



BREAK THRU PEOPLE SOLUTIONS

**RESPONSE TO
THE INTERIM REPORT
ON WELFARE REFORM:
A SYSTEM FOR BETTER
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL
OUTCOMES**

A response contribution which incorporates client feedback, identification of improvement, and offers international models & innovative solutions for consideration by the reference group.

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Breaking thru barriers, creating futures.

A LETTER FROM BREAK THRU MANAGING DIRECTOR, ROSS LEWIS

Break Thru welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Interim Report on Welfare reform and to contribute to the discussion on how to develop a new system for better employment and social outcomes.

Break Thru is an Australian not-for-profit organisation whose core vision is to “Break Thru barriers and create futures” by being the leading diversity champion, courageously promoting the value, potential and inclusion of all people in the life of the Australian community. We place social inclusion at the core of our mission and therefore support the objectives of the welfare reform agenda to maximise employment and social outcomes for individuals and families.

With the federal Government’s commitment to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Break Thru sees this reform as contributing to a real improvement in social outcomes for Income Support Recipients in Australia. We therefore support the objectives of the Welfare reform agenda in ensuring that the broader social support system works in partnership with the income support system to assist those most in need.

As a provider of diverse human services, service delivery has been impeded by the challenges of navigating a complex welfare structure and we welcome the recommendation by the Reform reference group to simplify the welfare payment system. We expect that greater simplicity will enable us to focus our attention more fully on providing direct services and support.

As an experienced employment services provider, operating since 1992, we are pleased to be able to contribute to the discussion on the proposal of a welfare system which has a stronger employment focus.

In preparing our response Break Thru sought the views of a number of stakeholders including via:

- **A client focus group** - Break Thru’s Client Reference Group represents our clients, especially in the area of mental health.
- **Review of International experiences** - We have considered the International experience in the context of employer engagement and welfare reform
- **Break Thru’s own experience** - We demonstrate Break Thru’s experience in implementing innovative service models

The following feedback is based on questions outlined in the submission template. Due to the nature of our service provision we have focused primarily on questions pertaining to employer engagement.

Authorising Signature:



Ross Lewis
Managing Director

8th August 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report is split into three response categories, which answer various questions from the Welfare Reform report. These sections provide context to the changes being made, outlining stories from Australia, the United States, Ireland and Germany.

THE CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

In this section, the client perspective is discussed listing concerns and considerations for improvement. Among the group, there was concern over the definition of 'permanent impairment with no capacity to work' and how this may apply to those with a mental illness. Overall, it was seen to be harder for those with a mental illness to receive the Disability Support Pension under the current and new system. The concern was that those with mental illness would predominantly fit into the working age payment under the new scheme, leaving some long-term needs unmet. Peer support was highly valued as the group felt those with lived experiences were best able to understand the complexities of their needs.

BREAK THRU'S PERSPECTIVE THROUGH INNOVATION

This section looks at two initiatives Break Thru has participated in and how these can provide insight into business-led covenants and Individual Place and Support. In 2011, Break Thru and Droga5 (global advertising agency and employer of people with disabilities) launched Creative Spirit. Creative Spirit showcases one model similar to the style of business-led covenants.

BreakThru has direct experience in delivering Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and understands the benefits of such a model in promoting employment outcomes for people with mental illness. Although Break Thru fully supports the model as an effective pathway for people with severe mental illness to achieve recovery through employment, we recommend a number of enhancements to the program.

LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

In this section, the report looks at international examples to learn from those programmes creating a positive difference in the lives of children, people with disability and the unemployed. The report suggests the Australian government can learn both from the success of other initiatives abroad but also from lessons learnt in these countries. Examples are from New Zealand, the United States, Ireland and Germany (translated by Break Thru).

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THE CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

Break Thru holds regular meetings with a Client Reference group (CRG). The CRG ensures the client's perspective is heard and is part of the decision-making process. A focus group (discussion group) with the members of the CRG was conducted in order to gain the perspective of those who have had experience receiving benefits under the current welfare system¹. The session honed in on response questions most relevant to those with lived experiences of mental illness, a growing proportion of those receiving Disability Support Pension, Newstart and other payments. The perspectives of those are of the clients' participating in the focus group and not necessarily Break Thru.

REPORT QUESTION:
Should people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work receive a separate payment from other working recipients?

DEFINING "PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT NO CAPACITY TO WORK"

The focus group believed that those with permanent impairment no capacity to work should receive a separate payment to other working recipients in order to address their greater financial need. To reach an appropriate standard of living both in the short- and long-term, those with no ability to work will have separate circumstances to those with the ability to supplement payments by working either full- or part-time.

However, among the group, there was concern over the definition of 'permanent impairment with no capacity to work' and how this may apply to those with a mental illness. As well, the question was raised on who would be best placed to make such a decision. The person will need to be independent, meaning they have no incentive to bias their decision towards a specific outcome. In particular, it was felt that those health care workers associated with the government may have bias to state a person does have some capability to work as this could have cost saving benefits.

Overall, it was seen to be harder for those with a mental illness to receive the Disability Support Pension under the current and new system. The concern was that those with mental illness would predominantly fit into the working age payment under the new scheme, leaving some long-term needs unmet.

Educating employers and employment service professionals on the needs specific to those with a mental illness was seen as a good first step in ensuring even those receiving only working age payments would gain adequate support. Approaches like Individual Placement and Support that combine vocational rehabilitation and personal support were seen to be of benefit.

A SHARED STORY

'Kevin' feels that if he applied now for the Disability Support Pension, which he is currently receiving, he would be turned down due to employment he has had in the past. However, he believes that a person must be seen as more than their ability to work and understand the complex nature of employment and recovery with mental illness. As his medicine has side-effects which include not being able to drive whilst on the medication, he needed to take it after driving home from work. However, this made it very difficult to have any evening activities, isolating him from the community. His work became his whole life. He states, "You can't live to work."

¹ The focus group was small, consisting of 3 individuals and will not fully represent the overall view of Break Thru's clients. However, their own stories of the system are poignant and a reminder of the complexity of even individual circumstance.

REPORT QUESTION:

How can approaches like Individual Placement and Support that combine vocational rehabilitation and personal support for people with mental health conditions be adapted and expanded?

CREATING UNDERSTANDING AND THE SUPPORT OF PEERS

Empathy and understanding were seen as the most important factors when on the road to recovery. A dual approach, much like the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program, which combines employment and mental health support, was seen as a welcomed initiative for any person with a mental illness entering the work place².

Cross-training was recommended for both Employment Service and Mental Health professionals to gain a better overall understanding of the pressures and risks associated with entering and participating in the workforce. In general, the group felt employment service professionals needed a greater understanding of the episodic nature of mental illness as well as the day-to-day side effects of medications.

Employing Employment Service professionals with a lived experience of mental illness was seen as a welcome adaptation to the IPS program. Peer support was highly valued as the group felt those with lived experiences were best able to understand the complexities of their needs. They would also be well placed to educate employers on how to adapt company practices and support those with mental illnesses.

Ultimately, there was distrust that employers and employment service professionals were able to be empathetic due to the pressure of reducing costs and attaining placement quotas. There were examples given of employers taking advantage of the system for their own profit rather than the wellbeing of those employed. It is suggested that not all employers may participate with good intentions and proper monitoring of those in the scheme will be needed to combat the risks.³

A SHARED STORY

'Darryl' has been living with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for 30 years, however he is not on a Disability Support Pension. Due to his illness's episodic nature, it makes an ability to work assessment difficult. He states, "Nobody is going to say I'll have it [PTSD] for the next 2 years." While his illness may be more pronounced at times, the side effects of his prescribed medicine are always there. The tablets have both social and health effects including losing teeth, bad breath and tiredness. While some past employers and employment service professionals have been understanding to his specific needs, he feels it can be down to the person's training whether he will receive a quality service. From his experience, employers are not prepared for the episodic nature of mental illness. At times, he has seen this result in some being fired and even losing their reputation in an industry. He hopes more education will be given to employers in the future to ensure those going back to work are supported in both good times and bad.

² Break Thru's own experience with the IPS program method is discussed in the section, Break Thru's Perspective and Expertise

³ This idea is not isolated to Australia and can be seen in other employment schemes in the world. The report will discuss Ireland's Jobbridge program and the public perceptions in the final section of this report.

REPORT QUESTION: How could Rent Assistance be better targeted to meet the needs of people in public or private rental housing?

RENT ASSISTANCE & MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY

All focus group participants agree that accommodation is a significant issue. Suitable accommodation is important to enabling a productive life for people with mental health issues and is summarised succinctly by one focus group participant:

“The best way to (mental health) recovery is a permanent roof over your head.”

The issue of rent assistance and fairness between private and public housing was debated by the focus group and seems to be a vexing issue resulting in disparate views being conveyed during the discussion. Some clients believed a lack of public housing created a greater need for funding. For instance ‘Paul’ commented that, “Rent assistance needs to go up because there is no public housing. You are on a waiting list ... for 25 years if you are renting privately you should get more especially if you have children”. Other participants believed that regardless of the need for public housing, a consistent and acceptable quality of living was important.

Although, there was not a commonly found solution to an equitable payment system for rental allowance offered by the focus group participants, two related issues were elicited from the discussion.

1. A requirement for greater understanding/empathy of the client situation (from service providers, housing agencies and Centrelink)
2. Clarity around issues of disclosure to enable effective communication of the client’s situation between service providers

Focus group participants also identified that the standard of accommodation is important and that properties should be in good condition. Additionally, the impact of shared accommodation arrangements should be taken into consideration. If public housing does become available there is a lot of pressure to share that accommodation with another person if you are single. There needs to be a realistic view of the standard of accommodation. It should also be considered that people with Mental Illness may have issues of anxiety about sharing their home with a stranger.

A SHARED STORY

‘Darryl’ met with one agency to discuss circumstances of payment entitlements. However, he was not aware that he should have signed form “106” (sic) to disclose his medical condition to other service agencies (so that his circumstances could be discussed across agencies). Therefore, he was not provided with adequate information about his entitlements to receive allowances such as rental assistance. ‘Darryl’ therefore, made some assumptions that agencies had an agenda to save money by not revealing a full list of allowances to which he may have been entitled.

BREAK THRU'S PERSPECTIVE THROUGH INNOVATION

Break Thru has experience leading cutting-edge initiatives in the employment service sector. These initiatives give insight into how the Australian Government could further implement programmes pertaining to business-led covenants and Individual Placement and Support.

REPORT QUESTION:

Should people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work receive a separate payment from other working age recipients?

Break Thru supports the view that a reformed welfare system should incorporate adequate payments to sustain people who have a permanent disability. However, we caution that people with a permanent disability in receipt of such benefits should not be excluded by the workforce as a consequence of such reform. Research has shown that some 80% of recipients of the DSP express a desire to gain employment and the shared story below demonstrates the value a DSP recipient brings to the workplace.

A SHARED STORY

'Mark' has a history of mental illness and long-term unemployment. He has been in receipt of a Disability Support Pension for 10 years and was assessed as having no capacity to work. However, he wanted to be able to work regardless of how hard it may be. He contacted Break Thru to help him. He entered the 'Suited to Success' programme and received individual support by the Employment Services team. He successfully found a job in retail in the model train store, an area which is a passion of his. He continues to receive support from Break Thru. "After starting work, [Break Thru] has been a great support in helping me to negotiate with my employer on a variety of issues. Their assistance has been most helpful and I would not have succeeded without their advice and support."

But to Mark, gaining employment was more than just working; it was about achieving his goals and challenging himself. "We must change and adapt but stay focused on that which we wish to achieve. Abandoning the space we are comfortable with is always a challenge. Changing our self takes courage. If we want to set a goal and achieve that goal, we must have the courage to change."

REPORT QUESTION:

How can business-led covenants be developed to generate employment for people with disability and mental health conditions?

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: BUSINESS COVENANTS

A STYLE OF BUSINESS-LED COVENANT

Meaningful engagement with employers is critical to the success of improving outcomes for people on income support. Break Thru therefore shares the view of the reference group that employers play a key role in welfare reform. Based on our experience in building successful partnerships with employers we demonstrate via a practical case study (Creative Spirit Campaign) how employers are pivotal to the solution.

Break Thru's partnership with global advertising agency Droga 5, starting in 2011, aims to place people with disability in all 32,000 Australian creative agencies by 2021 as part of the Creative Spirit⁴ campaign. Creative Spirit showcases one model similar to the style of business-led covenants.

David Nobay, Creative Chairman of Droga5 and advocate for hiring people with a disability, claims "What could be more creative than being different? Ultimately this [campaign] will make our community the largest employer of these extraordinary people." A film promoting the benefits of employing a person with a disability (featuring a Break Thru client) was aired at the Australia Caxton Awards, Disability Employment Summit & TEDx (conference of Australian thought leaders). Our findings show that a style of business-led covenants such as creative spirit can lead to employment generation in the disability and mental health sector.

A SHARED STORY

'Bill', a person with multiple disabilities including; Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Intellectual Disability, psychiatric disorder, pseudo seizures, (20 per day) anxiety & hypertension was retrenched from his last factory job 9 yrs ago. Clemengers (advertising agency) contacted Break Thru via the Creative Spirit network to lodge a vacancy. Break Thru and Clemengers created a tailored position (Support Assistant Concierge) that Bill commenced in April 2012. Break Thru offered employer Wage Subsidy, provided Disability Awareness Training to co-workers including training provided by the Epilepsy Foundation & implemented a workplace Seizure Management Plan for Bill. Break Thru provided Bill & Clemengers daily support for 8 weeks reducing to weekly contact for 6 months and has now been employed for over 2 years.

BREAK THRU COMMENTS ON EXISTING MODELS OF BUSINESS-LED COVENANTS

Before a business-led covenant in the disability sector is introduced in Australia, we would benefit from learning from the experiences of similar initiatives.

The largest business-led covenant in Australia, The Australian Employment Covenant (AEC)⁵, started in 2008 and aimed at securing the commitment of industry to create 50,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians. To date about 62,000 job openings have been pledged and 15,000 positions have been filled. Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC) provide vocational training and work readiness skills specifically targeted at the individual jobs the participating employers earmarked. Participants move into guaranteed employment once they successfully finished the training.

The Government's funding terms guarantee the AEC outcome payments based on job promises, job placements and job retention (26 weeks and longer). Researcher Dr Kirrily Jordan from ANU's Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research estimates that the AEC was able to collect over \$3 million in outcome payments solely based on the large number of job promises⁶. A business-led covenant in the disability sector should include job targets clearly linked to deadlines and should ensure that outcome payments are only linked to long-term employment targets.

The Australian National Audit Office notes that the goal of filling 50,000 positions was not linked to a timeframe⁷. However, VTECs have the target of staffing 5,000 positions by 2015⁸. A disability employment covenant should include a clear timeframe to increase pressure on employers to produce the pledged jobs.

⁴ For more information, please visit the campaign's website at: www.creativespirit.org.au

⁵ For more information, please see: <http://generationone.org.au/employers/covenant-journey>

⁶ For more information, please see:

http://caepn.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Publications/topical/TI2011_8_Jordan_AEC.pdf

⁷ The full audit can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1omF1VC>

⁸ For more information, please see: http://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous_affairs/vtec/

BreakThru currently collaborates with four VTECs such as Marist Youth Care in Western Sydney. Early success of these collaborations suggests that an Australian disability employment covenant would benefit from such centres as well.

Internationally, a large current business-led covenant is the corporate-covenant to support the British Armed Forces. Participating companies write up individual goals and specify how they will ensure that members of the British Armed Forces are not discriminated against. A business-led covenant in the disability sector would benefit from clearly worded, individual pledges. Ideally, pledges will be measurable and reported on.

REPORT QUESTION:

How can approaches like Individual Placement and Support that combine vocational rehabilitation and personal support for people with mental health conditions be adapted and expanded?

INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT & SUPPORT

Break Thru has direct experience in delivering Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and understands the benefits of such a model in promoting employment outcomes for people with mental illness. Break Thru first implemented the model in 2008 when a service level agreement was established with Queensland Health to participate in an eight-site trial of the evidence-based model (also known as the Integrated Employment Project). Break Thru extended delivery of this co-location/co-case management model for people with severe Mental Illness in partnership with clinical mental health services in both NSW and Victoria. Although Break Thru fully supports the model as an effective pathway for people with severe mental illness to achieve recovery through employment, we recommend a number of enhancements to the program.

Recommendations for improvements/adaptations:

- Support and resources to establish partnerships with universities to provide research assistance to conduct evidence-base trials, collect data and measure outcomes to determine the effectiveness of implementation of the model
- Access to training regarding the Drake-Becker⁹ Individual Placement and Support approach to ensure competency of both the clinical and employment service staff
- Infrastructure and support capacity to be provided to the clinical mental health service to enable the accommodation of the co-location model. For e.g. employment service staff to be given on-site access to workspace and technology.
- Ensure that IPS participants have access to the same incentives (for example a full suite of wage subsidies) that other people with disability do when they access mainstream employment services.
- The development of a comprehensive, holistic and consistent initial assessment to identify participant expectations and the employment and social needs of the participant. Such an assessment will enable effective delivery of the 'wrap around service model'
- Establish IPS "communities of practice" amongst service providers to share knowledge, promote continual learning about the model and establish best practice

⁹For the full article, please see: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF02188630>

LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

As stated in the Interim Report, key learnings from other welfare reforms worldwide give Australia a starting point in guiding their own programmes. Here we have collated several international initiatives from New Zealand, the United States, Ireland and Germany.

REPORT QUESTION

How can programmes similar to the New Zealand investment model be adapted and implemented in Australia?

EARLY INTERVENTION & ADAPTING THE NEW ZEALAND MODEL

The New Zealand Investment model is a novel approach to improving the long-term welfare of citizens. The new approach uses an actuary evaluation to estimate the lifetime liability for particular groups at risk. It allows New Zealand to acknowledge that the upfront investment of early intervention outweighs the long-term costs of not acting, and improves the quality of people's lives at key 'tipping points'.

What is so appealing about the New Zealand Investment model is that it is indicative to the advances in technology and social thought we are seeing today. Never before have governments been capable of such data analysis and understanding of their population. As well, investment models, much like the National Disability Insurance Scheme, allow both proactive and reactive assistance to those populations showing disadvantage.

Many of the perceived sticking points of the current system, as highlighted by our clients, were where short-term gain was given priority over their long-term health and wellbeing. If implemented correctly, the investment model is a promising compromise, rewarding long-term commitments over short-term profits while still remaining sensitive to spending levels.

Knowledge is power in this system. To ensure such a system would succeed in Australia, it's important to have an understanding of the technology available to best house the data created to extract the most value from it. While this idea may be new to most governments due to the complex nature of implementing such measurements, companies across the globe have been experimenting with possibly larger scale initiatives for some years. This has been driven to a large extent by technological advancement, but also by recognising the increased importance of understanding consumer needs.

Hadoop¹⁰, a non-profit open source initiative, is the global driving force behind the hardware and programming required to process big data, and provide an avenue the Australian Government could take to access and analyse large quantities of welfare data. Companies such as Spotify, Facebook and Twitter¹¹ currently use Hadoop's technology to process their own data in the most cost effective way on the market. Spotify, a music streaming site, has been able to rollout new products, improve site performance and streamline signups by analysing and learning from customer behaviour¹². Global social media sites and their use of Hadoop could offer the government a unique case study in how to best garner insight from consumer behaviour as most sites have a daily 'population' larger than Australia overall.

¹⁰ For more information, please see their website at: <http://hadoop.apache.org/>. A presentation by Doug Cutting (Founder of Hadoop) on the importance of Hadoop in the advancement of data analysis can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WwuZI6AhN8

¹¹ For a comprehensive list of companies using Hadoop, please visit their 'PoweredBy' Wiki page: <http://wiki.apache.org/hadoop/PoweredBy>

¹² Spotify has published a short presentation on their use of Hadoop and the benefits they have seen from the insights on customer behaviour: <http://files.meetup.com/5139282/SHUG%201%20-%20Hadoop%20at%20Spotify.pdf>

The success of Hadoop is attributed to its open-source policy, allowing the software to develop organically as the community highlights needs. Vast improvements have been made and functionality has grown through the efforts of the passionate community behind the platform. This in itself should be a key learning for the Australian Government. A collective impact model would facilitate the government to join social initiatives together to connect learning and increase the impact of the individual social enterprises¹³.

But with great data comes great responsibility. Speaking to almost 200 Data Scientists in Melbourne, Doug Cutting (Founder of Hadoop), talked about his approach to the advancement of big data.

The Hadoop Founder suggests four key steps both companies and governments should consider to strike a balance between promoting advancement and protecting privacy. These include¹⁴:

1. **Transparency** - Be transparent about what's being collected and how it's being used.
2. **Best Practices** - Share learnings about how to best keep data safe and how to ensure it's used benevolently.
3. **Define Abuses** - Always be on the lookout for how data can be abused. Governments should make sure legal wording gives jurisdiction over the new data landscape so abusers can be prosecuted by law.
4. **Oversight** - Regulations and Auditing should become more prevalent to make sure only the data needed is being collected and that best practices are being used.

A SHARED STORY: TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT HELPING EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Khan Academy began with Salman Khan (the founder) giving one-on-one math tutorials to his cousin. He starting sending Youtube videos on her lessons and something insightful happened. His cousin preferred the Youtube videos rather than the one-on-one tutorials. She was able to learn at her own pace, relistening to the areas where she was stuck. Another interesting finding was that other people were finding and watching Salman's videos and watching.

As the views began to multiply, Salman decided to work full-time on developing a new platform for learning. His idea is that one-size fits all education models create 'swiss-cheese' knowledge - meaning there are holes in people's understanding due to the fixed pace of the classroom. As subjects become more complex, these holes have the potential to create greater difficulty in understanding how to bring all the subject's knowledge together. Khan Academy allows students to learn at their own pace, mastering a topic before moving on to the next for a better overall understanding of the subject matter.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) highlights risk regions throughout Australia which could benefit from online platforms such as Khan Academy to gain the potential of narrowing the gap in education throughout Australia.

¹³ For more information on collective impact, please visit:
http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

¹⁴ Break Thru's Market Research Officer, Megan Huxhold, documented the talk. This information was originally published on her blog at: <http://www.meganhuxhold.com/post/85100536201/an-evening-with-doug-cutting>

REPORT QUESTION:
How can successful demand-led employment initiatives be replicated, such as those of social enterprises?

GERMAN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: INNOVATION

The workforce of private sector “integration-companies” in Germany is to a large degree (25% or more) made up of disabled persons. In some cases the German government subsidises such companies for the increased costs associated with employing a high percentage of people with a disability (through workplace modifications and initial on the job training) but does NOT subsidise to cover market risks. All such companies are profit oriented and have to shut down should they fail to be so.

Currently over 600 “integration-companies” are operating in Germany¹⁵. These companies include department stores, hotels, trade and repair services, auto shops, bakeries, farms, IT services, marketing agencies, travel agencies, supermarkets, museums and high-tech factories¹⁶.

These companies are very different from sheltered workshops as they operate across a wide variety of industries, jobs go beyond tasks of basic manual labour, staff are paid market rates, companies are for profit businesses, and companies do not present themselves as “disability organisations”. In order to “normalise” the idea of people with a disability in the workforce, piloting such “integration-companies” in Australia could be an innovative solution to increasing labour force participation of PWD.

REPORT QUESTION:
What initiatives could result in businesses employing more disadvantaged job seekers?

GERMAN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT: TARGETS

Craig Wallace from People with Disability Australia challenges the perception that the introduction of employment quotas is seen as too ambitious in Australia¹⁷. In Germany however, especially in the public sector, such quotas achieved success. The German public sector currently fills over 6% of all positions with people with disability more than twice as much as Australia¹⁸. Overall, just less than 4% of the labour market is occupied by people with disabilities¹⁹. This was achieved through the introduction of a 5% employment quota for medium to large organisations as well as setting financial penalties for failing to meet this target²⁰. These penalties are earmarked for funding initiatives to establish suitable employment for people with disability through the Department of Employment and local “integration bureaux”²¹.

Whether or not such a quota will be introduced in Australia, some interesting findings from the German case study can be utilized in the Australian context²². For instance, employer attitude towards employees was directly linked to whether the company was successful or not in meeting the 5% quota. Financial punishment was not viewed as an incentive to employ more than 5% of people with

¹⁵ Information is translated from: <http://www.bag-if.de/das-netzwerk-sozialer-unternehmen>

¹⁶ <http://www.rehadat.info/export/sites/einstieg/downloads/VerzIntFirmen.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2014/01/24/3930297.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2014/01/13/3922428.htm>

¹⁹ http://www.iaw.uni-bremen.de/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=995009

²⁰ Companies have to pay €115 / €200 / €290 per month per position if average percentage of employment of people with disability is below 2% / 2%-3% / 3%-5%.

²¹ German only source: <https://www.integrationsaemter.de/Aktuell/72c/index.html>

²² Findings based on research by the University of Bremen

disability, rather applicants' "ability to perform the required work" and a sense of "social duty" were mentioned.

The vast majority of German organisations employing 5% or more of their workforce to people with disability, did think this fact was not worth publicising. Publishing should be seen as an opportunity to create soft pressure on the competition to also employ more people with disability. Allowing small to medium sized employers to increase the length of the qualifying / probation period when hiring people with disability was found to result in higher employment rates of people with disability. Larger organisations found the German standard qualifying / probation period of six months to be sufficient. The training period when people with disability first started with an employer was found to be crucial and longer training was associated with higher employment retention.

A SHARED STORY

Embracing employment quotas of the German model can encourage companies to actively establish effective disability action plans. For example, Bosch, an engineering and electronics company with annual revenues of around \$66 billion, increased participation rate of PWD to 5.5%²³. Interestingly, this success is not limited to the company's German branches that are legally bound to the quotas. The organization's branches in countries that have no employment quotas regarding PWD aspire to fulfill these quotas as well. Bosch received help and training in developing their disability action plan by local "integration bureaus" in Germany. These offices manage and coordinate financial assistance for employers of PWD (workplace modification, training of HR and other staff) and employees with disabilities (work assistance, interpreters, OT assessments).

A COMMENT ON DISCLOSURE

Whilst there are benefits in implementing disability employment targets and quotas as indicated in the German example, there may be unintended consequences associated with the execution of such a model. For example, employees may feel obliged to disclose their disability in order to facilitate companies to achieve their quotas. Therefore it is important to emphasise in company policies and legislation that the decision to disclose a disability should be voluntary.

A study by the National Disability Agency (NDA) in Ireland indicates that the decision to disclose may be influenced by the person's attitude towards their disability and whether they view it as a barrier to employment. If a person feels their disability has no impact on their ability to do their job, they may feel it is unnecessary to disclose their disability to employers.

Break Thru has a disability action plan which details our target of employing 15% of our workforce with a disability. Target outcomes are measured through the voluntary disclosure of disability in employee surveys and it is recognised that the measurement outcome is inherently dependent upon the individual's decision to disclose and that this may not be a true reflection of the disability population in Break Thru's workforce.

IRELAND'S JOBRIDGE & EMPLOYER INTENTION

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT ON ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET INTERVENTION

JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, was announced as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative in May 2011. The scheme, which was officially launched on 29th June 2011, aims to provide those seeking employment with the opportunity to gain work experience, maintain close links with the

²³ For more information on this story, please see: <http://bit.ly/1ovbB2B>

labour market and enhance their skills and competencies through an internship opportunity, thereby improving their prospects of securing employment in the future.

As indicated in the Jobbridge report, Jobbridge has a number of potentially useful features, such as its inclusion of job placement and its direct link to the market, which could increase participants' human capital. Findings²⁴ do seem to show that those joining the scheme were more likely to find employment compared to those not participating. However, the study states further analysis was needed to control for differences in the two pools of people.

The report lists several recommendations which can provide insight into the various complexities that may arise in implementing a system such as this. These include:

- Employers were more likely to accept those with a higher degree. Those with only a non-degree education had much lower take-up rates, having the potential to leave the most vulnerable behind.
- Additional support is suggested as host companies may not always have the internal capabilities to fully train interns. This can result in varying quality of the internships and has resulted in some dissatisfaction among both interns and host companies. One organisation surveyed stated that, "a key challenge in the current environment is that small companies currently have a lot of people multi-tasking and this means that there is little free time to provide mentoring support to the interns."
- Another organisation suggested to "create informal groupings of common-type companies that could come together to deliver soft skills training to a group of interns. It may not be feasible for a company to deliver this to just one or two interns and more beneficial for interns and a trainer to do this in a group setting. Professional bodies should work to prepare an outline of a month-by-month plan for an intern. This makes the scheme more attractive to small companies."
- Again, those with lower education attainment were seen to be the most vulnerable to the lack of training provided by busier companies and should be given special attention.

While the independent analysis highlighted the programme's success, the media coverage of the scheme has, to a greater degree, focused on cases of companies trying to abuse the system. The scheme has received some outcry in the public space due to these instances. The Union of Students in Ireland have positioned themselves against the scheme even though many graduates are gaining internships. Earlier this year, Student Union President, Joe O'Connor stated²⁵:

"USI believes there is a need for quality internships and real upskilling opportunities for young people in Ireland. However, it is now clear that after countless scandals and exploitation of workers under the scheme, JobBridge is now broken beyond repair."

Any internship scheme should be properly monitored and regulated, and should not displace fully paid labour. Clearly, JobBridge is failing in that respect, and we believe it should be brought to an end."

Schemes which rely heavily on private company involvement must include detailed guidelines for companies to achieve an appropriate standard of care for all participants. Even if few companies choose to use the system for their own gain, rather than that of the participants, these instances have the ability to direct public discourse to the negative rather than positive outcomes (that the whole system is 'broken'). Government policy must balance that inherent risk of such a programme with ease of use to both participants and those companies that would like to host.

²⁴ For the full report, please visit: <http://www.jobbridge.ie/toolkit/IndeconReport.pdf>

²⁵ For the full article, please see: <http://usi.ie/collaborations/job-bridge-phased-out-usi/>

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