**PWDA calls on candidates to dedicate resources to evaluate and strengthen cross sector and cross Government strategies towards creating and promoting training and employment opportunities for all people with disability in NSW.**

**THE SITUATION NOW**



**People with disability are under-represented in the NSW workforce and face many barriers to employment. In 2012 only 45.9% of people with disability aged 15-64 in NSW had a job[[1]](#footnote-1).** Despite *NSW 2021* targets[[2]](#footnote-2) to close the gap in unemployment rates for people with disability, attitudinal barriers and discriminatory practices persist, with many employers reticent to hire people with disability due to a lack of disability awareness, poor knowledge of employment support options and the misplaced fear of cost implications. Some people with disability are marginalised from the workforce solely because of the continued inaccessibility of public infrastructure such as transport, the built environment, and workplaces.

**People with disability make up a mere 3.1% of the NSW public sector workforce, and this is a decrease from 5% in 2006[[3]](#footnote-3)**. The decline in numbers of employees with disability in the public sector reflects poorly on policy commitments and strategies[[4]](#footnote-4) to improve employment outcomes for people with disability. As the largest employer, the NSW Government should have a public sector that is successful in increasing and retaining employment of people with disability, and that reflects the diversity of the community.

**Government procurement practices need to strongly preference employers that demonstrate good practice in the open employment of people with disability.** The NSW Government could use its influence through its considerable purchasing power to incentivise industries to increase open employment of people with disability. Procurement practices directed to Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) support segregated employment, where employees with disability do not receive equal pay for work of equal value and do not have access to the same industrial protections as other employees.

**‘Smart and Skilled’ reforms within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in NSW are adversely affecting students with disability.** The largest VET provider, TAFE NSW, supports people with disability to get the training they need to access employment. Under current reforms, TAFE NSW is losing specialist teaching expertise and courses that provide tailored support for students with disability. A new 15% funding loading has been set for students with disability to enable supports and adjustments to be provided for participation in VET courses, but this funding is not quarantined for this purpose and may not cover the costs of high expense, individualised support required by many students with disability.

**WHAT IS NEEDED**



**NSW leadership in the development of a Council of Australian Government (COAG) jobs plan for people with disability**, which commits to creating 200,000 jobs for people with disability across Australia by 2023.

**Partnership with the private sector and Local Government to develop cross-sector employment plans** that include innovative strategies, such as training and internship opportunities and good practice open employment procurement practices, that aim to close the employment gap for people with disability.Specialist expertise could be sought from the [Australian Network on Disability](http://www.and.org.au/). This partnership approach should be driven by a Minister for Disability Inclusion.

**Development of a Parliamentary internship program for people with disability** so that Parliamentarians can model employment opportunities for people with disability. The internship program could be championed by the Premier and the Minister for Disability Inclusion.

**Reinvigoration of a whole of government public sector disability employment strategy** that increases targets to reflect the population of people with disability in the community; contains accountability measures, such as building outcomes into performance measures for public sector executive staff; innovative training and internship programs. The strategy should also include procurement practices that preference suppliers who meet targets for diversity in the workplace and who demonstrate best practise in the employment of people with disability in the open market place.

**Release of an annual Disability Employment Report Card** that outlines progress towards achieving targets in both private and public sector employment, that ranks public sector agencies and that identifies good practice private and public sector employers. Good practice employers could be announced at an Annual Disability Awards night.

**Resourcing and implementation of the actions in the National Disability Strategy NSW Inclusion Plan** to ensure that barriers to public infrastructure and wider barriers to training and jobs are addressed.

**Conduct of an urgent assessment of the impact of the new 15% loading for students with disability** and urgently addressing funding inadequacies for providing individualised supports for students with disability in the VET sector.

**Implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impacts of ‘Smart and Skilled’ reforms on students with disability,** including undertaking a ‘before and after’ reform comparison of the success rates of assisting people with disability receive VET training. Commitment should be made to invest in the futures of students with disability in the VET system by ensuring adequate, individualised funding and smart learning support services.

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1. Australia Bureau of Statistics, Disability Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *NSW 2021 – A Plan to Make NSW Number One* has set a target of closing the unemployment gap for people with disability by at least 50 per cent by 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. State of the NSW Public Sector Report 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *EmployABILITY – A Strategy to Increase Employment Opportunities for People with a Disability in the NSW Public Sector 2010-2013* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)