for 26 weeks.

## Wage Connect

Wage Connect is a wage subsidy for employers who offer employment to job seekers with little or no recent work experience. Wage Connect is paid for the first 26 weeks a person is employed and may be paid for longer in some circumstances. Wage Connect is worth around \$5912 per placement, or around \$227 per week (pre-GST).

The position must be expected to be ongoing and sustainable beyond the period of the subsidy. To access Wage Connect, employers need to enter into a Wage Connect Agreement with a Job Services Australia or Disability Employment Services provider.

For more information about Wage Subsidies visit [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or phone **1800 464 800**.

## Disabled Australian Apprenticeship Wage Support

Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS) is an Australian Government incentive payable to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice who satisfies the disability eligibility criteria in an Australian Apprenticeship.

This wage support is also available to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice who acquires a disability during their apprenticeship or traineeship.

For more information contact an Australian Apprenticeships Centre on

**13 38 73** or visit the Australian Apprenticeships website at [www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au) for more information.

## Supported Wage System

Supported Wage System is a workplace relations mechanism that allows employers to pay a productivity based wage to eligible people whose work productivity is reduced as a result of disability. Most Australians who have disability and participate in the open workforce do so at full rates of productivity and pay. However, some people are unable to get a job at full wage rates due to the effect of disability on their level of work productivity. Employers must have access to a Supported Wage System provision in their industrial award or agreement to enable the use of Supported Wage System productivity based wages.

The Australian Government contracts a panel of independent assessors to conduct workplace productivity assessments for employers who wish to employ people with disability under the Supported Wage System provisions.

The Supported Wage System operates within the normal federal and state industrial relations frameworks. An employment services provider can tell you more about the system and help you apply for it as appropriate.

For more information about the Supported Wage System visit [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or phone **1800 065 123**.

## JobAccess—A national information and advice service

JobAccess is a free, confidential telephone service providing information and expert advice to employers about recruiting and working with people with disability.

The JobAccess website provides step-by-step guides and checklists on recruitment, adjusting a workplace, benefits of employing people with disability, online applications for the Employment Assistance Fund and

Supported Wage System, information on understanding rights and responsibilities at work and much more. The online Workplace Adjustment Tool can be used to source practical ideas and solutions for workplace modifications.

For more information and advice on employing someone with disability, visit **[www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)** or phone **1800 464 800**.