

CPD Roundtables on Transitions to Employment Roundtables 1 & 2

On 15 April, CPD convened the first two in a series of virtual roundtables to discuss transitions to employment for people facing disadvantage. Experts joined the roundtables from government, civil society and the private sector (see full list of participants enclosed). We asked the groups of around 30 participants the question: *What interventions can the private sector, civil society and government pursue to tackle long-term unemployment and underemployment for the groups in our society facing the greatest disadvantage?* The first two roundtables focused on a) the overall cohort of the long-term unemployed and underemployed, and b) people with disability. Roundtable participants considered the rapidly changing context in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, noting the threat that people already facing disadvantage in the labour market would be further disadvantaged as unemployment soared. We also noted the potential opportunities Australia's response to COVID-19 presented.

1) Long-term unemployed

During the first roundtable we heard insights from experts including **Alexandra Heath** (Reserve Bank of Australia), **Sandra McPhee AM** (Chair of the 2018 Expert Advisory Panel on Employment Services) and **Robyn Shannon** (Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment), among others. Full participant lists for both roundtables are below.

The conversation highlighted a number of positive trends already underway which can be accelerated in light of the COVID-19 environment. These include improvement in how data and digital methods are used to predict, triage and fast-track employment services; the growth of public-private portals connecting jobseekers directly with employers; new opportunities in micro-credentialing; the importance of specialised and intensive service provision for those people facing disadvantage; and the benefits of place-based approaches and local industry partnerships such as the "community deals" model.

COVID-19 has revealed a number of previously held assumptions about what is not possible to be false. These include the rapid transition to working online for vast swathes of the workforce (and service providers), the suspension of existing contracts and relaxation of mutual obligation. The stimulus package, particularly the lifting of the Newstart through the JobSeeker payment and introduction of the JobKeeper wage subsidy scheme, are important developments. They show that principles underpinning better outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers have not changed but have been reinforced.

Overall, the first roundtable highlighted that COVID-19 has exposed gaps already present and reinforced the need to ramp up existing good practices and ideas. First, the importance of including the long-term unemployed in responses to the crisis is clear — including by ensuring new jobs created or onshored are designed with that group firmly in mind. Second, truly tackling long-term unemployment and underemployment isn't just about people finding a job at all costs, but the quality, suitability and sustainability of that job — including the employment pathways and nature of the employment relationship. Third, forming a coalition to improve the data so it is more useful (measurement of stock and flow, understanding of underutilisation, prediction and triaging, and sharing of best practice). Fourth, federal-state-industry partnerships and joint funding into local networks, as recommended by previous reviews into national employment services reform. Lastly, doubling down on locally tailored approaches.

There are now big opportunities to advance these ideas, but the roundtable was told coordinated approaches to government and business would be much more effective than a splintered effort.

2) People with disability

The second roundtable began with a presentation from Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner **Ben Gauntlett**, with **Donna Purcell** from the Human Rights Commission, and from the CEO of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), **Martin Hoffman**.

Building on the previous conversation, which the majority of the participants also attended, this conversation focussed on specific ideas to boost employment for people with disability. A number of participants spoke to ideas they submitted ahead of the roundtable. The common ground and alignment between roundtable participants on what could be done was particularly stark.

Common to all the ideas was the importance of including people with disability from the start and throughout the design and implementation process.

Specific ideas advanced included:

- Similar to the first roundtable, the need to gather segmented data across place, industries, and to match with the strengths and talents of people with disability and the other target cohorts.
- Given the rapid transition to online work, building and sharing capacity across providers and working quickly to understand what works on digital access and digital literacy.
- The opportunity presented by the evaluation of Disability Employment Services and new Disability Employment Strategy, being led by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.
- Strategic advocacy through a “Champions of Change” or “Employers Hub” with private and public sector employers who commit to being exemplar employers of people with disability.
- Supporting both public and private employers to co-design new roles during and after COVID with people with disability and other target cohorts in mind.
- Backing new trials in communities facing disadvantage using the Ticket to Work model, as well as other initiatives that build the transition from school to work, providing young people with disability with a sense of expectation and ambition for a fulfilling future.
- Analysis of which measures could and should remain for the target cohorts post-COVID, with an emphasis on opportunities in new growth industries.

Where to next?

The ideas and analysis generated during the first two roundtables in the series will be refined and taken forward by the Steering Group ahead of the next two roundtables, which are focussed on people in contact with the criminal justice system and on vulnerable migrants and refugees. Those roundtables are scheduled for 10 June 2020. We will come back to roundtable participants as appropriate on specific ideas that can be advanced together.

This roundtable series is convened by the Centre for Policy Development with the support of the Boston Consulting Group and Paul Ramsay Foundation. We thank participants for their time and contribution and look forward to an ongoing conversation about our collective response.

Participants: Long-term unemployed

Andrew Asten	Project Leader, Boston Consulting Group
Chris Blake	Executive General Manager, Latitude Financial Services
Annabel Brown	Program Director, Centre for Policy Development
Miguel Carrasco	Global Leader, Centre for Digital Government
Julian Cooper	Data Scientist, Boston Consulting Group
Dan Creasey	Head of Pro Bono and Community Impact, King & Wood Mallesons
Peter Davidson	Principal Advisor, ACOSS
Glyn Davis AO	CEO, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Melissa Donnelly	National Secretary, Community and Public Sector Union
Frances Flanagan	Fellow, Business School, University of Sydney
Ben Gauntlett	Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
Lill Healy	Deputy Secretary – Service Systems Reform, Department of Premier and Cabinet Victoria
Alexandra Heath	Head of Economic Analysis, Reserve Bank of Australia
Conny Lenneberg	Executive Director, Brotherhood of St Laurence
Travers McLeod	CEO, Centre for Policy Development
Sandra McPhee AM	Chair, Public Service Commission Advisory Board, former Chair of the Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel
Donna Purcell	Senior Advisor Accessibility, Australian Human Rights Commission
Robyn Shannon	First Assistant Secretary - Quality, Integrity and Evidence Division, Employment Group, Department of Education, Skills and Employment
John Spierings	Executive Officer, Mannifera
David Tong	Office of the Commonwealth Coordinator General for Migrant Services, Department of Home Affairs
Jeni Whalan	Chief Program Officer, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Mary Wood	Head, Social Policy and Partnerships, Business Council of Australia

Participants: People with Disability

Chris Blake	Executive General Manager, Latitude Financial Services
Annabel Brown	Program Director, Centre for Policy Development
John Bush	Associate, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Peter Davidson	Principal Advisor, ACOSS
Glyn Davis AO	CEO, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Jennifer Fitzgerald	Chief Executive Officer, Scope Australia
Ben Gauntlett	Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
Martin Hoffman	Chief Executive Officer, National Disability Insurance Agency
Pieta Manning	State Manager Victoria, Mable
Travers McLeod	Chief Executive Officer, Centre for Policy Development
Sandra McPhee AM	Chair, Public Service Commission Advisory Board, former Chair of the Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel
David Petherick	Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID)
Donna Purcell	Senior Advisor Accessibility, Australian Human Rights Commission
Mary Sayers	Chief Executive Officer, Children and Young People With Disability (CYDA)
Fiona Sharkie	Chief Executive Officer, Amaze
Sally Sinclair	Chief Executive Officer, National Employment Services Association (NESA)
Fiona Smith AM	Non-Executive Director, Melbourne Polytechnic (TAFE Institute) and Human Rights Law Centre
George Sotiropoulos	Group Manager, Disability, Employment and Carers, Department of Social Services
Michael Upston	Head of Employment Services, Outlook (VIC)
Michelle Wakeford	National Manager, Ticket To Work
Jeni Whalan	Chief Program Officer, Paul Ramsay Foundation
Jo Wickes	National Relationship Manager – Provider and Market Engagement, National Disability Insurance Agency