What do people with intellectual disability think about their jobs and the support they receive at work?
A comparative study of three employment support models

SPRC
Social Policy Research Centre

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What is this report about?

This report is about what people with intellectual disability think of their jobs.
It is about jobs in:

- **Open employment**
  This is having a job in any workplace with support.

- **ADEs**
  This is working at a workplace only for people with disability.

- **Social enterprises**
  This is working in a business set up to make sure people with disability are included.

In the report, people with intellectual disability talk about:

- How they choose a job
- How they find a job
- How they keep their job
- What they do if they want to change jobs
- What was important about working in different jobs
- What they like about different jobs
- What they do not like about different jobs

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Who did the research?

The Department of Human Services asked for the research to be done. They are part of the government.

The Social Policy Research Centre and Southern Cross University did the research.

Who took part?

51 people with intellectual disability were in the research. To take part they had to:

- Have a job
- Live in Sydney or Northern Rivers

How did they take part?

There were two ways people could take part:

- Talking with a researcher by themselves

- Talking with a researcher in a small group of people

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What the research found

Choosing a job

The research found that some people could not choose what job to do, because:

- Parents or teachers chose for them
- They did not have many options to choose from

Some other people could choose what job to do. They found it easiest to choose when there were:

- People who helped them decide

- Services that helped them decide

- Chances to find out about and try different jobs

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Finding and keeping a job

The research found that:

- It was hard for people to find a job in open employment
- It was easier to find a job in an ADE
- Lots of people wanted to find jobs in social enterprises, so sometimes they had to wait for a job to come up

The research also found that:

- It was harder for people to keep jobs in open employment than ADEs or social enterprises

Where people kept their jobs in open employment, they usually had:

- Help with tasks at work

- Good relationships at work

- Help to build their confidence

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Changing jobs

The research found that lots of people in open employment had changed jobs when they didn't want to, because:

- Their workplace closed down
- It was a short job and it finished

Some people made their own decision to change jobs:

- Sometimes this was moving from an ADE to open employment.

  These people wanted better pay or to work with people without disability as well.

- Sometimes this was moving from open employment to an ADE or social enterprise.

  These people were treated badly in open employment and thought an ADE or social enterprise would feel safer.

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What people thought was important about working

People in open employment, ADEs and social enterprises all said that the most important things about working were:

- Having friends and getting to know other people at work
- Getting paid

The next most important things to most people were:

- Learning new skills
- Having something to do
- Having something to take part in

Some people also said that other things were important to them, including:

- Feeling good at work
- Having rights at work
- Doing what they wanted with their lives

Mostly it was people working in open employment who mentioned feeling good, having rights and doing what they wanted to.

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What people liked and did not like about different types of jobs

People working in open employment said that compared to ADEs:

- Open employment had better pay
- Open employment had better connections with the community

BUT

- It was harder to find and keep a job in open employment
- They were treated badly in open employment

People working in ADEs said that compared to open employment:

- It was easier to find and keep a job in ADEs
- There was more encouragement and understanding in ADEs

BUT

- The pay was not as good in ADEs
- There were less community connections in ADEs

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People working in social enterprises said that:

- There was a lot of encouragement and understanding in social enterprises
- There were good connections with the community in social enterprises

BUT

- It was hard to find a job in social enterprises, because there weren't enough paid positions yet
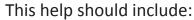
These findings are important because they show that all the different types of jobs have some good things about them and some bad things. There was no job that had everything that people wanted.

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What happens now?

This information can be used to help know how to make working better for people with intellectual disability.

For example, it shows that:

- People need more help to choose, find, keep and change jobs, especially in open employment

This help should include:
  o Helping people one-on-one
  o Changing the system to make it work better for people
  o Making sure services can do enough to help

- More work needs to be done to make sure that all the different types of jobs can give more of what people want

- It is useful to help people have more connections with other people and the community outside of work – when they feel more connected outside of work, it might be easier for them to make their own choices about their jobs

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Executive summary

The Australian Government Department of Social Services Disability and Employment Sector Reform Branch commissioned a comparative study of outcomes across a variety of employment support types for people with intellectual disability in Australia. The study was undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW Australia, in partnership with the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University and a community advisor, Robert Strike.

The study focused on the perceptions and perspectives of people with intellectual disability working in open employment with support from Disability Employment Services (DES); supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs); and social enterprise employment. Fifty-one people with intellectual disability working in these employment types from Sydney and the Northern Rivers participated in accessible interviews. They were asked about their experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment and about their likes, dislikes and outcomes from working. The major findings and policy implications are summarised below. Section 7 of the report includes an expanded version of the major findings and policy implications, with greater detail on both.

The major findings in relation to experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment were:

- Some people with intellectual disability had no choice about where they would work. This was because there were few choices available or because parents or teachers made the choice for them. Where they did choose, it was common that they made constrained choices, where there were not many options to choose from or where external circumstances had a large degree of impact on what they decided.

  Implications:

  People with intellectual disability need to have a range of employment opportunities available to them when job seeking, with support to choose between options.

- People with intellectual disability were successfully assisted to find work where there were both supports for their job search (helpful people, service system supports and preparatory experiences, such as work experience or employment expos) and conditions conducive to gaining employment (for example, enough business contracts in social enterprises).

  Implications:

  People with intellectual disability need to have both personal and systemic-level support for making employment choices.

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- People seeking work in open employment experienced many more barriers to finding work than people looking to work in supported employment or social enterprises. The barriers included ineffective or constrained DES assistance, challenges in the application or waiting process, and poor attitudes from employers. Work in ADEs was easier to secure. Social enterprises were welcoming, but people sometimes had to wait for paid positions and did unpaid work while waiting.

  Implications:

  Policy needs to address the limitations and constraints on funding in DES to allow assistance with education, capacity building and building people with intellectual disability's employment expectations.

  The policy framework needs to further enable social enterprises as an alternative work option for people with intellectual disability.

- People working in open employment experienced more barriers to maintaining their employment than people working in ADEs or social enterprises. Barriers to maintaining work in open employment included unstable labour market conditions, as well as disrespect, under-valuing and discrimination towards employees with intellectual disability. As such, finding an open employment job and then keeping it was a challenge for many people with intellectual disability. Maintaining a job was best aided where people had practical help with tasks at work; supportive relationships in the workplace, characterised by practical assistance and trust; and were assisted in personal development and confidence-building. Some people in the study had successfully kept their open employment jobs for a long time, but there were also many others who had left open employment because of the barriers to maintaining work.

  Implications:

  Employers in open employment need further encouragement to appreciate and understand how critical both personal supports for workers with intellectual disability and education towards cultural change in the broader workplace are as elements supporting people with intellectual disability to maintain their employment.

- Many people with intellectual disability had changed jobs in the past and commonly switched between roles; however, this was usually due to circumstances outside their control. It was much less common for people with intellectual disability to actively seek to change their employment. Sometimes this was because they were genuinely happy in their roles or felt secure there, while for others it was because they did not believe they would find or be accepted in another job.

  Implications:

  People with intellectual disability need to know that it is acceptable to change jobs if they wish to and to be encouraged to do so. They need to have support available to further develop their confidence for finding and moving to new roles. This support could be boosted in existing programs, such as DES and Transition to Work, or offered through other capacity building programs for people with disability, including those associated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

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- Sometimes people had changed employment type. The most common routes were either: (a) moving out of an ADE into either open employment or social enterprises, because they wanted higher pay, better working conditions, more of a challenge or because they wanted to work with people other than people with disability; or (b) moving from open employment to an ADE or social enterprise, because they had a bad experience in open employment and so did not want to remain in an open workplace.

Implications:

There needs to be support available to ensure that people with intellectual disability are making informed and supported choices about changing their employment type. This includes, but should not be limited to, assisting people who have had difficulty in either finding or maintaining work in open employment to consider staying with this employment type with a new employer or new DES, or to consider returning to open employment if they have already left.

- Many of the difficulties that people with intellectual disability experienced in their employment appear to be about the types of jobs available to them and/or their position in the labour market. Across all employment types, people with intellectual disability were working in entry-level and/or low-skilled positions. As such, they were subject to the tumultuous conditions of this section of the labour market, including low job stability, high turnover of jobs and employers, switching between low-skilled tasks, and lack of clear pathways into work. While the low-skilled work was similar across the different employment types, people in open employment appeared to be most vulnerable to these labour market conditions, as they did not have the interface of an ADE or social enterprise to ensure more job stability.

Implications:

Improving people with intellectual disability's employment outcomes should be considered one of the reasons for and factors in improving conditions in the entry-level and/or low-skilled end of the labour market in general. The employment of people with intellectual disability is not only a disability-specific issue and needs to be considered within the context of broader workforce and labour market conditions and policies.

The major findings in relation to people with intellectual disability's likes, dislikes and outcomes from employment were:

- Across all employment types, relationships and getting paid/achieving material wellbeing were the most important employment outcomes to people with intellectual disability. Skill development and participation were the next most important outcomes, with skill development particularly emphasised by people working in social enterprises and participation valued across employment types against a background of common experiences of social exclusion. Personal wellbeing, rights, respect and equity, and self-determination were important to those who mentioned them, but appeared overall to be outcomes less commonly mentioned as a result of employment. People working in open employment appeared to have the most knowledge about rights, respect and equity.

Implications:

Awareness of workplace relations is critical to ensure that positive relationships are fostered and maintained between employees, colleagues, supervisors and support staff.

People with intellectual disability working in all employment types need to have access to accessible information and advocacy support in relation to their rights and issues of respect and equity in the workplace.

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■ Getting paid was an important component of material wellbeing for people with intellectual disability, regardless of their type of employment. While most people were conscious of balancing their pay so that they could also remain on the Disability Support Pension, the pension appeared to not be enough on its own for achieving material wellbeing and quality of life. Pay from working thus appeared to have an important role in allowing people with intellectual disability enough money to pay for aspects they enjoyed as well as their daily living expenses. This was the case across the different types of employment.

Many people with intellectual disability did not criticise their pay arrangements. For some, this was because they were satisfied with their pay, while a large number of others appeared to be unaware of the details of their pay arrangements. Where they did criticise their pay arrangements, this happened across the different types of employment, although for different reasons in different employment types: low pay was criticised in ADEs, reduced pay while training was criticised in social enterprises, and differential pay compared to colleagues was criticised in open employment.

Implications:

People with intellectual disability need to have support and accessible information provided to them to make informed decisions about how their pay is related to their employment type.

■ Few people made direct comparisons between the employment types, but where they did, they identified that: (a) open employment offered better conditions with regard to pay and mainstream community connections than supported employment, but it was harder to get into than supported employment, had less job stability and they were more likely to face discrimination in open employment; whereas (b) supported employment in ADEs offered less pay and less mainstream community connections than open employment, but more support (i.e. encouragement, understanding and accommodation of their needs) and job stability; further (c) social enterprises were perceived as both supportive and connected to the mainstream community, but there were sometimes problems with entering paid positions, as these were in higher demand than what was available. These findings show the benefits and drawbacks of each employment type in comparison to each other.

Further, these findings highlight that none of the available employment options offer everything that people with intellectual disability may want. People with intellectual disability therefore experience a trade-off between which outcomes they most want from their work – do they choose support and stability in supported employment but less pay and mainstream community connections, or do they attempt to have better pay and mainstream community connections in open employment but have a harder time finding work and less stability for keeping a job if they find one? Social enterprises may be an alternative for some people, but paid positions are in higher demand than what is available. This trade-off is a difficult decision; people with intellectual disability will choose different employment types based on which outcomes they prioritise most highly and which job options they feel are available to them.

Implications:

The gaps in open and supported employment need to be addressed so that people with intellectual disability do not have to trade-off between better outcomes in pay and mainstream community connections on the one hand, or better outcomes in support and job stability on the other – there is importance to building the capacity of all employment types to be able to deliver on all of these outcomes.

In the context of the link between employment and community connections, there is a need to work to articulate the connections between broader initiatives to address the social exclusion experienced by people with intellectual disability and the ways these initiatives act to support their employment choices and outcomes. Less social isolation in general may empower people with intellectual disability to choose more freely between different types of employment.

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1. Introduction

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) Disability and Employment Sector Reform Branch commissioned a comparative study of outcomes across a variety of employment support types for people with intellectual disability in Australia. The study was undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at UNSW Australia, in partnership with the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University and a community advisor, Robert Strike. This report details the findings of this study.

In Australia, people with intellectual disability are supported to participate in a number of different types of employment: open employment in the open job market with support from Disability Employment Services (DES); supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs); and social enterprise employment. The study focused on understanding the perceptions and perspectives of people with intellectual disability working in these different types of employment about their working lives. It explored the following research questions:

- **How do people with intellectual disability perceive their employment and what do they value, or not, about their employment?** How does this differ across employment types?

- **What are the everyday experiences and perceptions of people with intellectual disability in employment, including of being supported to find, choose and maintain employment?** How does this differ across employment types?

- **How, and in what circumstances, are people with intellectual disability supported to change their employment choice?** How are their employment options determined? What choices and decision-making support is available? Are their employment choices supported?

- **What are the employment outcomes for people with intellectual disability in relation to social inclusion, social and economic participation and quality of life?** How do outcomes differ across employment types? How do the Australian outcomes compare to outcomes internationally?

The findings of the study answer the research questions and are detailed in later sections of this report. The findings are divided into two sections. The first section of the findings is about experiences in and perceptions of employment, including the opportunities and barriers that people with intellectual disability perceive in choosing, finding, maintaining and changing their employment. The second section of the findings is about likes, dislikes and outcomes from employment, including a set of outcomes that map to concepts of social inclusion, social and economic participation and quality of life.

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1.1 Terminology

This report uses the terms 'open employment', 'supported employment' and 'social enterprise employment' to refer to the types of employment examined in the study. Terminology in this area is, however, inconsistent nationally and internationally. Accordingly, Table 1 defines each of the terms as they are used in this report and highlights other terms which are used in other national and international contexts for the same types of employment described here.

Table 1 Terminology used in this report

Terms used	Other terms
Open employment	Mainstream employment
Open employment is where a person with an intellectual disability has a job on the open labour market with an employer who is not disability-specific and with award rates of pay (or pay according to the Supported Wage calculation in Australia) and support in place to find, do and/or keep the job.	Open labour market employment Competitive employment Supported employment (USA) Disability Employment Services (Australia)
Supported employment	Sheltered employment
Supported employment is the Australian term to refer to an employment situation where people with intellectual disability do streamlined work for a reduced wage based on their level of output or productivity and assessed level of capability, with a high level of service provider support in place. It is called 'sheltered employment' in many other parts of the world.	Sheltered workshops Australian Disability Enterprises (Australia)
Social enterprise employment	Social firms (UK and Europe)
Social enterprises are commercial businesses that are run with social values and with the intent to employ marginalised populations, including people with intellectual disability. More generally, social entrepreneurship may also include an individual entrepreneur with intellectual disability who establishes his or her own small business.	Alternative businesses

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2. Background

2.1 Policy context

People with intellectual disability in Australia have poorer employment outcomes compared to both people with other types of disability and people without disability. In 2012, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showed that:

- Only 39% of people with intellectual disability were in the workforce, compared to 55% of people with other types of disability and 83% of people without disability

- Only 12% of people with intellectual disability were employed full-time, compared to 32% of people with other types of disability and 55% of people without disability

- 20% of people with intellectual disability were unemployed, compared to 8% of people with other types of disability and 5% of people without disability

- 61% of people with intellectual disability were not in the workforce, compared to 50% of people with other types of disability and 18% of people without disability (ABS, 2012).

Further, the rate of employment of people with disability in Australia is low compared to many other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations, with Australia ranking 21st out of the 27 countries in 2010 (OECD, 2010; PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2011). This means that the low rate of employment of people with intellectual disability, even compared to people with other types of disability, is particularly concerning.

The low rate of employment of people with intellectual disability is also concerning because employment is a core human right under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), which Australia has ratified. Article 27 of the UNCRPD 'recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities'. Australia has also ratified the International Labour Organisation's *Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (no. 159)* of 1983, which, in Article 7, encourages nations to 'take measures with a view to providing and evaluating vocational guidance, vocational training, placement, employment and other related services to enable disabled persons to secure, retain and advance in employment'. As a party to these conventions, Australia is thus obligated to work towards improving the rate of employment of people with intellectual disability and their equal participation and experience in work.

Further, employment is important for key outcomes in quality of life (Purcal et al., 2014), social inclusion (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012) and social and economic participation (McClure et al., 2015). Improving the rate of participation in and experience of work of people with intellectual disability thus has a key role in ensuring that this group has a good quality of life and is included in the social and economic life of the nation. This is important for ensuring their rights under the UNCRPD and ensuring that they have a positive experience in their everyday lives.

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Set against this context, Australia has increased its funding to support the employment of people with disability, including intellectual disability, and linked this to strong policy statements about the positive effects of employment for social inclusion (Dempsey and Ford, 2009). Improving the participation of people with disability in the economic life of Australia and in employment are part of the principles guiding the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, with estimates that the Scheme has the potential to have up to 320,000 more people with disability employed by 2050 (Productivity Commission, 2011).

However, understanding how to improve the rate of employment and experience of work of people with intellectual disability requires knowing more about their employment experiences (Dempsey and Ford, 2009). Nationally, there is little meaningful data reflecting people with intellectual disability's own perspectives about their working lives, their experiences in different types of employment, and their experiences of trying to find and maintain work.

This study aims to provide new evidence in this area, by answering the research questions in Section 1 and examining the three types of employment in which people with intellectual disability in Australia are supported to participate:

- open employment through Disability Employment Services (DES; employing 6.9% of people with intellectual disability in Australia in 2012–2013; Inclusion Australia, 2015b)

- supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs; employing 21.3% of people with intellectual disability in Australia in 2012–2013; Inclusion Australia, 2015b)

- social enterprise employment (employing an unknown number of people with intellectual disability in Australia).

The evidence provided in this study is situated within a broader national and international literature base. A brief account of the literature is provided in the following section.

2.2 Literature review

A literature review was conducted, examining English language national and international academic and 'grey' literature about outcomes across different types of employment for people with intellectual disability. Search terms included combinations of phrases including 'disability', 'intellectual disability', 'work', 'employment' (including 'open employment', 'mainstream employment', 'supported employment', 'sheltered employment', 'social enterprise' and 'social firms').

The literature review highlighted that a lot of research has been done on the employment of people with intellectual disability, but there are a number of areas in which further knowledge is needed, particularly in the Australian context. Rather than providing the full literature review, the information below briefly summarises these gap areas, highlighting how this report contributes new information in these areas and thus contributes to expanding knowledge of people with intellectual disability's experiences in different types of employment in Australia.

Experiences of people with intellectual disability living in Australia

Most studies of the employment of people with intellectual disability are from the United States (Migliore et al., 2007, Timmons et al., 2011, Cimera, 2011, 2012, Kramer et al., 2013, Parker Harris et al., 2014), United Kingdom (Banks et al., 2010, Forrester-Jones et al., 2010, Hall and Wilton, 2011) or, less commonly, from Europe (Taanila et al., 2005, Beyer et al., 2010b) or Asia (Li, 1998). Very few are from Australia. By drawing on the accounts of people with intellectual disability employed in Australia, this study contributes important and needed information on employment experiences and outcomes in the Australian context.

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Everyday experiences in supported employment

While commonly reporting on poor outcomes from supported employment (Kilsby and Beyer, 1996; Kober and Eggleton, 2005; Migliore et al., 2007; Cimera, 2011, 2012), there is less examination of how supported employment is experienced on an everyday basis from the perspective of people with intellectual disability themselves. However, given the international move away from supported employment models, this information is important for understanding what needs or functions supported employment fulfils for employees. New information could contribute to understanding of what needs other types of employment would be required to address and what specific support and/or guidance employees would need were they to move out of supported employment. By talking to people with intellectual disability working in supported employment in ADEs, and analysing the data against a framework that includes everyday experiences and perceptions, this study contributes to this area.

Experiences in and outcomes from social enterprise employment

As the newest type of employment for people with intellectual disability in Australia, there is currently very little known about the experiences of people with intellectual disability working in Australian social enterprises and the outcomes they gain from their work. There are no specific studies of people with intellectual disability working in social enterprises in Australia. Evidence from Europe and the United Kingdom however suggests that this type of employment has benefits for wellbeing, independence, life experience, self-esteem and satisfaction (Durie and Wilson, 2007; Forrester-Jones et al., 2010; World Health Organisation, 2011) and that it strikes an effective balance between the demands of an employer and the support and accommodation needs of a worker with intellectual disability (Hall and Wilton, 2011). By including people with intellectual disability working in social enterprises in Australia, this study thus contributes to developing further knowledge reflecting outcomes from social enterprises in the Australian context.

Experiences of maintaining open employment

There is currently little research on what helps people with intellectual disability to maintain an open employment job (Wistow and Schneider, 2003; Akkerman et al., 2014), compared to more substantive research about how they choose and find employment (Dixon and Reddacliff, 2001; Wistow and Schneider, 2003; Butcher and Wilton, 2008; Beyer et al., 2010a; Parmenter, 2011; Kramer et al., 2013; Petner-Arrey et al., 2015). There is a need for more research about the reasons why people with intellectual disability do and do not maintain open employment, what employment conditions affect outcomes in this area and how people with intellectual disability are supported to stay in open employment. This is important given that only one-third of people with intellectual disability who remain in Disability Employment Services for six months get an open employment job that lasts for more than 26 weeks (Inclusion Australia, 2015a). This report contributes to this area by including a section on people with intellectual disability's perspectives on opportunities for and barriers to maintaining employment.

Three-way comparison of open, supported, and social enterprise employment

Internationally, research has commonly compared the experiences and outcomes of people with intellectual disability in open employment and supported employment (for example, Sinnott-Oswald et al., 1991; Griffin et al., 1996; Kober and Eggleton, 2005; Migliore et al., 2007; Cimera, 2011, 2012), but very few studies have included social enterprise employment in a three-way comparison. There is therefore currently less capacity to understand whether social enterprises may be an alternative for people who do not fit within or otherwise wish to access open employment, but also prefer not to be in supported employment. As a study based on this three-way comparison, this project begins to contribute knowledge in this area.

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3. Research methods

The core focus of the research was to understand the perspectives of people with intellectual disability. As such, a qualitative study was designed, based on interviews with people with intellectual disability with accessibility supports available to maximise participation by a wide range of people. This allowed people with intellectual disability to express their perceptions of their employment in their own way and allowed the study to draw from in-depth qualitative data. The processes used to implement this research design are outlined in the following sections.

The study and its research methods were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at UNSW Australia (reference HC15585).

3.1 Recruitment

Two recruitment methods were used to access study participants. First, people with intellectual disability were contacted through their employment providers. DSS sent a letter to the providers introducing them to the researchers and providing a chance to opt out of the study. Any provider who did not opt out was then sent the study information by the researchers and providers could contact the researchers to elect to participate. Where they did participate, the providers then facilitated contact with potential participants and sometimes helped to arrange interview times.

A second recruitment method was added part way through the research. In the second method, the researchers advertised the study through community organisations in the disability sector, which either distributed information about the study through their networks or directly approached anyone who they thought would like to participate. It was then the responsibility of potential participants to contact the researchers directly or to give permission for their contact details to be passed on. This recruitment method allowed people with intellectual disability to elect to participate without having to arrange it through their employer. This was important as it provided more direct access and allowed people who may not have been satisfied with their employer to participate without the employer's knowledge.

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3.2 Interviews

Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with people with intellectual disability working in open employment, supported employment, social enterprises, and who were transitioning to work. Participants had the choice to either participate in an individual interview or an interview in a small group. Thirty-eight people elected to do an individual interview and 13 people participated in a group interview of 2–3 people. Both interview types were conducted using the same interview structure and questions. The interview topics included:

- Details of the participant's current job – where they work, what tasks they do, how many days they work and how long they have been in that job

- Previous employment – whether they have ever changed jobs, how and why this happened and what the experience of changing jobs was like

- The participant's perceptions of their job/s – what they like and dislike about their current and past jobs, why and how they chose the jobs they have and have had, how they got those jobs, perceptions of the support/assistance they receive or have received to do well at their jobs and their social experiences at work; and why they choose to work in general

- Perceptions of their aspirations or ideal job and if they feel that is possible for them.

Modified questions were used for participants who were currently transitioning into employment, which focused only on the questions relevant to them. See Appendix A for both sets of interview questions.

3.3 Accessibility

Accessibility and inclusivity were a focus of the methodology. The interview questions were delivered in 'easy' language and tailored to the communication needs of the participant where needed. This meant that, while all participants took part by speech, some people were supported to complete interviews with one-word or short-sentence answers. The order of the interview questions was also designed to move from easier to harder questions in order to build participants' confidence and comfort at the beginning of the interview and only then move on to the harder questions. Participants were also able to bring a trusted supporter with them to their interview to assist with their communication. Fourteen people chose to bring a supporter to all or part of their interview. In addition, the researchers conducting the interviews were experienced in communicating with people with intellectual disability and people with complex communication needs.

3.4 Consent

The consent procedures for the study were designed to maximise informed consent for people with intellectual disability. An Easy Read consent form was provided, phrased in straightforward, 'easy' language, with pictures to assist comprehension of the text. The form was discussed with all participants immediately prior to their interview to ensure their understanding of the information provided. This discussion also meant that the consent process was finalised by the researchers, which avoided the possibility of an employment provider exerting coercion or pressure on an employee with an intellectual disability to take part. When legally required, a guardian's consent was also sought.

Some people with intellectual disability chose to have a supporter with them at their interview. In these cases, the supporter also consented for any contextualising information they provided to be included in the research findings.

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3.5 Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and then coded and analysed against a comparative analysis framework.

The analysis framework used for the study, and shown in Table 2, has two sections. The first section includes the characteristics of the different employment types. It includes formal characteristics, such as formally provided assistance in each type of employment to choose, find, maintain and change jobs. It also includes the characteristics of each type of employment as they are experienced and perceived by people with intellectual disability, including their everyday experiences in employment and what they do and do not value about their work.

The second section of the analysis framework covers the outcomes from the different types of employment. Seven outcome domains were identified (see Table 2), based on collating the markers of quality of life, social and economic participation and social inclusion, identified in Section 2.1 as important outcome areas resulting from employment (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012; Purcal et al., 2014; McClure et al., 2015).

Some components were also added inductively to the analysis framework, based on participants' data, including collecting information on the work-related aspirations of people with intellectual disability, examples of employers exerting authority over employees and other factors that impact employment experiences. Participants' data was thematically analysed against this conceptual framework using NVivo 10.

Table 2 Analysis framework

← Open employment, supported employment and social enterprise employment → Comparison across the employment types on each of the characteristics and outcomes below			
Characteristics of the employment type			
Formal characteristics		**Individual experience and perceptions**	
1. Support to **find** employment		1. People's **everyday experiences** in employment	
2. Support to **choose** employment		2. What people **value** about their employment	
3. Support to **maintain** employment		3. What people **do not value** about their employment	
4. Support to **change** employment			
Outcomes of the employment type			
	Quality of life **(Purcal et al., 2014)**	Social and economic engagement **(McClure et al., 2015)**	Social inclusion **(Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012)**
1. Skill development	*Personal development* – participation in meaningful activities and acquiring new skills.	*Capability* – building capability through skills and training so that people may reach their full capacity.	*Learning* – participating in education and training.

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Outcomes of the employment type			
	Quality of life **(Purcal et al., 2014)**	Social and economic engagement **(McClure et al., 2015)**	Social inclusion **(Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2012)**
2. Participation	*Inclusion* – participating in communities, volunteering and/or employment.	*Participation* – supporting people to participate both economically and socially and to engage with employers and the wider community.	*Working* – participating in employment, unpaid or voluntary work including family/carer responsibilities. *Engaging* – connecting with people, using local services and participating in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities.
3. Relationships	*Interpersonal relations* – having meaningful relationships with friends, acquaintances, partners, family and staff.		
4. Material wellbeing	*Material wellbeing* – earning an income and having personal possessions.	*Adequacy* – sufficient support to ensure a basic standard of living in line with community standards.	
5. Personal wellbeing	*Physical and emotional wellbeing* – upholding safety, health and having happiness, support networks and a stable environment.		
6. Self-determination	*Self-determination* – choosing personal goals and life circumstances.		*Having a voice* – influencing decisions that affect them.
7. Rights, respect and equity	*Rights and autonomy* – experiencing rights, privacy, own decision-making, respect and dignity.	*Respect* – being treated with respect and dignity while acknowledging diversity, individual challenges and aspirations. *Fairness* – people in similar circumstances are treated similarly and everyone can easily access payments they are entitled to.	

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4. Research participants

Fifty-one people with intellectual disability living in Sydney and the Northern Rivers, and working in open employment, supported employment and social enterprises or transitioning to work, participated in the study. The composition of the sample is detailed in Table 3 by employment type and geographic location.

It is important to note that several social enterprises in the sample were run by ADEs. For the purpose of this report, however, they are treated the same as other social enterprises and included within the social enterprise category.

Table 3 Sampling frame

		Total
Open employment	Sydney	9
	Northern Rivers	5
	Sub-total	**14**
Supported employment	Sydney	10
	Northern Rivers	10
	Sub-total	**20**
Social enterprise employment	Sydney	6
	Northern Rivers	6
	Sub-total	**12**
Transitioning to work	Sydney	3
	Northern Rivers	2
	Sub-total	**5**
Overall total		51

Attention was paid to ensuring diversity across a range of demographic factors, including age, gender, cultural background and geographical location. As indicated in Table 4, the sample is relatively evenly spread with regard to gender and geographical location; represents a range of ages (although with a notably larger sample aged in their 20s and 30s); and includes a small subset of people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Despite efforts for recruitment diversity, no Indigenous participants were found.

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Table 4 Demographic characteristics

		n	%
Age	Teens	2	3.9
	20s	21	41.2
	30s	18	35.3
	40s	6	11.8
	50s	3	5.9
	60s	1	2.0
	Total	**51**	**100.0**
Gender	Female	25	49.0
	Male	26	51.0
	Total	**51**	**100.0**
Cultural background	Culturally and linguistically diverse	7	13.7
	Anglo Australian	44	86.3
	Total	**51**	**100.0**
Geographical location	Urban – Sydney	28	54.9
	Regional – Northern Rivers	23	45.1
	Total	**51**	**100.0**

Attention was also paid to level of support needs. While harder to quantify than the other demographic characteristics above, the sample included people who had more and less difficulty with aspects such as comprehension and communication. Some people spoke at length in their interviews, while others, as noted above, contributed one-word or short-sentence answers. While the sample includes more people with less difficulty in comprehension and communication, both groups are represented. As noted earlier, all participants took part by speech, meaning that those with very high support needs, particularly non-verbal intellectual disability, were not included.

In addition, diversity was also captured across a range of other experiences, including length of time in employment, number of employers worked for, and number of forms of employment experienced. Given the variation in how participants disclose this information in an interview context, it is not possible to quantify these details conclusively, but they are reflected in the qualitative analysis later in this report.

Diversity on all demographic and other characteristics was sought by asking employment providers assisting with recruitment to consider these characteristics when approaching people about participation. Feedback from employment providers who assisted demonstrated that they did consider these factors and often purposively selected a range of people to invite to participate.

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5. Experiences and perceptions of employment

Across the different types of employment, the people with intellectual disability who participated in the study described their everyday experiences at work, including the tasks they did, their working days and hours, and what they did with their time off. Some of the tasks that people with intellectual disability did at work varied across the different types of employment, while in other respects there were similarities in tasks across the different employment types. People with intellectual disability also described their experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment, including facilitators and barriers. Their perceptions on each of these areas are detailed in the sections below, highlighting comparisons between the different employment types where relevant.

5.1 Everyday experiences in employment

5.1.1 Open employment

The majority of people with intellectual disability in the study working in open employment had entry-level jobs in retail, fast food or office work. Retail and fast food work was more common than office work.

In retail, the participants in the research commonly did tasks such as check out work, stocktaking and stacking shelves. Less commonly, a few people advised customers of the location of items in-store or assisted customers in fitting rooms. One person was a member of a supermarket safety committee, in addition to his other duties. In fast food, common tasks included delivering food, kitchen-hand work, washing dishes, cleaning tables and/or floors, and re-packing condiments. Less commonly, a few people did waitressing, although in most people's experience this did not last. In office work, common tasks included computer work, sorting and delivering mail, filing, archiving, stamping, and office coffee runs.

Aside from the common retail, fast food or office work, one person had briefly worked in childcare, but had not stayed; a few others had assisted in family businesses (car mechanic, yoga studio); one person had a newspaper delivery run; one worked in a hotel; and one was in a paid advocacy role. No-one worked in gardening, landscaping or maintenance, although these are other common jobs in open employment.

5.1.2 Supported employment

The people in the study working in supported employment in ADEs most commonly worked in production roles related to packaging. Packaging could include counting out or weighing items to be packaged; putting the items in boxes, bags or pallets; and sealing, tying off, labelling or tagging packaging. These tasks varied in difficulty, for example, with weighing and sealing considered more skilled jobs than counting items. Other roles related to packaging included assembling or otherwise preparing the items to be packaged. Sometimes this was unskilled work, such as assembling the pieces of a pre-made item; in other cases it was skilled work that required a TAFE course, for example, where some people sewed items and had done a TAFE course to learn how to use a sewing machine.

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Aside from packaging, other ADE tasks included kitchen work (serving food or filling fridges at the ADE), work in a plant nursery (watering, pruning, weeding, lawn mowing), and dismantling machinery. Two people had driver's licences and either made deliveries for the ADE or drove a forklift. One person had reached the level of Assistant Supervisor in his ADE, which involved a range of tasks, such as organising jobs for other employees, computer work and completing basic paperwork.

5.1.3 Social enterprise

In social enterprises, the people with intellectual disability in the study commonly did a small suite of tasks, depending on the subject matter of the business they were working for. The social enterprises that employed the participants in the study were two coffee shops, a craft store, a plant nursery, a computer-based service, and a steel-work work crew.

Accordingly, people working in these businesses performed tasks including serving customers and answering phones; data entry; making coffee; making compost; sorting and scanning documents; and sorting and clearing small pieces of steel from worksites. While some of their work was similar to tasks done in ADEs (for example, the nursery work), in general, the social enterprise roles involved a larger degree of contact with members of the public than in ADEs. Other common tasks in social enterprises included participating in training or other learning about the subject matter of the business; for example, participating in on-the-job training in how to use new computer programs, learning about different types of plants, or learning how to work in a barista role.

5.1.4 Work days and hours and use of time off

Across all types of employment, it was very common for the people with intellectual disability in the study to work part-time, usually two to three days a week and often only in the morning or afternoon, rather than a full day. Only a minority of people worked full-time or full days in any of the types of employment included in the research. Often people's part-time days and hours were because of health-related issues, fatigue, or because they had been advised that they had to work part-time in order to continue to qualify for a Disability Support Pension. Several people wished to work more hours, but found that this option was not available to them. This is further detailed in Section 5.4.2.

People with intellectual disability varied in their use of their days off. Some people said that they had little to do except for work. Others mentioned a range of activities related to leisure (watching TV, using an iPad, making jewellery, art, bowling or spending time with friends, boyfriends, girlfriends or parents), self-development (studying or attending a tutoring service), health (personal fitness, attending the gym or going to medical appointments), participating in community life (attending community groups, such as a women's group or a singing group) or unpaid economic contributions (volunteering, caring responsibilities, domestic responsibilities or housework). Some examples of volunteering positions included self-advocacy roles, roles in services assisting other people with disability, and roles in teaching older people to use computers. Two people also mentioned babysitting for relatives, for which they were paid cash in hand.

Together, this range of activities shows the other elements of life people with intellectual disability balance with their employment. For some people, being able to participate in some of these other areas (for example, volunteering) was important in complementing their job, allowing them to more happily remain in an entry-level or unskilled job because they felt they were also contributing to society in other ways; this was often the case for people work in ADEs or social enterprises. In other cases, people volunteered or studied in positions that they hoped would help them change jobs in the future to a role more tailored to their interests; this was more commonly the case in open employment and social enterprises.

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5.2 Choosing employment

5.2.1 Opportunities for choosing employment

Across all employment types, some people felt that they had the opportunity to choose where they were going to work while others did not. In general, people working in open employment and social enterprises tended to make stronger statements of their own decision-making, however, people in supported employment rarely appeared to feel that they were entirely without their own control over their decisions.

Some people referred to choices they had made about what job they preferred based on the types of tasks they wanted to do; the level of variety in the day-to-day work of the job; whether the job presented a 'challenge' for them; whether it was a 'standing up' or 'sitting down' job; the distance of the workplace from their home; and, occasionally, because they saw taking one job as their chance to 'escape' from another less-favoured job. For example:

> *When you changed from the [kitchen-hand job] to [this coffee shop], who decided that you were going to change?*
>
> Believe me if I say myself. Myself.
>
> *How did you decide?*
>
> I decided because I had enough of … making coffee in the kitchen and I decided 'Hmm, I can be a barista in the real café like this' (20-year-old man, urban, working in a social enterprise coffee shop).
>
> I decided [on this fast food job], because I know that an office job is more sitting down, it's not doing anything … and it's really hard because it's a sit down job, but I like to stand up and be more occupied (23-year-old man, urban, working in an open employment role in fast food).
>
> Well, [I took this job] basically because [the DES] originally all those years ago got me the job [in fast food] and I thought well this is my escape from [the ADE] and I took it (35-year-old man, urban working in an open employment role in fast food).

People with intellectual disability also included other life factors in their decision-making about work; for example, considering their health, family circumstances and caring responsibilities for partners, ageing parents or children.

Many people received assistance to make decisions. Assistance and advice from family was common and was mentioned across all employment types, as well as assistance and advice from friends, advocates and support workers. People working in open employment also sometimes mentioned studying at TAFE or doing work experience first to investigate whether they could do a particular job, as well as receiving assistance to choose from DES and Transition to Work programs. People in supported employment commonly participated in job trials at an ADE to see whether they liked a particular job and some said that they had chosen the job from an advertisement in the newspaper. People working in social enterprises did not usually mention any forms of assistance beyond family, friends, advocates and support workers.

5.2.2 Barriers to choosing employment

Some people with intellectual disability felt that they had not had the opportunity to make their own choices about where they would work or they felt they had made constrained choices. It was uncommon that people felt they had no choice at all. However, in the few cases where they felt this was the case, the barriers to personal decision-making included others making choices on their behalf (often parents and teachers), lack of available options, or ending up remaining in the first job they did work experience in, regardless of whether they liked it. These barriers to decision-making could manifest together, as the three quotes below from one participant demonstrate, creating conditions that were not conducive to his own decision-making:

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> Well, I didn't really have a choice, I did do some work experience at a [sport] shop and there wasn't much option apart from here [at the plant nursery], because they didn't take me on at the [sport] shop … I am still feeling a bit disappointed because it is not what I really want to do.
>
> My teacher put me in this [plant nursery] … I pretty much got shoved into this without knowing it at first.
>
> Mum said, 'Take the option you've got' (20-year-old man, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

However, rather than feeling they had no choice at all, it was much more common for people to reference constrained choices. For example, one person said that it had been her choice to work at an ADE, but that she did not feel like she had many options available to her because of complicated personal and family circumstances in her life at the time of making the decision. Another person felt that she had made the choice to take up her current job when she was very young and so her decision was influenced by a fear of the future:

> *So what made you think that this was a good job for you? …*
>
> I really don't know, because I was only young and I was scared about what life would be when I got older. Yeah. I just didn't know what would happen (26-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing office work).

A few other people said they had a choice about where to work, but also said they had only been presented with one possible option:

> *What made you choose this job and not some other job?*
>
> I just liked it.
>
> *Were there other choices you could have made?*
>
> No, this was the only place I could come (36-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

Often the people who said they chose from only one option did not object to working in the job offered to them and were happy to work there, but nevertheless had not been able to make a choice between options. Although the example above is from someone working in an ADE, this was a common scenario in open employment. People with intellectual disability were frequently presented with one possible employer to work for by a DES and they were keen to take the job in question, but it was the only option to choose from.

5.3 Finding employment

5.3.1 Opportunities for finding employment

People with intellectual disability spoke extensively about the ways they had found employment, or received assistance to find employment. Their methods of finding work generally centred around assistance from people, the service system, and/or preparatory experiences, as detailed below. These areas were common among the different types of employment, although sometimes there were differences in the experiences that people in different types of employment had of them.

First, some participants cited a range of people who helped them to find work. Often this was via a personal connection through family and friends. In supported employment in ADEs, people generally spoke about their family or friends finding the job for them or recommending it to them. In open employment people were more likely to comment on family or friends passing on an advertisement; making a potential connection with an employer, which they then followed up themselves; or helping them to write job applications. For example, one woman commented:

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> I applied for [the job] myself. I had to send in a covering letter and my friend typed it and I sent it away with my resume and I had an interview with my supervisor and I got the job (47-year-old woman, regional, working in an open employment role in a hotel).

Other people who helped in the search for work included teachers, career advisors, and people working in the management of ADEs. Notably few people spoke about disability support workers assisting with their job search, although the disability service provider who ran one man's supported accommodation had helped him and a colleague find employment.

Second, people spoke about using a range of aspects from the service system to help them find work. The most common were schools, Transition to Work programs, ADE recruiting programs and DES, while other aspects less commonly mentioned included Community Participation programs and drawing on jobs advertised in the newspaper or on job seeking websites online. These aspects of the service system commonly fed into each other; for example, often the role that schools played in helping people to find employment was to connect them to a DES or ADE, who then helped them to find work. DES commonly offered a range of different types of assistance for finding work, including administration, assessment of skills and capabilities, making a job search plan, and assisting people to prepare for job interviews:

> [The DES] did help with application forms, saying your name and address and everything you needed and all the information about it (22-year-old woman, regional, working in open employment doing waitressing).

> *What did [the DES] and [the worker from there] do?*

> They worked on my hours and they worked on 12–4pm and they worked on the money that I'm earning and the payment sometimes. It's like a document thing, I think it's more like – it's like one of these ones [points to consent form for the research], but it's more like saying hours, the time and the process of the whole job thing.

> *So they wrote a plan about what you wanted to do?*

> Yeah (23-year-old man, urban, working in an open employment role in fast food).

> [The DES] gave like a little talk just to help me prepare, because back then I was young and on my own. Just off the top of my head I think we sat in like a little room like this and had a little bit of a preparation talk for me to go for the interview (38-year-old man, urban, currently working in an ADE, previously worked in open employment in a supermarket).

Some people were also aware that the DES supported the employer as well. For example, one person explained that the DES helped him with distributing his resume, but also paid the employer:

> I don't know exactly what they did to help me find work. They probably just put out some resumes here and there. I think one thing that they used to do is they used to give the employer – like if you got the job they'd give the employer like X amount of dollars, I think it was $10,000 or something, yeah, if their client got the job (35-year- old man, urban, working in an open employment role in fast food).

Finally, people with intellectual disability also participated in a range of preparatory experiences that helped them to find work. The most commonly mentioned was formal work experience, organised either through school, day programs, or transition to work programs. Through work experience, people with intellectual disability gained connections and experience that helped them to later find similar employment or that became a gateway to a job with the employer who had offered the work experience. This latter experience was common:

> I started work experience here and then I started working here (25-year-old man, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

> That's when I came here for work experience. After that I got the job (34-year-old woman, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

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Other preparatory experiences included those that built work-related skills; for example, it was common for people to do TAFE courses related to the area in which they planned to work. People working in open employment had generally done their course independently through TAFE, but for many ADE employees, a TAFE course was run on-site at the ADE for a group of employees. Less commonly, some people also participated in generalised skill and confidence-building programs, such as the Duke of Edinburgh program. Several people also mentioned attending 'employment expos' or 'open days', where they found out about DES and other employment agencies or options.

In addition to direct assistance with finding employment, some people also spoke about some of the conditions that needed to be in place in order for them to find work at a particular employer. For example, two young people who were transitioning into the workforce spoke about how they were currently doing work experience at a social enterprise, at which they both wished to take up a paid position. However, they said they would only be able to do this when the social enterprise received more business contracts, which would translate into more contracted positions for workers:

> I [will] get a job here probably, well, that's my aim … it just depends when [the manager] brings in some more contracts and then there's a long list of people wanting jobs here (27-year-old woman, urban, transitioning to work by doing work experience in a social enterprise).

> [The manager] said it won't be very much longer until he gets the contract, so I don't know. I like it here … if I have to do [work experience] for another month or so I'll do it. I'll do it as long as it takes to get work (23-year-old man, urban, transitioning to work by doing work experience in a social enterprise).

This example highlights that contextual factors beyond only the disability sector and direct assistance to people with intellectual disability impact on whether or not they can find their preferred employment. In this case, the business circumstances of their preferred employer were a key variable influencing their outcomes. This is, in many ways, similar to factors enabling or constraining employment for workers without disability.

5.3.2 Barriers to finding employment

While discussion of what helped them to find work was common, people with intellectual disability only spoke about barriers to finding employment in a more limited number of circumstances. It was mainly people who had sought, but not successfully found, open employment who spoke about barriers. While several people in the study had successfully found work in open employment and were happy there, there was also a substantive number of people who had initially sought open employment, been unable to find a position, and had then entered another employment type as a consequence – usually supported employment in an ADE. For this group, there was a clear set of reasons to which they attributed their unsuccessful search for open employment: ineffective or constrained DES assistance, challenges in the application or waiting process, and poor attitudes from employers.

Some people cited ineffective assistance from DES in their job search. Some people explained this as the DES simply providing very little assistance:

> I also was with [a DES] … they basically did nothing, so that's why I came here (34- year-old woman, regional, currently working in an ADE).

Others explained more fully. For example, one person highlighted that she felt the DES had not been active enough in helping her to know how to search for advertisements or how make the phone calls that were required of her to find a job, as the three quotes from her below demonstrate:

> I used to go through … a job agency, they weren't very helpful … they would just say to you 'Just look in the paper' or 'Do this' – they don't actually properly help you find a job, so it was really hard to find a job for me.

> [I wish they would] help me find a job instead of just saying 'Look there's a newspaper or these are all provided and here for you to use, go for it'. It's like okay what's the – that doesn't help.

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> I just reckon they should just sort of maybe help you, not just 'Do this' and 'Do that, hope you get a job'. Just maybe more mental and physical sort of like – help you, make phone calls for you or something (29-year-old woman, urban, currently working in an ADE).

Another person explained that while the DES had been searching for a job for her, she felt that they did not consider her preferences and, as a consequence, they would only search for jobs that she found unchallenging and unsuitable:

> [The DES] couldn't find the job that suited [me]. They wouldn't think outside the square box, they didn't job match to jobs that suited me, they would just only ever go for basic roles (30-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing advocacy work).

The same person also highlighted that she faced barriers to becoming more qualified or participating in further training to take up more than the basic roles, because – as far as she knew – the DES had a budget and mandate to help people find work, but not to support up-skilling or education:

> In the end … they said, 'We're only getting funding to find work' – they don't actually get a lot of funding for education. So if I wanted to do something all they would do is tell me to go to TAFE and that was it, there was no financial support. So if you wanted to do something that was $1,000 they wouldn't pay that $1,000 and then, you know, organise what you need and you turn up, gain that qualification.

> I said to them that I do want to gain [a higher TAFE certificate]. But even I showed them a class that's currently available they won't even assist and everything, they won't unless an employer's given them a letter that it's guaranteed this person will get a job.

Another person similarly emphasised that the helpfulness of the DES was constrained by lack of funding for education:

> At first I had help from the agency … I have to say they weren't really helpful, like I wanted to do things in aged care, and I went to them and told them that I wanted to do TAFE and work in aged care and what I wanted to do. And I went with her to TAFE and [they said] they don't have anyone to help you take your notes because of the funding (47-year-old woman, regional, currently working in open employment in a hotel).

Some people also felt that the application process for finding open employment was more difficult than for finding supported employment, and although help was often available, aspects such as job interviews and resumes were still more challenging in the open employment context:

> But [open employment] was a bit more difficult to get into. I had someone help me with my application forms and that was more difficult to get into than supported employment, whereas supported employment was a bit easier to get into. Maybe the way they have the interviews? Maybe the way they sort your resume? But I found it much easier to get into supported [employment] than open [employment] (34-year- old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

For others, even when they completed the application process, the wait to find an open employment job was prohibitive. For example, one woman explained her decision to work in an ADE after having tried to find open employment:

> I tried open employment, it was like … you can do this, but you might have to wait for two to six months to get a position … so I thought 'No, I'd rather actually be doing something' (34-year-old woman, regional, currently working in an ADE).

Finally, some people attributed their difficulty to finding work in open employment to the attitudes of employers. As one person explained:

> I got knocked back a lot because of employers. That was a bit more challenging. Maybe because of people's attitudes … just looking at my disability, thinking that you're not able to do the job. Not listening. That kind of stuff (34-year-old woman, urban, currently working in an ADE).

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For these reasons, there appeared to be greater barriers to finding work in open employment compared to the other employment types. No-one working in ADEs or in social enterprises spoke in the same way of direct barriers to finding work, suggesting that these types of employment may be easier to enter than open employment.

An important caveat to these findings is that several participants in the research were not sure or did not know how they had found work. This suggests that work had been arranged for them, without their input. 'I don't know' was a common response to questions about how they had found their job. This issue applied particularly to those in supported employment in ADEs, but also in other employment types.

5.4 Maintaining employment

5.4.1 Opportunities for maintaining employment

People with intellectual disability spoke about conditions that helped them to maintain their employment. These conditions included practical help with work tasks, supportive workplace relationships, and personal development opportunities or other personal qualities that helped them to maintain their employment. Most of these conditions were common across employment types, although some appeared to be more important to people in some employment types than others.

First, people mentioned practical help in the workplace to learn how to do new tasks, complete tasks and gain assistance with difficult tasks. This helped them to maintain their role over time and applied equally across open, supported and social enterprise employment. Often the assistance involved was being shown how to do a new task, having a training period on new tasks, building their tasks up over time, or having the opportunity to ask colleagues or supervisors for assistance with trouble-shooting. Sometimes people were also able to share tasks with colleagues, so that other people could do the tasks that one person found too difficult. Two people in open employment also mentioned resources being developed to help them remember what to do:

> I'm not a very good writer so [I] asked [my colleague] if I can make a little index card with all the things I have to do and what order, and I have a little notebook and I keep it in my cleaning bag.
>
> *Were they happy for you to do that?*
>
> Yeah, I had it with the manager, because they were changing what they did, what you had to put on the bed and things (47-year-old woman, regional, working in open employment in a hotel).

> I do have a routine … A routine's like – every worker at every [fast food] restaurant, they do have a routine, the things they have to keep doing every time, the things to keep repeating many times too.
>
> Supporter (mother): And [he's] got his on a card. Sometimes if he forgets then he looks at his card, but otherwise he's got the routine in his head now (23-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

People working in ADEs also commonly mentioned that the tasks required by their job could be adjusted if they had too much difficulty, if their support needs changed, or if they became bored with their work. The ability to swap between tasks appeared to function as a way to maintain wellbeing and interest and prevent boredom in the workplace in ADEs. A few people in ADEs mentioned limitations in the extent to which ADE staff had time or were willing to help them with practical tasks – 'They don't help you out for long to do stuff, they just quickly show you and then if you complain they'll show you again' (23-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE), and 'Some of the supervisors are very stroppy' (31-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE) – although most people were satisfied with the help they received.

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Second, people mentioned a range of supportive relationships in the workplace that helped them to maintain their employment. These relationships were supportive in that they offered a combination of practical assistance and trust. People with intellectual disability often had an assigned supervisor – or commonly more than one – who they could ask for assistance with any issues that came up in the workplace. Trusting relationships with supervisors appeared to be key in helping people to maintain employment, irrespective of employment type. These relationships could help with trouble-shooting, with resolving disputes with colleagues, and with providing general emotional support. One man in a transition to work position in a social enterprise also highlighted that a trusting relationship with the social enterprise staff allowed him to be upfront about his support needs, which in turn allowed the social enterprise to better cater to what he needed to maintain his role.

In addition to supervisors, peer support from other employees was also a feature in some workplaces. This was more common in supported employment or social enterprise employment where there were also other people with disability. One woman mentioned a 'buddy system' that was a feature of her work in an ADE, where employees with disability were paired up to assist each other:

> I got the help that I need at the moment … I have a buddy system … [My buddy] helps me in guiding me. If people don't understand me, then she'll try to understand me and then tell the other person … If I have a problem, I can tell my buddy. And it's easier to communicate with my buddy because she can understand me and I can understand her (34-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

Another person mentioned that the social enterprise in which she works has a 'worker's meeting' where colleagues collaboratively talk about and solve issues together:

> *So in the beginning you weren't so happy [at your job]?*
>
> No.
>
> *So what was it in the beginning that made you unhappy?*
>
> It was too hard at the beginning, staff and something … but I solved everything.
>
> *How did you do that?*
>
> We have a worker's meeting and we go around with a stick and we talk about problems and we all solve it. So people helped me solve it in the worker's meeting (34-year-old woman, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

In open employment, people with intellectual disability also mentioned the role of the 'maintenance consultants' who visited them weekly, fortnightly or monthly from the DES who had assisted them to find work.[1] Most people enjoyed the company of their maintenance consultant and recounted him or her asking questions about how they were going at work and at home, both to them and to their supervisor, as well as sometimes checking safety requirements or observing them doing their tasks at work. One person commented on the benefits of three-way communication between herself, her maintenance consultant and her employer:

> [The maintenance consultant] made it easier because I could have someone to help me and to talk about stuff that I was having problems with. But I also had someone at work that I could talk to about my problem and it made it easier because they could talk to employment service with me as well (34-year-old woman, urban, currently working in an ADE, talking about a time when she previously worked in open employment).

Other than the quote above, people with intellectual disability rarely made direct comments on how the maintenance consultants had assisted them with specific issues, but appeared to generally appreciate their visits as helpful. This reflects the purpose of 'maintenance', where a small degree of ongoing support can

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1   Only one person referred to them as a 'maintenance consultant', however – usually they were referred to as '[name] from [name of DES]'.

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prevent larger issues from accumulating and needing to be dealt with. In this sense, the maintenance visits appeared to be effective and operating as they should. One man, however, highlighted that his maintenance consultant no longer came, partially because his original DES had closed and partially because, 'I don't want to get special help when others don't'. He also said:

> I don't know that I really want [a maintenance consultant] either … They were okay [at the beginning], but I don't know that you want someone visiting you when it gets busy, if you know what I mean (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

Finally, a minority of people also mentioned personal development opportunities or other personal qualities that helped them to maintain their employment. Some people in ADEs mentioned having an Individual Planning meeting, where they could reassess the details of their employment circumstances to better continue their work over time. Other people instead implied qualities such as their own resilience in ignoring annoying colleagues as helping them to maintain their employment, or mentioned their efforts to seek out their own resources to build their confidence in talking to people in the workplace:

> *What helps you stay in the job?*
>
> Keep on working and not noticing what other people are saying because people can say some things.
>
> *What do people say?*
>
> I can't remember, but it's just people can annoy me sometimes. If I have my head up and sometimes I wanted to keep it up, but it's hard to keep it up, and sometimes I want to have it down I want to have it down (30-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).
>
> I actually gained some confidence to [talk to people at work].
>
> *How do you think you gained confidence?*
>
> Well, I think I practiced in the mirror and everything.
>
> *Was that your idea or did someone say, 'That's a good way to practice, you should try it'?*
>
> I go to internet and just – yeah …
>
> *Yeah, so you looked up on the internet how to practice?*
>
> Yeah, how to practice self-confidence and how to talk to people (26-year-old man, urban, working in open employment doing office work).

Overall, many people were assisted to maintain their employment through practical help with managing tasks, trusting relationships and Individual Planning processes. In addition, some people were also able to draw on their own personal agency and efforts to manage in their work role. Therefore, it is important to provide substantive assistance to people with intellectual disability to maintain their employment, while also recognising that some people, when supported well, can also draw on some of their own skills and resources to continue in employment.

5.4.2 Barriers to maintaining employment

People working in ADEs and social enterprises did not mention many barriers to maintaining their jobs. The main barrier mentioned was that some people had been pushed by the ADE or social enterprise management to reduce their number of work hours or days, although in all cases they had remained employed in a smaller role. In these cases, the people who recounted these circumstances did not have power or control over their work circumstances. The reasons for the change to their hours or days had not always been clearly explained to them. However, in some cases it appeared to relate to the risk that the amount that the employees were earning would disrupt their service funding, pension or other entitlements:

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I used to work five days a week and one day they called me into the office and said 'Why don't you have a day off?' Something to do with the money or what have you. Anyway, I was working four days and that continued on for a while and then they called me in again and said, 'You'd better have another day off' – to do with the money. So I took off Monday and Friday and then they did it again and now I do two days (62-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

In other cases, the change was about accommodating other employees. For example, in one social enterprise, a reduction in one woman's hours was related to having enough work to go around when there was a particular reason for another employee to do more shifts:

At first I used to work about two to three days a week [at the coffee shop], now I'm only working Wednesday…

How come they cut back … to just one day … ?

Because they've got a guy named John right, and me boss wants to get him back into the routine because he had a long holiday and because there's things changed, and there's different things change in the coffee shop which John doesn't know about and they want to get him used to being back at work again.

So they gave him more shifts?

Yeah.

And took one away from you?

Yeah, I don't mind (49-year-old woman, urban, working in a social enterprise café).

In another case in a social enterprise, a man had been a member of a work crew doing entry-level work in a mainstream steel-work company. When a new group of recruits without disability came through and needed the entry-level work that the work crew had been doing, the jobs available to the work crew ceased temporarily. This highlights that the broader conditions of the industries in which people with intellectual disability are working can also affect the degree to which they can maintain employment. Similarly, some ADEs had less work come in when some of their jobs were outsourced to developing countries, although this did not appear to affect the extent to which people with intellectual disability could maintain employment at ADEs.

Other than these few reasons to cut back on their work, jobs in ADEs and social enterprises appeared to be stable and continuous. Where people did not continue in jobs in these types of employment, it was usually because they chose to leave. For example, some people chose to leave ADEs because they wanted to do more challenging tasks or because they did not want to work only with other people with disability. Some people had also made their own decision to cut back their work hours or days in ADEs due to health issues or other personal reasons (for example, care responsibilities when one man's wife was unwell), but remained employed in a smaller role. Another person had also left work at an ADE to care for her ageing father, returning to work after a period of time out of the workforce. A few people had also changed their employment circumstances because of issues such as moving house, living in unsuitable housing (or, in one case, being homeless), or problems with accessing transport to a new work location. In these cases, it was broader life circumstances that influenced whether or not people maintained their employment.

People working in open employment mentioned a more extensive range of barriers to maintaining their work. Some of the barriers were not receiving continuing work from employers because of administrative circumstances, such as because the place where they worked went out of business, because there had been a change of management, because they had taken a short-term contract which ended and could not be renewed, or because their workplace had had a large-scale round of redundancies. In these cases, the people concerned seemed to accept the cessation of their work as inevitable.

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In other cases, however, people raised more questions about either the cessation or reduction of their employment in similar circumstances. For example, one woman who worked at a department store gave the impression that she felt that she was one of the main people not to receive shifts for a six-month period when there was a downfall in business:

> They were saying that it was all retail that was down, and it's not just me I'm not getting singled out.
>
> *Okay and do you think that was the case?*
>
> Not really … that's what the store manager said, but I don't know. And when I went and saw my manager, she just like [mimics the manager shrugging] … And she just walked off, so she didn't really – and I did have meetings and that and rang the union, but that didn't really help (36-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment in a department store).

Another person felt that he had been passed over for full-time employment opportunities compared to other workers, which led to an argument with his boss and eventually to him being transferred out of his job:

> They kept giving other people full-time jobs and everyone reckoned I was the best worker they had, operating the million-dollar washing machine, so I said to the boss, 'If I don't get the next full-time job I'm going to kick up a stink'. Stupidest thing I ever said. [The boss] said, 'He's threatened me I'm not going to give him a job!' … so they transferred me to the kitchen (35-year-old man, regional, currently working in an ADE, but talking about a time when he used to work in open employment in a commercial laundry).

In a couple of cases, some jobs ended for reasons that were likely due to these kinds of administrative circumstances, but people with intellectual disability felt they had not been offered any explanation of what had happened and there was no closure in how the ending of their job was managed:

> They just didn't give me a proper reason [for why the job finished], but I think they just didn't need me anymore or something. I don't know – they didn't really specify … they go 'We'll call you when we need you again, this and that', and I still didn't get a phone call and I'm sitting there waiting and waiting and I still didn't get the phone call, so I just assumed I didn't get the job back again (29-year-old woman, urban, currently working in an ADE, but talking about previous experience in open employment).

In other cases, deeper issues of disrespect, under-valuing or overt discrimination had meant that people could not continue their jobs in open employment. One person mentioned that she had not felt respected by her colleagues, which led to her having conflict with them and eventually leaving her job. In another example, a woman felt that her jobs had not extended her to her full potential and she felt under-valued, so she tried to act in supervisory roles above her level, which led to her being dismissed from a number of jobs:

> I've had about five or six jobs but they haven't lasted, they haven't been a right match and people used to say to me I'm going over and above … putting myself in [a supervisor's] shoes. And then they'd force me out of work and tell me I would have to find something else. We'd find something else and that wouldn't last. Most of my jobs managed to last only about three months (30-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing advocacy work).

The same person also commented that she had chosen not to stay in some open employment jobs because she felt neither valued nor challenged:

> I thought when I first applied for a shop assistant role that I'd be serving customers, that I'd be stocking shelves, doing returns, face up, pricing, on the registers. I thought it was going to be quite varied, but then I mostly would just be stocking shelves.
>
> [It was] just cleaning or working in the kitchen, which I didn't really enjoy, and I wanted to be in more a position where I could feel I'm helping more people who are mostly under stress because their shortage on staff.

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In one workplace, a man had been accused of a crime he did not commit and he felt that he had been scapegoated and discriminated against because of his disability. When he later tried to change to another branch of the same employer, he found that he was not allowed to transfer because he did not have a clean record:

> Because of my disability, I got blamed for a lot of things that I didn't do, [that] other people would do … Because I was mainly working out on the back dock and there was a safe there and money got stolen out of the safe. I got the blame … [Later] I applied for a transfer because I moved [house] and they didn't mention to me that I didn't get the transfer and when I went to go to the new job they said, 'There's no job here available, we've heard [you have] a bad record' (39-year-old man, urban, currently working in an ADE, but talking about a time when he worked in open employment).

Overall, the experiences of the participants in the research highlight that there are a range of barriers to maintaining work in open employment, but that maintaining work in ADEs and social enterprises is often easier. The impact of these barriers was that there were several people in the study who had worked in open employment for a short period of time, but had not sustained this job and had later moved into a position in an ADE or social enterprise. This highlights that job stability is a factor influencing people's choices about where to work. The stability offered in ADEs and social enterprises appeared to be attractive for many people who had had poor experiences of maintaining jobs in open employment.

5.5   Changing employment

People with intellectual disability spoke a lot about changing their employment throughout the study. Many mentioned having been in several different jobs. Many also spoke about the experience of managing change, meeting new people, learning new tasks, and getting used to a new routine. A few spoke about realising there were not many other jobs available when they changed, or about changing between branches of the same employer (for example, different fast food stores of the same chain) as a way of altering their work circumstances without fully changing roles. As noted in an earlier section of the report, some people also spoke about having to change jobs when the place where they worked went out of business, or other changes occurred that meant their original job was no longer available.

However, while the participants spoke a lot about their range of different roles and the types of experiences involved, there was comparatively little discussion of people with intellectual disability actively going out and seeking to change their employment; rather it was mainly about coping in circumstances where they had to change their employment. The little discussion there was of actively seeking to change their work is summarised below under opportunities for and barriers to changing employment.

5.5.1   Opportunities for changing employment

Where people with intellectual disability did actively seek to change their employment, they mentioned a small range of aspects that were helpful in this regard, including supportive relationships, service system supports and skill development. The experience of these aspects could vary between the different types of employment.

As was the case with choosing, finding and maintaining employment, supportive relationships were important for people with intellectual disability who were changing their employment. These relationships were supportive in that they offered practical assistance and encouragement. People with intellectual disability mentioned the role of parents and other family members, ADE staff and support workers in helping them to change roles. Support could be provided by the person offering them a new role, helping them to find a new role, or being generally encouraging of the change. One person, for example, mentioned that her support worker was helping her to build up her aspirations:

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So you said earlier that your dream is to open a restaurant and that your [support worker] is going to try and help you do it?

Yeah, because they're very supportive too.

What's the [support worker] going to do to try and help?

Well, like she's given me – well, she hasn't really said anything to me but she's been giving me like booklets to fill out my dreams and goals and what I want to do in the future (29-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

In ADEs that had more than one site or more than one type of work on offer, ADE staff were also able to assist people changing their employment by allowing them to swap between sites or tasks. There were examples of ADE staff recognising that one site was either too noisy or too far away from the person's home and accordingly helping them to change site. As noted earlier, people were also helped to swap tasks through Individual Planning processes.

People also sometimes drew on aspects of the service system to assist in changing their employment. One man's comments gave the impression that there had been a recruitment visit to his ADE seeking people who wanted to change to open employment:

There was a fellow who came here [to the ADE] one day and asked people 'Would they like to leave the workshop?' and I was one of them. I was there for 10 years. At first it was a bit scary [to leave], but the bosses were pretty good … When I left [the ADE for the fast food store] they said to me 'If you ever leave the [fast food store], you will have a job back here'. Otherwise I wouldn't know where to go next (51-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE, but talking about briefly changing to open employment).

Many people also spoke about DES assisting them to find a new job when their old one ended, although not to change out of a job they were still in. DES could assist by finding new jobs for people, doing a reassessment of people's skills and capabilities for the workplace, and by explaining to people what would happen:

I had support from [the DES] and getting the help, it made it just easier to go from one job to another because I had everyone explaining to me what's going to happen (34-year-old woman, urban, currently working in an ADE).

Skill development was also perceived as a way to work towards changing employment, although for the people in the study it had not eventuated into changing their work yet. Sometimes this was informal skill development:

You want to be a cook more than a waiter?

Yes, I like cooking and I'm learning how to cook different things at the moment. Someone from [the ADE] is teaching me at my house. I cooked a batch of scones about a fortnight ago. I took them to Mum in the home and she said 'Oh wow' when I walked in the door (51-year-old man, regional, currently working in an ADE).

Other people were working towards formal qualifications. One woman identified how she was paying for two TAFE courses through her individualised funding package, demonstrating how she was using another type of disability support to progress her employment aspirations:

[My disability service provider] pay[s] for [the courses] from out of my Life Choices package because, I couldn't get the two courses with TAFE free … I can [do that] because it's my own package and it's individualised. But if it was block funded then I wouldn't be able to use it (30-year-old woman urban, working in open employment doing advocacy work).

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Notably, some people said that they had needed to gain qualifications in order to be in the jobs they were currently in; for example, one person who had had to get a TAFE certificate in sewing before she could work in a sewing role for an ADE. In this sense, the people who were working towards TAFE qualifications may have been trying to follow a similar route into new employment.

5.5.2 Barriers to changing employment

Very few people directly mentioned barriers to changing employment. One person in supported employment in an ADE commented that it was her mother who prevented her from changing her employment:

> Since then there have been times I was going to leave with changing bosses and everything, and then Mum said, 'Don't you dare go'. Anyway I kept going [to work] and I'm still here and that's why I've worked here for so long, 40 years (62-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

Another person commented on feeling a lack of confidence that he had the skills for employment in a mainstream role in the community:

> *Do you think you'll stay in this job or do you want to move on one day?*
>
> I think I'll stay here.
>
> *How come?*
>
> I don't know if I would be any good out in the community.
>
> *How come?*
>
> I don't know … Because I don't think I have the skills or stuff that people look for.
>
> *Is there anything that could help you get those skills?*
>
> I don't know (23-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

A person in open employment also expressed a lack of confidence that he would be suitable for other open employment roles. Here, although he was successful in the open employment role he had, he did not appear to believe he could get another role if he were to change, because when he had previously tried, he had been told he was 'not good enough':

> *Do you think you'll stay in your job [in fast food] or do you think you'll move onto something else?*
>
> I think I'm going to stay there forever.
>
> *Why do you say that?*
>
> Because I think I'm going to stay there forever.
>
> *Because you want to or for another reason?*
>
> Another reason.
>
> *What's the other reason?*
>
> I think I'm just stuck there … I don't see myself moving on from [fast food] because all the job interviews I've gone to they've all said, 'Sorry, you're not good enough' – not the exact words, but that's what they may as well have said (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

Structural and policy barriers could also affect the extent to which people could change employment. The same man as above felt that a DES would not help him change jobs, as he expected their priority would be on those who were still unemployed:

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> There's not much point in me joining any job agency now because I already have a job and the job agencies tend to sort of – as far as help goes tend to favour people who don't have jobs and so there wouldn't be much point in me joining.

Another woman, who worked for a social enterprise café run by an ADE, aspired to leave the ADE and get off the pension: 'I'm planning to get off the pension and see if I can work – I want to work open employment, like a normal person would do … and just earn a normal wage'. However, she had been told that she could not seek help from a DES to find an open employment job whilst still employed at the ADE, yet she did not want to be unemployed while looking for work in open employment:

> They told me that I can't work at [the ADE] while I'm looking for open employment, and I thought to myself, fine, I can't stay home and do nothing and just surviving on my pension. I just thought if I stay here [at the ADE] and get paid for it and, you know, because I'm not the sort of person who stays home and does nothing (49-year-old woman, urban, currently working in a social enterprise café run by an ADE).

The policy on DES assisting ADE employees to find other work in open employment has in fact changed with the ADE/DES Concurrence changes of 2015 – DES assistance is now permitted while a person remains at the ADE. However, this new information had not reached the woman in question or the people providing her with employment advice. More effective transmission of information is thus needed for her to move into open employment.

The quotes above were the only direct comments made by the study's participants about barriers to changing their employment. Beyond these few comments, it was however revealing that many people in the study simply did not envisage changing their employment at all. Many people, from all of the employment types, had no aspirations to ever change jobs and it appeared that another role had never been a consideration for them. In some cases this was because they had only ever had one role, which they never questioned leaving, while in others it was because they had had a number of unsuitable roles previously and then when they found one job that they were happy in, they never wanted to leave. Thus, while many people expressed no direct barriers to changing jobs, it would appear that it was nevertheless still not an option for them and that unarticulated barriers may be in place.

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6. Employment likes, dislikes and outcomes

Beyond experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment, the other important areas that people with intellectual disability spoke about in the study were (a) their likes and dislikes about their employment circumstances and (b) the outcomes they felt they gained or did not gain from working.

People with an intellectual disability's comments about their likes, dislikes and outcomes are discussed in the sections below. The analysis first ranks the most common likes and dislikes by employment type and then discusses the employment outcomes in more detail, mapped against the analytical framework of the study. Section 6.2 then looks at the complexity of some people's statements about the outcomes they gain from working and Section 6.3 examines the few direct comparisons that people with intellectual disability made between the different types of employment.

6.1 Likes and dislikes about employment

Across the different employment types, people with intellectual disability cited many aspects that they liked and valued about their jobs. While some people only mentioned one aspect that they liked, most people mentioned multiple elements that made them enjoy their jobs. The findings are summarised in Table 5, ranking what people said they liked about their jobs in different types of employment.

Table 5 Ranked likes about employment by employment type

Open employment	Supported employment	Social enterprises
1. Relationships	1. Relationships	1. Relationships
2. Getting paid	2. Getting paid	2. Enjoy work tasks
3. Pride/meaning in work; something to do; enjoy work tasks	3. Something to do	3. Getting paid; skill development/working towards goals
	4. Enjoy work tasks	

*   NB: Where more than one like is included at the same ranking separated by a semi-colon, this is because these likes were mentioned an equal number of times by participants and thus ranked the same.

People with intellectual disability were much less likely to comment on what they disliked about their jobs. This may be because they genuinely liked their jobs and had few problems at work, or it may be due to being wary about expressing dislike of or conflict with authority. As such, Table 6 ranks dislikes of work; however, it is important to note that it is based on much less data than the table above.[2]

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2   Beyond these most commonly mentioned aspects, one or two people also mentioned a range of other aspects they that they liked and disliked about work that do not fit into the outcome areas in the following report sections. Additional likes included finding their work fun; liking their physical working conditions and location of their workplace; and enjoying extra-curricular activities in the workplace, such as watching trains that ran behind one workplace or joining a workplace's soccer team. Additional dislikes included wanting more authority in the workplace; feeling unwelcome or unsafe at work; commenting that the workplace's culture was not 'fun'; receiving poor instructions or poor communication at work; and disliking when staff or managers left.

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Table 6 Ranked dislikes about employment by employment type

Open employment	Supported employment	Social enterprises
1. Physical discomfort at work	1. Conflicts with colleagues	1. Physical discomfort at work; poor attitudes from or conflicts with staff/managers; limited or unsuitable work days or hours
2. Boredom/need more of a challenge/want more variety; limited or unsuitable work days or hours	2. Physical discomfort at work; poor attitudes from or conflicts with staff/managers	
3. Poor attitudes from or conflicts with staff/managers	3. Boredom/need more of a challenge/want more variety	

* NB: Where more than one dislike is included at the same ranking separated by a semi-colon, this is because these dislikes were mentioned an equal number of times by participants and thus ranked the same.

** NB: Places #2 and #3 are not included for the social enterprise section of the sample, as due to the small sample size, all other dislikes other than the ones tied at #1 were reported by only one person.

These aspects that the participants in the research said they like and dislike about their jobs map to the outcomes on quality of life, social and economic participation, and social inclusion that were highlighted in earlier sections of this report as the analytical framework for the study. Outcomes in this framework were collated to include skill development, participation, relationships, material wellbeing, personal wellbeing, self-determination and rights, respects and equity. People with intellectual disability's likes and dislikes of work are thus reported in terms of these outcome areas in the sections below.

The outcomes are re-ordered in the following sections to show the frequency with which people with intellectual disability emphasised them. Relationships and material wellbeing were by far the most commonly mentioned outcomes; skill development and participation were mentioned by a mid-range number of participants; and personal wellbeing, rights, respect and equity and self-determination were important for some people, but were overall less commonly mentioned.

6.2 Employment outcomes

6.2.1 Relationships

Across all of the types of employment, people with intellectual disability most commonly mentioned that they enjoyed the relationships involved in their working lives. They frequently cited relationships with co-workers – whom they commonly referred to as 'friends' – as a key aspect they enjoyed about work, with this sometimes being friends whom they knew before taking up their job and sometimes being friends they had met at work:

> I like coming here because I have my friends here and this is the only time I get to see them. They are busy all weekend (51-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

> *So how many of you work at the restaurant?*

> There are about 10 of us … [I like] being able to talk to people and have some new friends (22-year-old woman, regional, working in open employment in waitressing).

> *What do you like about your job?*

> Having friends here, working faster and improve.

> *… What makes it a good environment do you think?*

> It's really safe here, all the staff are perfect, are nice and all my friends I've got here too (34-year-old woman, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

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Some people had met a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse at work and this was particularly valued. In open employment, people also sometimes spoke about enjoying relationships with customers at retail stores, cafés and hotels. In this sense, they enjoyed relationships at work that gave them access to peers and to the community.

Sometimes conflicts with peers and/or colleagues at work were also mentioned. Notably, in ADEs, the most commonly mentioned dislike of work was conflicts with colleagues (see Table 6). Most often this referred to one or a few particular people that people with intellectual disability disliked or had conflict with, or to general low-level conflict in the workplace:

> [Woman's name] annoys me all the time … I do my work, [she's a] stupid person (37-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

> I don't like the arguments and bitching and carry on with the other workers (44-year- old man, regional, working in an ADE).

While people mostly referred to small-scale personality conflicts, in a small number of instances the conflict involved appeared to border on bullying.

Alongside their relationships with friends, peers and colleagues, people with intellectual disability also spoke about their relationships with supervisors and, in ADEs and social enterprises, with the support staff who were there to assist people with disability in their work. Many people mentioned positive relationships in this context, where they trusted their supervisors or support staff and found them kind and helpful:

> The people are nice. I can go to them and ask questions if I need to and all that (21-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing office work).

> My boss – she's kind and she's really nice to me (23-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

> He's good, he's a nice bloke, he's good to work with. And he's our safety manager (31-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in a supermarket).

> I like coming here, I like the people, the supervisors are lovely (62-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

> People around here are nice (50-year-old man, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

However, poor attitudes from or conflicts with supervisors or support staff were also commonly mentioned dislikes of work across all types of employment (see Table 6). Similar to relationships with colleagues, most experiences in this respect were at the level of personality conflicts or finding supervisors or staff 'stroppy' (31-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE), although in a small number of instances workplace bullying had occurred and/or other staff had been drawn in to fix the problem:

> *What don't you like about your job?*

> Getting bullied.

> *Have you been bullied here?*

> Yes, by a supervisor, a lot. Because she gets cranky all the time at work and like I told [the other supervisor] what happened to me with [that supervisor], because she gets cranky all the time, but sometimes she is getting better and sometimes she's getting bad (25-year-old man, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

One woman working in an ADE mentioned ongoing issues with poor staff attitudes and bullying in her workplace that she felt was targeted at the most disadvantaged workers. She commented:

> They treat people unfairly and with little pay and it takes away their confidence. Staff just tell them to get over it or tell them off (23-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

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In this sense, the positive relationships involved in work were one of the most valued employment outcomes, but poor relationships in the workplace could also be a major source of frustration for many people, sometimes to the extent of threatening personal wellbeing. Working thus gives people with intellectual disability access to friends, peers, mentors and the community, which they emphasise as valuable, but there is also a need to monitor the relations enacted in the workplace to ensure that positive relationships and relational outcomes are fostered and maintained.

6.2.2 Material wellbeing

After relationships, the second most commonly mentioned reason for which people with intellectual disability in open employment and ADEs liked work was because they enjoyed getting paid; in social enterprises, this was the third most commonly mentioned reason (see Table 5). Type of employment and level of payment thus did not appear to make a lot of difference to whether the participants in the study nominated getting paid as an aspect they liked about working.

People made brief comments about getting paid, such as:

> You get paid, I like that (51-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

> I've got to have money in the bank account somehow (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

They then commonly spoke about spending their income on expenses for daily living (food, rent/board, electricity, costs of running and servicing a car, private healthcare; and 'Important things like my Opal card and stuff that I need for myself, and bread and milk', 26-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing office work), as well as on clothes, shoes, entertainment (movies, bowling, sports tickets) and the expenses involved in relationships with friends and family (for example, one woman spoke about paying for herself when she went out to coffee with her sister; another spoke about buying birthday presents for her nieces and nephews). In this sense, getting paid was important for material wellbeing in many ways, including providing essential items for daily living, providing funds for enjoying quality of life and leisure, and allowing people to participate as an equal in family relationships.

In accounting for their material wellbeing, several people spoke about the importance of balancing their pay from their employment with remaining on the Disability Support Pension. Some people mentioned that remaining on the Disability Support Pension was important for providing them with entitlements to savings on property rental and public transport costs, the cost of running a car, and pharmaceutical costs. Here they enjoyed earning money from working, but appeared to feel that losing their entitlements was not worth getting off the pension and earning more through employment. Alternatively, some other people highlighted that their pay from working was important because their pension alone would not allow them enough money to spend on things they enjoyed or to save for long-term goals. Thus, their Disability Support Pension went to living expenses and their pay from working was money to be enjoyed or saved. For example, four people commented that their pay from their employment paid for them to go on holidays, for which they often saved for a long time and then travelled either with family, a support organisation and friends, or with a partner. Other people were saving to move out of their parents' home, to buy a car, or buy a dog.

The majority of people did not criticise their pay arrangements. Sometimes this was because they stated they were satisfied with their pay, while, for others, it may have been because they had relatively little awareness of the amount they were paid; several people answered, 'I don't know', to questions about their pay arrangements. However, a smaller number of people mentioned issues that they were unsatisfied with or disliked about their pay arrangements. This included people from across all employment types, although people in different types of employment had different issues with their pay. In ADEs, some people disliked their low rate of pay:

> I'd change a lot of things. Basically I'd change what hours you work here and how much you get paid (23-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

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People who had left ADEs were more likely to comment in retrospect on being unhappy with the low pay rate. For example, one man who had left an ADE for open employment and a woman who had left for work experience at a social enterprise commented:

> One of the reasons why I was unhappy was the hourly pay rate, because it's like a workshop, being – because the hourly pay rate isn't that high (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

> *What was the pay like at [the ADE]?*

> Horrible. Yep it was – dollar an hour or something horrible like that (27-year-old woman, urban, currently transitioning to work by doing work experience at a social enterprise, but talking about her previous work at an ADE).

Another issue highlighted was where one man working in a social enterprise commented that he was only paid for some of his shifts while completing work experience on the other days:

> I don't like just being paid on Saturdays, but I know why I'm not getting paid on weekdays, because I'm sort of like doing training how to be a barista. This is work experience. I'm learning how to be a barista in this job. I mean, it's a real job, but I'm sort of learning how to be a real barista, getting paid money for it (20-year-old man, urban, working in a social enterprise café).

Further, one woman working in open employment commented on the Supported Wage, explaining that she did not like be paid only a portion of what the other workers earned:

> With most [open employment] jobs I had, particularly the nursing home, I was only getting about $6 an hour and someone in my same position was getting $14 an hour. So I felt why am I getting less and then they're getting more? (30-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing advocacy work).

Elsewhere in this woman's interview she also mentioned that she knew teenagers were paid only part of an adult wage and implied that being paid less than her colleagues made her feel younger than she was and less respected than she should have been. For this woman, and a few others who made similar comments, the lack of equity in her pay rate compared to her colleagues appeared to be the greater issue than the amount paid per hour itself.

Overall, people with intellectual disability highlighted that they place a high value on being paid, regardless of employment type, because pay is linked to material wellbeing and to participating and being treated as an equal in relationships and in society. While many people did not question or criticise their pay arrangements or the amount they were paid, where they did, they highlighted that differential pay arrangements could undermine this latter function of being paid and make them feel like they were being treated differently to other workers.

6.2.3 Skill development

People across all employment types mentioned opportunities for skill development, although it was in social enterprises that skill development was emphasised most strongly as an outcome in itself from working – this was the only employment type where it appeared to be considered a top 'like' about working (see Table 5). Overall, skill development opportunities mainly included either on-the-job training or external education opportunities.

Many people mentioned on-the-job training. This could occur across employment types. For example, in ADEs people mentioned learning skills such as 'z-folding' paper and other assembly tasks; in social enterprises people commented on learning the skills to work in a plant nursery, use new computer programs, or make coffee; and in open employment they commented on learning cooking skills, customer service, and shop work. In open employment, many people had also undergone 'travel training' as part of the assistance from the DES to find them a job. Barriers to on-the-job training were mostly where staff or managers were too

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busy to teach new skills. A small number of people in ADEs had progressed through on-the-job training to the point where they were now working at a higher level than their colleagues, thus indicating the possibility of promotion for some people working in ADEs. In contrast, people in open employment and social enterprises appeared to most commonly learn the skills to function in their existing job.

External education opportunities were also commonly cited. The most common was the completion of or studying towards a TAFE certificate. Across open employment, ADEs and social enterprises, people mentioned studying for TAFE courses including retail, sewing, steel-work, computing or IT, literacy, business administration, hospitality, childcare, horticulture and hairdressing.

While people across employment types had taken part in TAFE, it was a different experience for people in ADEs and in open employment. In ADEs and for some social enterprises run through ADEs, a TAFE course relevant to the ADE's industries was run on-site at the ADE for a group of ADE employees; for example, in sewing and steel-work, which then facilitated their work in one of the more skilled positions available at the ADE. In comparison, people in open employment appeared to attend the TAFE campus to study for their course. While both groups had opportunities for skill development, the opportunities were based in the community and a more normative TAFE experience for those in open employment. As a consequence, however, people in ADEs receiving TAFE training did not commonly have to deal with the administration of entering and paying for the course, whereas people in open employment did. A couple of people in open employment commented that it was sometimes unreliable as to when the TAFE courses would run. Another woman commented that it had been difficult for her to enrol in TAFE because she did not have the funds to pay for it and there was no funding for this available through her DES. She had only been able to pay when she used her individualised funding package to cover the cost.

Other external skill development opportunities people mentioned attending were college, a Duke of Edinburgh program, and other mainstream work skill-building programs, possibly for disadvantaged people/workers. One person had also studied for and received certificates in Responsible Service of Alcohol and Responsible Conduct of Gambling. The people mentioning these opportunities were usually in open employment or social enterprises, rather than ADEs, except for those who had attended the college, who were mainly ADE employees.

Importantly, while people across all employment types mentioned opportunities for skill development, it appeared to be people working in social enterprises who valued skill development most highly as an aspect they enjoyed about working and who emphasised it most strongly as an outcome in itself from working (see Table 5). In social enterprises, people commonly liked their jobs because their job offered them opportunities for 'a challenge' and working towards their goals:

> *So this job at the [craft store] shop, what do you like about it?*
>
> Different.
>
> *It's different. What do you mean?*
>
> You get to learn different [computer] programs.
>
> *What else? What else do you like about this job?*
>
> It's a challenge (40-year-old man, urban, doing data entry for a social enterprise craft store).
>
> *What else do you like about this job?*
>
> I've learnt new skills. Like things from the till, the phones as well and pricings on the magazines and stuff like that. Trying to improve a bit more, which is quite good (45-year-old man, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

Another woman working in a social enterprise café run by an ADE suggested that she saw the social enterprise as a skill development opportunity that allowed her a stepping-stone between the more traditional ADE packing work in a factory and her goal to one day work in open employment. In this sense, the skill

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development available through working in the social enterprise was important to a broader change in employment circumstances that she envisioned for herself. These insights that social enterprise employees were most likely to emphasise skill development as an end in itself from working perhaps imply that social enterprises particularly invest in their employee's personal and skill development.

In contrast to skill development, some people mentioned boredom, wanting more of a challenge or wanting more variety in their work. This was mentioned by some people in open employment and in ADEs. Here people commented either that they disliked the repetitive nature of their work or the prolonged nature of some tasks, or that they felt they had more to offer and did not like doing only basic tasks or working by themselves:

> It stresses me out a bit counting rope, because I have to count it into bundles of a hundred. I'm good at counting, but you've got to concentrate too long (35-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

> I feel that I could be doing a lot more because I get bored very easy.

> *What sort of things would you like to be different?*

> Just doing different things that would make me think (34-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

> In my old job I worked all by myself in the clothing shop, about three days a week and I thought, 'I am so bored working by myself, I just want to experience the world with different people from different backgrounds' (22-year-old woman, regional, currently working in open employment in waitressing).

Boredom has often been noted as a limitation of work in supported employment in ADEs. Boredom in ADEs appears in the findings here, although perhaps not as commonly as may be expected. The supporter of one participant noted that this may be because ADE employees are commonly able to swap between tasks, thus managing their level of engagement and potential boredom. Alternatively, the presence of people with intellectual disability in mainly entry-level or low-skilled roles in open employment may mean that they can also experience boredom or wanting more of a challenge, as they may have a set range of basic tasks but may not have alternative tasks to swap to.

Overall, noting the balance between skill development and boredom, wanting more of a challenge or wanting more variety in work tasks is important. The participants in the study highlighted that there are skill development opportunities available across the employment types, but that people working in open employment appear to have the greatest access to skill development options that are in the mainstream community. Importantly, skill development appeared to be a particularly valued outcome in social enterprises, possibly because of the enterprises' level of investment in their workers.

6.2.4 Participation

People with intellectual disability cited a range of issues related to participation as an outcome from their employment. This included the importance of work for giving them something to do; whether or not they liked their tasks at work; and the availability of the work hours and days they wanted. While these issues varied in how much people in the different types of employment liked or disliked them and whether people in the different employment types mentioned them (see Tables 8 and 9), they were relatively widespread across the participants in the study.

Most commonly, when people referenced participation as an outcome of employment, they spoke about liking their job because it gave them something to do. This was a particularly common in open employment and ADEs. Many of the people interviewed had often had long periods of unemployment, under-employment, and/ or social and economic disengagement prior to taking up their current job. As such, they now appreciated being engaged in productive activity and having something to do day-to-day. They made comments such as:

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> It just gets me out of the house basically. It gives me something to do. I'd be cleaning the house, doing the same thing every day. Just boring (23-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

> **What makes [your work] good?**

> Happy! Makes you smile.

> *Why are you happy?*

> Gives something to do! Better than staying home (32-year-old man, urban, working in an ADE).

> *What do you get out of working? Why is it good for you?*

> Something to do. Exciting (30-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing office work).

In ADEs in particular, people often expressed this as the importance of 'getting out of the house'. The value people placed on having something to do and getting out of the house speaks to the experience of a group that is often socially excluded and disengaged; the productivity and participation involved in work is a valuable aspect for them, as it counteracts social exclusion.

Another element of participation was enjoying or not enjoying the tasks that they took part in at work. Across all the employment types, some people mentioned enjoying their work tasks. In open employment, people enjoyed serving food, using the cash register, cooking and doing office tasks. In ADEs, weighing or packing chocolate, looking after plants and driving were favoured tasks. In social enterprises, people mentioned working in the nursery and planting seeds, using a 'mixing machine', and making coffee as enjoyable. There were others who did not like the tasks they did at work. As noted in the next section of the report, these were mainly tasks that involved strenuous or repetitive work, or hot and/or noisy workplaces. This could occur across employment types (for example, repetitive knot-tying in ADEs; work that required bending or pushing, such as pushing food trolleys in open employment in fast food, bending to rearrange mats in a social enterprise plant nursery). These findings highlight that people with intellectual disability can find a range of tasks enjoyable in the workplace, but that the conditions in which they do them very much matter to whether a positive participation outcome is gained.

Finally, unsuitable or limited work hours were also participation issues for some people. Some people commented that they would like to change the timing of their shifts, either to make transport to work easier or to work at a more convenient time of day. Limited days or hours was, however, the more commonly mentioned issue and could occur across employment types, although people working in ADEs appeared either more accepting or resigned to these circumstances, whereas more people working in open employment and social enterprises actively disliked working limited hours. Some people commented on wanting more work hours:

> I'd probably change some parts of my timeline thing. Like 12–4pm is a good shift, like I love that shift, but I like having more than that, because I'd like to have more money and just, you know, take more money and have more hours (23-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

As noted in other parts of this report, reasons for limited work days or hours could include health and family commitments, but also balancing work with remaining on the Disability Support Pension in ADEs and open employment; not enough work being available in open employment; and some social enterprises having to share shifts between employees. Given that work in open employment and social enterprises is highly sought after, the last two reasons perhaps reflect these types of employment not being able to keep up with demand.

Participation is a clearly valued outcome of employment, particularly as people with intellectual disability are often socially excluded and disengaged. Importantly, the people in this study identified issues that, if further addressed, would improve their participation outcomes in employment. These issues include improving the physical conditions of their workplace/work tasks and improving the availability of suitable work days and hours.

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6.2.5 Personal wellbeing

Aspects of personal wellbeing were an important outcome of employment for some people with intellectual disability, although these issues were mentioned significantly less often than the other outcome areas detailed so far. When referencing personal wellbeing, the participants in the study typically either implied that their work helped their general wellbeing and mental health, or that aspects of their job could lead to physical discomfort.

People with intellectual disability made a range of brief references to work helping their general wellbeing and mental health. These references were spread across people working in different types of employment. In terms of general wellbeing, some people said that work was good for their confidence and how they felt about themselves, through giving them a sense of accomplishment and something to look forward to:

> *What was it like changing from work experience to a real job?*

> It's like everything had changed since – like when I was a kid I didn't know anything about [my DES] and about anything, but now I'm man … It's like being a kid changing to be a man. It's like being changed a lot in a different life. It's really good for me … now I'm a man. I have changed now. It feels really good now (23-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

> Working – it gives me some variety and you can say that you did this and you did that, yeah (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

> It gives you something to do for one thing and it keeps you fit as well and something you look forward to coming to (62-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

Others emphasised that work was good for their mental health. One person said that it gave him a beneficial structure and routine:

> Gives me structure and rules to obey and gives me routine. If I don't have routine, I don't know what to do – it gets me out of whack (31-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

Another person who was not working yet, but transitioning into work, thought that work would be a good distraction from personal problems:

> I think maybe it distracts you from other things that are going on and you can focus on the work (18-year-old woman, regional, working in a social enterprise plant nursery).

Other people were able to organise their working lives to more purposefully avoid stress or aid their personal values or preferred lifestyle. For example, one man working in an ADE cut back his work days to have more time at home with his wife who was unwell, while another person who had restricted his work to only two days said:

> *What happens when you work longer than two days?*

> It stresses me out a lot (31-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

The other main way that personal wellbeing was referenced was where people said that there was physical discomfort associated with their job. Physical discomfort in the workplace was the most commonly mentioned dislike of work by those in open employment and social enterprises (tied), as well as ranking second in supported employment in ADEs (see Table 6). In talking about it, several people said they found it uncomfortable to do work that was either strenuous, repetitive, hot, or noisy and that this made them dislike some of the tasks they did at work:

> I don't like doing the toasted sandwiches … because I have to stand up in the hot dining room and do the sandwiches (34-year-old woman, regional, working in an ADE).

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Your job [in fast food] – what don't you like about it?

Some of the heavy lifting I have to do and the heavy pushing I have to do when I do the delivery, it can be hard work, but then again no-one died from losing some sweat (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

The low-skill and entry-level work that many people in the study were doing across all employment types is often associated with these physically uncomfortable conditions. In this sense, this poorer outcome on physical and personal wellbeing is perhaps more of an indicator of the part of the labour market that people with intellectual disability are in, rather than a reflection of disability employment per se.

Seen in total, these findings about personal wellbeing suggest that work can benefit general wellbeing and mental health, but that some jobs may present risks for physical wellbeing. As noted above, this likely reflects the part of the labour market in which people with intellectual disability can commonly find work and the nature of the jobs available to them.

6.2.6 Rights, respect and equity

Similar to personal wellbeing, rights, respect and equity were important outcomes for some people from their work, although were, overall, mentioned by relatively few people across the study. Outcomes in this area were most commonly (although not exclusively) mentioned by people working in open employment.

Where people working in open employment spoke about rights, respect and equity, they sometimes spoke about finding pride and meaning in their work – this was tied third in what they liked most about their employment (see Table 5):

I like doing sensible things at my job, because everything's important to me (23-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

[In my job], I'm making a difference to other people with disabilities and people from non-English speaking backgrounds (30-year-old woman, urban, working in open employment doing advocacy work).

Others mentioned feeling important because of their job – either because they felt they had an important or responsible role and/or because they thought it was an important job to do. For example, one man in open employment who worked in a supermarket, spoke about having an important role on the safety committee at his work and helping his supervisors stay safe when they climbed ladders. A few people working in ADEs also felt their role was important; for example, one man who was one of the only employees at his ADE who could drive:

… driving the work car makes me feel that I'm a little bit important. Because most of the people here can't drive, which is sad (35-year-old man, regional, working in an ADE).

A few people also referenced rights, respect and equity in the context of feeling respected by colleagues, supervisors or bosses. One woman emphasised that she felt like a respected equal in her workplace:

Working is about, you get up, and you belong in the community, and get more confidence, like all the people at my job now treat me like the same, like equal (47-year-old woman, regional, working in open employment in a hotel).

Other people mentioned enjoying receiving compliments on their work from supervisors. Two people in open employment had been awarded Employee of the Month in their workplace, which made them feel respected.

Where people felt their rights, respect and equity had not been achieved, this was mainly because they felt they were treated differently to other colleagues or discriminated against in their workplace because of their disability. A subset of people working in open employment mentioned instances where they were treated differently to their colleagues without disability; for example, where they were given less responsibilities in the workplace than colleagues, where they were not recognised for the same achievements as their colleagues

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(for example, where another colleague had a morning tea put on for her for achieving a training certificate, but the participant had not), and when they were actively discriminated against (for example, a man who was blamed for a crime he did not commit). These rights, respect and equity violations were only mentioned by people working in open employment, not by people currently working in ADEs or social enterprises, as all employees there had a disability and were treated equally. However, some people who had left ADEs and were now working in open employment commented on rights and respect issues there in retrospect, such as leaving the ADE because they wanted more pay, equal to others in society.

Overall, what stands out from these findings is that it was predominantly (although not exclusively) people working in open employment who were talking about rights, respect and equity (whether or not these were achieved) and that only a much smaller number of people from the other employment types referenced these areas. This may indicate that people working in open employment are more concerned about rights, respect and equity or, alternatively, may simply indicate that they have the most knowledge or education in this area and that people in the other employment types could benefit from more information provided to them about their rights.

6.2.7 Self-determination

Self-determination was the least commonly mentioned outcome from employment in the study. No-one in the study directly referenced increasing their capacity for self-determination (i.e. choice, decision-making, self-direction) as a result of working. There were, however, more indirect examples of self-determination in action in relation to employment throughout the study.

Sections 5.2 and 5.5 discuss the situations in which people mentioned having made or not made their own choices about where to work or about when to change jobs and where to change to, including supports and barriers to their decision-making. As noted earlier, people working in open employment and social enterprises tended to make stronger statements of their own decision-making, however, people working in ADEs rarely appeared to feel that they were entirely without their own control over their decisions.

These earlier findings about choice of employment type and when to change jobs can be considered examples of situations in which people with intellectual disability displayed self-determination with regard to their working lives or had their self-determination curtailed. Further, the findings throughout the previous sections about people weighing up their likes and dislikes about different types of employment in making decisions about work also evidence self-determination in action, particularly where they made a decision to leave one type of employment for another. As such, while people with intellectual disability did not directly reference increasing their capacity for self-determination as a result of working, there was evidence of self-determination in action for them as they navigated their working lives.

6.3 Complex outcomes

Several participants in the study made complex statements highlighting multiple intersecting outcomes they felt they could potentially gain from their work. Here they showed that many of the factors discussed in the outcome sections above were simultaneously important to them. For example:

> [I work] because I want to **get out of my home**, I want to **do something** *[potential outcome: participation]*. I just wanted to do something and **mix in with other people** *[potential outcome: relationships]*. **Just to earn some money** *[potential outcome: material wellbeing]* and just live (34-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE; emphasis added).

> People **don't want to be sitting at home doing nothing** *[potential outcome: participation]*, they want to be out working and **having friends** *[potential outcome: relationships]* I don't want to be sitting at home … watching TV and staring at walls every day (23-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE; emphasis added).

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I like **being paid** *[potential outcome: material wellbeing]* here and **just trying to take care of plants** *[potential outcome: participation – enjoys tasks]* and trying to get the job done and be – and **feel that the supervisor [is] pretty proud of me** *[potential outcome: rights, respect and equity]* (29-year-old man, urban, working in an ADE plant nursery; emphasis added).

Seeing the complexity of people's statements here is important for appreciating the breadth of their views about working; the benefits people with intellectual disability gain from work cannot be reduced to any one aspect alone. Like many other people within the population, they have a complex set of reasons for which working is of benefit in their lives.

6.4 Direct comparisons between employment types

This report has highlighted a range of comparisons between the experiences of people with intellectual disability working in different types of employment. These findings were however revealed by comparison of different people's accounts during data analysis. It was rare for people themselves to make direct comparisons between the employment types, expressing a direct preference for one over the other, or to make direct evaluative comments of a particular employment type. Only a few people did this throughout the study.

This section of the report details the reasons that people with intellectual disability directly gave for preferring one type of work over the other. There was a small and fairly consistent set of reasons given, related to inclusivity, involvement in the mainstream community, pay, support, ease of entry, and job stability. However, it is important to note that these reasons are accounted for with a small amount of data and were reported by only a few participants. Notably, given the small dataset in this area, some data is repeated from previous sections of the report.

6.4.1 Open employment and social enterprises were perceived as more inclusive and involved in the mainstream community than supported employment

Open employment and social enterprises were perceived as less segregated and more inclusive and involved with the mainstream community than supported employment. For example, one man who had moved from an ADE to open employment did so because he preferred to not only work with other people with disability: 'I just didn't like being around people that were sort of severely disabled' (35-year-old man, urban, working in fast food).

Another woman who had worked in a range open employment, ADE and social enterprise jobs said that her preferred job was a social enterprise café, because she got to mix with the most people there:

So out of the jobs that you've had so far … which do you like the best?

The coffee shop …

So what do you like about the coffee shop?

Okay, you get to know everybody all right, and you get to know – you get to see different people, mix with different people (49-year-old woman, urban, working in a social enterprise café).

In this way, for some people, the inclusive aspect of open employment and social enterprises was important, meaning that they felt less segregated and more involved with other people and with their wider community.

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6.4.2 Open employment was perceived as offering better pay than supported employment

Some people noted that open employment offered better pay than supported employment. As noted earlier in the report, this included the woman who called wages at ADEs 'a bit crappy' (34-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE) and a man who had left an ADE to work in open employment in fast food, who said:

> One of the reasons why I was unhappy [at the ADE] was the hourly pay rate, because it's like a workshop, being – because the hourly pay rate isn't that high … I wasn't really getting much money (35-year-old man, urban, working in open employment in fast food).

Another woman described wanting to get into open employment because she saw it as a way of 'earning a normal wage':

> I'm planning to get off the pension and see if I can work – I want to work [in] open employment, like a normal person would like to do, like yourself and just earn a normal wage (49-year-old woman, urban, working in a social enterprise café).

In this sense, open employment was a preferred option or a future aspiration for some people with intellectual disability because they saw that it would improve their earning capacity and equalise their earnings with those of other people.

6.4.3 Supported employment and social enterprises were perceived as more 'supportive' than open employment

A small number of people who had attempted to find jobs in open employment but ended up working in ADEs or social enterprises highlighted that they felt that ADEs and social enterprises were the 'more supportive' employment option. Here 'supportiveness' appeared to mean that ADEs and social enterprises offered more encouragement, understanding and accommodation of their needs.

One woman, who was quoted earlier in the report as saying that a DES had provided her with insufficient support to know how to search for a job, also said:

> [ADEs are] better than the outside jobs, they're more supportive, whereas you go in the outside world they're not as supportive, I do notice that (29-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

Another person who had previously worked in both open employment and an ADE, but was now waiting to transition into a paid position in a social enterprise, said that she would not go back to open employment because the social enterprise offered far more support:

> *What do you like about the job here?*
>
> Everything, it's… support. I don't know what I'd do without it …
>
> *Would you try another open employment job?*
>
> Nope.
>
> *Why not?*
>
> No support (27-year-old woman, urban, transitioning to work by doing work experience in a social enterprise)

Interestingly, the same woman also described the social enterprise as also more supportive than the ADE she had worked at (where she had received little praise for her work and had been told to watch children's shows when the ADE ran out of tasks), thus situating social enterprise as her clearly preferred and most supportive option.

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Another man who had previously been in open employment but was now working for an ADE said that he would not go back to open employment because he had been discriminated against and accused of a crime there that he had not committed and thus did not find open employment to be supportive.

As such, there appeared to be a tendency to see the workplace culture of social enterprises and, often, ADEs as more supportive and understanding than open employment.

6.6.4 Supported employment was perceived as easier to get into and as offering more job stability than open employment

One person highlighted that although she did not like the pay arrangements in the ADE she worked in, she found the ADE easier to secure a job in than open employment – she had been knocked back from several open employers and had come to the decision that she would trade-off ease of entry against pay. First she said:

> I know that supported employment wages is a bit crappy, but open employment is a bit harder to get into (34-year-old woman, urban, working in an ADE).

She then went on to explain:

> But [open employment] was a bit more difficult to get into. I had someone help me with my application forms and that was more difficult to get into than supported employment, whereas supported employment was a bit easier to get into … I found it much easier to get into supported [employment] than open [employment].

Another person had been unwilling to go without pay or being productive while looking for a job in open employment, so chose to work in an ADE where she knew she already had guaranteed work. Again, ease of entry and secured work was important to her.

Further to these two people who made direct comparisons, the findings in Section 5.4.2 highlight that many people found that there was greater job stability in ADEs than in open employment. They appeared to choose to work in ADEs because they valued stability over their precarious work experience when trying to find and keep work in open employment. In this respect, while some people with intellectual disability had looked for work or wanted to look for work in open employment, the practical realities of ease of entry, finding a job when one wanted to, and having job stability meant that they nevertheless sometimes favoured ADEs over open employment options.

Looking across these various reasons for preferring one of the employment types over another highlights that people's employment choices appear to depend on what they value most in choosing between different options – whether they opt for greater support and less discrimination in the workplace, ease of entry to work and job stability, or whether they would prefer greater community involvement and higher rates of pay. The different considerations involved highlight that some people with intellectual disability may be making trade-offs between different benefits and drawbacks and that different employment options may be preferred by different people because they have different priorities. Where people want to prioritise community involvement and higher pay, they may opt for open employment. However, where they seek stability and security, they may opt for ADEs instead. Social enterprises appear to fall somewhere in between. In this respect, different employment types may better suit different people depending on what they are seeking from their work.

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7. Major findings and policy implications

The previous sections of this report have explored in detail the perceptions and perspectives of people with intellectual disability about their employment, including their experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing their employment and the likes, dislikes and outcomes they experience from working. Where possible, comparisons have been made between the experiences of people working in open employment, supported employment and social enterprises.

The major findings from this in-depth exploration of people with intellectual disability's perceptions and perspectives and the policy implications are summarised below, including noting the areas in which the findings respond to gaps in the existing literature.

7.1 Experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment

The major findings in relation to experiences of choosing, finding, maintaining and changing employment were:

- Some people with intellectual disability had no choice about where they would work. This was because there were few choices available or because parents or teachers made the choice for them. Where they did choose, it was common that they made constrained choices, where there were not many options to choose from or where external circumstances had a large degree of impact on what they decided. This happened across employment types, although was common in open employment where people were often presented by a DES with only one possible option of where to work.

  Implications:

  People with intellectual disability need to have a range of employment opportunities available to them when job seeking. This includes ensuring that different types of employment and different employers are available, with support to choose between options.

- People with intellectual disability were successfully assisted to find work where there were both supports for their job search (helpful people, service system supports and preparatory experiences, such as work experience or employment expos) and conditions conducive to gaining employment (for example, enough business contracts in social enterprises). For people with intellectual disability to find work, both of these elements were important and needed to be in place.

  Implications:

  People with intellectual disability need to have both personal and systemic-level support for making employment choices. This includes ensuring there are personal and systemic-level supports for choices about type of employment, specific job decisions, and decisions within job roles.

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■ People seeking work in open employment experienced many more barriers to finding work than people looking to work in supported employment or social enterprises. The barriers included ineffective or constrained DES assistance, challenges in the application or waiting process, and poor attitudes from employers. Work in ADEs was easier to secure. Social enterprises were welcoming, but people sometimes had to wait for paid positions and did unpaid work while waiting.

Addressing a gap in the literature, these findings begin to outline a three-way comparison of experiences of entering open, supported and social enterprise employment, showing the different experiences in the different employment types.

Implications:

Support is not only needed for job seeking, but also for education, capacity building and building the employment expectations of people with intellectual disability, which all also assist in finding employment. Policy needs to address the limitations and constraints on funding in DES to allow assistance with these key elements beyond the job search itself.

The policy framework needs to further enable social enterprises as an alternative work option for people with intellectual disability. This includes supporting the development of new social enterprises with capacity to employ people with intellectual disability and offering support for social enterprises to more quickly streamline the transition of new workers into paid positions.

■ People working in open employment experienced more barriers to maintaining their employment than people working in ADEs or social enterprises, where work was usually more stable and continuous. Barriers to maintaining work in open employment included unstable labour market conditions, as well as disrespect, under-valuing and discrimination towards employees with intellectual disability. As such, finding an open employment job and then keeping it was a challenge for many people with intellectual disability.

Maintaining a job was best aided where people had practical help with tasks at work; supportive relationships in the workplace, characterised by practical assistance and trust; and were assisted in personal development and confidence-building. Some people in the study had successfully kept their open employment jobs for a long time, but there were also many others who had left open employment because of the barriers to maintaining work.

These findings are important as they respond to gaps in the literature about the reasons why people with intellectual disability do and do not maintain open employment, what employment conditions affect outcomes in this area and how people can be supported to stay in open employment.

Implications:

Employers in open employment need further encouragement to appreciate and understand how critical both personal supports for workers with intellectual disability and education towards cultural change in the broader workplace are as elements supporting people with intellectual disability to maintain their employment.

■ Many people with intellectual disability had changed jobs in the past and commonly switched between roles; however, this was usually due to circumstances outside their control. It was much less common for people with intellectual disability to actively seek to change their employment. Sometimes this was because they were genuinely happy in their roles or felt secure there, while for others it was because they did not believe they would find or be accepted in another job.

Implications:

People with intellectual disability need to know that it is acceptable to change jobs if they wish to, and to be encouraged to do so. They need to have support available to further develop their confidence for finding and moving to new roles. This support could be boosted in existing programs, such as DES and Transition to Work. However, there is also the possibility of considering how career development could become part of other current capacity building programs for people with disability, including those associated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

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■ Sometimes people had changed employment type. The most common routes were either: (a) moving out of an ADE into either open employment or social enterprises because they wanted higher pay, better working conditions, more of a challenge, or because they wanted to work with people other than people with disability; or (b) moving from open employment to an ADE or social enterprise because they had a bad experience in open employment and so did not want to remain in an open workplace.

Implications:

There needs to be support available to ensure that people with intellectual disability are making informed and supported choices about changing their employment type. This includes, but should not be limited to, assisting people who have had difficulty in either finding or maintaining work in open employment to consider staying with this employment type with a new employer or new DES, or to consider returning to open employment if they have already left.

■ Many of the difficulties that people with intellectual disability experienced in their employment appear to be about the types of jobs available to them and/or their position in the labour market. Across all employment types, people with intellectual disability were working in entry-level and/or low-skilled positions. As such, they were subject to the tumultuous conditions of this section of the labour market, including low job stability, high turnover of jobs and employers, switching between low-skilled tasks, and lack of clear pathways into work. While the low-skilled work was similar across the different employment types, people in open employment appeared to be most vulnerable to these labour market conditions, as they did not have the interface of an ADE or social enterprise to ensure more job stability.

Implications:

Improving people with intellectual disability's employment outcomes should be considered one of the reasons for and factors in improving conditions in the entry-level and/or low-skilled end of the labour market in general. The employment of people with intellectual disability is not only a disability-specific issue and needs to be considered within the context of broader workforce and labour market conditions and policies, especially given the particular vulnerability of people with intellectual disability working in open employment.

7.2 Likes, dislikes and outcomes from employment

The major findings in relation to people with intellectual disability's likes, dislikes and outcomes from employment were:

■ Across all employment types, relationships and getting paid/achieving material wellbeing were the most important employment outcomes to people with intellectual disability. Skill development and participation were the next most important outcomes, with skill development particularly emphasised by people working in social enterprises and participation valued across employment types against a background of common experiences of social exclusion. Personal wellbeing, rights, respect and equity, and self-determination were important to those who mentioned them, but appeared overall to be outcomes less commonly mentioned as a result of employment. People working in open employment appeared to have the most knowledge about rights, respect and equity.

Implications:

Awareness of workplace relations is critical to ensure that positive relationships are fostered and maintained between employees, colleagues, supervisors and support staff.

People with intellectual disability working in all employment types need to have access to accessible information and advocacy support in relation to their rights and issues of respect and equity in the workplace.

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■ Getting paid was an important component of material wellbeing for people with intellectual disability, regardless of their type of employment. While most people were conscious of balancing their pay so that they could also remain on the Disability Support Pension, the pension appeared to not be enough on its own for achieving material wellbeing and quality of life. Pay from working thus appeared to have an important role in allowing people with intellectual disability enough money to pay for aspects they enjoyed (for example, the costs associated with spending time with friends and family, holidays, community engagement and leisure) as well as their daily living expenses. This was the case across the different types of employment.

Many people with intellectual disability did not criticise their pay arrangements. For some, this was because they were satisfied with their pay, while a large number of others appeared to be unaware of the details of their pay arrangements. Where they did criticise their pay arrangements, this happened across the different types of employment, although for different reasons in different employment types: low pay was criticised in ADEs, reduced pay while training was criticised in social enterprises, and differential pay compared to colleagues was criticised in open employment.

These findings further fill out knowledge of the three-way comparison of open, supported and social enterprise employment, showing that different pay-related issues apply to different employment types.

Implications:

People with intellectual disability need to have support and accessible information provided to them to make informed decisions about how their pay is related to their employment type. This may include, for example, accessible pay slips, so that they are supported to understand their pay arrangements.

■ Few people made direct comparisons between the employment types, but where they did, they identified that: (a) open employment offered better conditions with regard to pay and mainstream community connections than supported employment, but it was harder to get into than supported employment, had less job stability and they were more likely to face discrimination in open employment; whereas (b) supported employment in ADEs offered less pay and less mainstream community connections than open employment, but more support (i.e. encouragement, understanding and accommodation of their needs) and job stability; further (c) social enterprises were perceived as both supportive and connected to the mainstream community, but there were sometimes problems with entering paid positions, as these were in higher demand than what was available.

These findings directly apply to the need for more information on the three-way comparison between open, supported and social enterprise employment. The findings show the benefits and drawbacks of each employment type in comparison to each other. They also show some of the everyday experience of working in supported employment and social enterprises, other gaps in the literature to which this study contributes.

Further, these findings highlight that even if provided with the ideal circumstance of being able to choose between all employment types (which was not possible for all people in the research), none of the available options offer everything that people with intellectual disability may want. People with intellectual disability therefore experience a trade-off between which outcomes they most want from their work – do they choose support and stability in supported employment but less pay and mainstream community connections, or do they attempt to have better pay and mainstream community connections in open employment but have a harder time finding work and less stability for keeping a job if they find one? Social enterprises may be an alternative for some people, but paid positions are in higher demand than what is available, evidenced by the people in this study who were doing work experience in social enterprises while waiting for paid positions to become available. This trade-off between support and stability on the one hand and higher pay and mainstream community connections on the other is a difficult decision; people with intellectual disability will choose different employment types based on which of these outcomes they prioritise most highly and which job options they feel are available to them.

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Implications:

The gaps in open and supported employment need to be addressed so that people with intellectual disability do not have to trade-off between better outcomes in pay and mainstream community connections on the one hand, or better outcomes in support and job stability on the other – there is importance to building the capacity of all employment types to be able to deliver on all of these outcomes.

In the context of the link between employment and community connections, there is a need to work to articulate the connections between broader initiatives to address the social exclusion experienced by people with intellectual disability and the ways these initiatives act to support their employment choices and outcomes. Less social isolation in general may empower people with intellectual disability to choose more freely between different types of employment. This has implications for how the *National Disability Employment Framework* **is conceptualised and implemented, as well as for how for the 'Economic security' and 'Learning and skills' components of the** *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* **are worked towards. It also situates employment within the broader social and economic participation and inclusion goals of the NDIS. It implies that funding and services targeted towards inclusion also have a role to play in improving employment outcomes and that people with intellectual disability may benefit from connections between inclusion and employment strategies.**

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Appendix A: Interview questions

Interview questions for people with intellectual disability who are already working

(1) Employment history

(1a) Current job

Objective details

- Where do you work?

- What do you do in your job?

- What days do you work? [If they work part-time: What do you do on the other days?]

- How long have you been doing that?

Perceptions

- What do you like about your job? / What is good about your job? / What is important to you about your job?

- What don't you like about your job? / What is bad about your job? / What would you change about your job?

- Why do you have your job? What made you choose that one?

  – Did you make the choice yourself? How? Did anyone help you choose or decide between options? What was that like? / What did you think of that?

  – Did someone else make the choice for you? Who?/How? What was that like? / What did you think of that?

- Why do you work? Why did you want to work? Do you feel like you are getting that from your job now? Has that happened?

- What do you need to do well at your job? / What kind of help do you need at work? Are you getting what you need?

(1b) Previous jobs

- Have you ever had another job? / Have you ever changed jobs?

- What other job/s have you had?

- Why did you change jobs? What made you choose to change?

  – Did you make the choice yourself? How? Did anyone help you choose or decide between options? What was that like? / What did you think of that?

  – Did someone else make the choice for you? Who?/How? What was that like? / What did you think of that?

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- What was it like changing jobs? What happened? What help did you get? How did it go? [i.e. Did it go well/ badly?]

(2) Ideal employment

- If you could choose any job, what would it be? Why?

- Do you think that's something that could really happen for you? Why?/Why not?

Interview quetsions for people with intelectual disability who are transitioning to employment

(1) Objective details

- Where are you hoping to work?

- What do you want to do in your job?

- How long have you been getting ready [preparing] to work?

- What have you been doing to get ready [prepare] to work?

(2) Perceptions

- Why do you want to work? / What is important to you about working?

- What do you think will be good and bad about your working?

(3) Choice

- How have you been deciding where and when to work?

  – Did you make the choice yourself? How? Is anyone helping you choose or decide between options? What is that like? / What do you think of that?

  – Did someone else make the choice for you? Who?/How? What was that like? / What did you think of that?

(4) Ideal

- If you could choose any job, what would it be? Why?

- Do you think that's something that could really happen for you? Why?/Why not?

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