

Australian hirers can benefit from an untapped talent pool

More than half of Australian businesses can benefit from an untapped pool of talent by considering candidates with disability during the hiring process.

New research released by the Australian Government titled [Building Employer Demand Research Report](#) shows that the majority (79 per cent) of Australian employers across these industries are open to hiring people with disability. While these numbers are encouraging, there is room for improvement as only 58 per cent are currently employing someone with disability.

Across all businesses, HR personnel were most open to hiring people with disability (93%) followed by administration staff (83%), middle managers (79%), people in leadership roles (76%) and business owners (73%).

Assistant Minister for Social Services, Housing and Disability Services, Sarah Henderson said most employers recognised the value that people with disability bring to the workforce, however many were unsure about what was involved in the disability employment process at a practical level.

“77 per cent of businesses believe it is important for their workplace to reflect the diversity in the community by including people with disability,” Ms Henderson said.

“Still, of the estimated 2.1 million Australians aged 15-64 living with disability, only 53 per cent participate in work, compared to 83 per cent of people without disability.

“The research tells us businesses want more help to transition from ‘willing’ to ‘hiring.’”

The most commonly perceived barriers holding employers back from hiring are their concerns about integrating people with disability into the workforce, reported by 44 per cent of all open employers, and a lack of awareness and understanding of disability employment (37 per cent see employing a person with disability as ‘a step into the unknown’).

Ms Henderson said a range of supports are available to open employers via [the JobAccess website](#) to support them through the process.

“Through JobAccess, employers can access practical advice and resources on all aspects of disability employment – from recruitment assistance, staff training and financial support, to workplace modifications, and tips for creating flexible work environments,” Ms Henderson said.

“Leading disability employers are already utilising these services and reaping the benefits, but we’re urging more employers to get on board.”

PwC Australia is one organisation echoing that sentiment, joining the Australian Government’s *Employ their Ability* campaign.

With a workforce of more than 7,000 staff, PwC Australia is committed to workplace diversity, and has been named [Australia’s most desirable employer for two years running](#).

HR leader and Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion at PwC Australia, Nicole Vongdara said considering a person with a disability often leads them to the best person for the job.

“I’ve seen first hand that employees with disability bring valuable new perspectives, skills and diversity to our team,” Ms Vongdara said.

PwC has utilised JobAccess to obtain partial funding for equipment such as iPads, and captioning services through the [Employment Assistance Fund](#) that can help cover the costs of making workplace changes. The EAF can cover more than just physical changes to the workplace. Other items often covered under the EAF include communications technology, Auslan (Australian Sign Language) interpreting, disability awareness training for staff, and specialist support for people with mental health conditions or learning disorders.

“For an organisation of our size, and with such varied capabilities, we’d be restricting our view or ability to attract talent if we weren’t employing people with disability,” Ms Vongdara said.

She said building a workforce which genuinely reflects and represents their customers and communities had multiple benefits and made good business sense.

“It’s win-win. That diversity strengthens our workforce, and at the same time, we’re helping to ensure more Australians with disability are given the opportunity to enjoy the personal, social and financial benefits that come with being employed and part of a team,” Ms Vongdara said.

“Right now, there are around 1 million Australians with disability looking for that opportunity, and we want to be part of a movement that helps turn those numbers around.”

For resources and assistance to hire people with disability go to www.JobAccess.gov.au.

Other key research findings:

- Large (90%) and medium employers (83%) were more open to employing people with disability compared to small (77%) and micro businesses (76%).
- Among this cohort, there was widespread agreement that employees with disability have a good attitude to work (76% of ‘open’ medium businesses, 69% of ‘open’ large businesses) and are loyal to the business (69% of ‘open’ medium employers, 63% of ‘open’ large employers).
- However, 43% of medium and 32% of large businesses open to employing people with disability were either uncertain or of the view that their business is not equipped to employ someone with a disability.
- More than a third (35%) of employers in medium sized businesses not currently employing people with disability said they wouldn’t know how to prepare their workplace for a person with disability.
- Research identified professional and financial services; retail, accommodation and food services; and social, health care and education services as the major industry groups most supportive and open to hiring people with disability.

