

SUPPORTING QUEENSLAND'S NDIS WORKFORCE EFFECTIVELY

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND SKILLS ECOSYSTEM

Introduction

This paper summarises a range of NDIS workforce and Vocational Education and Training issues that have been identified in the WorkAbility Queensland project to date.

The purpose of the paper is to generate discussion, identify practical action that is already occurring, and explore action that may occur in the future that will better enable the development of a workforce with the skills, knowledge and values to support implementation of the NDIS.¹

Overview

Innovative and individualised supports for people with a disability will require diversity, flexibility and mobility in its responding workforce.

It is clear from participants and providers in NDIS trial sites that most importantly the workforce will need to have as its core the right attitudes and values, a broad demographic to match participants, and ongoing opportunity to skill in areas relevant to service supports.

The workforce challenges are many, not the least of which is how to meet the skilling needs of such a workforce in a way that encourages longevity in the sector, and continues to maintain relevancy for changing needs. The challenges will be further complicated by the rapid workforce growth that will be required, along with the uncertainty about the future service demand that will emerge from the NDIS reforms.

While the issue of an appropriate workforce is surmountable, it will take an ecosystems approach with a commitment by all stakeholders to, policy revision, business practice change, affirmation of the right values and attitudes, and development of skills related to priority areas of work.

Employers, government agencies, employees and education and training providers all play a part and will need to co-ordinate their responses in this area at the regional level to be effective in this space.

The role of WorkAbility Queensland is to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities for the NDIS workforce, and to help give life to collaborative approaches across the skills ecosystem to help ensure NDIS success. For example, the project is currently working with national and state government agencies, as well as North Queensland employers, employment service providers and other stakeholders to support NDIS attraction and recruitment strategies in the early launch site.

¹ The Workforce Vision in the *NDIS Integrated Market, Sector and Workforce Strategy*, June 2015; p12.

Background - Disability Workforce

The WorkAbility project has identified some issues about the disability workforce, and the capacity for the current education and training system to adequately support the future NDIS workforce.

These include:

- The disability workforce in Queensland is forecast to more than double as the NDIS rolls out in the period to June 2019. The NDIA predicts jobs growth of between 16,000 and 19,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Given most jobs in the sector are part-time or casual, this may translate to as many as 30,000 new jobs in the next three years.
- The NDIS workforce will need to be diverse in many ways, including gender, age, different abilities and cultural diversity. Particular attention will be required to ensure more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people from culturally diverse backgrounds are able to enter and remain in the NDIS workforce. People with a disability and their families and carers will be encouraged to take up NDIS careers.
- It is recognised that the NDIS success will require organisations and workers to move away from a philosophy of care and a focus on deficits, and towards a philosophy of empowerment that encourages people with a disability to strive for a better life and provides the supports necessary to help them achieve it. This shift has been occurring in industry for some time, but the transformation still has some way to go.
- It is not clear the extent to which the current disability workforce has embraced a philosophy of empowerment and choice and control and whether they have the necessary, skills to operate accordingly.
- The formal move to choice and control for people with a disability, and a stronger focus on community and economic participation, will have a big impact on the diverse kinds of supports that individuals will demand. It is not possible to know what the future demand will be and it will be important to maintain close monitoring of NDIS support plans to ensure workforce planning keeps pace with participant needs.
- Like other community services sectors, Disability employers tend to recruit based on values and attitudes rather than an entry level qualification. It is important to encourage learners and training providers to focus on the same values and attitudes when commencing and delivering a disability qualification.
- While Certificate III qualifications have broadly been accepted as the minimum requirement for ongoing work in individual support, it is not clear whether this will remain the case under the NDIS – either in terms of the actual supports required or the future quality and safeguards regime.
- As people with a disability begin to purchase supports from other sectors and industries, there may be a need for training programs to assist workers in these areas to develop the knowledge, skills and values to support the NDIS implementation.

Background – Vocational Education and Training

Key assumptions about the Vocational Education and Training system as it relates to NDIS are:

- The Disability VET qualifications, skill sets and competencies in the National Training Package were recently reviewed and are unlikely to change the next 12-24 months.
- Previously, some disability VET delivery has been criticised for taking a deficit focus and it will be important to monitor delivery of the new qualifications to ensure training supports client choice and control.
- VET trainers are required to demonstrate vocational skills that are up to date with industry requirements. This now needs to include an empowerment approach.
- The new *Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability)* commenced in 2016 and has been designed to support implementation of the NDIS, including the following competencies:
 - Contribute to ongoing skills development using a strengths-based approach
 - Follow established person-centred behaviour supports
 - Support community participation and social inclusion
 - Facilitate the empowerment of people with disability
- How competencies and qualifications are delivered and contextualised will be pivotal to how well the training supports NDIS success.
- The training market is based on market forces offering choice of training providers to everyone. Consumers in the training market may need assistance to select the appropriate training products and quality training providers.
- A range of government incentives and subsidies exist to support individuals to access vocational education and training, and may also give priority to certain industries and occupations.
- The national training system provides flexibility to implement new skill sets - from Community Services and other industries - that may address new job roles and skills required for NDIS implementation.
- Disability Work Traineeships in Queensland are in decline. This may be related to changes in how the Trainee supervision requirements have been applied in recent years. It will be important to remove any unnecessary barriers to uptake of Disability Traineeships under the new qualification.

Issues and Potential Responses

The table below lists a range of Vocational Education and Training issues related to NDIS implementation, along with some possible responses to ensure the ongoing development of a workforce to support NDIS success.

The WorkAbility Project intends to use this table to identify what action has already occurred, or is currently occurring, to help address these challenges. We will also consult with key stakeholders to refine the list of potential responses. Key questions for this consultation will include:

- Are there other workforce issues that we need to consider?
- What has already occurred or is currently occurring that may help address these issues?
- Are there other potential responses that we should consider?
- How might the WorkAbility Project best support a system-wide response to the priority issues?

The project will then use this information to develop a set of recommendations to enable the development of a workforce with the skills, knowledge and values to support implementation of the NDIS.

Theme	Education & Training Issues	Potential Responses
Industry Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It may become increasingly difficult for learners and training providers to access the vocational placements required to develop competency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor difficulty in accessing disability and mental health vocational placements. Promote traineeships to support on-the-job learning and assessment. Review subsidies and incentives to support vocational placements in disability and mental health training.
Market - Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People from priority populations may need training and support to be job ready for the NDIS workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for pre-employment training and supports to be oriented towards the needs of priority populations entering the NDIS workforce. Explore opportunities to work with Job Active providers to support priority populations into NDIS jobs. Ensure Skilling Queenslanders for Work is oriented to support priority populations become job ready for NDIS jobs Support community groups seeking to deliver Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs to prioritise priority populations entering NDIS jobs.
Market - Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current government subsidies and incentives may not adequately support all key cohorts of potential candidates to take up NDIS jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate any gaps or barriers in current subsidies and incentives programs in relation to supporting the NDIS workforce
Market - Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability employers have limited funds available to support training, and new funding models may make it difficult to provide staff paid time for training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review subsidies and incentives to ensure optimum level of support for employers and existing workers to participate in training and cover the cost of training.
Market - Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queensland Traineeships in Disability are declining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and address barriers to Disability Traineeships and other factors contributing to decline. Promote and support uptake of traineeships in NDIS workforce.

Theme	Education & Training Issues	Potential Responses
Market – Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of service demand, and therefore workforce demand, is unknowable and will emerge over the next 3 – 5 years as participants exercise their choice and control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop processes to monitor the service and workforce demands resulting from NDIS and communicate this to employers and training providers. Work with local Planners to identify key areas of service and workforce demand. Develop new training products (e.g. skills sets) and related funding supports to address skills gaps and new job roles as they emerge.
Market – information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners and employers may not have sufficient information to know how to choose an appropriate training product or quality training provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop resources to support employers and learners “training officers” and job placement officers to choose quality training providers and courses. Identify and promote high quality training through regional networks.
Market – information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers and jobseekers may not be fully aware of the range of subsidies and incentives available to support NDIS employment and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop targeted materials and strategies to promote understanding of and access to subsidies and incentives. Link with Back to Work Employer and Training Officers to inform and help access relevant funding and supports.
Market – information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobseekers, Job Active Providers and training organisations will need advice on the appropriate pre-employment training that will assist workers to be job ready for NDIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with stakeholders such as employers, participants and their families and carers to design a skill set suitable for jobseekers who may be seeking NDIS jobs.

Theme	Education & Training Issues	Potential Responses
Market Contestability / PQS Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market principles may allow lower quality training providers to attract significant business, potentially failing both employers and learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop resources to support employers and learners to choose quality training providers and courses. Develop industry input into the decisions on which training providers can access state funded training subsidies. Develop guidelines for delivery of disability qualifications and skill sets. Identify and promote high quality training through regional networks. Provide place based forums for training providers and industry to engage in dialogue about training provision.
Market Contestability / PQS Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VET delivered in schools needs specific attention to ensure the training reflects the needs of NDIS jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore strategies for better coordination of VET in Schools and ensure quality training delivery to senior secondary school students.
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cert III & IV level delivery may not be consistent with empowerment philosophy and participant choice and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review delivery and assessment material to ensure appropriate content Develop guidelines for delivery of disability qualifications and skill sets Develop training for VET practitioners to support shift to empowerment philosophy and participant choice and control
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential training participants need to be supported when deciding to undertake training to focus on the values and attitudes required to support NDIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidelines and tools to support participant self-assessment
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing workers may not have the knowledge, skills and values to support choice and control for NDIS participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop upskilling programs that focus on empowerment, participant choice and control, and customer service skills. Support widespread implementation of upskilling for the existing workforce.

Theme	Education & Training Issues	Potential Responses
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers in other sectors who begin to provide services to NDIS participants may require support to develop the knowledge, skills and values required for NDIS to succeed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop orientation information and/or training for workers beginning to deliver services to people with a disability. Explore content of wider health and community services education and training, as well as other training packages such as hospitality and tourism, regarding NDIS and participant choice and control.
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skill sets may be required to support new skills and job roles important for the success of NDIS, for example: customer service skills, billing officers, marketing skills, cultural liaison officers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with industry to identify new roles and new skills, and design training products to address skills gaps. Ensure funding support for skill sets related to new job roles and new skills required to support NDIS.
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be a need for quality leadership and management training to support jobs growth and NDIS environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore appropriate qualifications and skill sets to address leadership and management needs Review subsidies and incentives to support leadership development Identify quality training products and promote to the employers and existing workers
Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community mental health workers need to be skilled in working in a recovery model, and have the skills to provide different services to people over time as their lives change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key skills and requirements for community mental health workers. Develop advice to training providers on delivery of qualifications and skill sets for community mental health workers. Identify quality training products and promote to jobseekers, existing workers and employers. Review the previous ROC IV model of VET practitioner development