

Institute for  
Public Policy  
and Governance



# How local governments can increase the social and economic participation of people with disability

Boost local employment



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## Overview

In many communities, local governments are some of the largest, if not the largest, local employers and this provides opportunities to recruit and train people with disability. Many local governments have started to proactively recruit people with disability and develop accessible recruitment practices, create suitable workplaces and build organisational cultures which support all types of people.

Some local governments also assist local businesses to train and employ people with disability in order to further increase local social and economic participation. In addition, a few local governments are developing plans to create local employment in the disability sector to support the implementation of the NDIS.

This section provides information about how local governments recruit and retain people with disability and how they support other organisations to do this.

## Employ people with disability

The national survey showed that most local governments see that they have a clear role to employ people with disability but less than a third actually do. Many local governments feel there are significant barriers to employing people with disability such as:

- Low vacancy rates
- Competing pressures to employ other disadvantaged groups
- Unconscious bias in recruitment processes
- Risk aversion around occupational health and safety (especially in outdoor work)
- Perception that employing people with disability is too difficult
- Lack of knowledge about how to modify workplaces (both in outdoor and indoor work).



## CITY OF WHITTLESEA, VICTORIA – EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (Urban Regional)

Council has a strong commitment to social and economic participation but recognised the need to employ more people with disability and reflected this as action in its current Disability Action Plan.

Council established an employment program for a young person with cerebral palsy. The trainee spent time in several areas of Council to identify the most mutually suitable role for ongoing employment. The Access Team supported staff to increase their awareness of cerebral palsy and make the necessary workplace modifications to support this employee.

The trainee is now employed permanently in the Records Management Team and is reportedly one of the most productive staff members. Buoyed by this, Council is now investigating expanding this program in its new Disability Action Plan.

See also: [Creating employment opportunities for people with a disability](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/ageing-disability/disability/relateddocuments/Creating%20employment%20opportunities%20for%20people%20with%20a%20disability.doc) ([www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/ageing-disability/disability/relateddocuments/Creating employment opportunities for people with a disability.doc](http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/ageing-disability/disability/relateddocuments/Creating employment opportunities for people with a disability.doc))



## WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – TARGETED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES (Urban Regional)

Council embraces workforce diversity as a point of strength and is committed to creating a culture that fosters fair and inclusive behaviours, and promotes a workplace that reflects the diversity of the community. These principles are applied to all their recruitment strategies and programs.

The Learning Pathways program specifically engages schools and community service providers to create opportunities to attract and recruit people with diverse backgrounds, including people with disability. Each year this has resulted in numerous placements beyond targeted opportunities.



## BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – SETTING WORKFORCE TARGETS (Capital City)

Council is the largest local government in Australia and with more than 8,000 employees is one of the largest employers in South-East Queensland.

Council has a strong commitment to workforce diversity and to becoming a disability-aware organisation. Its Access and Inclusion Plan has a disability workforce target of 10% to reflect a similar percentage in the community. The Access and Inclusion Team actively support areas of Council to create a workplace environment which is supportive of people with disability, such as providing advice to other divisions on workplace modifications and how to work productively with colleagues with disability.

To help meet the 10% target, Council has partnered with WorkForce Australia, Vision Australia and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service to assist with the recruitment of employees with disability. Council also advertises internal Band 2-4 roles to applicants with disability and shortlists at least one candidate with disability if the selection criteria are met. Council also has a Reasonable Adjustments Policy which outlines processes for modifying workplaces to accommodate specific access requirements.

Council has also formed partnerships with South-East Queensland universities to offer work experience placements for students with disability as part

of their degrees. The partnerships provide students with valuable work experience and potential pathways to future employment in Council. Council often takes on the students as full-time employees at the end of their degrees.

The Council disability workforce target is now at 6.5%, and with changes in recruitment policies this is expected to improve over time.



## WUJAL WUJAL ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – COMMITTING AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPLOY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (Rural and Remote)

Wujal Wujal has high levels of unemployment and approximately 15% of the community has disability. Council is overwhelmingly the largest local employer and has committed to progressive targets to ensure that its workforce is representative of the community. This includes a 5% initial target for the number of employees with disability employed, with incremental annual increases towards 15%.

To achieve this, Council has assessed the capability requirements of current roles against the capabilities of people with disability in the community to

identify opportunities for employment. This has led to proactively targeting community members with disability for vacant roles. For example, Council targeted a community member with physical disability to fill the vacant community radio presenter position. Council has also committed to diversifying its roles to create new opportunities for people with disability and recently appointed a number of community Elders, including some with disability, as cultural mentors for staff.

## Support local businesses to employ people with disability

Local businesses are often unsure of how to modify their workplaces for people with disability and are also unaware of available support to make their workplaces more accessible. For example, businesses with more than 100 employees can access the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. NDCO Officers help people with disability access training and subsequent employment at no cost to the employer.

In addition, there are opportunities for more local governments to directly support local businesses and community organisations to employ people with disability to increase their economic participation in the local community.



### CITY OF PLAYFORD, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – POSITIVE FUTURES EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING EXPO (Urban Fringe)

The City is growing but has both a high unemployment rate and a higher than average proportion of residents with disabilities and mental health issues. The City delivers an annual Positive Futures Employment, Education and Training Expo to provide information to individuals, families and members of the community about education, training services and resources for people with a mental health issue or disability. The event supports people with disability to:

- Understand career pathways and hear the stories of others
- Discover their strengths and weaknesses
- Connect with local employers, disability employment services and other NGOs to find training and employment opportunities

See: Positive Futures ([www.playford.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1839](http://www.playford.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1839))



## PENRITH CITY COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – NEPEAN JOBS FOR ALL PROJECT (Urban Fringe)

Council formed a partnership with the neighbouring Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury City Councils to collaborate with the Australian Network on Disability, the New South Wales and local Business Chambers, the Penrith CBD Corporation and Disability Employment Service providers. The aim is to deliver a community awareness and capacity building initiative with large employers and small business in the Nepean local area.

The Nepean Jobs For All project aims to promote the employment of people with disability to local business leaders and employers. Businesses will be invited to participate in the Jobs For All network providing access to information, training and resources both online and in events which aim to inspire, persuade and engage participants. Practical ongoing mentoring support and professional networking will be provided throughout the duration of the project.

A communications and marketing strategy will be rolled-out to support the establishment of the Nepean Jobs For All network which will provide local businesses with the resources, policies and practices to support employees with disability.

## Support employment in the disability sector

The implementation of the NDIS may potentially contribute to local or regional economic development through either the creation of employment opportunities in the disability sector or the increase of people with disability, their families and carers accessing local businesses.

Although most local governments do not intend to register as NDIS service providers, they can support the establishment of local disability services.



## CITY OF PLAYFORD, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – CAPITALISING ON THE NDIS (Urban Fringe)

The City of Playford is currently regenerating the local economy following a significant decline in the manufacturing industry as Holden prepares to cease manufacturing cars in Australia; the City has an ambitious plan to establish the city centre as Greater Adelaide's second CBD. Council sees the NDIS as central to the economic regeneration of the city.

The NDIS is expected to create more than 6,000 jobs in South Australia, with up to 1,700 of these in the Northern Region of Adelaide. The NDIS will be implemented in Northern Adelaide in July 2017 and Council sees this as an opportunity to grow its own workforce. To enable this, Council has registered as an NDIS provider, one of the few local

governments in Australia to do so.

Council recently endorsed the NDIS part of their economic revitalisation strategy (although the specific actions have not been finalised), recognising the potential the NDIS presents for local economic growth.

built an accessible sea pool, which includes a ramp and portable hoist.

Council has also successfully worked with several hotels to increase the number of accessible rooms available by widening doors and installing fully accessible bathrooms.

Those local governments who deliver more inclusive, accessible communities also activate local and regional economic opportunities outside the disability sector, such as through tourism.



### DISTRICT COUNCIL OF THE COPPER COAST, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – ACCESSIBLE TOURISM (Rural and Remote)

Two of the district's main towns are located on the coast, and the area attracts a significant number of tourists per year, many of whom are retirees with various mobility issues. Tourism is a key and growing industry in the district and delivers much-needed revenue to local economy.

Council has implemented several initiatives to increase access for people with disability, including the provision of beach wheelchairs at both ends of the two main beaches, and has



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