
Disability Action Week Employment Forum

Driving workforce diversity, inclusion, and innovation

Summary Report - 10 December 2021



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About Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability. QDN operates a state-wide network of 2,000+ members and supporters who provide information, feedback and views based on their lived experience, which inform the organisation's systemic advocacy activities.

We believe people with disability should always be at the table when decisions are made that directly impact their lives.

QDN's systemic advocacy work encompasses a range of responses – from community campaigns, formal submissions, evidence to commissions and inquiries and membership of roundtables and working groups around national, state, and local government legislative and policy initiatives. QDN's work is focused on the rights and full social and economic inclusion of people with disability within their communities. QDN's systemic advocacy work has focused on a range of key areas identified by Queenslanders with disability that has included the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), improving mainstream services that people with disability rely on every day, including health, housing, employment, transport, and most recently the impact of COVID-19.

Background

Disability Action Week is held annually and raises awareness of how Queenslanders can play a role in creating an all-abilities Queensland.

In 2021, businesses and employers were encouraged to support workplace diversity and inclusion during Disability Action Week with the theme being **'Workforce Diversity – open up to opportunity'**. The intent being to focus on employment opportunities for people with disability and the benefits of an inclusive and accessible workforce.

There are 900,000 Queenslanders living with disability. The recent Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, explored the barriers faced by people with disability that prevents social and economic inclusion. The Royal Commission found people with disability:

- are less likely to participate in the labour force than those without disability. In 2018, just over half (53.4 per cent) of people with disability were in the labour force, compared with 84.1 per cent of people without disability.
- who are in the labour force, are less likely to be employed than those without disability. In 2018, the unemployment rate of people with disability was 10.3 per cent, more than twice that of people without disability (4.6 per cent).

There is limited employment data collected, and the available data shows consistently low levels of labour force participation for people with disability in Australian workplaces. Only 53.4% (or 1 million) of working-aged people with disability participate in the labour forceⁱ, and are twice as likely as those without disability to be unemployedⁱⁱ.

Disability Royal Commission Chair Ronald Sackville AO QC stated in Public hearing 9 *'the statistics relating to workforce participation of people with disability are sobering.....Australia has one of the lowest employment rates for people with disability in the OECD.'*ⁱⁱⁱ

Introduction

In conjunction with Disability Action Week, QDN hosted an online employment forum – *Driving workforce diversity, inclusion, and innovation*. Having access to a secure job is not only essential to a person’s economic security, but gives people a sense of purpose and achievement, which is central to fostering good mental health and creating an enriched life free from poverty. Overwhelmingly, QDN members indicate that they want to engage in some form of work. The barrier to secure work is not their abilities, but a lack of opportunities.

Feedback from QDN members shaped and informed this forum including the breakout sessions and key topics and speakers. design, speakers, and each of the concurrent sessions explored a key theme in relation to inclusion and equity in the workplace for people with disabilities, acknowledging the barriers experienced by people and focussing on how to address those barriers through tangible solutions.

Over 150 people (including people with disability, government employees, community leaders and businesses) registered their interest in hearing directly from people with disability on what are the issues faced around employment and what solutions will make a difference to improve employment outcomes.

Conversations were hosted by 2021 graduates from QDN’s Emerging Leaders program putting their leadership skills into practice and co-creating solutions to the issues facing people with disability in employment.

Speakers

A range of speakers were invited to share their expertise and story to set the scene for the forum at a political and a personal level. Speakers included:

- Hon. Craig Crawford - Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Des Ryan - QDN Chair
- Dr Dinesh Palipana - Emergency doctor and Queensland’s 2021 Queenslander of the Year
- Katie Booker and Catrin Culla - Mater EASY Health Project
- Cody Skinner - QDN 2021 Emerging Leader graduate



Concurrent Sessions

Conversations in the concurrent sessions were hosted by 2021 graduates of QDN's Emerging Leaders program, putting their leadership skills into practice and co-creating solutions to the issues facing people with disability in employment. The themes of concurrent sessions included:

- Workforce diversity – getting more people with disability into employment,
- Workplace inclusion – making sure workplaces are inclusive and accessible for people with disability,
- Innovation and changing the system,
- Entrepreneurship – people with disability who are starting their own business.

Summary of Solutions

The concurrent sessions explored different aspects of employment and inclusion in relation to people with disability, from systemic change to self-employment innovation. While discussion explored the barriers and experience of people with disability, the intent was to lead to solution focussed actions. A summary of the solutions co-created across sessions is below.

- Employment and workplace participation is one element of a larger universal approach to inclusion across all levels of society. Co-designing strategies with people with disability is essential for change at all levels (individual, business/employer, community, systemic).
- A strength-based approach (rather than a deficit focus) is required to build confidence and trust in relationships between employers and people with disability.
- It was recommended that the Queensland government could put measures in place for quotas in public employment targets for people with disability. A similar program initiated by the Australian government "RecruitAbility."
- Ensuring the visibility of people with disability in employment assists in challenging assumptions. It was recommended that a range of measures could be put in place including NDIS to provide access to 'work enablers,' including reasonable adjustment equipment for employers.
- Flexible recruitment processes in government that move beyond accessible interview rooms. Implement the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, of recruitment and employment support across government.
- Disability employment services to work from a strength-based model in identifying and building on skillsets transferable to the workforce (professional, personal, social skills, as well as community networks), and not on people's deficits.
- Training and education for employers in the recruitment of people with disability designed and delivered by people with disability.
- Embedding co-design principles and processes across government and community to address the barriers faced by people with disability. A key example provided was in relation to the 2032 Brisbane Olympics Planning to design and develop inclusive and accessible venues.
- Resources to support employers to have honest conversations about their concerns and challenge stereotypes and assumptions about the capability of people with disability to undertake employment in different roles.
- Small Business mentor program to link people with disability wanting to start their own business to existing business owners to help with start-up essentials.
- Training and education programs targeting people with disability for business development and planning linked with mentoring to develop business ideas into action.

Keynote summaries

Dr Dinesh Palipana (Doctors with Disability Australia)

Dr Dinesh Palipana shared his own story about acquiring a disability through a car accident while he was still studying medicine, nearly a decade ago. After a long recovery, he continued with his medical degree and found that he faced bias and outdated views about being a doctor with disability, particularly from peers and people in the medical industry.

“When I graduated, I realised employment was discriminatory too. I had to fight to get my job as a doctor, which was otherwise guaranteed to everyone else.” – Dr Dinesh Palipana

It was because of these experiences that Dr Palipana cofounded, Doctors with Disability Australia, an organisation that advocates and raises awareness for doctors with disabilities.

Katie Booker and Catrin Culla (Mater EASY Health project)

The second keynote speakers focused on inclusion of people with intellectual disability in the workplace and how consumer led research is working to influence the broader workforce in the health system. We heard from Katie Booker and Catrin Culla, who are involved in the Mater EASY Health project.

This project, which is a collaborative project with QDN, is designed to improve the accessibility of hospital services by improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of health professionals toward people with intellectual disability.

Catrin is employed as a consultant on the project and is a woman with Down Syndrome, and Katie is a research assistant and assists Catrin on the project.

Catrin told the forum participants about her experiences on being a young woman with Down Syndrome and the discriminatory practices she experienced, particularly when starting employment in casual jobs.

“They did not really support me in my job (in retail position), and I was paid less than other people working there.” – Catrin Culla

Since working at the Mater, alongside Katie, Catrin has a renewed sense of self and confidence. Catrin spoke about how her workplace is now inclusive, not without challenges but appreciates the ability to advocate for herself and for people to ask her for advice around hospital settings for people with intellectual disabilities.

*“Now, I feel like I am an important part of the workforce”
– Catrin Culla*

Cody Skinner (Link Connection One Community)

Lastly, the forum heard from Cody Skinner. A recent graduate of the 2021 Emerging Leaders program, Cody is a proud First Nations man who is also Deaf. Cody spoke about his workplace experiences which has led him to start his own small business, *Link Connection One Community*.

Cody recalled his experiences in a variety of workplaces, particularly how people treated him because of his hearing impairment. It was these discriminatory actions that led Cody to give evidence at the Disability Royal Commission. He spoke about an example when working at a local coffee shop where he was paid less than the other workers, because he had a disability.

“Every time I made a mistake, the boss would clap their hands in front of my face, coming closer and closer and closer. I had to stand up for my rights and say no, that’s not okay to clap at a Deaf person in the workplace.” – Cody Skinner

Concurrent Sessions

Participants were invited to join breakout rooms to discuss issues and solutions for people with disability covering:

- Workforce diversity – getting more people with disability into employment,
- Workplace inclusion – making sure workplaces are inclusive and accessible for people with disability,
- Innovation and changing the system,
- Entrepreneurship – people with disability who are starting their own business.

Even though the break-out conversations covered diverse topics, there were key themes and synergies that emerged. People with disability want equal opportunity and access to the paid workforce. Key barriers that prevent this happening, are the low expectations of people with disability in a workplace, compounded with the bias and assumptions both employers and recruiters make about people with disability. These factors result in under representation of people with disability in the workplace.

Workforce diversity – getting more people with disability into employment

Disability inclusiveness has been shown to lead to:

- increased levels of engagement and productivity
- better workplace morale
- diversity in problem solving approaches
- enhanced teamwork.

Forum participants reinforced the need for employment settings to foster environments that create a better understanding and awareness of the positives of employing people with disability. There are still widespread misconceptions and outdated stereotypes influencing the attitudes and behaviour of employers, recruiters, and government policy makers, which ultimately restrict the ability of people with disabilities to find and obtain employment.

Forum participants reported that these assumptions can often be dispelled if the employer/recruiter has an open and honest discussion about their concerns. However, there is widespread acknowledgement that many employers/recruiters don’t know how to approach these topics or don’t feel comfortable having these conversations. This often leaves people with disability who are otherwise qualified for a job being overlooked.

Targeted strategies are needed that provide pathways to employment for people with disability. Forum participants indicated that employers should promote a welcoming, accessible workplace that is inclusive of diversity and understanding of the needs of people with disability. Resources to help improve the accessibility of workplaces need to be deployed across workplaces with a 'whatever it takes' attitude.

Strategies to ensure that workplaces are more inclusive of people with disability include:

- providing flexible working arrangements to meet the individual needs of employees
- negotiating workloads where necessary on an individual basis
- providing equal access to up skilling training
- providing opportunities for acting in higher duties
- selection for higher roles/promotion

these are all goals for workplaces that improve employer culture and practice to ensure a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Issues

A range of issues were raised in relation to inclusion in paid employment for people with disability. These included:

- mandatory requirements for employment. example, the requirement to hold a valid license. This was identified as a barrier to applying for employment as some cannot legally drive due to their disability.
- the failure of employers to meet quotas in the workplace. The Queensland Government has a quota for 8% of their workforce to be people with a disability. The latest figures show that people with disability employed in the public service is significantly lower, sitting at approximately 2.83%. People with disability represent 20% of the population, however the quotas for employment do not reflect this. It was also raised that people with a disability in employment is not reflected in mainstream media, e.g., television and film.
- the attitude of employers is a significant barrier to gaining employment. Many employers have unconscious biases toward people with disability in the workplace, for example, a poor perception of the capacities of people with a disability and concerns about a lower productivity output. This 'deficit model' where employers are focusing on the negative attributes of the person they are employing, is a barrier to people with disability gaining employment.

As a part of the discussion around employer attitudes toward people with disability, the participants raised the issue of disclosure of disability and the inherent requirements of the job. Often people with disability do not want to disclose their disability for the fear of employer biases and negative attitudes toward the person with disability's capability to meet the requirements of employment.

Solutions

The participants discussed a wide variety of solutions that take a universal approach to accessibility-beyond just employment but that would encourage and enable inclusion in the workplace. Solutions encompass technology (touchscreens, websites), systems (recruitment process, education) and structures (buildings, equipment) that are beneficial to everyone.

Participants raised the idea of co-design strategies to develop the universal approach but did stipulate that people with disability must be included in the development from the start. The

specific barriers that people with disability face when entering the workforce can be broken down into smaller parts. One approach is to focus on strengths and promote the idea that there are different ways to build the confidence in the relationship between employer and the person with disability. A key factor is exposure and bringing normality to the idea of employing people with disability.

Quotas need to be put in place and regularly publicly reported on by Governments, as part of state plan to include public service employment targets for people with disability in different levels of government, especially as change must be driven by people with disability in leadership positions. The participants identified that the Australian Government has a program called 'RecruitAbility.' It is a scheme which aims to attract and develop applicants with disability and facilitate cultural changes in selection panels and agency recruitment. The participants of the breakout room thought a similar program should be implemented in the Queensland government.

The workplaces that have a team of people with diverse disability are essential to creating positive and inclusive experiences for customers and employees alike. It also provides employers the opportunity to have personal experience with a person with disability to assist in the breakdown of employer attitudes. It was also discussed how this then feeds into the representation of people with disability in the workplace, which in turn ensures that the work environment has a tailored approach to the needs of the business, its employees and its clientele. The importance of representation was discussed many times with one participant saying, "you can't be what you don't see." The participants also believe that this would be an opportunity for the NDIS to provide access 'work enablers,' including reasonable adjustment equipment for employers.

The participants would like to see recruitment in government become more flexible. They would like recruitment Panels to know that reasonable adjustment is more than just providing access to the interview room. For example, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, of recruitment and employment support has been particularly effective in helping people with disability to secure and maintain work in competitive, open environments. Some key features of the model include integrated mental health treatment, an emphasis on employee strengths and preferred way of working, and time unlimited supports.

One of the participants Elisha, gave an example of how it was helpful when QDN assisted her in identifying her skillset and how to transfer those skills into a workplace. Elisha shared that disability employment services need to do better in this space when helping people with disability entering the workforce. This 'strength-based model' focuses on the person with disability's strengths (professional, personal, social skills, as well as community networks), and not on their deficits. It also focuses on the skills and interest of the person with disability to promote their well-being in a holistic approach to employment.

The idea of more training and education for employers regarding the recruitment of people with disability was raised more than once, with the participants sharing that it would also create employment opportunities for people with disability to be delivering these trainings.

Discussion explored how wider society could be using co-design principles to address the barriers faced by people with disability. Co-design is a process that involves key stakeholders in defining, developing, implementing, and reviewing a necessary change (to improve access, inclusion, and participation). An example of how this could be used was raised in the context of the 2032 Brisbane Olympics/Paralympics. Ensuring that people with disability are employed on the Olympic planning committee and involved in the design process would not only create employment opportunities, but

it would also feed into building more inclusive sporting venues, transport, housing, and public spaces for the Brisbane community for the next 50 years.

Workplace inclusion – making sure workplaces are inclusive and accessible for people with disability

Disability inclusion at work is about more than hiring people with disability. An inclusive workplace values all employees for their strengths. It offers employees with disability — whether visible or invisible — an equal opportunity to succeed, to learn, to be compensated fairly, and to advance. True inclusion is about embracing difference.

Changing community attitudes to people with disability is central to improving opportunities for employment. Forum participants reinforced this message, stressing the importance of shifting community perceptions about the potential of people with disability, and their contribution to the community, rather a focus on deficits and impediments.

It was also identified that the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (CRPD) are key to delivering a more inclusive Australia. The CRPD states the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and a work environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible. The CRPD also:

- Prohibits discrimination based on disability regarding all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions.
- Protects the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances.
- Promotes employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining, and returning to employment.
- Promotes opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business.
- Ensures that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace.

Negative attitudes continue when people with disability obtain a job and enter workplaces. Forum participants reported an ongoing attitude that employing people with disability is a form of “charity,” or that people with disability should “just be grateful they have a job.” These community attitudes can influence people with disability’s experience of getting and keeping a job. A major issue in relation to employers is a lack of exposure to the real experience of people with disability. Employers are reluctant to even begin a conversation on how to be more inclusive, and there is an incorrect assumption of the scale and effort required to include and employ people with disability in the workplace. There is a lot of fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, which is in itself a barrier to making workplaces more inclusive and accessible.

Issues

Participants reported experiences of discrimination from the outset, just getting an interview can be the first hurdle for someone with a disability. There are many barriers to meaningful, inclusive employment for people with disability. These barriers include low expectations by both people with disability themselves and others around them; employers viewing people with disability as a workplace health and safety risk; a lack of visibility - with people with disability not well-represented in public roles, making it difficult to recognise their potential.

Participants reported misinformed attitudes towards disability (i.e., people with disability are costly to employ and are less productive than people without disability), employers' concern about potential risks, an increased focus on low-skilled, short-term jobs and programs (driven by government compliance requirements) in favour of building viable careers. There is a misconception that inclusion will be long and hard. There is a considerable lack of career development opportunities for people with disability, including limited professional development and skills training, being passed over for promotion and higher duties, lack of job rotation. Participants also explained that the lack of social inclusion some people with disability face in traditional employment can lead to feelings of exclusion and workplace bullying.

Solutions

Participants suggested that employers should focus on making sure job opportunities actively encourage people with disability to apply and highlight their practice as an inclusive employer. It is important that employers and workplaces are fostering an inclusive business culture, starting with expressions of commitment from the highest levels and carried across an organisation through practices and engagement activities.

Promoting disability-inclusive recruitment and retention processes by establishing personnel systems and job descriptions that facilitate not only the hiring but also advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities.

Participants expressed employers need to provide the accommodations people with disability may need to do their jobs effectively, whether that means assistive technology, a flexible schedule.

Employers need to remove assumptions about people with disability with what they can, or cannot, do and be opened to adapting workplaces and policies on how things get done. Taking steps to ensure external and internal communication of workplace policies & procedures around its commitment to disability inclusion and providing training on disability-related workplace issues to staff.

Ultimately, participants stressed the significance of ensuring a barrier-free workplace by maintaining accessible information and communication technology, as well as a workplace that is physically and attitudinally accessible. There is a significant need for flexible design of roles, designing a job around what a person can do rather than trying to 'fit a square peg into a round hole.' Participants would like to see more people with disability leading from the top and in positions of power and influence to champion employing people with disability.

Innovation and changing the systems

Structural issues with the design and implementation of employment programs, particularly Disability Employment Services (DES) was a common theme in responses. The problems most frequently raised were a lack of appropriate support, poor client outcomes, and clients being placed in jobs that did not match their skills, interests, or abilities.

Making the Government's Disability Employment Program more person centred and more focussed on individual needs is supported and requires targeted and strategic approaches which currently are not in place. Forum participants identified that it is important that people with disability have choice and control over the provider they work with when accessing these programs, and to change their provider if unsatisfied.

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) presents numerous barriers for people with disability who are wanting to enter employment, including part time work. A significant impact is the reduction in income support once employment is undertaken. There are complex rules and compliance issues associated with social security income support which create barriers to work. There needs to be large, systemic changes to the DSP and the way it views people with disability.

Attitudes and perceptions of people with disability is a systemic and cultural issue that is experienced by people with disability, including in government and non-government organisations. As part of getting more people with disability into the workforce would be overhauling the culture of how people without disability view people with disability in the workplace.

Issues

Attitudes toward, and beliefs about, people with disabilities are important determinants of social inclusion. Misconceptions, negative attitudes, and a lack of knowledge can affect many aspects of life for people with disabilities, including employment opportunities. Participants identified that community attitudes toward inclusion of people with disabilities, and employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities, indicate that stigma is still strongly impacting on people's ability to participate fully. Negative employer attitudes typically involve perceptions that people with disabilities are absent from work more often, fear of a negative impact on work performance and productivity, the perceived high costs associated with accommodating people with disabilities, fear of a potentially negative reaction from other staff members or customers in response to hiring a person with a disability, and the perceived risk of litigation if the employee is dissatisfied.

Many participants discussed the idea that people with disability fear losing the Disability Support Pension and its associated benefits if they earn too much, this can be viewed as a disincentive to working more. Additionally, there are a multitude of interface issues with differing agencies not talking to one another, with the onus being left on people with disability to fight for basic rights.

Solutions

Participants stressed the importance of the co-creation of campaigns, incorporating feedback and input from people with disabilities and positive framing of messages, including normalised portrayals of people with disabilities, focusing on ability rather than disability, the use of personal stories of success, challenging people to identify stigmatising beliefs in themselves and/or others, and being specific about what individuals can do to challenge stigma and/or promote inclusion.

Employers are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward employees with disability if they have previous experience employing them. Employers cite a strong work ethic, punctuality, dedication to the job, lower turnover, and the diversity they add to the workplace as benefits of hiring people with disability. Participants explained it is important to changing negative community and employer attitudes towards people with disability, and challenging stigma, is likely to make a positive contribution toward greater inclusion.

Participants suggested an overhaul and large systemic change required for the Disability Support Pension. This could be similar modelling to veterans' scheme that receives more funding to

encourage return to employment and/or study. It is important to innovate the Disability Support Pension it actively discourages employment.

Entrepreneurship – people with disability who are starting own business

For many people with disability, self-employment provides a way to be financially independent, arrange the workplace to suit a person's individual needs and achieve job satisfaction. Self-employment could assist people with disability overcome barriers to work, but the current system is falling short on fostering entrepreneurial skills in the disability community. People with disability often feel they have no choice but to start their own business to work, setting their own flexible hours and working conditions was attractive, and it was an opportunity to give back to their community in some way. However, the current system is short on inclusive programs, mentors, tailored networks, and educational opportunities for people with disabilities to start their own businesses.

Key messages from participants indicates that there is a lack of resources and assistance for people with disability to set up their own business or begin their journey into starting their own business. Further to this, the discussion highlighted that the current Disability Employment Services and Australian Disability Enterprise systems/programs were not helpful for people with disability transitioning into self-employment or providing any platform to build on.

Improving career development and tools for people with disability during their schooling as well as school to work transition programs is important for enhancing support networks and challenging attitudes and assumptions. Attention needs to focus on creating and targeting flexible transition pathways including TAFE, apprenticeships, University, internships and traineeships and the role of NDIS in supporting options and pathways.

Career development options and innovative paths around emerging jobs should also be included in pathway options. This approach needs wide promotion in schools, TAFE, and Universities.

The Australian Human Rights Commission outlines the benefits of self-employment as:

- Control over where you work—you may wish to work from an office or business premises, a café, or your own home.
- Control over when you work—mornings or evenings may suit you better. Choosing when you work can also give you flexibility to engage in-home support, attend appointments, and meet any carer responsibilities.
- Choice about who you work with—you can choose who you wish to work with, including co-workers and clients.
- Ability to pursue a passion or creative interest—self-employment can allow you to pursue the specific type of work you want to engage in, and in a way that suits you. For example, you might have a passion for helping others, creating new technology or making art.
- Greater financial independence and success—self-employment provides the potential for greater financial independence and success when compared to employment which is likely to be limited to a fixed salary.

Issues:

The largest barrier identified by participants were community attitudes and beliefs towards a person with disability being a business owner. The current narrative revolves around the assumption of

people with disability will only obtain meaningful employment in the Australian Disability Enterprise context. Additional barriers identified by participants included:

- Increased range of duties—when you are self-employed you will take on an increased range of duties. In addition to doing your core work you will also have to manage your business.
- Financial uncertainty—when you are self-employed you will no longer be receiving a regular salary. Instead, your earnings will be tied to the success of your business
- Self-motivation—being productively self-employed requires significant self-motivation. Being self-employed means that you will not have a manager directing your workflow or setting milestones for the delivery of work

Solutions:

It is important for people with a disability interested in self-employment to determine what is necessary to start the business. Participants identified that it would be of benefit to be able to talk to a business owner operating a similar business as they may be willing to help with recommendations of the essential items needed to start the business.

In addition to this it will be important to ensure there is adequate funding and training/educational programs available and accessible for people with disability for business development and planning. This may include government grants geared towards accredited small business training and mentoring and support to help develop business ideas.

Conclusion

The conversations held throughout the forum across the different employment themes demonstrate that we still have significant work to do before we have true inclusion of people with disability across all aspects of life. There are significant barriers in existence for people with disability in accessing employment, however there are many simple, tangible steps that can be taken to remove barriers and create opportunities. The list of solutions that emerged throughout the forum are not exhaustive but provide some tangible starting points for a more equitable future in Queensland. Key to providing employment opportunities for people with disability is a cultural and social shift in peoples perceptions about the capabilities of people with disability seeking paid employment, both by employers and the community more broadly. It is everyone's responsibility to change this perception, to embrace diversity and the strength that it brings to society and community and ensure there are pathways to paid employment for everyone that are clear, equitable, accessible, and inclusive.

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AiHW), People with disability in Australia 2020: in brief <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia-2020-in-brief/contents/employment-external-site>, last updated 02 October 2020

ⁱⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AiHW), People with disability in Australia 2020: in brief <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in->

[australia-2020-in-brief/contents/employment- external site](#), last updated 02 October 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/sobering-employment-rate-people-disability-be-examined>