



Issues Paper 3: Issues for Employers

What factors impact on whether an employer will recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities?

One of the goals of the Inquiry is to identify and develop practical strategies to address some of the factors that act as a disincentive to employers hiring people with disabilities.

Another important goal is to map out those places that employers wishing to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities can find support and guidance.

This Issues Paper sets out some of the commonly identified barriers that employers face when it comes to hiring people with disabilities. It also attempts to identify existing employer initiatives that aim to help increase the number of people with disabilities in the open workplace.

The Inquiry is interested in your feedback on all of these issues. Please use the questions set out below as a guide to your responses.

1. **Why might employers be reluctant to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities?**

There have been various studies analysing the reasons why employers may be reluctant to hire people with disabilities. Some of the factors raised in those studies, and in preliminary consultations conducted by the Inquiry, include the following real and perceived barriers:

- **Inadequate information and advice means that hiring people with disabilities becomes difficult and time-consuming. For example:**
 - there is no 'one-stop shop' for employers looking for information, advice and ongoing support
 - there seems to be a lack of coordination between different government services so that employers are unclear about which Commonwealth or State agencies can provide them with assistance
 - there is insufficient advice as to an employer's legal rights and responsibilities under State and Commonwealth equal opportunity, occupational health and safety, industrial relations and discrimination laws
 - there are no clear channels for recruiting people with disabilities.
- **There may be some additional financial costs associated with hiring some people with disabilities. For example:**
 - it may be necessary to make physical adjustments to the workplace building and equipment

- there may be higher costs for insurance, workers compensation and occupational health and safety
 - some people with disabilities may be less productive in the workplace
 - some people with disability may require additional ongoing support in the workplace.
- **Employers have expressed concern about additional risks that may come with hiring people with disabilities. For example:**
 - there may be a higher risk of facing unfair dismissal or discrimination claims if an employee with a disability does not work out
 - there may be a higher risk of workplace accidents
 - there may be an adverse impact on other staff and customers who are uncomfortable dealing with people with disabilities.

Your feedback: employer disincentives

- (a) What are the most pressing concerns that employers have regarding recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities?
- (b) Are there any additional factors that might make an employer reluctant to recruit, hire or retain people with disabilities?
- (c) What are some individual examples of how these factors have affected an employer's decision to recruit, hire and retain of people with disabilities?
- (d) Do employers face additional or different barriers if a person's disability is physical, intellectual or psychiatric?
- (e) Which of these barriers are real and which are the result of stigma, a lack of information and/or education?

2. What are some of the incentives for employers to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities?

- There may be net economic benefits to employers
- Financial incentives from government (see Issues Paper 4)
- Strengths of employees with a disability:
 - many employers believe that people with disabilities are more loyal and reliable employees in terms of attendance, retention and safe workplace practices
 - people with disabilities are usually at least as productive as people without a disability, when matched to an appropriate job
 - some employers believe that people with disabilities are more innovative when faced with problems.
- Corporate reputation and morale:
 - customers and suppliers appreciate that a company is making an effort to employ people with disabilities
 - staff appreciate the effort that the company is making to hire and retain people with disabilities
- Fulfilling obligations under discrimination laws

Your feedback: employer incentives

- (a) Which incentives have the most impact on an employer's decision to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities?
- (b) What steps could be taken to ensure that employers were better aware of these incentives?
- (c) Are there any additional incentives that might encourage an employer to recruit, hire or retain people with disabilities?
- (d) What are some individual examples of how these, or any other, incentives have affected an employer's decision to recruit, hire or retain people with disabilities?
- (e) How might incentives need to be tailored to take account of different types of disabilities, for example, whether a person's disability is physical, intellectual or psychiatric?

Your feedback: current initiatives

- (a) What are some of the current initiatives that encourage employers to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities? For example:
 - Commonwealth government initiatives (see also Issues Paper 4)
 - State government initiatives
 - private sector initiatives
 - community sector initiatives.
- (b) What cross-sector initiatives are there to encourage employers to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities? For example:
 - Commonwealth-State government initiatives
 - Commonwealth and/or State government-private sector initiatives
 - Commonwealth and/or State government-community sector initiatives
 - private sector-community sector initiatives.

3. Send us your solutions!

In addition to providing a map of existing initiatives, it is important to identify the gaps and develop some practical solutions to the issues facing employers in the context of hiring people with disabilities. The Inquiry would like to hear your ideas on what strategies or initiatives would make a positive difference.

- (a) What additional steps could the government take to support employers to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities in open employment?
 - (b) What additional steps could employers take to hire people with disabilities?
 - (c) What additional tools should be provided to make it easier for employers to hire people with disabilities?
 - (d) What is the best way to provide the additional tools that employers need?
 - (e) What are some ideas for new initiatives that could encourage employers to recruit, hire and retain people with disabilities?
 - (f) What specific measures might encourage employers to hire people with psychiatric disabilities and mental illness?
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4. How do you make a submission?

Further information about the Inquiry can be found at:

www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/employment_inquiry/index.htm

Submissions are due by **15 April 2005**.

You can email your submission to: employmentinquiry@humanrights.gov.au.

Submissions may also be sent in hard copy, audiotape or videotape, to:

Employment Inquiry
Disability Rights Unit
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001

Questions can be directed to:

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