



Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

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# National Disability Forum

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# 2014

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# Summary of Survey Results

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## **1 Background**

On 14 July 2014 newly appointed Acting Disability Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon Susan Ryan AO, announced that the Australian Human Rights Commission would be holding a National Disability Forum. The forum would look to take stock on the status of the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities. The forum would also have a thematic focus on employment related issues (which the outgoing Disability Discrimination Commissioner had identified as a key area of focus for the future).

Ahead of the forum, the Commission conducted a survey to consult with the disability rights' sector and wider community about the key issues affecting persons with disabilities.

## **2 Purpose**

The purpose of the online survey was:

1. To seek the views of persons with disabilities, advocates, associates or carers, service providers, employers and others with an interest in disability rights on the key challenges currently facing persons with disabilities; and
2. To provide public input into the National Disability Forum so as to inform the themes and discussions of the event.

## **3 Focus and structure**

The survey focused on three sets of issues:

- Identifying the most important human rights issues facing persons with disabilities;
- Identifying priorities for improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities; and
- Identifying the most strategic way to focus the resources of the Commission, in light of capacity constraints and to ensure maximum impact.

## **4 Method**

The survey was conducted using the online survey tool SurveyMonkey. It was open to the public for two weeks and was distributed online via:

- The Commission website;
- Social media;
- The Commission's disability mailing lists; and
- Email to forum invitees.

Persons who received the survey were encouraged to share the survey link widely with other interested persons.

Participants who had difficulty accessing the survey could contact the Commission for assistance.

## 5 Survey Results

### 5.1 Respondent Information

A total of 541 respondents participated in the survey (412 complete responses).

**Question 2:** Please tell us if you are (*please tick all that apply*):

- A person with disabilities
- An associate or carer of a person with disabilities
- A member of an advocacy group or organisation
- An employee of an advocacy group or organisation
- A service provider
- An employer or recruiter
- Other (*please specify*)

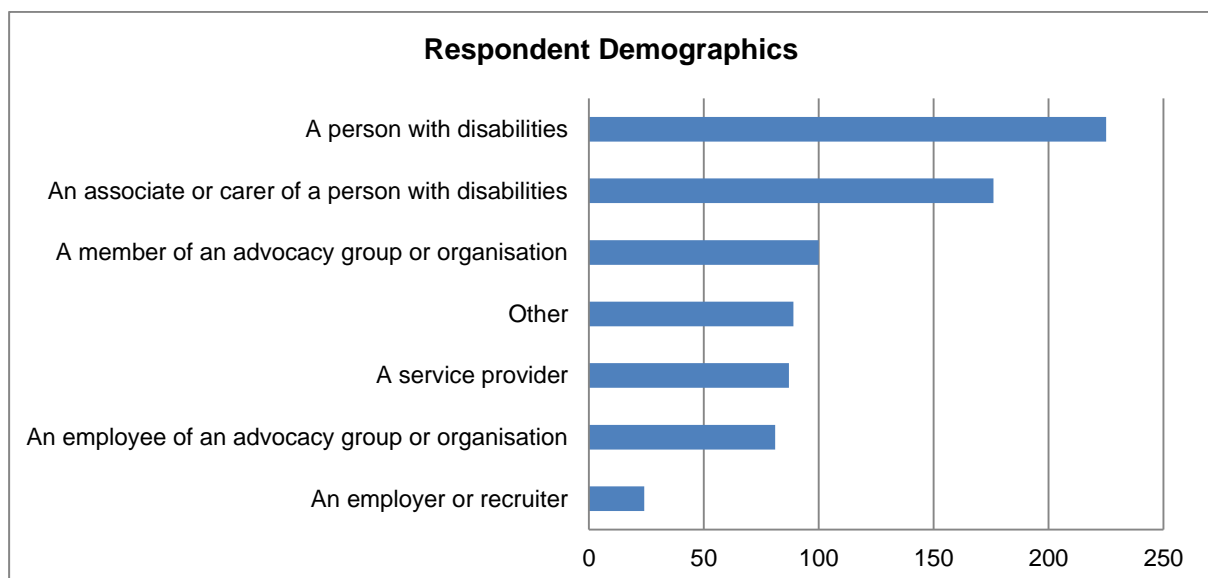
Many respondents described themselves against more than one category. As a result, the percentages listed below add up to more than 100%.

- A person with disabilities (41.59%\*, 225\*\*)
- An associate or carer of a person with disabilities (32.53%, 176)
- A member of an advocacy group or organisation (18.48%, 100)
- Other, which included: parent, guardian, sibling, social or support worker, nurse, educator, student and researcher (16.45%, 89)
- A service provider (16.08%, 87)
- An employee of an advocacy group or organisation (14.97%, 81)
- An employer or recruiter (4.44%, 24)

\* Percentage of respondents who selected the option.

\*\* Number of respondents who selected the option.

**Chart 1:** Bar graph showing respondent demographics.



## 5.2 Disability Rights Generally

**Question 3:** In your view, what are the most important human rights issues currently facing persons with disabilities?

- Health and safety
- Work and employment
- Education
- Welfare and social security
- Access to justice
- Access to services
- Violence, abuse and neglect
- Participation and inclusion in society
- Reasonable adjustments or reasonable accommodations
- Transport
- Assistance animals
- Living independently
- Housing
- Negative attitudes and stereotyping
- National Disability Insurance Scheme roll-out
- Other

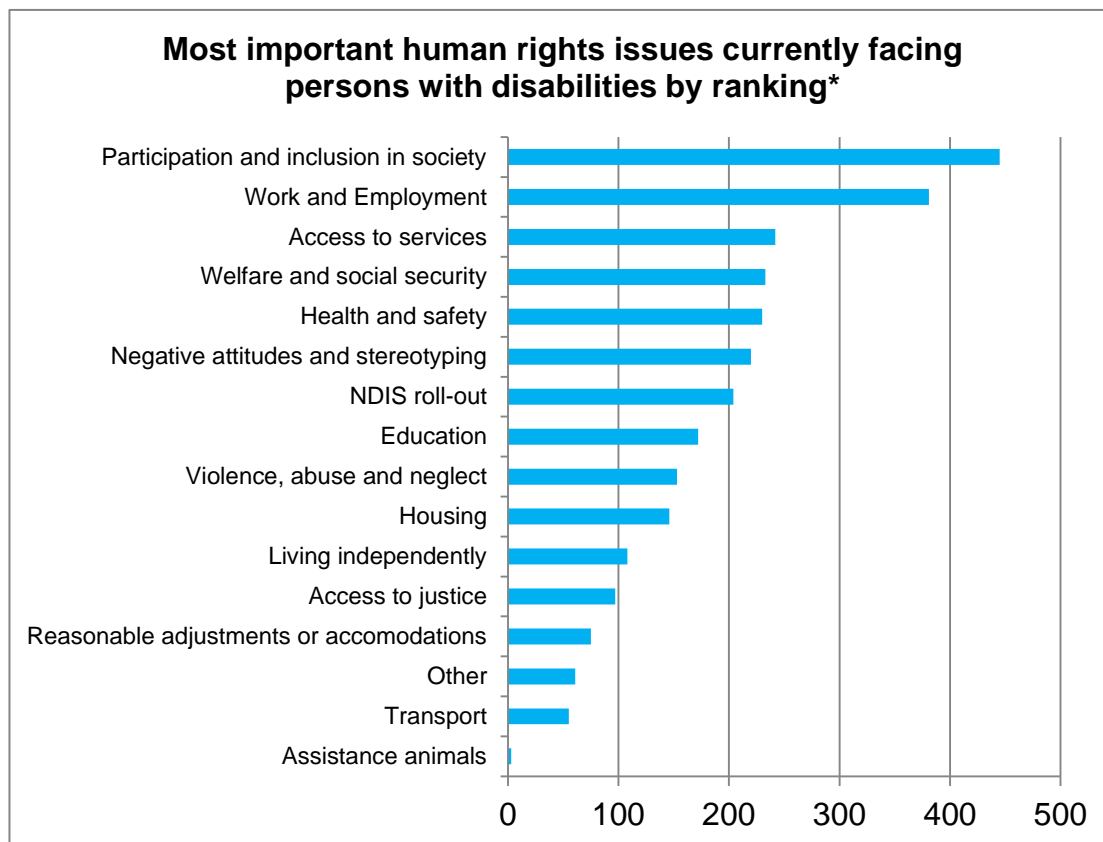
Respondents were asked to select three issues from the list above and rank them in order of importance. The most important issues by ranking were:

1. Participation and inclusion in society (15.75%\*, 217\*\*)
2. Work and employment (13.49%, 193)
3. Access to services (8.57%, 131)
4. Welfare and social security (8.25%, 105)
5. Health and safety (8.14%, 104)
6. Negative attitudes and stereotyping (7.79%, 115)
7. NDIS roll-out (7.22%, 99)
8. Education (6.09%, 84)
9. Violence, abuse and neglect (5.42%, 73)
10. Housing (5.17%, 76)
11. Living independently (3.82%, 61)
12. Access to justice (3.43%, 50)
13. Reasonable adjustments or accommodations (2.65%, 42)
14. Other (2.16%, 31)
15. Transport (1.95%, 29)
16. Assistance animals (0.11%, 3)

\* Weighted percentage based on rankings.

\*\* Number of respondents who selected the issue.

Chart 2: Bar graph showing the most important human rights issues currently facing persons with disabilities as ranked by respondents.



\* Respondents were asked to select three issues from a list of options and rank them in order of importance. The horizontal axis represents the sum of the rankings. Issues ranked most important were attributed a value of 3 and issues ranked least important a value of 1.

**Question 4: If you selected ‘other’ as one of your top three issues in Q3, please specify.**

Recurring categories are summarised below.

**Access and support:** Many respondents emphasised the need for increased access and support for persons with disabilities including access to information, services, transport, assistive devices and equipment, and support in decision-making.

*“Access to information in Australian Sign Language.”*

*“Access to information (including health information).”*

*“Access to appropriate equipment that will enable interaction with the community and prevent further injuries in the future.”*

*“Assistive devices and equipment.”*

*“Access to accessible travel and leisure services.”*

**Adequate representation:** Respondents were also concerned that persons with profound intellectual disabilities or who are otherwise not able to represent

themselves are adequately represented through their parents, guardians, carers and/or peak bodies.

*“Representation for people with profound intellectual disability who do not have capacity for verbal communication and self-representation.”*

*“Right to representation by a parent in the absence of the capacity of verbal speech and self-representation.”*

### **Compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:**

*“Mapping everything you do against the Convention.”*

*“UNCRPD not being met / adhered to in Australia.”*

*“Ensuring that the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is carried out with appropriate commitment and accountability.”*

**Other specified categories included:** equality before the law; government treatment; policy and labelling; disability and sexuality; public awareness about the broad range of disabilities; and relationships and family.

### **Question 5: Please provide any additional comments about the key disability rights issues that you have selected.**

Many respondents identified that the rights issues facing persons with disabilities are inter-connected. In particular, barriers encountered in relation to access to services, education and employment were interlinked with negative attitudes, stereotypes and discrimination.

*“if you can't access education you're not likely to access employment. If you don't have transport, you can't access education, health, work or social participation. And if you don't address negative community attitudes you might not access any rights in an equal basis with others. Without access to justice you can't do anything about it ... And let's not focus just on economic productivity – social and cultural rights are important too.”*

*“the evidence tells us that income security, freedom from discrimination and violence and social connection are the three most critical areas for anyone's health and wellbeing. They are particularly hard to realise for people with disabilities in a world that excludes and where people with disabilities, and women with disabilities in particular are discriminated against in finding work, demeaned and targeted for violence.”*

Respondents also noted that the key issues faced by persons with disabilities will differ depending on the type of disability that a person has, their geographic location, age and other factors. For example, there were different priorities identified for persons with a physical disability compared to those with an intellectual disability.

*“The importance of human rights issues may vary among different disabilities. EG for people who are blind or have low vision, access to information is an additional important issue.”*

The following themes commonly recurred in the responses to the survey. They are interspersed with quotes from survey respondents:

**The National Disability Insurance Scheme** is at an early stage of development, and it will take time to identify how adequately it addresses the full range of disability issues.

**Violence, abuse and neglect is too commonly experienced by persons with disabilities**, especially persons with an intellectual disability.

**There are inadequate services for persons with disabilities, particularly supported accommodation options.**

*“In my role as within a service provider capacity, families contacting me about lack of access to services, including speech, occupational and physio therapies and behavioural support is a daily occurrence. Most distressing of all is the common occurrence of families being left to wait for 6 months on average for a modified wheelchair for the person they are caring for - ranging in age from around 5 - 35 years of age. For an aged carer to be without an appropriate wheelchair for their adult child being cared for at home is an affront.”*

**Stereotypes and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities are too prevalent, both across the community and among employers:** These were described as the basis for discrimination and a key barrier preventing persons with disabilities from living as equal citizens.

*“As someone that has recruited for different organisations, I think many employing organisations have unwarranted fears, negative attitudes and stereotypes about employing people with disabilities. These attitudes need to be challenged. I think there are a lot of people with disabilities that would love the opportunity to live independently but don't have either the means or support to do so. That is why participation and social inclusion is ranked my number one issue. I believe it is possible to achieve independence with a disability but it does require a range of support.”*

*“Without attitude change full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in Australian society will continue to be problematic. It's important that our society values and respects everyone regardless of disability. Attitude change brings behavioural change which means the NDIS, work, education for people with disability etc will be viewed as a basic right by the broader population.”*

**There is a lack of services for persons with disabilities and their carers in rural locations:** This included transport, health services, respite and supports to promote employment.

*“In regards to persons with a disability in rural areas, access to external resources and services is a recurring theme in particular with limited transport options. Supports for carers including respite availability is also an issue in regards to rural areas and funding availability for participation in the community.”*



**The importance of providing educational opportunities for young persons with disabilities:** Some respondents promoted a model of inclusive education while others pointed to increased assistance for special needs students and the issue of costs for tertiary education.

**There is a lack of funding and support for persons with disabilities to become 'job ready' through TAFE and vocational education providers.**

**There are negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in relation to sexuality and relationships:** Services to build relationship skills, for reproductive health and in relation to LGBTI issues limit the rights of persons with disabilities to make decisions and live independently.

*“People with disability often are not recognised as sexual beings, as such their right to have a relationship and make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health is often not upheld. A significant issue that people with disability face is a poverty of meaningful relationships in their lives. Loneliness, isolation and vulnerability to sexual and other abuse are all too often a feature of people's reality. Evidence shows that when people receive relationships and sexuality education in a way that meets their learning needs, there is an increased likelihood that people will be able to make safe and healthy choices about relationships and their body.”*

**There are concerns about the quality of care offered by some service providers and whether they meet their duty of care to persons with disabilities:** Concerns were also expressed about a lack of accountability and consequence for the abuse of rights of persons with disabilities.

**Government systems remain inflexible and too narrow in how they define disability.**

**Persons with disabilities do not enjoy access to justice:** Barriers include lack of awareness or understanding about the experiences of persons with disabilities, lack of reasonable adjustment in policing and court systems, and a failure to identify and treat persons with a disability as vulnerable within justice systems.

*“Speaking on behalf of my brother, I never realised how important access to justice was until we needed it and cannot receive it. Denial or access to justice has resulted in having no control or input or choice in all parts of his life.”*

### 5.3 Disability Rights and Employment

**Question 6:** In your view, what are the most important issues that require attention in order to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities? Please select 3 from the list below and rank in order of importance, where 1 is the most important issue.

- Availability of jobs
- Recruitment processes
- Skills training and education
- Mentoring and coaching support
- Flexible workplace practices
- Reasonable adjustments or reasonable accommodation in the workplace
- Addressing negative attitudes and stereotypes
- Accessible transport
- Accessible technology in the workplace
- Accessible workplace design
- Assistance in finding, securing and maintaining employment
- Other

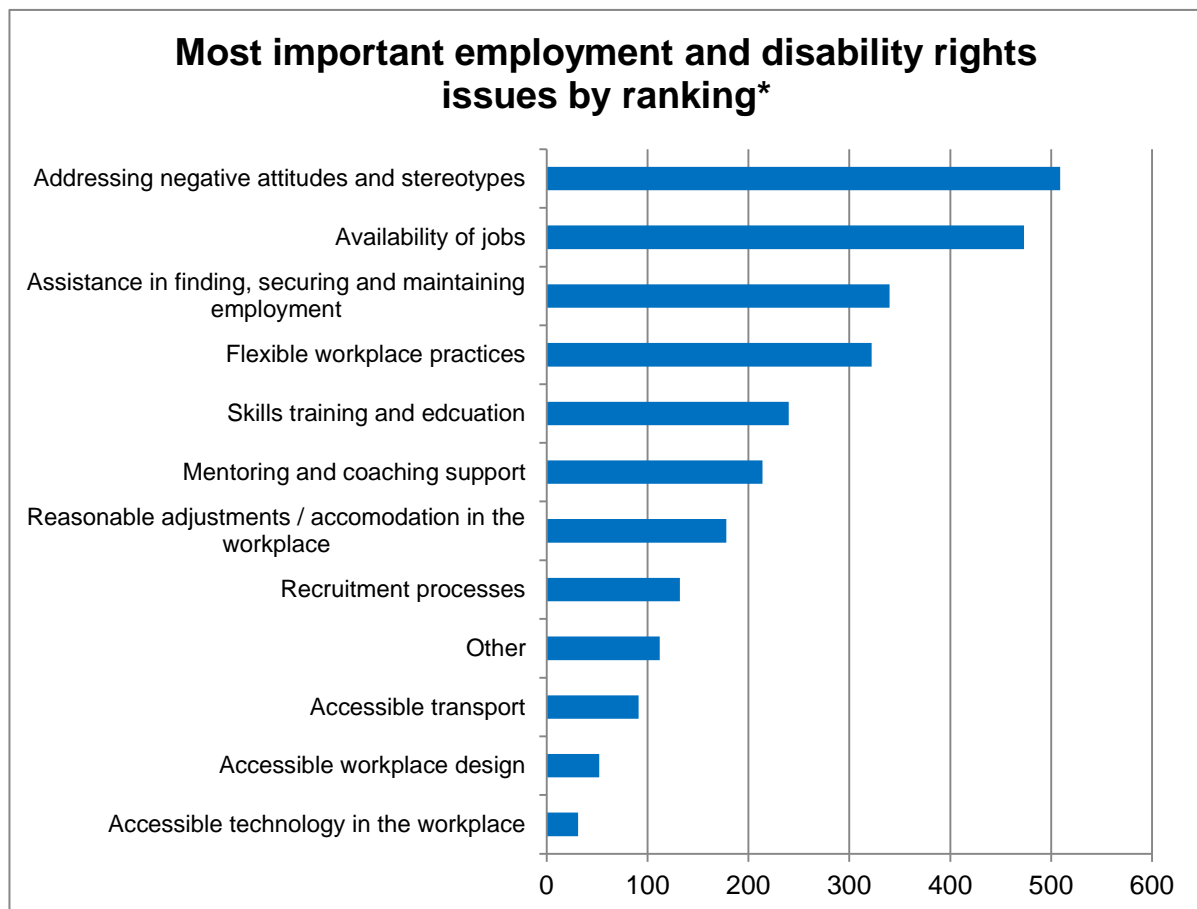
Respondents were asked to select three issues from the list above and rank them in order of importance. The most important issues by ranking were:

1. Addressing negative attitudes and stereotypes (18.89%\*, 226\*\*)
2. Availability of jobs (17.56%, 206)
3. Assistance in finding, securing and maintaining employment (12.62%, 168)
4. Flexible workplace practices (11.95%, 176)
5. Skills training and education (8.91%, 199)
6. Mentoring and coaching support (7.94%, 118)
7. Reasonable adjustments or reasonable accommodation in the workplace (6.61%, 104)
8. Recruitment processes (4.90%, 74)
9. Other (4.16%, 52)
10. Accessible transport (3.38%, 56)
11. Accessible workplace design (1.93%, 31)
12. Accessible technology in the workplace (1.15%, 17)

\* Weighted percentage based on rankings.

\*\* Number of respondents who selected the issue.

**Chart 3:** Bar graph showing the most important employment and disability rights issues currently facing persons with disabilities as ranked by respondents.



\* Respondents were asked to select three issues from a list of options and rank them in order of importance. The horizontal axis represents the sum of the rankings. Issues ranked most important were attributed a value of 3 and issues ranked least important a value of 1.

**Question 7: If you selected ‘other’ as one of your top three issues in Q6, please specify.**

Many of the responses in Q7 overlapped with Q6 categories. Some recurring categories are listed below.

**Increasing employer awareness:** Many respondents believed that increasing employer awareness, engagement and understanding of disabilities in employment could resolve many discrimination issues in the workplace.

*“Discrimination in the workplace actively drives people out of the workforce and into despair. There is a huge need for education programs in workplaces, from CEO level through to base level to appreciate what disability is and how to bust the stereotypes.”*

*“Support, financial and mentoring/training for employers who employ people with disabilities. Lots of employers don't ‘get’ people with disabilities.”*

*“Re autism, the employer must be educated because what seems like poor behaviour is often a result of the ASD.”*

**Accessibility and support in workplaces:** Respondents also emphasised the importance of increased accessibility and support in the workplace and the need for flexible approaches to recruitment, job access, productivity and wages.

*“There is no scheme to support pwd who are already in the workplace.”*

*“People with intellectual disability can work in the open labour market WHEN they are provided skilled support...”*

*“Open employment matching people's skills & workplace capacity taking into account their impairments & assistance needs including personal care, transport, workplace assistance. People can be highly skilled but still not able to attain flexible employment because they can't get personal care on those mornings or start at 9.30am. People in supported workplaces can't progress to open employment because there are not support systems in place for long term support structures to enable open employment at award wages and with the supports required.”*

**Addressing negative attitudes and stereotypes:** Another recurring theme was the need to address negative attitudes and stereotypes among employers and the community.

*“Educating the community (especially employers) about the advantages do having PWD in their workforce.”*

*“Employer's willingness to recruit people with disabilities and make reasonable adjustment.”*

**Other specified categories included:** greater government leadership in regulating employers and facilitating systemic change; the need to recognise and raise awareness about the broad nature of disabilities. Some respondents also expressed concerns about employers' approach of selecting the 'best' or 'most suitable' candidate and employers' reluctance to accept the varying availabilities and productivity levels of candidates with disabilities.

*“Once again they are a whole package we have to get right. Supporting employers to mix and match individual skills. Not look for the 'perfect' candidate each time.”*

**Question 8:** Please provide any additional comments about the key employment and disability rights issues that you have selected.

The following themes commonly recurred in the responses to the survey. They are interspersed with quotes from survey respondents:

**Many persons with disabilities want to work:** A recurring comment was that many persons with disabilities want to work and are capable of working. However they are prevented from contributing to the workplace by a range of barriers including negative attitudes and lack of adequate supports.

*“People with disabilities want jobs just like everyone else.”*

*“Most people with disability with a capacity to work would love to get a meaningful job and work.”*

*“Many people would rather be working than receiving the [Disability Support Pension], they just don’t get the support they need.”*

**Flexible workplace practices are essential:** Flexible working conditions was considered by many respondents to be an essential precondition to the successful and ongoing employment of persons with disabilities. This included: flexible recruitment processes, tailoring of jobs to individual capabilities and needs, flexible working hours and conditions, and adaptable work options that could change over time according to the person’s disability. Flexibility was also linked to accessible workplaces and the provision of reasonable adjustments, including assistive technologies.

*“...An employer that understands that I can work extra hours when I’m feeling good, but when I’m depressed I can’t get out of bed and need time off, or to work from home some days as I can’t cope being around people.”*

*“...adapt work and job descriptions to enable people with disabilities to participate...”*

*“9 to 5 doesn’t work for people who have serious health conditions – how do we as a society make that work?”*

**Mentoring and coaching improves confidence:** Many respondents pointed to the benefits of continued mentoring and coaching in improving the confidence of both employers and employees in the workplace. For employers, it was noted that quality mentoring and coaching could provide the motivation to employ a person with disabilities and to implement adaptable practices in the workplace. For employees, ongoing mentoring and support could help to build their confidence and sense of security in the workplace.

*“Confidence is a major barrier for prospective workplaces and employees. Mentoring and support for both employees with disabilities and workplaces seeking to engage disabled employees plays a big part in developing this confidence.”*

*“I think there should be a lot more mentoring and coaching for people with a disability, a sort of trusted friend who can give the person lots of confidence that they can achieve whatever they put their hand to.”*

**Educate employers and recruiters:** Another key theme was the need to educate and raise awareness among employers and recruiters about the benefits of employing persons with disabilities. A number of responses recognised that many employers want to be inclusive but are afraid to employ persons with disabilities because they don’t understand or don’t know how.

*“...companies are afraid of what they don’t know or understand about disabled people.”*

**Bullying and harassment by co-workers is a problem:** Bullying and harassment by co-workers was identified as another barrier to the continued employment of

persons with disabilities. Respondents pointed to the importance of educating and raising awareness among co-workers to change negative attitudes and perceptions about persons with disabilities e.g. as a 'burden' or as employees receiving 'special treatment'.

*"Employer and co-worker attitudes are a massive barrier. Even if the employer is supportive, harassment by co-workers can be intolerable..."*

**The Australian Government as a model employer:** Several respondents said that the Australian Government should adopt a leadership position to change community attitudes by setting a good example and employing more persons with disabilities in the public service. Other suggested actions for the government included: setting disability employment targets for companies and providing financial incentives for employers to employ persons with disabilities.

*"There needs to be leadership from the government in relation to the employment of people with a disability to help eradicate negative attitudes."*

*"Federal gov needs to lead by example."*

*"I strongly believe that the government needs to step in and make sure there is an allotted amount of people with disabilities getting hired. Employers (with their lack of knowledge and biases) won't do this on their own."*

**Accessible and affordable transport is an issue:** Another barrier to the successful employment of persons with disabilities was the limited availability of accessible and affordable transport, especially in rural areas. Respondents described situations where they were required to travel long distances for a few hours of work. The stress and financial burden of travel often meant that employment became unsustainable. Transport was an issue for both persons with physical disabilities, such as in relation to inaccessible design, and also persons with intellectual disabilities, by reference to issues of safety, vulnerability, anxiety and complexities of navigation.

*"At one stage I had a great work opportunity at a food company but it was an hour away from home and I had to turn it down because I can't drive and there is no public bus service in my town. I have epilepsy and high anxiety, therefore driving is out of the question for me."*

*"Accessible transport is only available in major cities."*

*"Problems of not being able to use Public transport because of not being able to access the community or see or hear signs are paramount."*

*"Again, the issue of transport is a concern as if only able to sustain part time employment, and required to travel long distances, the cost of fuel quickly eats into any financial gain."*

**Need to recognise that not all persons with disabilities are able to work:** Some respondents stressed the need to recognise the wide range of disabilities and that not all persons with disabilities are able to work, including persons with profound intellectual disabilities.

*“Some people with disabilities can not work and I think this needs to be accepted (and acceptable) as well.”*

**There is limited availability of suitable jobs:** Several respondents noted that in the current employment climate, jobs are scarce not only for persons with disabilities but for many other groups as well. This makes the employment of people with disabilities a particularly difficult policy issue as they are competing against people without disabilities in a small job market. Respondents also noted that even where jobs are available, they are often not suited to the skills, interests and capabilities of the employee. Respondents stressed the need to provide persons with disabilities with meaningful work that is tailored to their strengths and interests rather than merely providing menial work assigned on the basis of their disabilities.

*“There is such a tight market in the open employment market, with far more job seekers than vacant positions...People with disabilities are competing for positions when other disadvantaged sectors of the population with legitimate needs are also struggling to find employment; youth, people with mental health issues and older workers aged over 50.”*

*“with such a small job pool in Australia, access employment in general is difficult.”*

*“Emphasis must be on the provision of meaningful, respectful and appropriately remunerated employment.”*

*“[disability organisations] don’t take the person’s skills, strengths and talents into account and they end up with any old job they can do but are not the least bit interested in.”*

**Job security is important:** A number of respondents expressed that job security was important and that there needed to be continued supports to enable persons with disabilities to keep and maintain their employment.

*“Employment needs to be supported and sustainable – not short term “placements”...”*

*“We need job security so if unwell the job is still there.”*

**Concerns about reducing or losing Disability Support Pension after gaining substantial employment.**

*“Many people with disabilities...are put in a situation where they have to choose between their often hard-fought government funded support and the hours they work. If they work too much they put their supports/pension at risk which is a terrifying prospect for them and their families.”*

**Other themes included:** proper remuneration for employees with disabilities, especially in the context of sheltered work environments; the need to train Disability Employment Service providers to support persons with diverse disabilities; and the need to place more persons with disabilities in positions of influence and management.

## 5.4 The Commission's Roles and Priorities

**Question 9:** Considering the specific role and functions of the Commission, what are the most important things that the Commission can do to advance the rights of persons with disabilities? Please select 3 from the list below and number in order of importance, where 1 is the most important issue.

- Public education and awareness raising activities
- Engagement with Government Ministers and through parliamentary processes (such as submissions to parliamentary and other inquiries)
- Facilitation in bringing the disability sector together on key issues
- Public consultation and inquiry processes
- Research and public reporting
- Engagement with UN and international processes (such as under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Universal Periodic Review)
- Development of standards or guidelines under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)
- Investigation and conciliation of complaints
- Guidance and advice to employers and industry
- Other

Respondents were asked to select three options from the list above and rank them in order of importance. The most important options by ranking were:

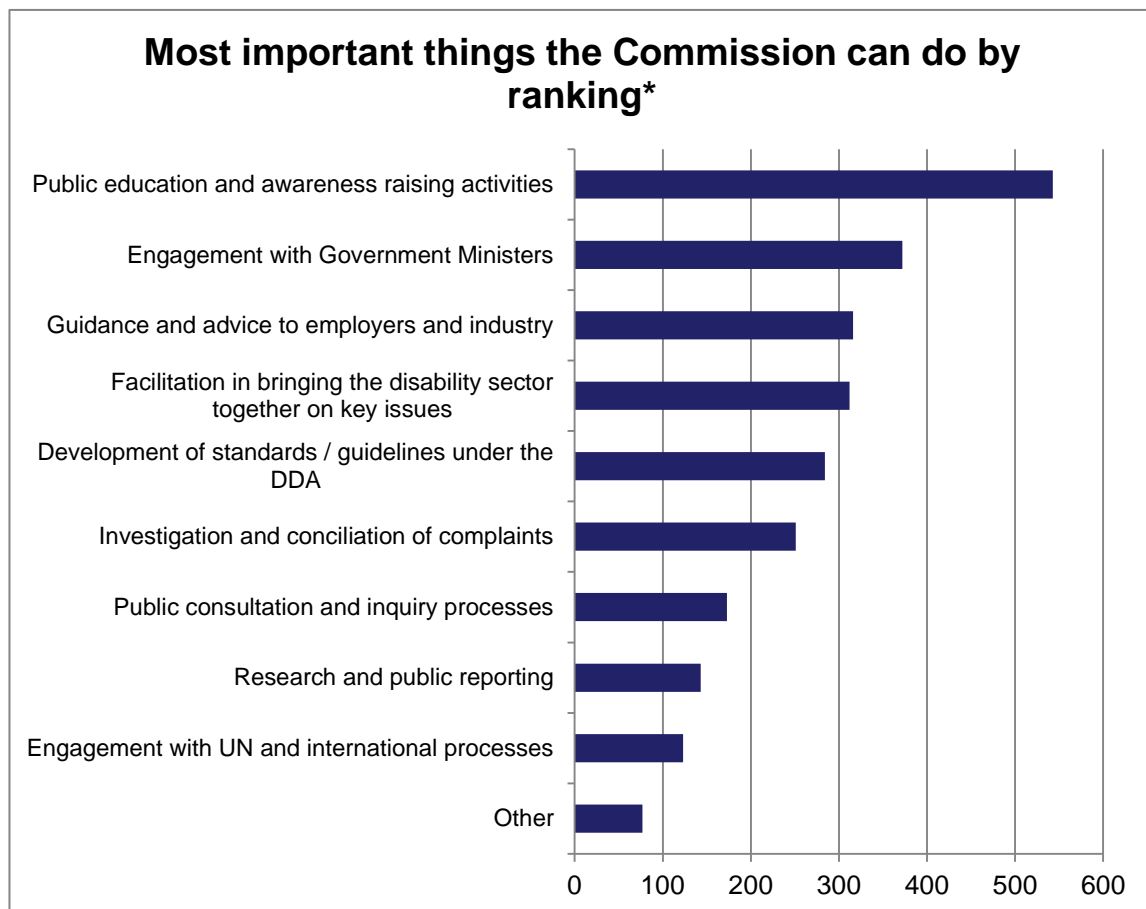
1. Public education and awareness raising activities (20.93%\*, 230\*\*)
2. Engagement with Government Ministers and through parliamentary processes (such as submissions to parliamentary and other inquiries) (14.34%, 178)
3. Guidance and advice to employers and industry (12.18%, 164)
4. Facilitation in bringing the disability sector together on key issues (12.03%, 160)
5. Development of standards or guidelines under the *Disability Discrimination Act* (10.95%, 144)
6. Investigation and conciliation of complaints (9.68%, 132)
7. Public consultation and inquiry processes (6.67%, 92)
8. Research and public reporting (5.51%, 75)
9. Engagement with UN and international processes (such as under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Universal Periodic Review) (4.74%, 79)
10. Other (2.97%, 42)

\* Weighted percentage based on rankings.

\*\* Number of respondents who selected the option.



**Chart 4:** Bar graph showing the most important things the Commission can do to advance the rights of persons with disabilities as ranked by respondents.



\* Respondents were asked to select three from a list of options and rank them in order of importance. The horizontal axis represents the sum of the rankings. Options ranked most important were attributed a value of 3 and options ranked least important a value of 1.

**Question 10: If you selected ‘other’ in Q9, please specify.**

The following recurring categories were specified by respondents:

**Strengthened laws and enforceable rights:** Many respondents commented on the limitations of existing legislative protections, including the Disability Discrimination Act, and the need for strengthened laws, enforceable standards, monitoring processes for increased accountability and sanctions for non-compliance with certain laws and standards.

*“Give real sanctions for discrimination.”*

*“Introduction of periodic reporting requirements and financial sanctions for non-compliance with certain elements of existing standard[s].”*

*“Legislative supports are too weak.”*

*“Accountability for service providers.”*

**Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** Respondents also pointed to the importance of engaging with the international community for best practice examples and implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Australia.

*“Public education and enforcement of the CRPD across Australia...”*

*“Promote the implementation of the Convention and ensure that this is effectively monitored and that people with disabilities are part of the process.”*

**Increased consultation:** Another recurring theme was the need for greater consultation with parents, guardians and carers, especially those of persons with profound intellectual disabilities.

*“Promotion of the right of parents and guardians to advocate for their people with profound intellectual disability because they cannot speak for themselves.”*

**Education and advocacy:** Public education, advocacy and awareness-raising were highlighted as key activities that the Commission should be engaged in.

*“The commission should be primarily focussed on [the] education of the people. Stereotyping is the biggest problem...”*

*“Advocacy... We need direct service from you...”*

*“Knowledge of the legislation in the workplace. People don’t seem to know about the DDA and reasonable accommodations.”*

**Commission specific suggestions:** Other specific suggestions for the Commission included: having a specific disability portfolio, overcoming intersectional issues such as overlaps between the sex and disability portfolios, employing persons with disabilities within the Commission, having a greater community engagement and communication role such as in demonstrating practical applications of human rights in the community.

*“... the AHRC should consider a role of “joining the dots” of rights, inclusion, and practical demonstration, so that government and community may see that rights can be reality.”*

**Question 11:** Please provide any additional comments in the space below about the key things that the Commission could do to advance disability rights issues.

The following themes commonly recurred in the responses to the survey. They are interspersed with quotes from survey respondents:

**Public education and awareness raising was most important, including the need to ‘normalise’ disability:** Many respondents commented that public education and awareness raising among community, employers, government and the media should be a key activity for the Commission. In particular, respondents emphasised the importance of creating an inclusive society where disability is part of the ‘norm’.

They also noted that educating employers about their obligations and persons with disabilities could play a role in improving employment outcomes.

*“A lot of this is around community education and awareness raising. Involving the community in disability – bringing them in to disability so that it is no longer the ‘other’ as opposed to the norm. People with disability and the related issues they face need to be so integrated in to society that it all becomes just another part of life. Not so different and unusual that it is frightening, tiresome or difficult and thus to be avoided.”*

*“An education campaign to employers is a big, big need at the moment ... We need to bust the stereotypes ... that Disability [is] intellectual impairment, absenteeism, underperformance and major expense to adapt a workplace to a person with a disability...”*

*“I believe that employers would like to be more inclusive in their recruitment practices, however they are unsure or unaware of how to employ people with disabilities into their organisation...”*

*“Focus on people with disability not on the disability itself I am more than my disability I wish I could have help finding things that able bodied people take for granted like love and employment.”*

**Greater consultation with persons with disabilities:** A large number of respondents stressed that the Commission should consult widely with persons with disabilities, who can share lived experiences of the barriers and issues they encounter. Consultation with carers was also raised for people who are unable to represent themselves because of their disabilities. Consultation with the disability sector generally, including service providers, was also mentioned.

*“Give the disabled a voice.”*

*“consultation, just simply asking the people who are involved, the affected people.”*

*“Ask a wide range of people. Ask PWDs and their carers.”*

**Engage with government and politicians:** Respondents urged the Commission to engage with government and politicians on a range of topics. These included: changing the attitudes of politicians and the community; changing and implementing government policies; involvement in law reform processes; funding for support services; one disability scheme to replace the current myriad of programs and services; and specific advocacy on a range of issues including health and accessibility.

*“Government has to be committed to ‘making it work’ for people with disability. Politicians need to be given, if necessary, confronting examples of the failure of existing systems in order to look at ways to address the impact on not just the person with disability, but their families and carers, and support agencies, in order to make Australia and Australians proud of ‘best practice’ when it comes to inclusion.”*

*“We need strong and inspiring examples of support from Parliament. More good news on the NDIS.”*

**Increased guidance and advice to employers and industry about employing persons with disabilities:** Suggestions included guidance and advice for employers and industry on how to employ persons with disabilities and comply with their obligations. Follow up and monitoring was also suggested not only in relation to employment but also in education contexts.

*“I believe that employers would like to be more inclusive in their recruitment practices, however they are unsure or unaware of how to employ people with disabilities.”*

*“Actually follow up establishments such as education settings to make sure that they are following all requirements.”*

**Facilitate a ‘unified voice’ for persons with disabilities:** A few respondents considered the value of bringing the disability sector together on key issues to present a stronger unified message to government and the community.

*“The disability sector will be more powerful if united on key issues.”*

*“It would be good to bring people together and create a louder voice that cannot be ignored.”*

*“One voice that can collectively represent the stakeholders, bringing a unified message...”*

**Advocate for proactive laws and enforceable rights:** While some responses noted the value of standard and guidelines, many emphasised the need for more proactive laws and increased accountability through enforceable rights to combat systemic discrimination. Some commented on the need to strengthen protections in the Disability Discrimination Act.

*“There is a need for implementation of robust standards and enforcement of compliance with the DDA.”*

*“...there are no enforceable laws that make governments, agencies and individuals accountable.”*

*“The barriers to equality must be broken down and this can only be done by a legislative response which is not weak or ambiguous.”*

**All functions are important:** Many respondents noted that all functions were important and it was difficult to choose between them.

**Other suggestions included:** that the Commission’s role in investigating and conciliating complaints was an important function; there should be a full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner; conduct an inquiry on key human rights issues for persons with disabilities; provide Auslan at all events; and employ persons with disabilities at the Commission.