AUSTRALIAN
DISABILITY
NETWORK

The business case for disability employment targets

Guidelines for setting and achieving targets to increase the employment of people with disability

October 2023

About the Australian Disability Network

Australian Disability Network is a national, membership-based, for-purpose organisation that helps organisations welcome and retain people with disability in all aspects of business.

We work with approximately 450 member organisations - who in combination hire approximately 2.2 million people or 18% of Australia's workforce - to remove barriers that limit opportunities and prevent the employment and advancement of people with disability.

As the peak body for disability inclusion in the workplace we provide expert guidance, services and programs to employers, Government representatives and industry bodies.

At Australian Disability Network, listening to the voices of people with disabilities is central to everything we do. Starting with a strong internal voice (47% of our team identify as having disability) helps us to listen and create positive change.

This report was developed with the generous support of members. We thank our network for contributing to a disability confident Australia.

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Introduction

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has highlighted the need to address the systemic barriers to employment for people with disability.

The Royal Commission identified 26 barriers to open employment for people with disability, including:

- Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours during recruitment and in the workplace.
- Employers incorrectly assuming hiring people with disability will be costly, "burdensome", less productive, and risky; which may result in overlooking a person's unique skills.
- Employers lacking knowledge, skills, leadership, and resources to support people with disability.
- Employers refusing to provide flexible work arrangements or workplace adjustments, including during recruitment.

These findings confirm that despite a willingness to work, people with disability in Australia are less likely to participate in the labour force and will experience poorer employment outcomes than people without disability.

The Royal Commission's final report included 222 recommendations to government and represent an acknowledgment that the thousands of people with disability who have shared their stories over the past four years have been heard.

However, the recommendations do not go far enough in relation to employment for people with disability.

We know there is currently an employment gap between people with and without disability of over 30%, a number which has barely shifted in twenty years.[1] This gap results in people with disability experiencing social and economic exclusion.

As a nation, we can do better.

The underrepresentation of people with disability in the workforce is due to deeply entrenched ideologies and practices that must be critically analysed and addressed.

What is open employment?

"Open employment is when people with and without disability work together in the same workplace. All workers in open employment must be paid a fair pay."
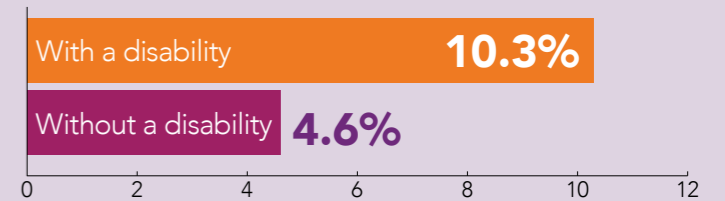
EveryoneCanWork.org.au
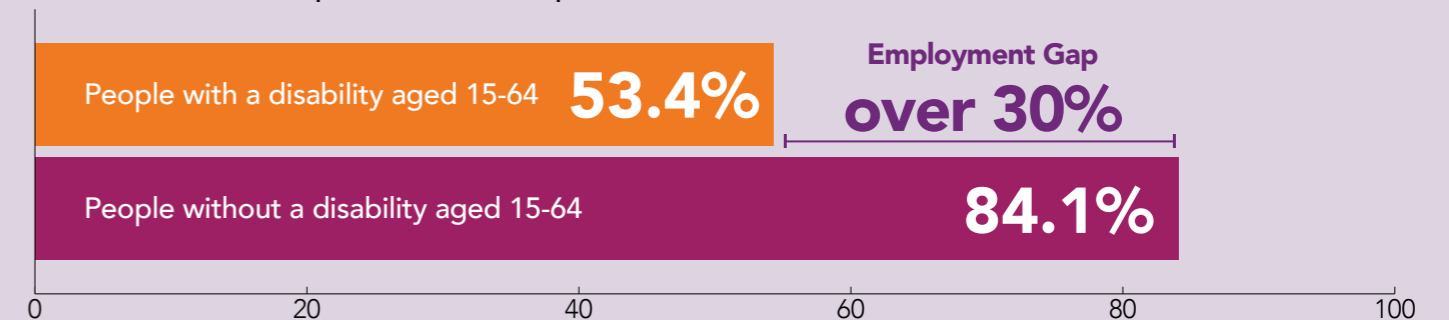
Understanding the employment gap

The labour force participation rate (the proportion of people aged 15 - 64 who have a job or are actively looking) was 53.4% for people with disability, compared to 84.1% for people of the same age without disability. This reflects an employment gap of over 30%, which has remained stagnant for two decades.[2]

The unemployment rate for people with disability was 10.3% in 2018, more than twice that of people without disability at 4.6%.[3]

Unemployment Rate Comparison

With a disability	**10.3%**
Without a disability	**4.6%**

0   2   4   6   8   10   12

Labour Force Participation Rate Comparison

Employment Gap over 30%

People with a disability aged 15-64	**53.4%**
People without a disability aged 15-64	**84.1%**

0   20   40   60   80   100

A new approach is required to bridge this employment gap.

1   Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia, 2018, Catalogue 4430.0.

2   Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia, 2018, Catalogue 4430.0.
3   Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia, 2018, Catalogue 4430.0.

Are employment targets the solution?

Australian Disability Network is advocating for organisations to consider establishing employment targets to increase the visibility, recruitment and retention of people with disability in the workforce.

In response to initial Disability Royal Commission findings, Australian Disability Network consulted with its membership of approximately 450 employers to understand what is working and what is preventing disability employment. Key consultation activities included:

- Four surveys from October to December 2022 to all members to determine which organisations are setting targets and what other initiatives are being implemented to increase disability employment.

- Interviews with members in 2023 to understand the barriers and enablers to setting and achieving targets.

- Focus groups to understand what resources employers are seeking to support them to implement their disability inclusion strategies.

- Member roundtables to share knowledge, initiatives and best practice.

The Hon Ronald Sackville AO KC, Chair of the Disability Royal Commission, stated during Public Hearing 9: *Pathways and barriers to open employment for people with disability*, that;

"…employers must introduce additional measures to increase the workforce participation rates of people with disability. …. There are large numbers of people who are willing and able to work productively but are prevented from doing so by community attitudes and employment practices that in many respects belong to another age…

They, especially the large employers, have a responsibility to lead the way, not just by adhering to their legal duties, but by promoting attitudinal and cultural changes within their organisations and in the wider community."

Australian Disability Network recommends targets

Research and consultation have revealed a range of attitudes towards disability employment targets and varied strategies to increase disability employment.

Australian Disability Network identifies targets as a powerful tool to drive positive organisational change but recognises targets alone are not enough to create lasting impact and systemic change. In addition to showing leadership by setting targets, organisations must also commit to building an inclusive culture, implementing appropriate infrastructure, and creating policies and procedures to ensure that individuals with disability are supported to succeed and thrive in the workplace.

Targets for disability employment can provide the motivation and incentive for organisations to focus, prioritise, and implement initiatives to increase disability employment and address the underrepresentation of people with disability in the workforce.

This report and accompanying guides will help organisations understand why employment targets are a viable solution and support them to set achievable targets.

The business case in support of targets

"What you don't count, doesn't count… The only way to get people with disabilities into employment is to set targets and then develop strategies to achieve those targets."

Graeme Innes AM, Former Disability Discrimination Commissioner [4]

Australia's labour market faces significant challenges and demands, such as skills shortages and an aging population.

In the competition for talent, employers are unintentionally missing out on an untapped talent pool. Employment of people with disability can address these challenges and provide great economic benefits to individuals, employers and the economy.

Employers are losing out when they leave disability inclusion off the agenda. Australian Disability Network has identified 10 business benefits you gain when employing people with disability.

Read more about the business benefits of hiring people with disability at www.AustralianDisabilityNetwork.org.au

Additionally, research undertaken by global professional services firm Accenture discovered that organisations that were disability-inclusive, outperform their corporate peers that are not disability-inclusive on profitability. [5]

So, with a labour market facing a skills shortage and an underutilised talent pool of skilled employees with disability, is setting targets for the employment of people with disability the solution? Australian Disability Network believes there is a strong case for targets and that employers can and should do more to enable employment opportunities for people with disability so that we can shift the dial on disability inclusion.

- Widen your talent pool
- Expand your consumer base
- Retain workers
- Represent your customers
- Lower absenteeism
- Improve brand reputation
- Enhance productivity
- Engaged workplace culture
- Lower workplace risk
- Uphold the rights of people with disability

The rationale for setting targets

- What gets measured gets done.
- Targets demonstrate commitment; setting targets can motivate an organisation to articulate and clarify what is important and that disability employment is being taken seriously.
- Targets can catalyse action and motivate an organisation to focus on an objective, be accountable and build momentum.
- Targets demonstrate ambition and can boost competitive advantage; setting targets and promoting these externally can positively impact brand, reputation, and an organisation's profile as an employer of choice in a competitive job market.
- Targets indicate an organisation-wide approach, meaning that they are more likely to be built into key performance indicators of managers across an organisation.
- Targets enable organisations to identify and unlock a broader talent pool.
- Importantly, targets increase and elevate the conversation about disability employment, both with internal and external stakeholders. Increasing conversations about disability and the visibility of disability in the workplace helps support a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Cautions to consider when setting targets

- Targets are voluntary so they may be set very low and may not drive real change.
- Targets can lead to a focus on numbers rather than people.
- Targets are not a "magic bullet" and need to be implemented in conjunction with supporting mechanisms, policies, procedures and be supported by an inclusive culture to enable their success.
- A lack of this supporting infrastructure can result in "failure fatigue" if the target is repeatedly not achieved.

We acknowledge that effective implementation of employment targets relies on robust data collection methods. Australian Disability Network has created a resource to provide guidance to organisations on the effective management of data collection.

Australian Disability Network's surveys and consultation with its members revealed organisations that support targets, identify them as an effective catalyst for change, enabling them to build momentum and galvanise support to increase inclusion and diversity.

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4   Transcript Day 1 - Public hearing 19, Virtual (royalcommission.gov.au)
5   Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage | Accenture

What targets really mean

Many organisations measure and monitor disability employment within their organisations and set recruitment and employment goals without labelling them as "employment targets".

This reluctance to identify objectives as targets suggests a fear about getting disability employment wrong.

Disability employment advocate Randy Lewis encourages employers to:

"Keep your fear in check. The biggest impediment to hiring people with disability is fear." [6]

While there is some ambivalence towards the concept of targets and reluctance from some organisations to identify their actions as target setting, it is worth considering what targets actually represent: **people and impact.**

Targets inherently relate to tangible numbers and measures, but more significantly, they translate to improved outcomes for people.

For people with disability that for decades have been excluded from employment opportunities, targets equate to positive social impact. Having access to meaningful employment means being able to build financial independence, security, social networks and can result in a greatly improved quality of life.

Organisations that openly promote and implement realistic targets do not see them as something to be feared but rather an opportunity to send a strong signal to employees, customers and the community that they are committed to increasing representation of employees with disability in their workforce and that this is a challenge that they are taking seriously.

People with disability told the Royal Commission during Public Hearing 9, of their strong, desire to obtain work and to flourish in employment. They emphasised the personal fulfilment to be gained from paid employment and their satisfaction of contributing to the Australian economy. [7]

Why targets and not quotas?

When considering strategies to increase disability employment, it is important to understand the difference between targets and quotas. The difference can be defined as follows:

Targets

- Targets are specific, measurable objectives or goals, which an organisation can set at its own discretion, to be achieved within a nominated timeframe.
- Targets are voluntary and consequences for not meeting the target are determined by the organisation.
- Targets can be implemented across the entire organisation or may relate to a specific business unit or division only. For example, a target may be set to increase disability representation across the whole organisation, or a target may be set at the recruitment stage only.
- Targets can be flexible and customised to an organisation's strategic goals and the environment it is operating in and can be adjusted depending on internal and external factors and changing business and economic conditions.
- Targets may be represented by a percentage or by a number. For example, an organisation may aim for a target of 7% of their workforce to be people with disability or they may choose to set a target of 1,500 employees to be people with disability.

Quotas

- Quotas are mandated outcomes, which dictate that workplaces allocate a specific quantity of their available positions to a particular cohort of candidates (women for example). They are usually set by an external body such as the government, with the authority and ability to enforce them and potentially penalise organisations for not meeting them.
- Quotas are generally not used in Australia in an employment context. However, there are several countries that set disability employment quotas to address discrimination and disadvantage and ensure their workforces are representative of the communities they serve. (See *Current state: What is happening internationally*.)

Australian Disability Network supports the setting of **targets** rather than quotas. While quotas can be effective and can work relatively quickly, they can be associated with tokenism and the belief that appointments are not made based on merit but to meet numbers and "tick a box". Such an approach can potentially disadvantage people with disability, increasing discrimination and negative assumptions.

Publicly published targets help Medibank to exceed goals.

Medibank sets publicly declared targets for the employment of people with disability with the goal of increasing the target year-on-year. They exceeded their FY2023 target of 6.5% and are aiming to exceed their current level of 6.7% to reach 7% by FY2024. Medibank tracks its progress through an anonymous engagement survey which allows employees to identify as having disability and the results are published in its Annual Report, in its Sustainability Report and its Access and Inclusion Plan. The organisation has found that setting targets provides a tangible objective for their accessibility and inclusion work and is critical to ensuring disability employment is front of mind, particularly among its leadership team.

6   Lewis, R. No Greatness Without Goodness. Lion Books, Oxford, 2014.
7   Transcript Day 1 - Public Hearing 19, Virtual (royalcommission.gov.au)

# The current state of disability employment targets

What is happening in Australia?

Australian Disability Network's research and a survey of our network of member organisations in late 2022, shows a significant variation in employers' views towards the use of employment targets and how they should be implemented and reported.

The employer survey revealed that of 98 responses received across public, private and NFP sectors, **68% of members currently do not have disability employment targets.**

Of the 32% of members that set targets:

21% had targets published both internally and externally (90% public sector). 11% had targets published internally only (45% public sector, 45% private sector).

98 responses received across public, private and NFP sectors

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32%
set targets

Of the 32% of members that set targets:

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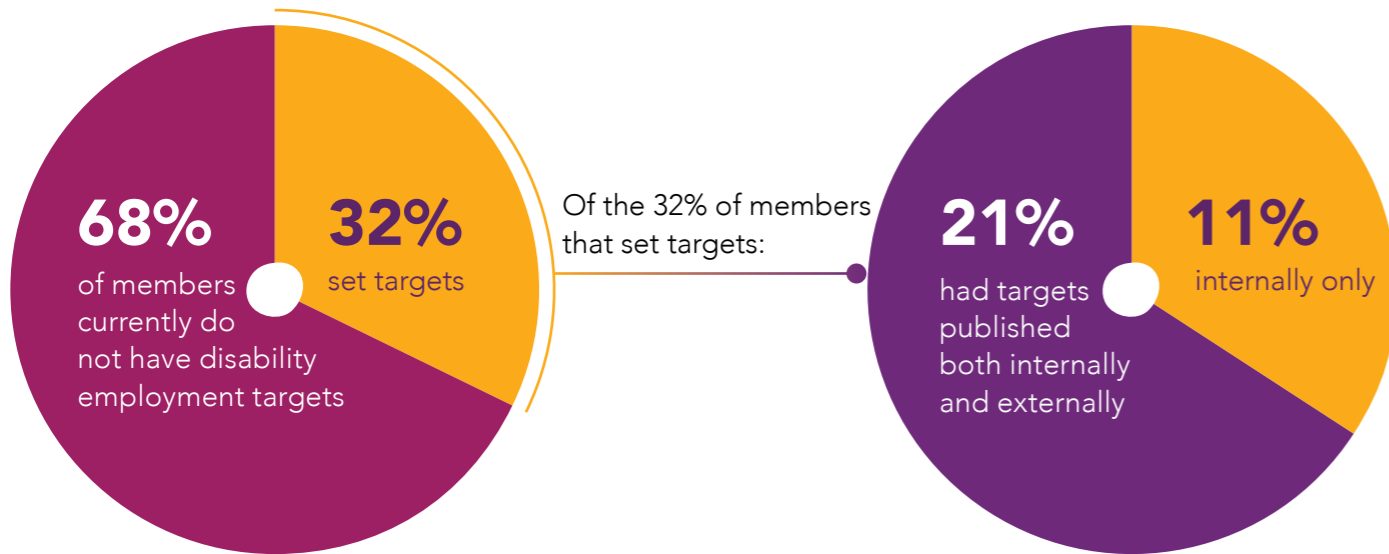
Not surprisingly, the Australian Government has implemented targets both nationally and across different jurisdictions for the employment of people with disability, see below.

Australian Public Service Commission

7% by 2025

New South Wales Public Service Commission

5.6% by 2027

Queensland Public Sector Commission

12% by 2026

Victorian Public Sector Commission

12% by 2025

Western Australian Public Sector Commission

5% by 2025

NB. States and territories not shown do not have published targets.

Case Studies: How Australian organisations are utilising targets

A psychologically safe environment saw an increase in the number of AGL employees sharing their disability status

AGL established a Disability Working Group (AGL Ability) in 2021 to create and foster a safe and supportive workplace for employees with disability. AGL Ability has four primary areas of focus, including facilitating an improved capacity to employ, develop and retain people with disability. AGL's first Disability Action Plan (**DAP**) was developed in 2021 to address these four primary focus areas. AGL is committed to increasing the number of people with disability in its workforce and the activities identified in its DAP clearly further this goal. AGL's FY23-FY24 DAP states that AGL is "committed to employing and supporting people with disability within our workplace and aim to increase our representation of people with disability at AGL by the end of FY24".

Since 2021, the number of people in AGL's workforce identifying with disability has increased from 2% to 9%. This can be attributed to having more open discussions about disability, ensuring people with disability feel safe to share their disability status, encouraging more people with disability to apply for jobs, updating its DAP and providing education and training to the organisation. AGL tracks its progress through an anonymous biennial diversity survey which asks employees if they live with disability. In addition, online systems are being updated to enable employees to add information about workplace adjustments to their employee profiles.

"Our commitment to increase the representation of people living with disability in our workforce and communicating this commitment throughout AGL, provides clear direction of what we're trying to achieve. We can also measure our efforts through the implementation of disability inclusion initiatives." **Melinda Hunter**, Executive Sponsor of AGL Ability

Australian Public Service Commission creates inclusive culture through targets

In 2019, the then Government announced a target of 7% Australian Public Service (APS) for employees with disability by 2025. Since the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) launched the Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25 (Strategy) in 2020, the proportion of people with disability in the APS has increased by 0.5%. As at June 2023, 5.1% of the APS workforce identified as having disability according to data collected in agency HR systems. The Strategy includes actions to not only attract, recruit and retain more people with disability into the APS, but also to ensure accessible and inclusive workplace cultures.

The decision to introduce a target supported the need for a stronger focus on employment outcomes for people with disability. The Strategy calls for "sector-wide and agency-specific targets for proportions of staff with disability recruited and retained including performance against these targets and improved annual reporting". Collectively, the APS is implementing a range of initiatives to achieve its goal including targeted recruitment, improved support for career development, workplace adjustments, disability confidence training, the provision of disability contact officers, awareness campaigns and ensuring staff feel safe to identify. The APSC and Agencies collect and monitor disability information through engagement surveys and employee profiles.

"Setting targets is not just about the number, it is about storytelling. It is about creating an inclusive culture and changing recruitment practices that respect everyone's needs and abilities." APS leader in diversity and inclusion.

Life Without Barriers sets ambitious targets to boost disability employment

Community services organisation Life Without Barriers set incremental targets for new and existing employees in their 2019-2022 Access Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP).

The target for new employees with disability increased from 8% in 2020 to 10% in 2021 and 12% in 2022.

The target for existing employees with disability increased from 4.5% in 2020 to 7.5% in 2021 and 9% in 2022.

The 2022-2025 AIEP has a target of 15% of the total number of employees, across all levels of the organisation, to be people with disability. Progress toward these targets is measured and reported regularly to enable continuous improvement. Both AIEPs, including targets, were made publicly available.

Ventia increases disability representation by 500%

Ventia, an infrastructure services provider based in Australia and New Zealand set ambitious targets around employing people with disability. As a large service provider to government, Ventia responded to the requirement for government contractors to choose their own employment targets. The broad aim was to reflect the representation of people with disability in the community of around 17%. Their commitment and effort saw disability representation increase by 500% in 12 months[8].

> Commitment and effort from Ventia saw disability representation in their business increase by 500% in 12 months.

8   How this organisation increased disability representation by 500% in 12 months - www.hrmonline.com.au

What is happening internationally?

Many G20 countries have government mandated quotas for disability employment. While Australian Disability Network endorses targets rather than quotas, the adoption of quotas by many countries suggests that various governments believe quotas can effectively drive change.

G20 Countries with compulsory employment **quotas** for people with disability.

1	Argentina	✓	11	Japan	✓
2	Australia	✗	12	Mexico	✗
3	Brazil	✓	13	Russia	✓
4	Canada	✗	14	Saudi Arabia	✓
5	China	✓	15	South Africa	✗
6	France	✓	16	South Korea	✓
7	Germany	✓	17	Turkey	✓
8	India	✓	18	United Kingdom	✗
9	Indonesia	✓	19	United States	✗
10	Italy	✓	20	European Union	✗

Source: ILO – International Labour Organisation, 2018 wcms_646041.pdf (ilo.org)

International Case Study: France

France has a quota system that requires private and public employers with more than 20 employees to hire at least 6% of people with disability. Failure to meet this quota results in a penalty payment to a national fund established to support the employment of people with disability. Despite the aim to encourage organisations, regardless of the size of their workforce, to adopt inclusive recruitment processes, compliance with the quota system has its challenges. The system has been criticised as being ineffective, inefficient, and unfair and has not been successful in increasing the employment rate of people with disability.

Country	Examples of targets and quotas
Canada	Canada has a target to increase the representation of people with disability in the federal public service to 5.6% by 2023.
France	Mandated quota: Employers in France with at least 20 employees must have employees with disabilities account for 6% of their total workforce. This includes full and part-time employees, trainees and temporary workers. Companies that don't meet the annual quota will have to implement a collective bargaining agreement that favours workers with disability or pay into a government fund to support their employment.
Germany	Mandated quota: Germany has a disability employment quota of 5%, for employers with more than 20 employees. If this quota is not met, employers must pay a compensatory levy. According to the latest data from 2019, only 4.6% of the workforce in Germany were persons with disability.
Japan	Mandated quota: Japan has a statutory employment rate for people with disability that is reviewed every five years. In 2021, it was set at 2.3% for companies with over 44 employees.
South Africa	South Africa has an Employment Equity target of 2% of the workforce in the public and private sectors comprising people with disability.
UK	In 2017, the UK government set a goal to see 1 million more people with disability in work by 2027. In the first two years, the number of people with disability in work increased by 404,000. The target was exceeded by May 2022, with 1.3 million more people with disability in employment, five years ahead of schedule.
US	In 2017, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued a rule requiring each federal government agency to adopt the goal of having 12% of its workforce be people with disabilities. These goals apply at both higher and lower salary levels.

International Case Study: Walgreens

Randy Lewis was Senior Vice-President of Logistics at Walgreens, a Fortune 50 Company for 17 years, prior to his retirement in 2013. During his time there he implemented a disability employment program in the company's distribution centres to employ significant numbers of people with disability on an equal basis to other employees. Randy Lewis endorses target setting.

"A goal let's people know what success looks like, and monitoring progress in a timely fashion ensures that bumps don't become roadblocks. Develop a key performance indicator (e.g., hire a certain percent of new employees with disabilities by a target date) that is easy to understand and communicates overall progress…Conspicuously refer to progress so others know it's important to you." [9]

To learn more about the disability employment initiative undertaken at Walgreens go to:

No Greatness Without Goodness - YouTube

"Develop a key performance indicator that is easy to understand and communicates overall progress."

Randy Lewis, former SVP, Walgreens

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[9]   Lewis, R No Greatness Without Goodness. Lion Books, Oxford, 2014.

Barriers and enablers to setting and achieving disability employment targets

Despite good intentions and an appetite to increase disability representation in the workforce, some organisations are reluctant to set targets or align their objectives with tangible targeted outcomes.

Barriers

Some of the barriers to target setting noted by organisations include:

- A belief that their organisation is "not ready".
- A lack of disability confidence.
- A lack of the appropriate infrastructure, including the technology to effectively capture, monitor and track disability employment data.
- A lack of policies and procedures to be able to implement and support the achievement of targets.

There is also a **reluctance of employees to share disability related information with their employers.** It is important to note there is a significant degree of complexity in collecting disability information and measuring impact, as people may not self-identify as having disability or choose to share this personal information for fear of being discriminated against, worry they will be seen less favourably, uncertainty around why they are being asked, or because they do not see a need to do so.

Capturing workplace adjustments should not be used as the only measure of disability prevalence in the workplace as not all people with disability require workplace adjustments. However, it can aid in understanding the prevalence of disability in the workplace amongst those who require adjustments. It is important to continually offer workplace adjustments to all candidates and employees to promote a psychologically safe environment.

The social model of disability believes that disability arises from the way people with disability interact with the world. Individuals encounter physical barriers, digital barriers and barriers of attitudes and communication. It is these barriers that impact on an individual's ability to equitably participate in society and employers have a positive obligation to offer adjustments and remove societal barriers.

Australian Disability Network endorses target setting however we recognise that setting targets is not a one-size-fits-all process. And targets are not effective if introduced in isolation. Focusing on employment numbers alone can be at the detriment of creating an inclusive and supportive workplace. Targets should be implemented after thorough consideration and based on rigorous analysis of operational and financial performance objectives and baseline employee data. The conversation about targets should encompass commitment to fostering a healthy, psychologically safe workplace culture to enable employees with disability to flourish at work.

Australian Disability Network recommends setting targets appropriate for the organisation and with the appropriate systems in place to support their implementation.

Businesses that are prepared to show leadership, commitment and flexibility can reap great benefits from setting disability employment targets and implementing a disability employment strategy to achieve them.

If employers are genuinely serious about increasing disability employment in their organisations and addressing the disadvantage and marginalisation of people with disability, they need to consider taking affirmative action and conspicuously set targets.

"Organisations need to set their own realistic and achievable targets. However, targets are not a quick fix. Targets should be introduced only after accessible recruitment practices are introduced, and processes to ensure the long-term retention and career progression of people with disability are established. The careful introduction of targets opens the door to equitable employment, an inclusive workplace culture and long-term business benefits."

Corene Strauss, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Disability Network

Enablers

To support organisations to implement disability employment targets, Australian Disability Network has developed the following guides[10].

How to Guide: Capturing disability employment data

Provides guidance on collecting and capturing disability related information and data; what to collect, how to collect and why.

How to Guide: Inclusive Recruitment Practices

Provides guidance on how to attract and hire in an inclusive and accessible manner.

How to Guide: Offering and implementing Workplace Adjustments

Provides guidance on providing workplace adjustments; what they mean and how to implement them. The Guide also includes the findings of our Workplace Adjustments Surveys and the responses from 180 employers and over 390 people who identify as having a disability.

How to Guide: Building a Disability Confident Culture

Provides guidance on how to build a disability confident culture that will support organisations to retain and develop employees with disability.

How and when to introduce targets

Targets should be based on thorough review and analysis of baseline data.

Targets, like well formulated goals, need to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

Targets can be applied in different ways, based on an organisation's objectives and structure. They may be applied as an overarching, whole of organisation target that relates to representation. For example, Medibank set a general disability employment target of 6.5% for FY2023 across their whole organisation. Alternatively, organisations may consider setting targets that apply to particular functions or business units, such as recruitment and retention, retail or administration functions.

Organisations can choose to set targets internally or externally, but reporting on those targets should be non-negotiable.

The following guiding principles should be considered when introducing targets:

- **Be clear:** communicate clearly what the organisation is trying to achieve, whether that is a percentage of the whole workforce, a percentage of new recruits or a target number.

- **Be realistic:** assess what is achievable for the organisation, taking into account potential barriers and any gaps in processes and support mechanisms that may impact the achievement of targets.

- **Develop the target in consultation with people with disability:** organisations should seek and include feedback and involvement of employees with disability when developing their targets.

- **Understand who will be responsible and accountable for the target:** ensure those managers responsible have the authority to initiate activities and influence outcomes. Consider building targets into key performance indicators so that they are prioritised appropriately.

- **Build momentum:** consider short-term, interim goals to support the nominated target. This will enable the organisation to monitor progress effectively and allow for flexibility as well as acknowledging incremental successes and building support.

When to introduce targets

Targets should be introduced after careful consideration of your organisation's disability confidence and analysis of the disability access and inclusion initiatives undertaken by your organisation.

Regular measurement and reporting are proven to strengthen focus, inform decision-making to improve results and drive action. Organisations can measure and assess their accessibility and inclusion by using Australian Disability Network's world-class Access & Inclusion Index.

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10   Guides available November 2023

Five steps to get you started

1. Determine who will set the target

- This may be a dedicated project team or a specific team or individual with responsibilities for recruitment and diversity and inclusion. Depending on the size of your organisation, the target project team may include senior leader representation / executive sponsorship, a Diversity and Inclusion practitioner, a representative from Talent Acquisition/ Human Resources/ a representative from Disability Employee Network/ Employee Resource Group/ employees with disability.

- While having an individual or team will help to determine the target, you need to determine who will champion the target. Consider senior leaders and sponsors who will passionately support the initiative and have the influencing power to drive buy-in from the team.

2. Define the cohort that the target will apply to

- Determine whether you are aiming for an increase in disability representation (e.g., people with disability and / or carers) at different employment levels (e.g., graduates, new recruits, management) or across the whole organisation.

- Decide whether the target will be applied to specific business units and what the implications may be for different divisions within the organisation. For example, Australia Post sets goals or targets for each talent segment based on historical and predicated forecast hiring volumes, rather than setting a broad whole-of-enterprise target. This strategy acknowledges that in a large organisation such as Australia Post – which employs more than 35,000 people in widely diverse roles - the performance, growth and workforce requirements of each talent segment varies significantly.

3. Undertake an analysis of the organisation's current state and proposed future state

- Determine the current state of disability representation within the organisation.

"People say, if you're not measuring it, it's not getting done. So, I think that organisations, before they look to see what they can do, need to see what they're currently doing. Data is king, so have a look at your profile."

Simon Darcy, Professor in Management at the University of Technology Business School[11]

- Start by asking some questions of your organisation;
  › *Does your organisation already have a framework in place for affirmative recruitment measures that can be replicated? (i.e. for other diversity cohorts such as women, First Nations employees.)*
  › *Does your organisation capture data on the number of employees with disability in the organisation?*
  › *How is your organisation capturing disability information?*
  › *How many people with disability do you currently employ?*
  › *Are most of your employees with a disability in entry level positions? Are they receiving fair opportunities for growth?*
  › *What is the retention rate of your employees with disability?*

  › *Is there pay parity between staff members in the same position?*

- If disability data is captured and you can answer these questions, you have a baseline to work from and the project team can determine what is a realistic and achievable target. Factors to take into account are the size of the organisation, rates of attrition, recruitment projections, business forecasts, and any assumptions about the future direction of the organisation and the economic or political climate that may impact business.

- If disability data is not captured, you need to implement a mechanism to collect this data, and a way to do so ethically and safely.

- Identify any initiatives that have been successfully implemented in the organisation to increase disability employment that can be leveraged in other areas.

- Identify any barriers to disability employment in the organisation which may include systems, technology, lack of accessible recruitment processes, lack of awareness and training for teams, lack of flexibility. Assess how these barriers may be addressed and what actions need to be taken to overcome these barriers.

- Identify what safeguards are in place or need to be implemented to ensure employees with disability are supported and retained, once employed.

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11   https://employmenthero.com/blog/how-to-support-people-with-disabilities-in-the-workplace/

4. Establish a realistic timeframe to achieve the target

- It is recommended that adequate time is allocated to achieve the target. Many organisations set a target for a three-to-five-year period, reviewed annually. This recognises that time is required for change to have an impact.

- Short term targets may mean that processes and systems are overlooked and can jeopardise the successful achievement of the target.

- While a longer-term approach is appropriate, commitment must be made to maintain focus and regularly monitor and report on the progress to ensure that the target is not overlooked. For example, in 2018 the Victorian Public Sector Commission set an initial disability employment target of 6% by 2020 and a secondary target of 12% by 2025 to demonstrate commitment and to help drive longer term positive change.

5. Ownership and accountabilities

- Clarify who will be responsible for the initiatives that will drive the achievement of the target and who is accountable for the achievement of the target.

- Building the target ownership into the key performance indicators of relevant personnel, responsible for the initiatives, will increase the chances of success.

- Ensure systems are in place to measure, monitor and report on activities and progress towards the target and be sure to share key learnings and successes along the way.

Other factors to consider

To publish or not to publish:

- Just as the setting of disability employment targets is at the discretion of an organisation, so too is the decision whether to publish the targets or not.
- Publishing progress towards achieving targets both internally and externally promotes recognition and inclusion of people with disability which can address attitudinal biases and discrimination.
- Representation is important and ensuring this representation is visible, communicated and celebrated is instrumental in breaking the cycle of invisibility relating to people with disability.
- Publishing targets builds accountability and momentum.

Australian Disability Network advocates for the public setting of targets.

Checklist: What to consider before you start

Collecting, monitoring and reporting

☐ Does your organisation have measurement and reporting systems in place to monitor progress and evaluate impact?

☐ Are you able to collect disability information in a way that is safe, secure and protects an individual's privacy?

Policies and procedures

☐ Does your organisation have the appropriate policies and processes in place to support employees with disability?

☐ Does your organisation ask about workplace adjustments in the recruitment, induction, onboarding and career development stages of employment?

☐ Do you have inclusive and accessible recruitment practices?

Organisational Culture

☐ Is your organisation committed to building a disability confident workplace culture?

"The business case for hiring people with disability is clear but we are still not seeing enough progress towards closing the employment gap for people with disability. Implementing targets are a step in the right direction. Employers that are prepared to show leadership, flexibility and innovation in their recruitment practices will reap the benefits of a skilled, adaptable and resilient workforce and an improved workplace culture."

Peter Wilson AM, Chairman, Australian Disability Network

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