MAKING IT WORK

A workforce guide for disability service providers

A Practical Design Fund project funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

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The opinions and comments expressed in this document are those of the authors and they do not necessarily represent the views of the Minister for Disability Reform and they cannot be taken in any way as expressions of government policy.

Acknowledgements

The generous contributions of time, energy and ideas of all those who contributed to this project enabled this Guide to be created. We sincerely thank our Reference Group members who gave generously of their time, and the managers, support workers, people receiving support and their families from the 20 disability providers and organisations across Australia invited to participate, and the six people from England, Sweden and Canada. We also thank our two research assistants, Dr Raelene West and Christina David, for their competent and thoughtful contributions.

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Contents

This guide (Guide) provides strategies for disability service providers (providers) to draw upon when creating and sustaining a workforce of support workers to meet the aims of DisabilityCare Australia and implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013[1]. In particular, the Guide is designed to assist providers develop a workforce strategy that will enable support workers to:

i)   support the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability

ii)   provide reasonable and necessary supports, and

iii)   enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports.

The essence of DisabilityCare Australia is to be supportive, responsive, exible and creative. This Guide offers a wealth of ideas and practical suggestions without being prescriptive. It includes ideas relating directly to support workers as well as to their interactions with service users and their employing service provider, and there are varying cost implications. The Guide does not attempt to provide one integrated workforce management strategy. Instead, it is intended that providers will take away

ideas to develop their own unique workforce strategy relevant to their environment and provider type. The aim of this guide is to contribute to the development of enthusiastic, competent and satis ed workers who will embrace the aims of DisabilityCare Australia and provide excellent support to people with disability.

The Guide is organised around the following themes: Communication; Organisational culture, values and expectations; Recruitment; Flexible, responsive and creative work; Training, mentoring and support; Recognition and incentives; and Career Pathways. These themes emerged from an analysis of interviews with key stakeholders in Australia, England, Sweden and Canada, where challenges and opportunities in a DisabilityCare environment were discussed. The themes were also identi ed in the literature and they have been organized to re ect critical elements of good practice in workforce planning and development. The support needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and people receiving support (referred to as Aboriginal in this Guide), and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people are integrated throughout the Guide under relevant headings, with additional attention under speci c headings. The Guide is designed to assist providers meet the aims of DisabilityCare

Australia regarding responsiveness, supportiveness, exibility and creativity.

Each theme incorporates ideas from

vision and values, coupled with open and clear pathways of communication, underpinned the quality and consistency of provider operations. Related to leadership and communication was the importance of positive working relationships internally between staff, and externally between workers and people receiving support.

The interviews also revealed numerous tensions which need to be managed. The key tensions identi ed were:

- funding shortfalls that limited the time available for creative planning and suf cient support

- many people needed to 'stretch' their budgets to maximise their support, while workers needed a reasonable wage

- people needed exibility to change the days and hours of their support as their circumstances changed, while providers and workers wanted predictable rosters

- some workers wanted permanent work and certainty to plan their lives, while some providers wanted a casualised workforce to maximise exible rosters and to avoid xed wage commitments when demand for services was unpredictable.

This Guide cannot resolve these tensions. Rather, it presents ideas from different types of providers as to how they are managing these tensions, and at times these ideas are contradictory. Readers are encouraged to approach the ideas and suggestions with an open mind and to take what is relevant for their context and community. The Guide is structured to give a brief introduction to each theme, with sub-themes included when the topic is broad. Stories and anecdotes are used to illustrate key ideas, and where required, explanatory notes are offered. Background evidence accompanies this Guide with broader evidence for the ideas presented.

Summary of key themes

Organisation culture, values and expectations

Recruitment

Career pathways

Communication
Underpins all other strategies

Recognition and incentives

Flexible, responsive & creative work

Training, mentoring and support

- Keep a 'diary' regarding the person if appropriate, for team members working with one person to share information, detailing the person's preferences, plus household matters such as menus, shopping, budgets, activities and any concerns.

- Listen to workers' preferences about how their work is structured. This listening begins with the job interview and continues through induction and regular supervision and feedback. Open communication is key to positive relationships and workers feeling that they 2 0 0 12eda3n0Aeard.

  Note: An example of a lack a communication is that some managers did not know that their workers were distressed when they had2eden refused bank loans because of their casual status.

- Use IT to SMS the group of workers about last minute changes and work opportunities e.g. an emergency shift.

- Use IT such as online roster systems to post rosters and work opportunities that 2 0 0 12transp2 0 0 1nt to all workers and afford opportunity to manage their own schedules.

- Use IT Facebook for workers to exchange information and peer support

- Use IT for people 0 0 1ceiving support to access IT applications to post the shifts they need or to inform of changes or cancellations.

  Note: With IT options inc 0 0 1asing, some workers felt frustrated because they were expected to fund private internet access to see rosters or they would miss out on information and opportunities. Consider p2 tially 0 0 1imbursing IT costs when mobile phone or home computers are required for work, and encourage tax expense claims. Workers not familiar with IT need ori1ntation and assistance.

"You really have to get to know the person first. You can't walk into someone's house and expect you are going to be a p2 t of it … Some people are used to people coming in and they open up quickly, but sometimes it takes time to unpick the layers. Listen to the body language and let the relationship evolve. Ask questions, and it is okay not to have the answers when people ask questions in return, help them find their ideas. Also, you need to share something of yourself as well, if you expect others to share with you. Know the person, not their disability."

(Provider community facilitator)

A family member of a person 0 0 1ceiving support said that they have a structured process for open communication. The person, the family and the coordinator meet fortnightly to discuss plans and any concerns. The coordinator then meets with the team leader and the team of workers at their regular meetings. Additional opportunities for communication between the fortnightly meetings are via email, Skype, phone or face-to-face meetings.

2. Organisation culture, values and expectations

Organisation culture and change

Each provider has a unique culture based on its values, vision, goals, workforce structure and the local context. Providers need to clearly communicate to workers what they are required to do to meet the organisation's expectations. Workers who had worked at different providers said there were stark differences in expectations across providers regarding the extent to which providers' aims are aligned with DisabilityCare Australia. Much change is needed for some providers, at the organisational and individual worker levels, for the sector to successfully transition to the DisabilityCare Australia principles of choice, control, and social and economic participation.

Culture and organisational change is inherently stressful, and workers face additional challenges in the new environment as they become more accountable to the people they support, while also managing their obligations toward their employing provider. Some workers welcome the new opportunities, while others feel unsettled by the new expectations.

- Provide training and support to those workers who are learning to take a broader role and assist people to take more control and have more choice and participate in social and economic activities

## Orientation to values and expectations

There is a wide range of values and practices among providers so it is important that each provider explains its approach to people wanting support and to prospective workers. It cannot be assumed that people and workers know what values and expectations the provider holds. It is important for all parties (providers, workers and people receiving support) to understand the shared expectations. For example, one provider interviewed is committed to having each worker support only one person, with the aim of providing a person centred service. Other providers strive to match the needs of people and their workers, while also providing the worker with suf cient hours to earn a reasonable wage. All providers attended to the personal needs of people they supported. Some placed greater emphasis than others on giving people choice and control

and facilitating social and economic participation. Practices to ful ll the aims of DisabilityCare Australia are still being developed.

> *A young man receiving support, who had an intellectual disability said, "I want respect and help to follow my dreams". He had a long term supportive relationship with his worker and appreciates the support given, especially when he is challenged at times about his behaviour. He said that he was treated in a 'real way' which gave him confidence to manage conflict.*

Ideas

- *Review the provider's overall purpose, aims and strategic planning documents to consider whether they have to be updated to align with those of DisabilityCare Australia.*

- *Invite people supported by the provider to participate in a review of the provider's aims and procedures.*

- *Develop a change management strategy if required.*

- *Use advertising, 'Open Days' and individual interviews to communicate to people and prospective workers about the provider's values, beliefs, expectations and the opportunities that result from these.*

- *Include people supported by the provider to present at recruitment forums to train workers about the service provided and what is expected of them.*

- *Train workers that people have the right to respect, to have choice and control over their support, and to participate in the social and economic life of the community to their full potential.*

- *'Buddy' a new worker with an experienced worker who is fully aware and practices the provider's values and expectations.*

- *Introduce the provider's values and expectations during recruitment and reinforce in ongoing supervision and mentoring.*

- *Model required values, attitudes and behavior at senior management level.*
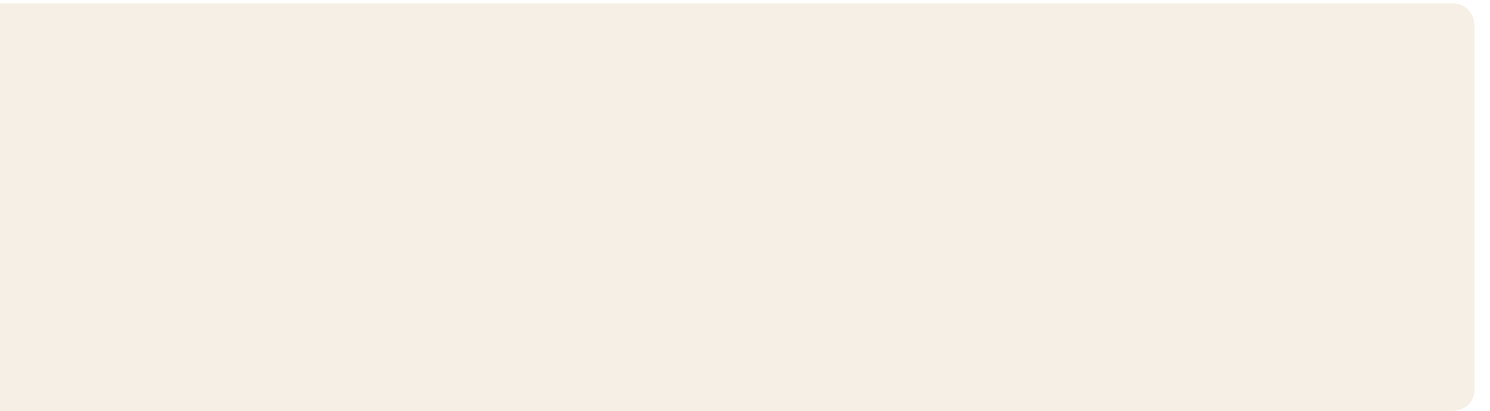
3. Recruitment

Recruitment strategies varied greatly. The key differences were whether speci c groups of potential workers were targeted, the working conditions offered, and the efforts made to 'match' the person and the worker. These factors are interrelated in practice. The ideas and examples given are presented in three headings: general and speci c targeted recruitment; working conditions; and, matching person and worker.
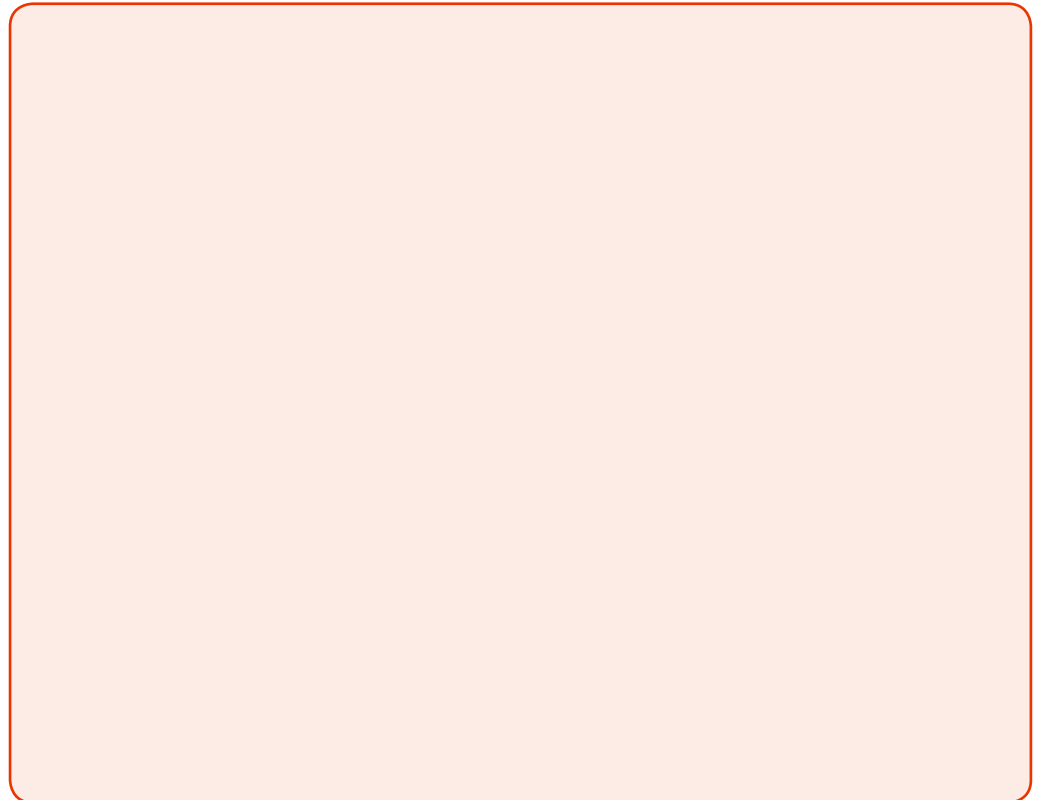
- *Develop recruitment strategies that suit the area and workers targeted e.g. websites such as Gumtree and SEEK are effective in metropolitan areas; speak at universities and TAFE colleges and post notices on their websites and notice boards to attract students; advertise in local newspapers for older workers; hold recruitment forums for target groups such as parents at home with young children, middle aged women with grown children, older workers, and retirees.*

- *Develop a volunteer program and recruit from volunteers who demonstrate the necessary attributes.*

- *Liaise with education and training facilities to have students on placement / work experience and recruit from students who demonstrate the necessary attributes.*

The Swedish interviewee said that many Swedish artists work part-time as personal assistants and find the work rewarding while pursuing other interests.

A manager said that they accept anyone of any age. "Sometimes

were looking for work elsewhere. One CEO also raised the concern that the disability sector could not compete for recruits with similar elds if most of the work is casualised and the workers have no career prospects.

Providers have to manage the tensions of balancing workers' needs for security, providing maximum exibility to people receiving support, and nancial viability. Causal work and job security are likely to remain contentious issues.

For many workers permanent part-time work is preferable to casual work without security. Guaranteed minimum hours can be organised on a fortnightly, monthly or annual basis. A number of providers interviewed guaranteed their workers minimum hours with regular additional hours that suited their varying demand for services. Comparison was made to practises in the fruit picking industry to guarantee workers' hours annually and accommodate seasonal variation.

A CEO said that they have successfully addressed a number of work conditions challenges. "We needed more workers, and we needed workers from diverse backgrounds because the people we support are culturally diverse across metro and rural areas. Previously we recruited permanent part-time workers with a low number of guaranteed hours, and as a result we employed mainly married, middle aged women. Other workers needed longer hours and a higher income, and it was a challenge to give them the hours they needed. We are careful to find the right worker for the person, with the right skills and values, and we decided to develop our existing workers rather than keep looking for new workers. First we invested in all workers attending person centred values training. Then we developed a supervision structure to ensure that workers were providing strengths based support. We now have team leaders providing close supervision and support with a ratio of one supervisor to nine workers, plus workers are mentored through buddying. Contracts are permanent part-time and we offer more hours per week than previously. We negotiate flexible hours with workers because we offer people flexible support, with a one hour minimum service if required."

Ideas

- *Ask prospective worker what work times suit them e.g. students are often available for evenings and weekends, retirees often commit to ongoing work if they can have three months leave each year to travel.*

- *Ask prospective workers their preferences for casual/permanent work, part-time/full-time work, hours of work each per week.*

  Notes: Many workers preferred to be on a contract so that they had better working conditions to get bank loans; payment for gaps between appointments, administration, travel costs between appointments, staff meetings, late cancellations, holidays and sick pay. The Modern Award and Enterprise Bargaining Agreements' may determine the working arrangements that can and cannot be offered.

- *Give a probation period of one to three months when offering permanent work to ensure the worker has the values, attitudes, skill and capabilities needed.*

Matching person and worker

The importance of matching the person and the worker was emphasised. Successful matching of the person with an appropriate worker results in positive experiences, with implications for service quality, job satisfaction and staff retention. DisabilityCare Australia's aims for people with disability to exercise choice and control in the planning and delivery of their supports; and encourages providers to involve people in the selection of their workers. Some providers already use this practice in Australia, Canada and England.

> *"The power and control of recruitment must rest with the person being supported, with the focus in the recruitment process on matching the needs of the individuals ... The process of matching is crucial for successful recruitment."*
>
> (Person receiving support)

A team leader said that one woman complained about her workers and demanded changes until she took an active role in recruiting, interviewing and choosing her workers. Now she has a stable team of workers and no issues. She feels in control and has ownership of her support.

A team leader said that they recruit workers who were able to relate to the person needing support and share their interests. If the person needing support likes swimming, a worker is sought with this interest. Formal qualifications are not as important, although workers with qualifications who have a deep understanding of a person centred approach and values can be excellent workers.

A representative from Women with Disabilities Victoria who reviewed the draft of this report, told of inappropriate matching of women with male workers from cultures were menstruation was viewed as unclean, so both the women and workers were uncomfortable when they assisted with changing pads. In extreme situations, pressure was put on the women to use oral contraceptive to stop menstruation.

Ideas

- *Discuss with the person to be supported their requirements and preferences regarding the type of workers they prefer, acknowledging the limitations.*

   Notes: Some women want a female worker to provide intimate care for reasons of personal privacy, culture or fears of violence or abuse.

   People often prefer workers with whom they have something in common e.g. gender, age, cultural background or shared interests, such as music, cars or craft.

- *Include the person to be supported in the selection process so that they can select workers with the skills they want and begin to develop a positive working relationship from the beginning. This process also demonstrates the person centred values of the provider and an empowering approach.*

   Note : People and their workers often feel a greater commitment to each other if they choose each other.

- *Target workers who match the demographic profile that people prefer e.g Aboriginal and CALD workers for people who want workers from their ethnic group; older / younger workers as preferred.*

- *Discuss with the person receiving support the relative merits of having one, or a small number of workers, compared to having a larger pool e.g.*

He wants to go out with his friends to live bands and dancing in the evening, and needs workers available then too.

Ideas

- Negotiate duties, rostered times and the flexibility required with workers and the people they support as much as possible, e.g. some workers preferred developing a long-term relationship with one person, while others preferred short-term contacts and more varied work.

  Notes: Workers reported greater satisfaction when they have input into the design and structure of their work.

  Most people and most workers preferred having long term working relationships. To avoid risks of becoming overly dependent on a single worker, or a small number of workers; it may be best for managers to address any problems on an individual basis and encourage other consistent arrangements.

  Workers said that their work was more satisfying and they were more effective in assisting people to reach their goals when they were given the autonomy to respond flexibly to peoples' needs.

- Devolve authority to people and their individual workers or team of workers to negotiate roster changes to the extent that is appropriate to maximise flexibility.

  Note: There needs to be caution when devolving authority to change rosters because workers can be asked to do additional tasks such as pick up medications or shopping in their own time. They needed training on how to manage requests.

- Prepare workers to take an expansive role assisting people to exercise choice and control, develop their potential, participate in the community and pursue their goals. This may include attending formal planning meetings.

- Allow time-in-lieu and 'nine day fortnights' to enable workers manage work / life balance.

- Allow workers to do administrative work at home to assist with work / life balance

  Note:

> *A manager said they have developed a smart phone app that shows rostering and workers can post their availability, accept or reject shifts online. Plus there are pop up broadcasts showing last minute shift opportunities.*

> *A manager said that their organisation has invested in updating their computer system to do individual rostering and invoicing, which previously had been a nightmare. Now they have the capacity to carefully manage these areas.*

> *A manager said that a young man with intellectual and other disabilities attending a Transition to Work program had the same consultant support him for two years. This continuity was very important to him because of the strong rapport and trust they developed and he could call his consultant any time during business hours and count on his help.*

Aboriginal and CALD people receiving support

DisabilityCare Australia aims to establish good communication and support people to make their own choices. To achieve these aims when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it is necessary to have an understanding of the country's history. The historical discrimination and abuse continues to impact on many Aboriginal people today who have high levelsman n(L<4 EMC /Span <</MCID 1162 >>BDC BT /T1_0 1 Tf /S r)21

Note: The 10 points are: 1) Recognise; 2) Awareness raising via a concerted outreach approach; 3) Establish NDIS Expert Working Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with disability and the NDIS; 4) Build the capacity of the Non-Indigenous disability service system; 5) Research; 6) Recognise that there already exists a workforce in many Aboriginal communities; 7) Recognise that it's not always about services – many communities just need more resources; 8) Recruitment of more Aboriginal people as workers; 9) Build the capacity of the social movement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disabilities; 10) Aboriginal 'Launch' sites focused upon remote, very remote, regional and urban settings.

- *Consider what historical, current contextual issues and environment factors are impacting on the person and the community*

  Note: Many Aboriginal people are uncomfortable speaking to people in authority because of historical abuse suffered by their communities

- *Show respect by negotiating entry to an Aboriginal community through the assistance of a local Elder or other appropriate person who can be employed as an ambassador.*

  Note: There are many different Aboriginal cultures and customs in communities across the country and entry to each community needs to be negotiated with openness to its particular culture.

- *Show respect by taking time to build face-to-face relationships until formally 'welcomed' and accepted into a community*

- *Show respect by acknowledging traditional ceremonies.*

- *Foster relationships with Aboriginal communities by inviting Elders and other relevant community members to be on the provider's advisory committees, attend the AGM, celebrate NAIDOC Week and other important cultural events and observe memorials such as Sorry Day.*

- *Ask communities, people receiving support and workers what they want.*

  Notes: For women in Aboriginal and CALD communities it may be culturally unacceptable to receive personal assistance from a male worker

  *Everyone has their own preferences. Some Aboriginal people prefer support workers from within or from outside their community. Some Aboriginal people prefer people from within their community because they feel a level of kinship, comfort and mutual understanding, while others prefer workers from outside*ou,:MCID 125eiD 1ding,ul AMCID 1237 B

5. Training, mentoring and support

Training, mentoring and support incorporate all other themes included in this Guide, these being good communication and building positive working relationships, reinforcing the providers' values and aims with people receiving support and workers, providing recognition for work well done and creating career pathways were possible. Training, mentoring, support and supervision are important for all workers, and particularly for new workers who do not have disability qualifications. The providers that recruited workers for their values and personal attributes, rather than formal qualifications, generally also provided more extensive induction, mentoring and supervision than other providers.

Many workers are facing a major role change with the introduction of DisabilityCare Australia. While some people still need and receive only traditional in-home care, the emphasis on "high quality and innovative supports that enable people with disability to maximise independent lifestyles and full inclusion in the mainstream community"[3], expands the role of many workers. Training workers about the new approach they are expected to adopt and ongoing support as they broaden their role is critical.

Many decisions that make all our lives expansive and satisfying are taken on a spontaneous day-to-day, or week-to-week basis and often not at the occasional formal planning meeting. Workers have a key role and a large inuence in creating options for people and assisting them to take advantage of opportunities. This creative facilitation is outside the range of many workers who have only been required to provide personal care until now, and they need training and encouragement to help people nd and take advantage of new opportunities. Many of the workers interviewed said that they gained satisfaction from their work by assisting the person plan and create opportunities that suited their interests. Some added that in some other places they had worked they were not expected or encouraged to look beyond personal care at home.

Expanding the worker's role into planning can also extend to including workers in formal planning meetings. Many providers do this because they recognise that in many instances the worker has valuable knowledge to contribute. Although judgement is needed as to when it is appropriate to include the workers, those who had been included often felt valued and appreciated.

A team leader said that it is difficult finding workers who are good at assisting people to really become engaged in community activities. Most workers would only take people for a coffee, a meal, or maybe to a movie or park. They need training to understand community participation.

Induction

Induction is important in orientating workers to the provider's culture, values and expectations that direct their work, and instructing workers about OH&S and Duty of Care for their protection and for the people they support. Some providers invest much time instructing workers on their particular practices because of their commitment to speci c values.

A service manager said, "We want to control the induction process as much as possible because we send new workers who represent our organisation to unsupervised environments in the community with vulnerable people, potentially without extensive training. To ensure

- *Train workers about people's right to the 'dignity of risk' and to choose their own lifestyle, while being mindful of the worker's duty of care to protect the person from injury.*

- *Train people receiving support, when appropriate, about legal responsibilities and OH&S guidelines relevant to them and their workers.*

- *Train workers about their legal responsibilities and all relevant OH&S guidelines.*

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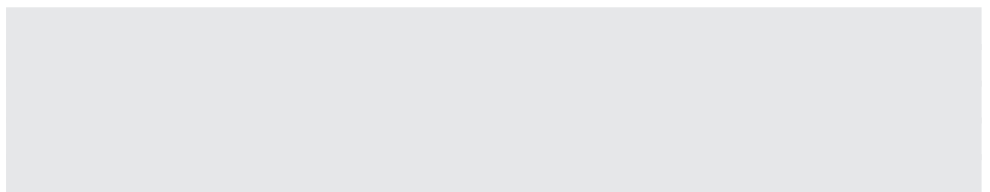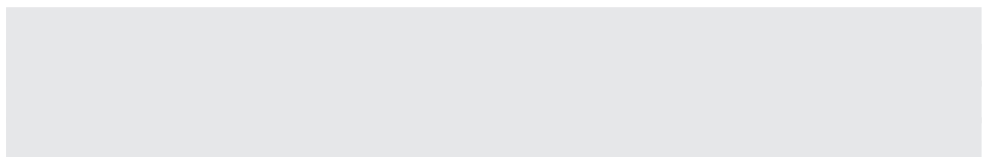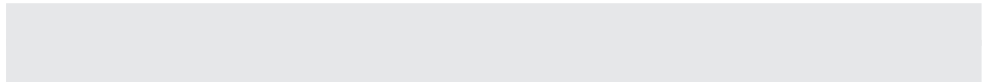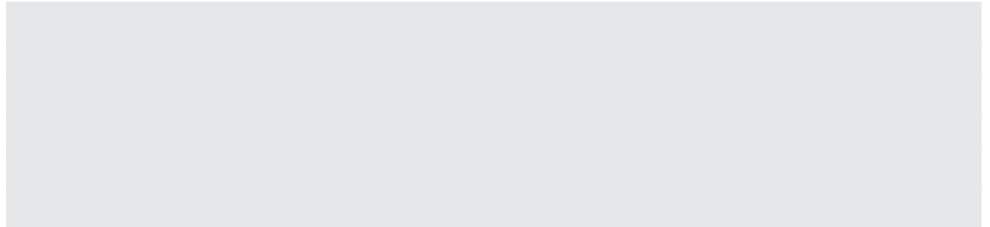
Ideas

- *Provide each worker with an annual training fund (one provider gives $1,000) to spend on any training they consider relevant and is approved.*

- *Assist workers set professional goals and strategies to achieve a healthy work-live balance.*

- *Provide workers with ongoing learning opportunities to revisit the provider's values and expectations, and the expanding opportunities disability support offers through DisabilityCare Australia.*

- *Provide workers with learning opportunities to increase their skills and to prevent burnout e.g. in-house seminars with senior staff or external experts; become a Registered Training Organisation or partner with training organisations to provide Disability Certificate 3 or 4; sponsor conference attendance.*

- *Use a variety of training methods in addition to face-to-face instruction e.g. site visits, IT e-learning platforms, IT Moodle tutorials and multimedia resources.*

- *Provide workers with ongoing learning opportunities to learn how to assist people think broadly about their goals and social participation opportunities.*

- *Provide workers who have only worked in one area opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge, for example, assist workers who have provided personal care in the home to assist people become more included socially.*

- *Train workers to manage any new risks for themselves and for the people they support when the people participate in more social*

> *One worker said that it was tricky deciding if a safety incident should be reported, even though she knew she was obligated to do so, because it would betray the person's trust and could change their relationship. Good providers trained workers how to negotiate with the people they support and how to seek advice from supervisors when they face a dilemma.*

> *A manager in Canada said that the government in some provinces funds coordinators independent of a person's support allocation, and the coordinators have an ongoing role is to assist people plan, recruit and support workers. They provide ongoing support to both the person and the worker to resolve any issues that arise for either party. The people are the legal employers and they can use part of their funds to purchase ongoing administrative support.*

Ideas

- *Provide workers with access to 24/7 telephone advice from a responsible team leader/coordinator.*

- *Provide regular supervision and support from a team leader/coordinator, through face-to-face, phone or IT opportunities, which may suit rural and remote areas. Support can be given in a formal meeting or informally, for example over a cup of coffee. This support needs to be given in a welcoming and safe environment where workers can express concerns and doubts.*

  Note: One support worker wanted professional support and debriefing from supervisors and 9mh7r.gon and thT opportunitids tmakolenpuent s td thdesignom

- *Create social opportunities for workers to mix together, for example: organise a lunch where workers are paid for their time; give film vouchers to a group of workers for a film night; create social networking groups on Facebook etc. that require a secure sign-in; create email groups.*

- *Create opportunities for particular groups of workers to form peer support groups, for example Aboriginal and CALD workers. Share their cultural expertise with other workers.*

- *Provide an Employee Assistance Program for support independent of workers' line supervisors.*

- *Use IT options to supplement face-to-face meetings e.g. video conferencing, Skype, an e-portal that houses a platform for workers to communicate with each other, make suggestions and give feedback.*

- *Ensure the organisational culture encourages and reinforces communication between workers and team leaders/coordinators and workers are not judged negatively when they ask questions and seek advice.*

- *Gain feedback from workers personally or through paper or electronic surveys.*

A team leader said that supervision with workers was previously a formal meeting and it had become more like a casual conversation with individual workers, and sometimes with teams of workers who are supporting one person. The workers share more issues and

6. Recognition and incentives

Many workers said they have great satisfaction working with the people they support and this satisfaction motivates them to continue. Some added that there are additional bene ts of personal growth as they learn much in their work. Providers need to build on the intrinsic satisfaction many workers feel by providing formal recognition and additional incentives to increase workers' job satisfaction and ensure their retention.

> *"My work is challenging, meaningful and purposeful and I get far more out of it than I put in".*   (Provider support worker)

Ideas

- *Provide financial rewards, for example salary sacrifice, pay above the award rate if possible, Christmas bonus, salary packaging, and early access to long service leave.*

- *Provide additional leave, for example extra paid parental leave on top of what is formally required, give extra paid annual leave and extra personal leave in emergencies.*

- *Award movie vouchers to workers who accept evening and weekend work or accept work at short notice.*

- *Award on merit with thank you cards, flowers, vouchers, attendance at conferences, special training, use of a 'company car' for one month.*

- *Randomly award vouchers for dinners, massages and movies.*

  Note: Some workers were confused when vouchers and rewards were given on merit and they did not understand the criteria, even when they benefitted. They did not have difficulties with the random allocation of vouchers, which improved high staff morale.

- *Give formal awards, cards and gifts for good performance, birthdays and starting anniversaries.*

- *Provide positive feedback and appreciation for good job.*

- *Acknowledge good performance in a monthly newsletter.*

"My greatest incentive and reward is being a valued person in my organisation" (Provider support worker)

7. Career pathways

Happy workers give the best service – "I need to know that the worker is happy with the arrangement"

(Person receiving support)

Career pathways are important to some workers and not to others. Some workers who look for varied work, more responsibilities and nancial security appreciate having opportunities to work in different areas and to act in senior roles and they hope to be promoted to team leader or coordinator. These opportunities encourage them to stay in the industry. Some workers who want these opportunities look for work elsewhere if the opportunities are not available within their current workplace, especially if they are casual workers without nancial security or career prospects. Some providers said they required a casualised workforce to provide exible support and

remain nancially viable, and other providers preferred having a permanent workforce and found it cheaper than employing casual workers.

Many providers interviewed did not rely on tertiary quali cations and promoted workers to higher positions only as they gained experience. In contrast, one family member of one person receiving support encouraged providers to sponsor their workers to undertake tertiary education. This family member had years of experience managing a team of workers and was of the view that tertiary education provided team leaders and coordinators with enhanced strategic planning abilities.

"Tertiary education provides team leaders and coordinators with the capacity to apply principles across a range of situations and not be trapped in a particular mode of thinking and responses."

(Family member of person receiving support)

Ideas

- *Encourage and assist workers gain recognition of prior learning (RPL) to enhance their qualifications.*

- *Encourage and assist workers to gain a variety of work experience and have periods of increased responsibility including supervision and mentoring, project work, and planning with people.*

8. Conclusion

The ideas listed above are for providers to consider when developing a workforce management strategy that suits their unique circumstances and prepares them for the requirements of the DisabilityCare Australia. Workforce strategies differ in detail across the country, with the uniform aim to develop and maintain a responsive and creative workforce that supports the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability and enables people to exercise maximum choice and control in their lives.

9. Appendix

Organisations consulted

Australia