

Wednesday 24 July 2019

MEDIA RELEASE: COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR TO COME TOGETHER TO EMPLOY MORE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

How can Queensland community service organisations become destination employers for people with disability?

That's the question that will be posed on Wednesday 24 July when disability service provider [Life Without Barriers](#) joins the [Queensland Community Services Industry Alliance](#) (CSIA) and Queensland community services senior executives to discuss how the industry can work together to employ more people with disability. The forum is being chaired by former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes AM.

Life Without Barriers Executive Lead for Disability Engagement, Chris Chippendale, said, "50% of people with disability are of working age, yet only around half have secured a job – that's unacceptable. As an industry, we have to walk the talk and ensure that people with disability are represented on our workforce."

"The community services industry is the fastest growing industry, with 1 in 5 new jobs created in Australia today being in our sector. If we can boost the numbers of people with disability in our workforce, that will go a long way to increasing the overall numbers of people with disability in employment."

"And it's not just an equity issue – it makes business sense. Having a workforce that reflects the diversity of our community also helps us to design and deliver better services. In fact diversity within an organisation is good for all employees, including those without disability."

Studies have long shown that people with disability work harder, make more reliable employees and are likely to stay longer in an organisation than the general workforce. Life Without Barriers recently committed to a disability employment target of 12% of new recruits by 2022.

CSIA CEO Belinda Drew said this roundtable was just one of the ways they support the Community Services Industry to create diverse and sustainable workforces.

"The industry has undergone a lot of reform and change – for example with the implementation of the NDIS – so we can lose sight of the urgent priority that this needs to be for us," Ms Drew said

"The *Becoming Inclusion Ready* research report on the inclusion of people with disabilities, through the CSIA Inclusion Ready Project, shows that this group are valuable employees to have in an organisation, but we still have a lot of work to do around employment.

"By creating an Industry-led focus through this partnership with Life Without Barriers and the wider industry, we can look at the barriers, and find ways to improve the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities," said Ms Drew.

"This includes how to create a welcoming workplace culture and addressing old fashioned stereotypes about people with disability.

"We also need to improve recruitment processes to make them more flexible and ensuring that selection criteria does not become a block – for example making it mandatory that all employees have a drivers licence."

"We'll also discuss measures to retain people with disability on staff – ensuring they are supported with mentoring and career development pathways."