DEBBIE ROOSKOV: Hello, and welcome again to this webinar. I really appreciate you taking time from your busy schedules to join with us today to learn just a little bit more about JobAccess and how it can complement and value add to the processes that you have in place today. My name is Debbie Rooskov and I am a National Disability Coordination Officer based in QLD. It is great to be joining you today on behalf of Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, or as we commonly refer to it in its acronym, ADCET. So both our programs, the NDCO and ADCET, are federally government funded through the Department of Education, and we have a focus on tertiary education and also in moving students who have graduated into relevant tertiary and graduate employment. So today our webinar is live captioned and it is also Auslan interpreted. I know that we have been using Zoom and Teams for some time, so just as a refresher, to activate the captions please click the CC button either at the top or the bottom of your tool bar and we will also have the captions available in your browser if you prefer that. We'll put that in the chat box now. I'm very fortunate to be based on Gubbi Gubbi lands situated in South-East Queensland. It's quite a large area and encompasses the regional councils of Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Noosa, Gympie and the Wide Bay area. In the spirit of reconciliation we respectfully acknowledge and recognise the Aboriginal history and culture of the land that I'm on and I pay respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge all the country participating in this webinar and also acknowledge the Elders and ancestors and their legacy to us, and also any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in the webinar today.

Just a few little housekeeping before we start. As I mentioned, the webinar is live captioned. I'd like to welcome Sharon from Bradley Reporting. Thank you for being with us, Sharon, and also Auslan interpreted, so thank you Andre for being with us. We will have you spotlighted for this presentation. The webinar is also being recorded. It will be ready for viewing on the ADCET website in the coming days. The other way to get the recording, and also to be aware of future webinars, is you can register online to receive the ADCET newsletters which is full of information around tertiary education for people with disability and also in the employment phase. So you can register for that and, as I said, that will be in the chat box. Any difficulties today, please don't hesitate to get in contact. Email admin@adcet.edu.au and we'll also put that in the chat box. So please don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

We have a wonderful presentation today from Daniel from JobAccess. We’ve worked with Daniel for quite some time and all of his presentations are extremely popular and we get lots of requests for repeats, so you'll receive lots of great information today from Daniel. He will talk for around 45 minutes. Then we're going to have the opportunity for Daniel to answer any questions. So I notice that Daniel has brought some of his own, some of the common inquiries received from employers. So it may even encompass some of the questions that you have had as well. Throughout the presentation we really encourage, you know, communication between each other, so please feel free to use the chat box, and if you could use panellists and attendees we will all be able to interact and really get the most out of this webinar today. Daniel, of course, will answer questions. However, during the presentation we have one of his colleagues, Dheeraj, who has joined us, and he's going to have a look at some of those generic questions so you may get your answer as we proceed through the webinar. So please don't hold back on any questions. This is your opportunity to see how this great program is able to benefit. So let's start. I'm really happy to introduce Daniel who is the General Manager for JobAccess. As you would have read in his bio Daniel comes with a wealth of experience in the disability sector and has, for a few years now, in his current role managed a team which has delivered awarded win services on behalf of the Australian Government. It is the national hub for workplace, employment, information for people with disability, employers and also service providers. So it’s really good to be working with you again, Daniel. I'm going to hand over to you and I'll come back when we get to the questions, so thank you.

DANIEL VALIENTE-RIEDL: Thank you, Debbie. Thank you for the warm welcome as well. And thank you for unmuting your microphone at the beginning. That reminded me that I needed to unmute mine. Hello everyone. Thank you to the ADCET and the NDCO for organising and inviting JobAccess to deliver this webinar today. It is great to be here with you and we've done work with the NDCO, as Debbie said, for a long time and as a matter of fact it was the first ever presentation that we had as a webinar format. So budyeri kamaru means hello in Gadigal language. The traditional custodians of the land on which the Sydney CBD is built. I want to pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land I am on today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and as we are from multiple regions, I would like to acknowledge traditional owners throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connections to land, waters and culture and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We need to acknowledge the custodianship of this beautiful country now more than ever. So as I said, my name is Daniel Valiente-Riedl and I'm the General Manager of JobAccess and thank you to everyone who is joining us today. Two things that I like to disclose before I start any presentation is (1) that I don't have experience of living with disability, any lived experience of disability, but I was brought up in a small village which takes me to the second disclosure, that I know that I've got an accent and that I sound like Puss in Boots. But in this little village it was a very close, tight community. I was brought up by a person living with chronic schizophrenia, my great aunty heard voices continually and we lived with her. During the process of living with her, I always noticed that nobody was afraid to come into my house. Neighbours will send their kids to have lunch or dinner with us or to play at my house without any extra supervision. My aunty was just part of the normal experience of human diversity. It was surprising once I got out of that environment to know that my aunty's situation was one to be feared, one to be avoided. That's why I'm really passionate about this topic. And various studies have reinforced the long-term benefits of employing people with disabilities, yet they're twice as likely to be unemployed and stay out of work for at least one year compared to their peers without a disability. And this employment pattern sounds similar also for graduates with a disability. As providers you play a vital role in closing the employment gap by supporting graduates with a disability and employing people with a disability more broadly within your organisations. I’m very proud to say that JobAccess employs 47% of people with disabilities within our ranks. Organisations should be representing the communities that they serve. Today we will discuss a range of services that you can access at no cost at all to support your teams. So today we will cover the range of free support and service available through JobAccess. What are workplace adjustments in reality and how to support staff with adjustments, and how to access funding for adjustments through JobAccess and the Employee Assistance Fund, or EAF which I will talk in much more detail. We will also talk about how JobAccess can help employers gain confidence in recruiting and retaining people with disabilities. Then, as Debbie mentioned, we will open up to the audience for questions. So let's start today's session by looking at what actually JobAccess do. JobAccess is the national health and disability employment for people with disabilities, employers and service providers. It is a free service that help remove barriers to disability employment. Our range of services includes a dedicated advice service by a phone and website. So we operate a national call centre. The number is 1800 464 800 and is delivered by frontline professionals who provide free confidential and expert advice. Our advisers are available to answer your questions on matters related to disability employment or can direct you to other support services. JobAccess also has a comprehensive website [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) with information and advice on disability employment. As mentioned before, we also coordinate workplace modifications and adjustments through Employment Assistance Fund or EAF. I will talk more about it later in the session. We also run the national disability recruitment coordinator, which is the employer engagement service of JobAccess, working with large employers including tertiary institutions, such as UTS and some TAFEs, across Australia to increase the disability confident. Later in the presentation I will discuss how employers can engage with the NDIC. We also have the complaint resolution and referral service which aims to improve government funded employment disability support services through a fair and impartial complaint resolution process and, lastly, the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline which we will refer to as the hotline, which is a vital reporting and information service available to anybody that suspect abuse and neglect of a person with a disability. Now, some of you may know what workplace adjustments are. However, for the benefits of everyone, let's start by defining the term. So workplace adjustments, or reasonable adjustments are administrative, environmental or procedural changes that enables people with a disability to equitable employment opportunities and work effectively and comfortably. Not all people with disabilities would require adjustments, however knowing how to provide adjustments can help employers attract and employ people with a disability from a wider talent pool. And also remember you are not alone. You have got a lot of services out there that will be able to support you, such as JobAccess. Last year JobAccess took national research to gauge awareness about workplace adjustments among employers and people with disabilities for that matter. The survey revealed that 7 in 10 people haven't heard of workplace adjustments. As some of you may know, workplace adjustments can be one of the most effective tools to help people with disabilities to gain employment and retain employment. I know that an astonishing piece of data was that 66% of people with disabilities were not aware of workplace adjustments. If people with disabilities require adjustment support and aren't aware of this support, it can really adversely impact their decision about employment and career goals and their absence from the talent pool means employers miss out on their potential. Also 1 in 3 people consider workplace adjustments as something easy to organise. We also found that 2 in 5 people estimated the cost of adjustments to be significant. 35% of people said that discussing workplace adjustments was outside their comfort zone while a whopping 61% were unsure or did not know how to arrange workplace adjustments to support employees with a disability. Making adjustments has a clear, wide ranging business benefit. It can help increase the work performance of employees with a disability by providing the right tools to do their job. It can increase retention of proactive and committed staff who may acquire a disability during their employment. Nobody is immune to disability. Increase staff capabilities. Some adjustments can enable employees to perform tasks that they weren't able to perform before the changes were put in place. It can also improve access to buildings and rooms by other people and customers. Potentially even broadening your customer base to include people with disabilities. Lastly, and more importantly, become part of your day-to-day work practice for all employees by integrating workplace adjustments into your business process, rather than just being an afterthought. In here consider the impact of COVID-19 and how many businesses moved to flexible working arrangements for employees and hopefully that will be something that will be advantageous for people with disabilities. So adjustments can be made to our physical environment, workplace practice and policies and training resources to help improve accessibility and inclusion, in terms of physical environment, physical adjustments refer to any changes made to the structures surrounding or furnishing and fitting within a workplace to remove barriers and improve access for people with disabilities. Most physical changes are needed to improve access are minor such as desks or installing bright lighting. Occasionally a more significant adjustment might be required, such as installing a ramp, automatic door openers or visual fire alarms. You can also make deep changes to your recruitment processes. This can include making all recruitment materials available in accessible or laternative format, such as position description, application forms and questionnaires. You can remove medical tests or aptitude tests that aren't related to the essential job requirements. You can also provide alternative performance of assessment test papers. For example, in audio or large print versions. Allowing the candidate to present their answers using an alternative methods. For example, verbally rather than in writing. Allowing candidates additional time to complete exams, or selection tests, particularly for individuals with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. You can also organise the interview at an accessible venue. You can provide an interpreter, for example, for a candidate who communicates using sign language. Funds for this is also available through the Employment Assistance Fund, to organise an Auslan interpreter to participate in the interview appropriately. You can also make changes to the job design process. This can include flexibility with work hours. Job sharing, so more than one person does the job, and that can be an option also for employers who want to work part-time for the job that is available if the job needs to be full-time. You can also job card. Locating some duties from another employee and you can customize employment. This is the type of job creation for people with more significant disabilities. And in terms of training and development this can include introducing a workplace buddy or mentor system. Allowing external support workers from a specialist employment or disability service on site, if necessary, for orientation and learning assistance. Extending training time or probation for workers with cognitive impairment or learning disabilities, or you can also arrange general or specific disability awareness training for co-workers, supervisors and managers. So making adjustments in the workplace isn't costly or complicated. The Australian Government Employment Assistance Fund is available for people with disability who are about to start a job, or who are currently working and could be helped by workplace related modifications and services. So JobAccess works with a national panel of assessors to conduct free workplace assessments and advice on modifications and adjustments and support at no cost at all. Funding may be available for a wide range of support from adjustments or special equipment, for physical workplaces to information and communication devices and Auslan interpreting. The EAF can also support with funding for specialist service for employees with a specific learning disorder, mental health conditions, organising disability specific awareness training to support managers and colleagues on how to best interact with the employee with a disability. Deafness awareness training, mental health awareness training in the workplace as well. It is important to remember that workplace assessments and funding through the JobAccess is to help identify disability- specific solutions in the workplace. It is not to conduct an ergonomic assessment. Anyone would benefit from an ergonomic assessment and it is the employer's duty of care to ensure an ergonomic assessment is set up. As an employer you are responsible for ensuring your staff are provided with the right tools to do their job. This includes the desk, chair, telephone, computer, amongst others. But research makes it clear how everyone benefits from altering postures throughout the day, making this an ergonomic issue, not necessarily a disability specific issue. Many adjustments are low cost and no cost at all, it is also about putting reasonable adjustments in place. This includes flexible work hours, and working from home arrangements. We've all seen this through the pandemic as well. Moving where someone is sitting in an open plan area so they are not distracted in terms of people who live with neurodiversity, or surprised if they're hard of hearing people if sitting in a high traffic area, for example. These flexible work arrangements can also assist all of their staff with work life balance requirements. Employers can apply for the EAF funding through the JobAccess website or simply call us on 1800 464 800 to speak with our advisers who would be happy to guide you through the process. Employers, employees and service providers can make an application for workplace modifications. For our discussion today we will talk about the employer application process. So employers can submit an online application at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au). JobAccess will assess the application and your organisation, we will let your organisation know about the outcome. If the application is successful JobAccess will also advise if a workplace assessment is required. If a workplace assessment is not required, your organisation can purchase modifications or adjustments and have all the costs reimbursed by JobAccess. If a workplace assessment is needed JobAccess will arrange a specialist at no cost to you at all to assess the workplace and look at the changes that may be required. The assessor will visit and look at your workplace identifying barriers that may exist and talk to you and the employee to find solutions to make the workplace more accessible and flexible. Your organisation then can purchase modifications and have the cost of reimbursement by JobAccess. When making an application remember to check if the employer is eligible and we'll talk about more of that in the next slide. Complete all parts of the application, provide the required supporting documentation and don't purchase anything until after your application has been approved. The best part of all of this is you don't have to go at it alone. We are here to help you. JobAccess advisers will manage the process and answer any inquiries that you may have and the detailed guidelines on the Employment Assistance Fund are also available on the JobAccess website. I really encourage you to have a look at them. So in order to be eligible for funding to make any workplace modifications and adjustments there are certain criteria that applicants need to meet. They need to work at least 8 hours per week. If they're self-employment, work at least 8 hours per week, earn an hourly income at least equivalent to the national minimum wage. They also have to be in a job that is expected to be continued for at least 13 weeks. You have to be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident and have an ongoing disability that has lasted or will last at least two years and the disability must limit, restrict or impair your ability to work. A job seeker with a job plan may also be eligible to apply. Again, our professional advisers are available to assist you with any queries that you may have regarding the eligibility for the Employee Assistance Fund. It is important to identify who will own the modifications when the item or items have been approved. Ownership might be confirmed in writing before approval of the EAF application as it will determine who is responsible for the maintenance or repair and what will happen to the modifications if the employees with a disability changes jobs, and the responsibility for the ongoing maintenance, repair or replacement of modifications lies with the owner. When the employee changes jobs, modifications should move with the employee. However, if the employee does not own the modifications, then the owner shall ensure that the portable modification should either move with the person with a disability to a new job or where the employee has a provider, transfer the modifications to that employer to be used by another person with a disability, or is retained in the workplace to be used by another person with similar needs. Again, we are there to support you. Give us a call. We will be able to advise you on all of these. It is not difficult when you've got somebody on the other line just providing you the precise information that you are requiring. Apart from physical modifications and adjustments in the workplace, employees can also access funding support for Auslan interpreting for job interviews and related activities, such as site visits, completion of tests, and information sessions for people who are deaf or have hearing impairments. It can be used for awareness training. This can include generic disability awareness training, deafness awareness training and mental health awareness training. The EAF can also provide $1,500 per year to employers for each eligible employee. So if there’s two employees, that is $3,000, if it is three employees, that is $4,500, to conduct training at the workplace. Training is conducted always by a reputable organisation and delivered by qualified professional work specialist experts. Training seeks to increase awareness, reduce the stigma, improve aptitudes, as well as increasing the confidence of employers and co-workers, for that matter, to assist someone in seeking help. It can also provide specialist support here, the EAF can provide $1,500 per year to employers for each eligible employee to access specialist services. This support is directed at enabling a specialist to work with an employee on employer to establish a practical plan or workplace intervention aiming to meet the workplace goals as identified. This is where I get to brag about the service that I'm so proud to lead. Since 2006 JobAccess has managed over 60,000 applications for workplace modifications and adjustments. Each of them have made a difference. The feedback from employers we have received workplace modifications that were made through the Employment Assistance Fund show us that 96% of employees were still employed three months after receiving the Employment Assistance Funding, 95% of employers indicated that employees were more productive post implimentation of the workplace modifications. To me these studies are the ones that really reflect and resonate with the work that we do. 100 per cent of employers indicated that the EAF provided the work that it was intended to. So we are doing what we are meant to be doing as a service. Let's take a look at the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator which is the employer engagement service of JobAccess. The NDRC partners with large employers to remove barriers in recruitment and other employment practices to give organisations a practical framework to increase disability confidence. How do they do that? We act as a free Disability Recruitment Adviser to employers that enter a 12-month partnership with us. We work closely with our partners and focus on building the confidence and capability in disability recruitment. Specific support the NDRC can provide is develop and disseminate job vacancies. The NDRC works with employers to identify opportunities to create vacancies that encourage people with disabilities to apply. We can also work with employers and disability employment service providers to help them develop an ongoing relationship as a ready supply and able job candidates with a disability. We also review existing recruitment practices from the candidate's perspective checking to see if there is any inadvertent barrier preventing people with disabilities from applying for the roles. We can also develop attraction strategies, reasonable adjustment policy and internal disability awareness training packages. We provide also ideas and raise awareness of the benefits of employing people with disabilities across their business. Since 2010 the NDRC has partnered with over 360 large organisations including public and private tertiary education. The JobAccess employer toolkit and our website is another freely available support for employers who are keen to employ people with a disability in their organisations. The toolkit is designed to support all levels of disability confidence in employers no matter whether you are hiring a person with a disability for the first time or looking to take the next steps. There is appropriate information available. It is also an extremely versatile resource as it includes short lesson videos, clips, downloadable resources to support employees with a disability. The Australian Government disability employment service program supports people with disabilities to find and keep a job by matching them to employers. Over the years the DES has supported tens of thousands of people with a disability to join the workforce. The primary function of a provider is a good job fit. So they are there to ensure that both the employee and employer receive the assistance necessary to address any potential disability-related issue. They also help remove potential barriers that may get in the way of satisfactory work performance. While it's not all people with disability who require support, it is good for employers, service providers and people with a disability to know that this service exists in terms of self-advocacy, in terms of inclusion and diversity goals. To create a truly inclusive workplace we believe that employees need to feel comfortable and supported to share information about their disability, if they wish to or need to do so. You may have heard of the term disclosure used to describe the process of sharing information about a disability. Instead we refer to sharing of access requirements. This is in keeping with the use of personal first language. Putting the focus on the person and not the disability. It is a topic where graduates might require the right guidance and advice before they begin their job search process. A recent survey at the Australian National Association of Graduates, employers or AAGE found that over 50% of students with a disability did intend to share their disability with their employer. Nearly 70% of the students said no, they will not. While nearly 30% of the students weren't sure on what to do. Whilst it is not a legal obligation for an employee to share information about their disability unless it affects their ability to do the job or impact the safety or safety of their co-workers. In some cases disability may only become evident once a person is employed. Some people may choose not to share information and we need to be respectful of that choice if there is no impact in the workplace. Some reasons a person may choose to share the information includes their disability is a core part of their personal identity. It may be that adjustments is required for the interview or assessment process. The person may need to ask for workplace adjustments or flexibility. Companies may be actively promoting diversity. It's most common once a person has settled in their job when the person experiences problems with performance or team dynamics. It may be involuntary or may be a precautionary measure in case the issue of their disability arises on the job. What we hear from the people that we support is that some of the reasons for not sharing information includes fear of discrimination and stigma which still exists. Internalised stigma, that self-stigma that is created through all of these systems. Privacy. The disability may not be relevant to workplace or not need for workplace related adjustments. It may be a short-term, casual or a contract position. You may not have a diagnosis or may not consider their condition a disability. Since we launched in July 2006, JobAccess has become a trusted partner in the disability employment space. We have supported over 400,000 people with disabilities and employers with advice and support. JobAccess has managed over 60,000 applications for workplace modifications and adjustments. Our employer engagement team has partnered with over 360 employers to build their experience and disability confidence. Since 2012 we have lodged more than 15,000 complaints or reports of abuse through the CRS and the hotline services. Having supported thousands of Australians, including career practitioners and graduates, our team are ready to answer your questions and provide specific advice on your situation. Here are some of the questions we are usually asked about JobAccess and supporting people with disability in the workplace. Is there a limit on how many times an employee can apply for the EAF? There is no limit. There is some guidelines around Auslan interpreting that we know that it's limiting. The main thing, I think, that's important to remember is, you know, we may adjust the budget and it may cost $200,000 to modify, but when we look at the real numbers of what we do, about 90% of the modifications are less than $10,000 and about 50% of the modifications are less than $1,000. So these are things that when you know how and what to put in place to remove those barriers, and as I was saying before, with the number of adjustments that we've made as a team when you know the how, you can actually do it within a limited budget. So I really encourage you to give us a call and have a conversation with one of our professional advisers to see what may work within your workplace. What's the scope of adjustments for physical buildings and facilities through the EAF? There is a really large scope. It will be highly dependent on what type of physical buildings and facilities we will need to modify. It will be highly dependent also on how old the building is or whether the building managers accept the modifications that we will put in place. So, again, the best thing that you can do is call JobAccess. Have a conversation with a professional adviser because every single disability will manifest in a different way in each single individual and each workplace will have a different circumstance as well that is very specific to their situation. Again, give us a call. We are happy to chat about any of these things through the JobAccess phone line. Can public sector agencies apply for EAF? That is a commonly asked question, and yes, we do work with a number of workplace agencies. Not just through employment modifications, but also through the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator. We partner with several public sector agencies. We work with federal government, state government and local government. We've got a wonderful video due too of all the work that the NDFC did with the - in our west Sydney council which exemplified the work that the NDFC can do and, yes, we can also provide assistance through the Employment Assistance Fund for modifications and adjustments. How can we get support from JobAccess for a work experience program? It is a little bit tricky because work experience is obviously not work that is - that falls within our guidelines. There is some Auslan interpreting that may be provided, but unfortunately the service is geared for people that will be for more than 13 weeks within employment, long-term employment but the phone line is still there. You can still give us a call. You can still have a conversation with us about what kind of things you may want to think about in terms of the employment of that person. What modifications may be relevant for the person? What kind of hours they may be able to do? How can you provide an environment that will be supported? All of those things we can still provide support with. How can we support employees with managing mental health in the workplace? Mental health, in many ways, it's about having a supporting work environment. That will be the principal strategy that you may need to acquire. However through the EAF, as I said, you can get $1,500 per eligible employee to put things in place such as communication with a psychologist to develop a plan to put in place in the workplace. You may want to use it for mental health awareness training. You may want to use it for a number of things that you can do in order to develop that supportive environment. Again, I encourage you to give us a call and understand how JobAccess can support you with mental health with the relevant healthy mental health at work. That brings us towards the end of the presentation today. Hopefully it has provided you with a useful insight into practical support that are available through JobAccess. Once again, I really encourage you to visit our website or speak with one of our advisers if you require any assistance. I would love to answer some questions from the floor. I know that Debbie is already smiling because she's already had a few in there. Happy to answer any of the questions that you may have.

DEBBIE: Thanks, Daniel. I'm a quick learner. I'm off mute now. You'd think with all the time we've been doing this you -

DANIEL: We all do it, Debbie. It's the joys of Zoom.

DEBBIE: I do it consistently. That’s a thing. So, no, we do have a few questions coming through.

DANIEL: And, Debbie, I think one of the things that is really, really important to highlight, before we answer any questions, is that JobAccess is for the individual and for the individual job. How does the work look like? What does the workplace look like because every single workplace is so different to the next one and the way that people experience disability is so different, even amongst the same disability type or the same diagnosis. So it is important for people to understand that this is a truly self-centred program that we'll go to that workplace. We'll assess that specific person and what their needs are at that specific workplace and then the recommendations will be made for those modifications and adjustments. So in many ways, many of the times that I get asked questions the best thing to do is just simply give us a call and start the process.

DEBBIE: I know. The phone call. It's amazing the high calibre of staff with JobAccess, it's always a great pleasure to make the phone call. But talking about individual supports, there was a question that came through about, you know, the hybrid workforce that we are now that we work in an office and then we also work from home. So with the equipment, if that is what is required for an adjustment, do you just have the one or are you able to have a set-up in two different locations?

DANIEL: Well, first of all, we will try to look at either setting the modification can be adjusted at work and can be translated to the house or the place of work that the person has got. We understand that sometimes that is impossible because modifications are too great or it is too extensive. In many cases we will provide a second piece of equipment that will be required. As I said, the ethos of JobAccess is to remove barriers to the employment of people with disabilities. It's really interesting that we had an evaluation done a couple of years back. The evaluation was extremely positive about what we do at JobAccess. It was noted that it is an investment of government. It's not an expenditure of government. A side remark during the presentation, about 90% of modifications is $10,000 or less. About 50% of all modifications are less than $1,000. That really means that with very little we can maintain people with disability at work. We can maintain their productivity, their inclusiveness. We can maintain also them outside of the welfare system as well, which, you know, governments love.

DEBBIE: They certainly do. This is an interesting topic that's been asked a little bit on email and it's a very valid question. It’s around EAF and the dollar allocation for Auslan interpreting or caption support. There's been some time since there's been an increase. The cost of staff have increased, equipment has increased. So is there any insight into anything from the radar in increasing some funds around Auslan, and continuing on from that is the comparison between EAF funds for captioning and Auslan and NDIS where they receive a significant more amount of money?

DANIEL: Yeah. This has been something that has been raised quite regularly. I know that I went to the round table with the minister for DSS and also with the minister for the NDIA, Bill Shorten, and that was raised several times. It was raised also by the Minister, which leads me to think it's in the radar, it’s in the radar as it has never been before. I think that we're facing at the moment a catalyst point. We've got so low unemployment that something needs to be done to move the needle of people with a disability around employment. I think the government has seen it as well with that. We had the employment forum on Thursday and Friday. My understanding is that that was raised as an issue, and I think that there will be some commitment to government to review the amount of Auslan interpreting, and you're absolutely right. It is part of the guidelines. It is not something that for us is a flexibility that we can provide as a service provider but it is in the radar of the right leaders at the moment. Hopefully they will move. You're quite right. It has not changed for 16 years now. So the review is well worth it, I think.

DEBBIE: Yeah. It's timely, isn't it?

DANIEL: It is.

DEBBIE: I have a question from an organisation who is building their reputation for intensity to remove all barriers. They have a question in relation to how would you encourage new staff with disability to engage before they actually start their job, so on day 1 things are up and things are running and they can get straight into being, you know, a contributor to the team. So the process at the moment is that they will - so they will ask once they've been accepted, and that's purely due to the fact that there may be some issues with people not sharing that information earlier on to receive those adjustments. So is there any thing you might like to add, Daniel?

DANIEL: Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it? We did some really interesting work with Health NSW, Healthshare NSW. They had a similar problem. People weren't disclosing that they had a disability and, again, that is a word that we should disregard in many ways because it's not something that you are hiding from anybody. It's something that is part of yourself. So by memory they had about 2% of people with disability actually disclosing any disability. Healthshare NSW changed the language to “accessible requirements”. So what things do I need to be able to do my job and I think that, as I said before, that is keeping with person-centred language because as an employer, to me it's not important what is the diagnosis of a person. For me, what is important is what do I need to put in place for that person to be able to do their job. So removing that language that is not person-centred was really, really positive for them. I think that the number of disclosed disability requirements – sorry, disability requirements increased dramatically after they implemented that. They were able to start putting things in place before people were starting to work. So they had that workplace ready. There are other organisations also that have developed an accessibility passport. So employees - so that's a centralised way to know what accessibility needs a person may need, whether they are related to disability or not. Whether they are related to personal life or not. But whichever part of the organisation you go your new manager or your new supervisor will know exactly what the requirements are so they can prepare the work before the person actually starts their employment. I'm not sure if that answered your question or not but there are several techniques you can utilise like that to be able to engage employees before you need to put – and another thing that is important, if the work is going to last for more than 13 weeks and we've got assurance of that, we can actually go in and prepare the workplace with Employment Assistance Funding so the person with a disability can just transition immediately to that role and start contributing as well.

DEBBIE: Thank you. The next one is in relation to timelines. So from putting a request in to actually having things on the ground and functioning is there a long timeframe for that, and I guess that builds on another question is around delays that have been identified due to assessment and adjustment assessments due to COVID lockdowns and other related impacts in obtaining all the goods and products. So is there any delays and what would be the timeframe between starting the assessment and having the -

DANIEL: It would be highly dependent of what type of assessment is required and what type of equipment will be required. I mean, the assessment may tell us they just need an iPad. Go and buy it and we'll pay you back right away. So they're the kind of things that can be moved fairly quickly. I know that also for interpreting, you know, we can do it within 48 hours or we can do it fairly quickly. So it will be highly dependent on the type of assessment and the type of adjustments that we will make. We always try to do it as quickly as possible, but sometimes there is delay even from service providers. They won't provide us information that we may require. Right now the department is also reviewing our guidelines to see if there is any red tape that can be removed so we can be even nimbler. I can assure you we are fairly nimble once we receive the information and we send the assessment out, that is a really, really quick process. And we strive to do it as quickly as we can. You know, hopefully the new review of the guidelines will also remove any red tape. Again, when we were at the roundtable with the ministers, that was one of the things that got raised. There was some red tape that was still in there that could be removed that could be much easier for an employer to utilise JobAccess and also for a person with a disability. And the department has given a commitment to review the guidelines and introduce some changes.

DEBBIE: Brilliant. We have a question around if you’re able to provide some examples on support JobAccess has provided for employers with dyslexia and their employees.

DANIEL: Yeah. Look, we’ve provided equipment such as iPads and tablets and,you know, technologies that can actually help a person that has got dyslexia. There are programs now that will read every single thing that you've got. So, you know, there is a lot of those type of technologies that can be utilised. Again, they are not at a great cost. They are technologies that are readily available now and can be utilised for people - to support people.

DEBBIE: This is around NDRC. And I must say, I haven't connected with the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator for sometime, but it's around do you have any stats on jobs advertised and the success of the applicants?

DANIEL: There is some that we’ve got in there. The problem that we've got with the vacancy program is that we will get the vacancies from the employer and we will send it through the local network of the DES. So it is highly dependent on how much support DES is going to provide that individual in terms of their CV, in terms of the quality of candidates that they will put forward and how much preparation they provide them. It is highly dependent on them as well. So there are some stats but I don't think that they're a true reflection of what it is. I think those vacancies that we put out there are mainly so employers can start practising the recruitment of people with disabilities. As the name implies, is the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator. Disability Employment Service are there to employ people with disability. So given that is not our focus, because we focus on the policies, the procedures, and distributing those vacancies to DES. The statistics I think are not as telling, but I can tell you high 90s is the statistic we work when we survey our employers around whether they feel more comfortable with disability recruitment and disability employment. So employers do feel a lot more comfortable with it once they partner with us, and we have partnered, as I said, with over 360 large businesses. We partner with Australia Post and we've got a continuing relationship with them. Universities, TAFEs. We've partnered with schools. We've partnered with the Department of Education. We've partnered with a lot of large employers that feel a lot more confident once they finish our program.

DEBBIE: Great.

DANIEL: And it’s free.

DEBBIE: I know, it's brilliant. One of the things, just building on from that, you were saying that you’ve worked a lot with large businesses, have you done any work with a lot of the universities? I know you mentioned some in the introduction.

DANIEL: Yeah. So we've worked with a number of universities around the country. We've partnered with Monash, we’ve partnered with UTS, we've partnered with the University of Tasmania. We've partnered with Deakin University in Perth. We've partnered with a lot of universities. So we've got a really big knowledge in that area, and we also participated in some research on how DES can better support students from tertiary education to move into employment which, you know, we're hoping that that is something that will be in the cards should they expand the JobAccess program to support people that are transitioning from - students that are transitioning from university into work. But also we know that universities are really large employers, and we want universities to be utilising the service, not just the adjustments and modifications but also the NDRC so they can review the policy practice. And the other thing is we really encourage universities as well. It is about also including disability in terms of the modules that they've brought for management, for the Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Management. The MBA program should be talking also – should have modules around disability employment. Some of the universities have got, and tertiary educations have got a really big part to play in moving the needle and making disability a normal experience of human diversity.

DEBBIE: We might have time just for two more, Daniel. We've got a few here. One of them is around inclusive language, and, you know, we're looking at requesting adjustments for the student with a disability or the employee with a disability, but as soon as you put that request in you then need to look at the evidence to justify that adjustment. Is there any magic words or ideas that you might be able to -

DANIEL: No. Unfortunately, that is one of the things that is driven by the guidelines that government has provided. We need to follow those guidelines. So some of the language, yeah, I think it needs to be reviewed, but unfortunately we are tied to those guidelines. The department, as I said, is reviewing all of that, so if there is any suggestions that the person asking the question have or any experiences that they have, that they want to provide as feedback with, we would be happy to take it to the department and review it within those guidelines.

DEBBIE: Excellent. You have to be very quick with this one. And I don't think this is a question that's going to have a short answer. It's in relation to the obligations of employers to implement and put adjustments in place for their employees. So how is that a little bit different to JobAccess and having that support in providing equipment and that support?

DANIEL: Yeah. As I said with the example of the assessment, the ergonomic assessment. If it is something that is just because the person with a disability has an impairment that is not for everybody else as well, that modification can come into place for us. So any single thing that the person may need to do their work safely and efficiently and comfortably that is not related to anybody else. That doesn't - that is not a problem that every other employer may have. So, for example, if I want a standing desk and I'm a person with a disability, it may be provided to me through funding. But if everybody else has a back problem in my team, that becomes the problem of the employer because it is the way that the job has been designed. They need to then look for the solutions.

DEBBIE: Thanks, Daniel. I'll have to wrap it up there. We could talk for ages and we’ll still have lots of questions coming through. So thank you, everybody, for being so active in the chat and the questions and really making this a really interactive session. Daniel, always a great pleasure to work with you. Thank you again for another informative presentation. It highlights, you know, not only the great services that you provide Australia-wide but also the calibre of staff that you've engaged with JobAccess to really deliver high quality service. So thank you for that.

DANIEL: Thank you.

DEBBIE: To both our Auslan interpreters, amazing. Thank you very much for being with us, and for Sharon of Bradley Reporting doing our captioning. Appreciate you all being with us today. Remember if you like this type of webinar and you'd like to know more, please sign up to the ADCET newsletter. I know that was in the chat earlier on, but we might be able to find that and put that towards the end as well. So thank you for that. Again, I really appreciate being with everyone today. Everyone taking time from their schedule to see how we can really imbed people with a disability in all our organisations and really benefit from the diverse and the wealth of knowledge and experience they bring. So thank you very much. Have a wonderful afternoon and ADCET and the NDCR program hope to see you at a future event. If you are interested in the recording, it will be on the ADCET website in the coming days. Thank you again, everybody, and wishing you a great afternoon.