



Inclusion in government sector employment

Most people want a job so that they are financially secure and have a strong sense of purpose in their lives.

People with intellectual disability want these things like everyone else. So, government needs to help break down the barriers to employment that people with intellectual disability experience.

The NSW Government has a particular responsibility for equal access to jobs in the public sector.

What needs to happen

The NSW Government should:

1. Meet its own target of having 5.6% of public sector roles held by people with disability by 2025 and make sure this includes people with different kinds of disability.
2. Develop a strategy right now, so that at least 1% of government sector roles are held by people with intellectual disability in 2025. The strategy should focus on both school leavers and adults with intellectual disability.

Where things stand

One of the NSW Premier's Priorities is that, by 2025, 5.6% of government sector jobs will be filled by people with disability.

However the State of the Public Sector Report 2021 says that only 2.5% of government sector employees had disability and this number in fact has fallen from 3.8% since 2012.¹

The government does not collect data on employment rates for people with different kinds of disability. However, CID's enquires strongly indicate that there are very few people with intellectual disability in government jobs.

If there was equity across disability types and the Premier's 5.6% target was achieved, approximately 1% of government sector employees would be people with intellectual disability.

The NDIS reports that 29% of NDIS participants with intellectual disability are in paid jobs. However, over 70% of these people are working in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs, previously called sheltered workshops) where people are segregated from society and wages are as low as \$2.50 an hour.

Only 8.5% of NDIS participants with intellectual disability are in regular jobs with real pay. This is much lower than for participants with most other disabilities, eg hearing impairments (55%), vision impairment (25%) and a range of physical impairments (22%).ⁱⁱ

Inclusion Australia reports on "the polished pathway" which encourages the transition of school leavers with intellectual disability into ADEs and without exploration of individual goals and alternatives.

Employers often mistakenly assume that people with intellectual disability cannot do "normal" jobs. Employers are not confident how to support workers with intellectual disability. They are much less aware of the workplace adjustments needed by people with intellectual disability compared with the adjustments needed by people with most other disabilities.

The right to employment

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability says that people with disability have the right to work on an equal basis with others in an accessible and inclusive work environment. This specifically includes employing persons with disability in the public sector.

Under discrimination law, government agencies must make reasonable adjustments to their recruitment and workplace practices to avoid discrimination against people with disability.

Drivers for change

Like all Australian governments, NSW has committed to the Australian Disability Strategy. The Strategy has a key focus on Employment and Financial Security including increasing employment of people with disability, improving transition from school to work and strengthening financial independence.

The NSW Government Disability Inclusion Plan has as one of its four focuses Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment. The Public Service Commission must work with government agencies to implement the Premier's Priority of 5.6% employment.

CID's More Than Just a Job Program, currently funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, provides training for government and non-government employers to make them confident and capable employers of people with intellectual disability.

Based on our experience and best practice, CID recommends the following strategies for government agencies to provide fair employment opportunities to people with intellectual disability:

- Ensuring there is specific expertise in human resources and diversity teams.
- Providing relevant information in accessible formats, in particular Easy Read.
- Adjusting capability frameworks and job classification systems. Instead of having fixed capabilities and roles, job descriptions and levels should be adapted.
- Strength based assessment of prospective employees.
- Job carving (carving out duties for an employee with intellectual disability, including, where appropriate, moving duties between employees) or customised employment (creating a new role) to capitalise on individual strengths.
- Tailored training and supervision.

ii <https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/state-of-the-nsw-public-sector/state-of-the-nsw-public-sector-report-2021> By contrast, the People Matters Survey reports 5% of respondents to have disability but this is a voluntary survey with a 44% response rate. <https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/people-matter-employee-survey/pmes-2021>

ii <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/outcomes-and-goals/employment-outcomes-participants-their-families-and-carers#employment-outcomes-for-ndis-participants-as-at-31-december-2020> pages 30 and 46

