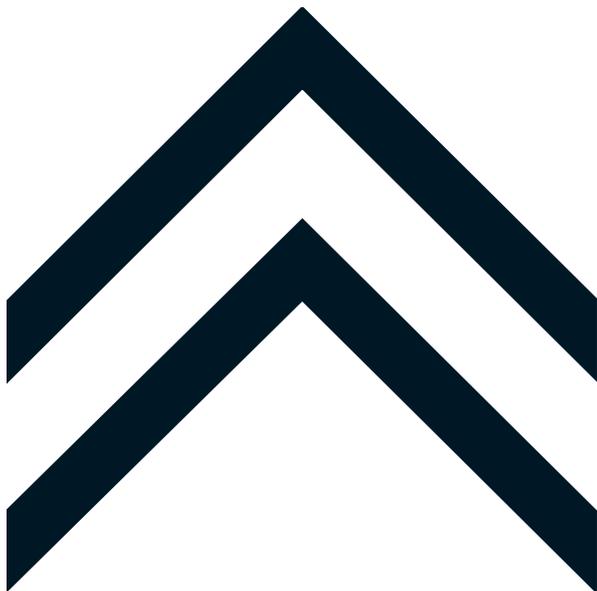
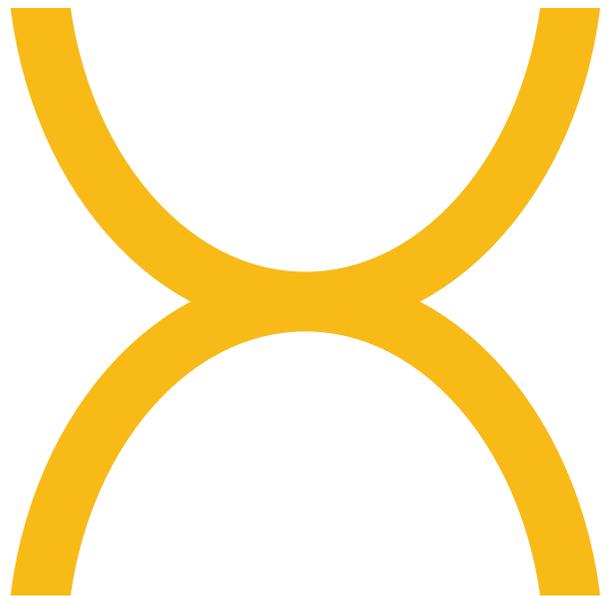


# Moving from Good Intent to Action

Exploring the challenges faced by employers in recruiting and integrating people with disability into their workforce.





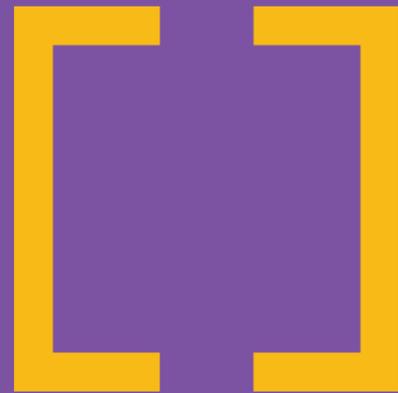
**Diversity makes for a stronger, more capable organisation. If you hire everybody from the same background and life experience, you're going to get the same ideas.**

Employer in the utilities industry



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# 1. Introduction

Employers in 2021 are actively seeking to be more equitable in their employment of people from various minority groups in our society. One of these groups is people living with disability, mental health conditions and long-term injury and illness. This demographic accounts for 5% of Western Australia's working age population<sup>1</sup>.

The efforts of employers have resulted in growing representation of many minority groups in the Australian workforce. Disability inclusion, however, continues to lag. In some cases, this may be the result of employers focusing on other groups. In other cases, it is hampered by real or perceived limitations, specific to disability.

With long-term meaningful employment for people with disability remaining limited, a staggering 46.6% of working age Australians living with disability are not active in the labour force, compared with only 15.9% of working age Australians without disability<sup>2</sup>.

The findings within this report highlight that employers are facing challenges at all stages of the employment process.

By providing clear insights we aim to empower both employers and those working with them.

This way, we can assist more employers to create diverse workplaces that truly represent the communities they operate within. In turn, we hope that they can begin to reap the benefits that truly diverse workforces bring.

**46.6%**  
of working age  
Australians living with  
disability **are not active  
in the labour force,**  
compared with only  
**15.9%** of working age  
Australians without  
disability.

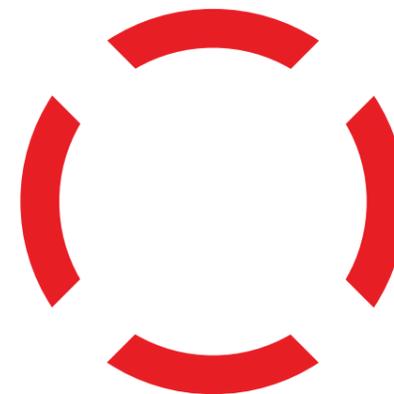
<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Disability, Ageing and Carers Data 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with disability in Australia 2020: in brief.

# 2. Key findings

Through this research, a range of findings were uncovered that provided context about the challenges employers face when employing people with disability.

Challenges provide opportunities, and when addressed, will increase the representation and retention of people with disability in our workforce.



## The Situation

# Employers face challenges at all stages of the employment process.

## The Challenges (key findings)

### Challenge #1 – Getting started

Limited understanding and misperception is hindering employers.

- 1.1 Misperceptions about employees with disability exist and affect all stages and considerations throughout the employment process.
- 1.2 Many people with disabilities hesitate to disclose their condition to employers. This is driven by the valid fear of losing their job.
- 1.3 Mental health conditions are affecting more Australians. Stigma and negative perceptions cause many to hide their mental health condition.

### Challenge #2 – Successfully employing

Barriers exist that prevent employers from taking action.

- 2.1 Proactive recruitment of people with disability is lacking and processes are often inequitable and compromised by being merit-based.
- 2.2 Recruitment is hampered by the employers' concerns relating to the support people with disability may require.
- 2.3 The needs and expectations of people with disability are reasonable and often similar to other employees.
- 2.4 Leaders drive change when it comes to disability employment but competing priorities and lack of knowledge is often holding them back.

### Challenge #3 – Retaining employees

Employers aren't sure how to support employees after they are employed.

- 3.1 Employers are often unaware that support is available to them. For those who are aware, limited time and confusion are likely driving disengagement with support providers.
- 3.2 Employers want to get it right. They want cultural and practical support for their employees and to build organisational knowledge and capability. Disability Employment Service (DES) providers can offer this support.

## The Opportunities

## The Outcome

# Higher employment and retention rates of people with disability, benefits both employees and employers.

Improve understanding and confidently take action.

Develop skills and knowledge to ensure actions taken are successful.

Access DES provider support to successfully integrate employees with long-term results.





## 3. Executive summary

**2021 marks the 37<sup>th</sup> year that Edge Employment Solutions has been successfully connecting Western Australian employers with people with disability, mental health conditions and long-term injury or illness.**

We have secured over 8,000 jobs for people with disability and simultaneously supported them and their employers, to achieve meaningful and successful long-term employment outcomes.

However, throughout this time, we have witnessed the employers we work with face a number of challenges. These limit opportunities, and see many businesses miss out on the tangible benefits that diverse workforces can bring. Ultimately, they are limiting the participation rate of people with disability in the workforce.

The Australian business community as a whole has made great strides in diversity and inclusion through targeted initiatives focused on gender, age, sexual orientation and identity. This tells us that employers typically have good intentions and a desire to do more.

We wanted to know what was needed to help employers move from good intention to action with regard to the employment of people with disability, allowing them to become part of this evolving success story.

With the support of The Department of Communities via an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant, Edge commissioned independent market research consultancy, CoreData, to undertake research into these issues on our behalf.

We focused on understanding the experiences, perceptions and needs of both employers and people with disability when it comes to job seeking, recruitment and retention of employees.

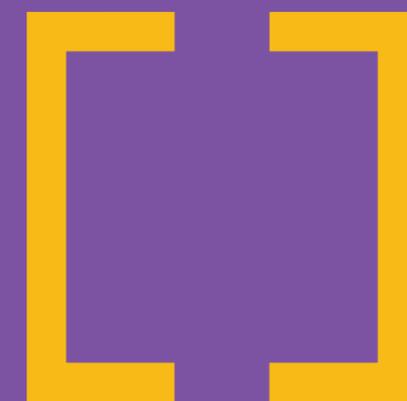
The following report is a summary of our key findings. Of note is the clash between general willingness by employers to include people with disability in their workforces, and a range of misperceptions that prevent good intentions from becoming reality. Coupled with extremely limited awareness of DES providers and the services they offer, we found that employers often felt ill-equipped and under-resourced to recruit and retain people with disability.

For those with disability, poor reactions from employers and co-workers, means they are choosing not to disclose their conditions, either at all, or in their entirety. This means employers are sometimes (but not always) aware if an employee has a specific condition and are therefore unable to provide effective support.

It is our intention, by sharing our research findings we'll help employers gain insight into the reality of working with people with disability, and how they can build and get the most out of a diverse workforce.

This doesn't have to be a solo journey, or a complex, challenging one. DES providers offer a range of ongoing services beyond recruitment, to ensure diversity and inclusion of people with disability is an organisational success story.

Contributing to the conversation and growing the body of research about disability employment, Edge continues its quest to better educate employers about the supports available to them, to help them create their own disability inclusion success story.



## 4. Methodology

The initial qualitative phase of research captured insights from:

- employers;
- referrers of people with disability, mental health conditions and long-term injury or illness to DES providers; and
- current and recent job seekers with disability, mental health conditions and long-term injury or illness.

We spoke to

- 41 employers and employer representatives over 40 in-depth interviews;
- two referrers; and
- 10 people with disability.

Quantitative research was then conducted to test and validate the key qualitative themes uncovered.

This was achieved through an online survey which captured responses from 130 employers and 200 people with disability, mental health conditions and long-term injury or illness. The large majority of people with disability were current or former Edge clients.

The qualitative phase was conducted through fieldwork undertaken between the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The quantitative phase was conducted between the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Edge has taken a localised approach to sourcing insights, relevant to the markets in which it operates. All interviewees and survey participants were living or working within Western Australia at the time the research was conducted.



//

I would love us to have more people with disability... because we [would] have a good reflection of the make-up of the community that we are there to serve and certainly everyone comes with their strengths. **Someone with disability might be able to do or think in a way that others don't.**

Employer in the public sector

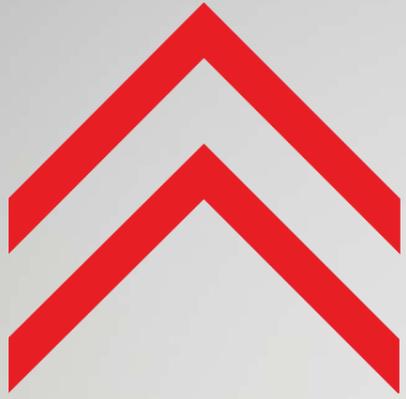
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## 5. Disability employment – the challenges for employers



# Challenge #1 – Getting started

Limited understanding and misperception is hindering employers.



**KEY FINDING 1.1**

**Misperceptions about employees with disability exist and affect all stages and considerations throughout the employment process.**

When the term 'disability' is used, employers' dominant associations are with physical (90.9%) or intellectual (61.0%) conditions. Vision impairment comes in third (43.9%)\*.

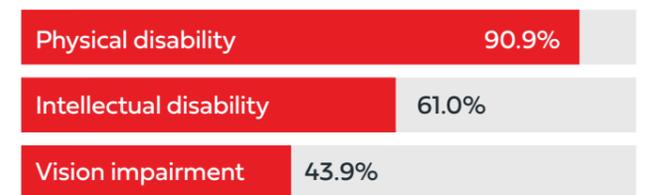
The term 'disability' defines a vast spectrum of conditions that have varying impacts on the people living with them. It includes not only those mentioned above, but everything from hearing and speech impairments to conditions such as arthritis, and those that are neurological or mental health related.

Although some disabilities are visible to others, many are not. As a result, these conditions are rarely front of mind for employers. The resulting narrow range of associations among employers highlights the limited understanding many have of the breadth of conditions among people with disability.

Many employers already have people with disability in their workforces, without even realising. This reinforces the challenges and limitations that see so many people with disability stranded in underemployment or unemployment.

# 90.9%

**of employers' dominant associations are with physical disability, followed by intellectual conditions (61.0%).**



\* Figures shown represent the sum of first, second and third ranked unprompted associations provided by employers.

## Challenge #1 – Getting started

### KEY FINDING 1.2

**Many people with disabilities hesitate to disclose their condition to employers. This is driven by the valid fear of losing their job.**

When we spoke to people with disability, many told us they chose not to disclose their disability and concerningly, more than one in five (21.7%) told us they only disclosed when directly asked by an employer, or when their circumstances forced them to do so.

In fact, many employers are aware of non-disclosure:

**41.5%** say they have employees with disabilities in their organisation who have not disclosed.

**23.8%** suspect they might.

Fear is the root cause of non-disclosure. People with disability who don't always disclose are fearful of the consequences, resorting to hiding their condition, at least until they feel their job is secure.

**63.6%** fear they won't be considered for roles if their condition is known to an employer.

**60.9%** are afraid they will be perceived as less capable or hard-working.

**46.4%** think their employer will not offer them the same opportunities as their co-workers.

Almost one in three people (31.8%) do not disclose because they fear doing so would cost them their job.



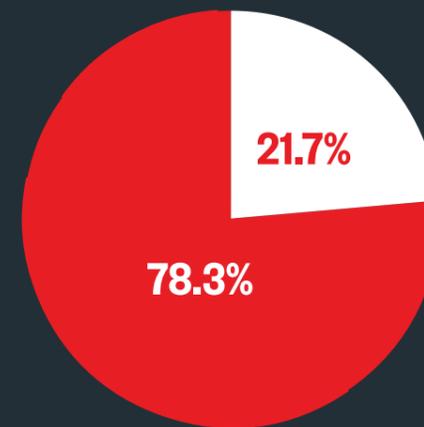
“  
**No, I don't disclose it just because I know straight away, as soon as someone hears 'back injury' and you're applying for a position that includes physical labour, that'll be the end of the interview.**  
 ”

(39 year old, construction worker)

## At a glance

# 2 in 5

employers believe they have employees in their organisation who have not disclosed their disability.



# 21.7%

of people with disability told us they only disclosed when directly asked by an employer, or when circumstances forced them to do so.

## Challenge #1 – Getting started

These fears are not without basis. People with disability are more likely to have experienced discrimination than those without. Nearly one in 10 have experienced disability-specific discrimination<sup>1</sup>. Looking at disclosure in the context of employment, we found:

**63.1%** of people with disability have experienced negative outcomes;

**30.6%** have had job applications rejected because of their disability; and

**21.7%** were excluded, treated differently, or considered less capable or hard-working.

**One in 10 people with disability reported losing their job following disclosure.**

There are misperceptions among employers that are contributing to the fear of disclosure among job seekers. Despite the enormous diversity of people with disability, less than one quarter (23.8%) of employers say all roles in their organisation could be undertaken by a person with disability. For the rest, there is a belief that people with disability are ill-suited to physically taxing (35.4%) and complex (34.3%) roles.

**Increasing disclosure will maximise successful outcomes for both employers and individuals.**

Disclosure is important. Clear, open communication and mutual understanding will maximise success for the person with disability, and allow employers to benefit from the wider range of experience and skills a diverse workforce brings.

**13.5% of employees with disability say they find hiding their disability at work a challenge.**

Disabilities and health conditions are diverse in terms of their impact on individuals and consequently, any limitations they may have and the support they need from employers to work effectively around these differ greatly. Just as diverse are the pool of skills, knowledge and experience among people with disability, who make up one sixth of the Australian population<sup>2</sup>.

Understanding this can help employers onboard people with disability into well-suited roles that meet their needs and abilities.

Education is key to addressing misperceptions many employers hold about disability. Tangible financial and practical supports are crucial to facilitate disclosure, relationship building and truly inclusive policies and processes.

These elements not only demonstrate an organisation's positive attitude towards disability and other health conditions, but also allows people to feel comfortable and confident disclosing their disability.



<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. People with disability in Australia 2019: in brief.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. People with disability in Australia.



### KEY FINDING 1.3

**Mental health conditions are affecting more Australians. Stigma and negative perceptions cause many to hide their mental health condition.**

Of the four million Australians living with disability, one in five have a mental health condition or behavioural disorder, making these among the most prevalent disabilities in our population<sup>3</sup>. Psychological conditions often accompany other disabilities and their prevalence is increasing.

Among Edge clients, the number of people disclosing a mental health condition as a secondary disability surged by 37.1% in the last year alone<sup>4</sup>. This makes the low rate of disclosure by those with psychiatric or psychological conditions particularly concerning (33.3% and 31.4% respectively say they always disclose).

**Mental health conditions are classified as disabilities in their own right<sup>5</sup>, and most employers do consider them as such (66.2%). In fact, when asked about the disclosed disabilities in their workforce, mental health conditions were the most cited type (44.8%).**

However this leaves a considerable number of employers on the fence, or definitively saying they do not consider mental health conditions to be a disability (33.8%).

As a result of this belief, it was unsurprising that a quarter (28.6%) of those employers who indicated they did not employ anyone with a disability, or weren't sure they did, conversely reported having employed one or more people with a mental health and/or nervous or emotional condition.

# 1 in 5

**Australians have a mental health condition or behavioural disorder, making these among the most prevalent disabilities in our population.**

# 37.1%

**more Edge clients, disclosed a mental health condition as a secondary disability in the last year alone.**

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. People with disability in Australia 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Internal client data, mental health disclosure, 2019 vs. 2020 secondary only disclosures.

<sup>5</sup> According to the NDIS, mental health conditions are classified as psychosocial disabilities when they "have a significant impact on their day-to-day life and the person's ability to participate in the community. It also needs to be likely that the person will need support for the rest of their life". See Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. Mental health services in Australia.

## Challenge #1 – Getting started

By their nature, psychological and psychiatric conditions are often less visible than physical and intellectual disabilities that are most commonly front of mind among employers.

This makes the option of hiding and self-managing these conditions at work more feasible. Stigma is a key driver of non-disclosure among people with mental health conditions.

People fear they will be labelled or misjudged and there is a common belief that employers don't really understand the nature of these conditions.

**33.8%** of employers do not readily accept mental health conditions as disabilities.

Education is required to break the cycle of non-disclosure and misunderstanding.

In some ways the issues around mental health and disclosure form a recurring cycle.

Low rates of disclosure, coupled with employer awareness that employees with undisclosed mental health conditions are in their workforce, likely drive misperceptions that these people don't require support. As such, more visible disabilities remain front of mind, and the focus of employers' attention and actions.



“ I think that there’s still some stigma about mental illness related disabilities. People just don’t know how to deal with it. ”

(39 year old, unemployed)

“ They (employers) might not want someone who’s got ADHD or depression or anxiety because they might view us as unreliable. ”

(21 year old, education carer)

The result can therefore be a culture that may not foster a sense of safety and positivity towards employment of people with mental health conditions and disclosure of these conditions among existing employees.

Yet employers show a genuine desire to do the right thing. The most common belief employers have is the need to support people with disability by creating a safe, inclusive, and discrimination-free workplace (24.6%).

With education, initial and ongoing training and mentoring support for the employee and employer, stigmas and misperceptions can be addressed. Therefore, disclosure and inclusion of people with mental health conditions can be improved.

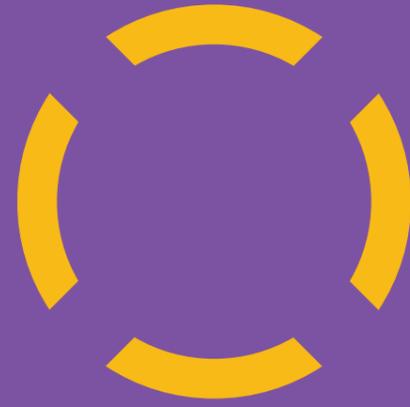


“ There’s a natural reticence and hesitation driven by concern with [employing] people that may have mental health, anxiety and depression issues. Their (our managers) level of comfort managing through those situations may potentially be a barrier as well. ”

(Employer in the mining industry)

“ With a mental health disability, you’ve got to think of it as like diabetes, you know 99% of the time it’s not an issue so long as the person keeps up with their treatment it shouldn’t affect them at work. But it’s important to know when it does start to affect them so that you can take the appropriate measures to ensure that they’re safe. ”

(39 year old, unemployed)



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The benefits of bringing greater diversity to the workforce includes **better understanding the customers that we seek to service.** This is creating a more inclusive culture in an organisation.

Employer in the public sector

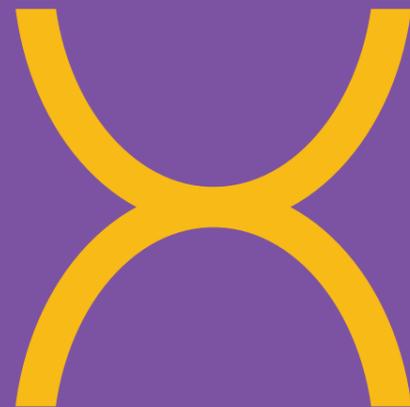
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THE CHALLENGES

# Challenge #2 – Successfully employing

Barriers exist that prevent employers from taking action.



**KEY FINDING 2.1**

**Proactive recruitment of people with disability is lacking and processes are often inequitable and compromised by being merit-based.**

Less than a quarter (23.8%) of employers told us they were actively recruiting people with disability. This is because they tend to favour merit-based selection processes (43.5%). Put simply; employers want to select the best person for the job.

This is a reasonable, and on the surface, an equitable approach to recruitment. However, feedback from people with disability indicates that many are struggling when job seeking.

These common sources of frustration suggest that merit-based selection may not always provide the level playing field intended:

**37.5%** being discriminated against during the job application process.

**36.0%** of job advertisements not considering the needs of people with disability.

**32.0%** of employers being inflexible with roles.

**The problem with a merit-based approach is that the recruitment process is not equitable for all.**

Three quarters of employers (76.9%) told us they had at some time employed a person with disability. Fewer than one in five (17.4%) said they would not proactively consider hiring people with disability.

This suggests a lack of willingness to consider people with disability for roles is not the issue in most cases. Rather it appears the employers, seeking to be equitable for all, rely strongly on merit-based selection.

**More than half (51.5%) say they need support to ensure their policies are inclusive for people with disability.**

Employers themselves admit that this is often not the case. A considerable number acknowledge that their processes are in fact not accessible or are uncertain that they are (30.8%). The same is true when it comes to flexibility (36.9%) and inclusivity (40.8%).

It appears employers are uncertain about the internal capacity of organisations to create equitable policies and processes that enable them to recruit people with disability within a broader merit-based process.

## Challenge #2 – Successfully employing

### KEY FINDING 2.2

**Recruitment is hampered by the employers' concerns relating to the support people with disability may require.**

The majority of employers have had experience with employees with disability and are aware they have people who have chosen not to disclose their disability in their workforce. However, many we spoke to expressed concerns about their ability to effectively support people with disability in their workforce.

**20.3%** of employers felt they were not well-equipped to manage.

**18.8%** of employers were unsure what was needed to support someone with disability.

Employers appear to be somewhat fixated on potential physical limitations of employees with disability. More than one in five (21.7%) do not actively recruit people with disability because they believe their workplace is not safe for them.

Financial aid to assist with making workplaces more accessible was one of the most common supports employers ranked among the top three that would encourage them to proactively recruit (41.9%).

# 1 in 5

employers felt they were not well-equipped to manage, and a similar number (18.8%) were unsure what was needed to support someone with disability.



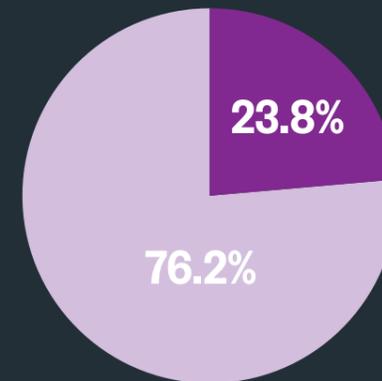
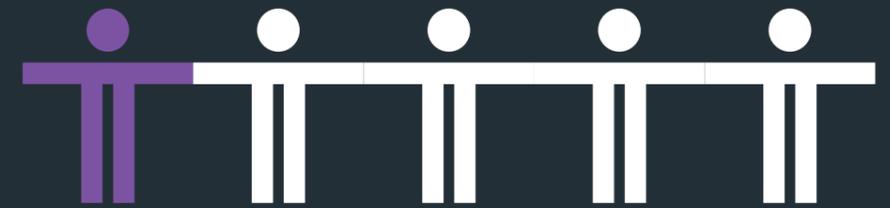
“**Whatever we’re doing in this space, we need to make sure we have the right level of support available for individuals to make sure that their working life with us can be productive and motivating.**”

(Employer in the utilities sector)

## At a glance

# < 1 in 5

17.4% of employers said they would not proactively consider hiring people with disability. However, three quarters (76.9%) told us they had at some point employed a person with disability.



# 23.8%

Less than a quarter (23.8%) of employers told us they were actively recruiting people with disability.

**Most common sources of frustration for people with disability when job seeking:**

**37.5%**

Being discriminated against during the job application process.

**36.0%**

Job advertisements not considering the needs of people with disability.

**32.0%**

Employers being inflexible with roles.

## 2. Successfully employing

### KEY FINDING 2.3

**The needs and expectations of people with disability are reasonable and often similar to other employees.**

Many employers we spoke to conveyed a genuine fear of 'not getting it right' and indicated this was hampering employment of people with disability. In contrast, people with disability need straightforward support and the same equitable, respectful treatment all employees want.

When ranking the top three supports they would like to see employers do to assist them, people with disability were most likely to cite:

**70.1%** create safe and inclusive environments free from discrimination.

**60.9%** proactively ask and understand the specific needs of employees with disability.

**53.3%** allow flexible work hours where possible.

The most common challenges people with disability face at work are also rarely related to accessibility (3.5%). Instead, they are all about people, specifically:

**37.5%** dealing with difficult colleagues and customers.

**28.5%** struggling to feel safe and included.

# 26.5%

**of people with disability noted being discriminated against because of their disability.**



“**The single biggest failure would just be lack of commitment of the organisation to make a firm step towards inclusion. I think the policies are more viewed as a compliance requirement.**”

(Public sector employer)



Employers acknowledge they have limitations when it comes to supporting employees with disability. For more than two in five (44.0%), advice on how to best do this was one of the top three things that would encourage them to proactively recruit.

Yet overall, we see that people with disability have basic expectations regarding their employment, in line with the expectations any other employee might have of their employer. Support can sometimes come in the form of assistive technology and workplace adjustments.

However, the overarching expectations of people with disability are to be treated fairly and with respect, and have their individual circumstances fairly considered. It is worth noting they do want employers to actively reach out to them. This may be due to the fear and uncertainty of the potential repercussions of actively requesting support themselves.

**Flexible working arrangements have come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic, making this a simple step that many employers can take.**

Engaging with an external agency such as a DES provider, will help fine-tune policies and processes. Boosting staff knowledge and awareness will help create workplace cultures that are more inclusive of all workers, not just those with disability.

## 2. Successfully employing

### KEY FINDING 2.4

**Leaders drive change when it comes to disability employment but competing priorities and lack of knowledge is often holding them back.**

For the most part, organisations do not proactively recruit people with disability. Rather, this is typically initiated when senior leaders take the reins and actively encourage change (41.9%). It is far less often the result of an employee, not in a leadership position, advocating for change (16.1%). This holds true for organisations yet to start proactively recruiting people with disability.

Among this group of employers, three in 10 (30.8%) told us that leaders who champion diversity and inclusion, were one of the top three reasons that would encourage them to change.

Retaining people with disability also requires engaged and effective leadership. One quarter (26.0%) of people with disability find communicating with their manager a challenge. In addition, non-disclosure is often driven by fear of negative manager reactions (40.0%) or concerns and experiences relating to outcomes a manager may influence, such as promotions, opportunities, hours, and job security.

Many senior leaders who championed growth of people with disability in their organisation, did so due to lived experience with disability among their immediate family or social circles.

# 26.0%

of people with disability find communicating with their manager a challenge.



“**We have a plan to increase our percentage of employees with disability in the organisation. I think it’s nice to have... but without any accountability that it has to be achieved... there won’t be... a significant change.**”

(Public sector employer)

For those without this personal drive, there was almost always a keen willingness to be inclusive and supportive of employees with disability. However, many had competing targets relating to representation and inclusion of other equity groups.

There was also a sense among many that they had insufficient internal resources and time to consider and review their capability to effectively support employees with disability. Unless formal targets existed, adjusting roles or updating relevant policies and processes were not a priority.

**Senior leaders who genuinely champion change and best practice are crucial to drive businesses from a position of willingness to proactive action when it comes to recruitment and inclusion of people with disability. There are also key concerns that are stopping some potential champions from stepping up.**

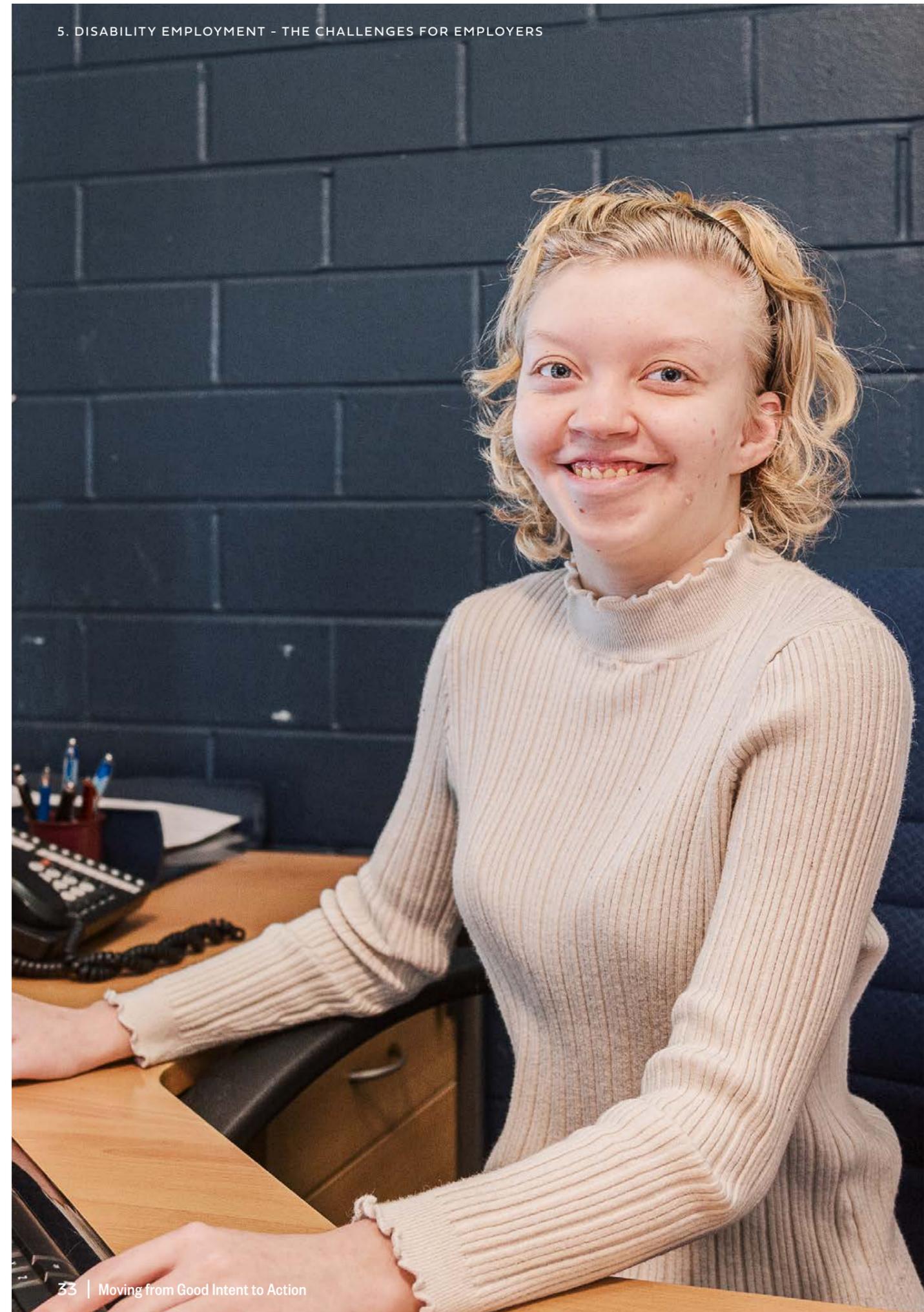
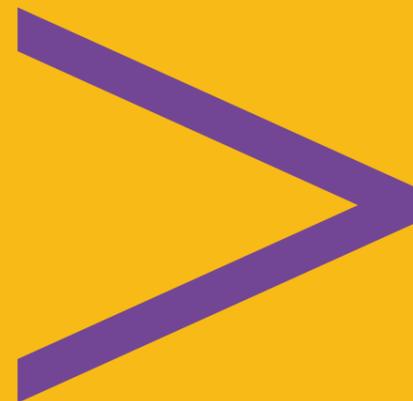
It is worth noting, of those employers who are actively recruiting people with disability, more than half (51.6%) are doing so because of prior, positive experiences. This proves there is merit in taking steps to maximise recruitment and retention of people with disability.

//

I don't think a lot of people understand the capacity and the impact that someone with disability can make within their business if they're supported appropriately and put on a path to success.

Employer in the education and training industry

//



THE CHALLENGES

# Challenge #3 – Retaining employees

Employers aren't sure how to support employees after they are employed.



**KEY FINDING 3.1**

**Employers are often unaware that support is available to them. For those who are aware, limited time and confusion are likely driving disengagement with support providers.**

Almost two in three employers (62.3%) have never heard of DES providers. These Government funded agencies, such as Edge, are contracted to provide a range of supports to people with disability and employers. Their goal is to help create and support mutually successful, long-term employment outcomes. Unsurprisingly, this means few are aware and familiar with the free of charge services available to them.

Employers are routinely confronted with agencies seeking to provide and place candidates, often for a fee, as is the case with private recruitment. The result is policies in some organisations to not use recruitment agencies of any kind (39.7%) and confusion about what DES providers offer and how their service model works. This is exacerbated by confusion over the difference between DES providers and Job Services Australia (JSA) providers who work with longer term unemployed individuals who are often seeking entry level roles due to moderate or significant disadvantage.

Employers are also unlikely to know where to start in terms of approaching a DES provider.

Paid advertising appears to have little cut-through. There is likewise little evidence of online searching, with less than one in five employers surveyed (18.4%) using provider websites to improve their awareness and understanding. This is not surprising, given how time poor many business leaders are, and considering the additional pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, one in five employers (20.3%) who are not working with a DES provider say being contacted directly would prompt them to start doing so.

A final contributing factor is the lack of knowledge and understanding of people with disability and what they can bring to an organisation or the types of roles they can fulfill. The top two factors that would cause an employer to engage with a DES provider are having more roles suited to people with disability (30.4%) and learning more about the benefits of hiring people with disability (25.3%).



**2 in 3**

**Almost two in three employers (62.3%) have never heard of DES providers.**

## Challenge #3 – Retaining employees

### KEY FINDING 3.2

**Employers want to get it right. They want cultural and practical support for their employees and to build organisational knowledge and capability. DES providers can offer this support.**

DES providers offer a range of services that directly address many of the misperceptions, needs and concerns raised by employers. Reaching out to a DES provider offers a quick and simple opportunity to identify and support disability advocates and senior leadership team champions. They play a crucial role in identifying business' unique cultural and practical needs for support, and can forge a partnership to meet those needs.

Providers can offer wraparound support from:

- training and workshops to build internal capability, awareness, and knowledge;
- recruitment support, and ongoing, post-employment support for the employee and employer; and
- workplace modification assistance if required.

For those employing people with disability, services such as ongoing mentoring, on-the-job training, and financial incentives are available to maximise success.

Support is available to review and improve recruitment processes, practices, and policies to ensure they are not inadvertently inequitable, or discriminatory. In this way, merit-based selection can be undertaken in a manner that is truly inclusive of people with disability.



“  
**The intention is absolutely there, but I’m not sure that we’re able to fully support people. So, I’m not sure if the support is there.**”

(Employer in the health sector)

## How employers can partner with DES providers like Edge to move from good intent to action:

### Opportunities ----- DES Offering -----> Outcome

Improve understanding and confidently take action.

We can work with you right from the very beginning of the recruitment process to set you up for success.

**Higher employment and retention rates of people with disability, benefit both employees and employers.**

Develop skills and knowledge to ensure actions taken are successful.

Once you decide to employ a person with disability, we will make sure that throughout the recruitment and onboarding process, you have the information, support and tools that you need.

Access support to successfully integrate employees with long-term results.

We are able to provide training and ongoing support needed for your new employee to culturally and practically integrate into your workplace for the long-term.

## Challenge #3 – Retaining employees

Disability Employment Service (DES) providers offer services and supports that directly address the challenges and concerns employers face:

- finding suitable candidates;
- being able to effectively support employees with disability; and
- having access to expert knowledge and advice.

Beyond this, improving practices can also address another common challenge employers face, particularly those working toward diversity targets. That is, the inability to attract candidates when roles are advertised.

In addition, 52.4% listed on-the-job training for new employees as one of the top three supports they need when it comes to employing people with disability.

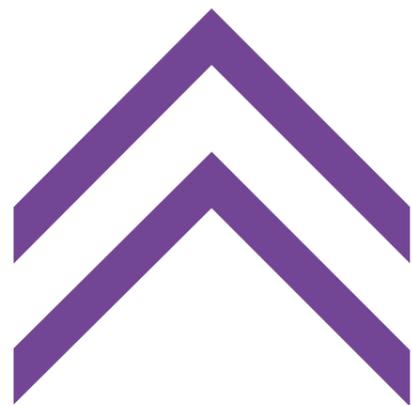
Feedback from people with disability indicates simple actions can make a huge difference to the belief their application would be fairly considered, such as:

- inclusive language;
- active encouragement to apply;
- clear statements about availability; and
- willingness to be flexible and accommodating.

DES providers have access to an excellent source of diverse candidates of people with disability.

“  
**For us we represent the community. So, having a clear voice for people with disability is really critical because we know that there’s a huge patron base of people with disability.**  
”

(Employer in the arts industry)



## 6. Conclusion

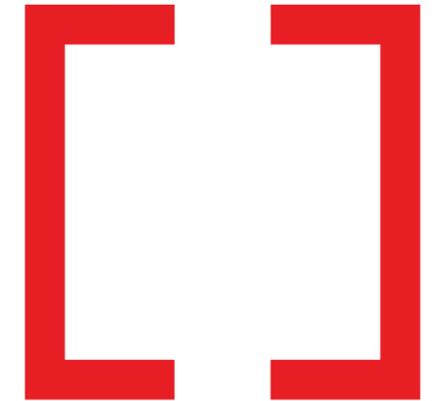
**Understanding that employers face competing priorities and challenges when it comes to building and maintaining their workforce, this research focused on identifying what DES providers, such as Edge, can do to help.**

In addressing key misperceptions about disability, sharing the benefits of diverse workforces, and highlighting the role that DES providers can play in closing the gap between good intent and action, we hope we have been able to reassure and inspire employers to act.

Achieving meaningful change is a team effort. In the spirit of collaboration, we hope that these insights are also valuable for other DES providers, as they, like us, work to help more employers include people with disability into their workforces and find them employment.

Equally we hope that other agencies working with and supporting DES providers can better assist employers on their quest to improve the lives of people with disability, by continuing to share information and build understanding of the services we provide.

Together, by acknowledging and working to overcome the collective challenges faced, we have the best chance to deliver services at a rate and level effective enough to drive real and lasting change in workplaces, and by extension the lives of more people with disability.



## Where to from here?

**Let's move forward together.**

**No matter what stage of the journey you are at, DES providers, like Edge, are here to help. Partnering with you, we can help you start, continue, or further strengthen the recruitment and long-term retention and inclusion of people with disability in your organisation. Our services and supports, at all stages of the employment cycle, are designed to maximise success for everyone involved.**

**If you would like to find out more about the expertise and support you can access through a DES provider, or would like to discuss the insights in this report, we would love to hear from you!**

# Changing lives through the power of **employment.**

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By Edge Employment Solutions in partnership with:

CORE|DATA



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Department of **Communities**

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