



Women With Disabilities ACT
WWDACT

Women with Disabilities ACT

report to

Women With Disabilities Australia

on

**Women with disabilities experiences of Disability
Employment Services in the ACT and surrounding
region**

June 2014

Women With Disabilities ACT

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WWDACT is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. Established in 1995, WWDACT adheres to a human rights philosophy, based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and works with government and non-government organisations to improve the status and lives of women with disabilities in the ACT and surrounding region.

strong women, strong voices

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Winner of the 2012 International Women's Day Award—Community Category

www.wchm.org.au/WWDACT/wwdact



'To earn my own money on top of the DSP made me feel more confident...worth something.' – Forum participant

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About this report

This report brings together research gathered by WWDACT about the experiences of women with disabilities with Disability Employment Services (DES) in the ACT and surrounding region.

Information has been sourced by WWDACT through multiple methods and is presented in accordance with the aims laid out by Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA). The aims include:

1. Identifying issues affecting women with disabilities in relation to their access to, and use of, the DES
2. Identifying ways the future DES can be improved to better meet the needs of women with disabilities
3. Identifying any other issues that impact on women with disabilities seeking, finding and maintaining employment.

Research presented in this report will contribute to the national report on DES by the peak non-government organisation WWDA. This report aims to help the government understand the job-seeking experiences of women with disabilities and improve the delivery of Disability Employment Services locally and nationally.

For confidentiality, the names used in this report are fictitious.

Method

WWDACT conducted a forum, survey and one-on-one interviews with women with disabilities in the ACT. Below is a breakdown of the research activities conducted by WWDACT.

Forum

Date: Wednesday, May 28th 2014
Time: 2:00-5:00pm
Location: Advance Personnel Canberra Inc.
PA Chambers
18 Corinna St
Phillip ACT 2602

The forum was organised in collaboration with the DES provider Advance Personnel Canberra Inc. Advance Personnel Canberra Inc. provided WWDACT with an accessible venue, as well as a way to recruit women with disabilities who had accessed DES in the ACT. Advance Personnel Inc. also provided information about the role of DES providers and some of the difficulties their clients' experienced under the government guidelines.

A limitation of this planning approach is that the location may have discouraged some participants' participation because of the affiliation with DES. Participants who attended may also have felt uncomfortable criticising DES within a DES setting. Steps to lessen this impact included making sure people affiliated with the DES hosting the forum had left before the consultation commenced and that the reason for this was explained to participants.

The forum was promoted through WWDACT's networks, Facebook, eBulletin and website, the Women's Centre for Health Matters networks, CDnet, Canberra Disability support and service provider groups and by Advance Personnel Inc.

The structure of the forum was drawn from the document *WWDA Disability Employment Services (DES) Consumer Engagement Project: Background Briefing Note*.¹ A copy of the agenda can be found in Appendix 1.

Consent forms which explained the nature of the research and the use of data collected in the forum were distributed to attendees. Prior to the commencement of the forum each participant was assisted and/or given adequate time to read and fill in a consent form. A copy of the Consent Form can be found in Appendix 2.

The forum was attended by 5 women who were of various ages, educational and professional backgrounds and who had various disabilities. The smaller group size enabled a

¹ Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), 2014, *WWDA Disability Employment Services (DES) Consumer Engagement Project: Background Briefing Note*, WWDA.

depth of collection which would not have been possible in a larger group. It also provided participants room to share their stories and experience with DES in detail.

In order to assist women to attend WWDACT provided remuneration of transport costs. As a small offer of our appreciation we also provided attendees with a \$25 supermarket voucher.

Survey

The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey for the period Thursday 22nd May 2014 to Monday 2nd June 2014.

The structure of the survey was drawn from the document *WWDA Disability Employment Services (DES) Consumer Engagement Project: Background Briefing Note*.² This provided consistency between information gathered in the forum and in the survey. The survey contained questions which collected both qualitative and quantitative data. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 3.

The survey was promoted through WWDACT's networks, Facebook, eBulletin and website, the Women's Centre for Health Matters networks, CDnet, Canberra Disability support and service provider groups. WWDACT also contacted all DES providers in the ACT and requested that they send it to their clients and networks.

The survey attracted 15 fully completed and three partially completed responses in total. The average age bracket of respondents was 25-34 year olds (33%). Even though the survey collection was small, these responses provided a good variety of experiences which also reflected many of the views expressed in the forum.

Interviews

An interview was conducted with one participant who could not attend the forum and wished to offer further information in addition to the survey.

A consent form which explained the nature of the research and the use of data collected in the interview was given to the interviewee. Prior to the commencement of the interview the participant was assisted and/or given adequate time to read and fill in the consent form. A copy of the Consent Form can be found in Appendix 2.

The interview was conducted at a place convenient to the attendee and as a small offer of our appreciation we also provided the attendee with a \$25 supermarket voucher.

² Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), 2014, *WWDA Disability Employment Services (DES) Consumer Engagement Project: Background Briefing Note*, WWDA.

Given that the interview provided significant detail regarding the participant's experience with DES, more interviews would have enhanced the research. However, time limitations and availability of interviewees curtailed this method.

Findings

Issues affecting women with disabilities in relation to their access to, and use of, the DES

Issues identified below impact women with disabilities access to, and use of, the current DES providers. They include insights into both positive and negative interactions between case workers and clients.

Proving disability to access DES

To access DES, clients must navigate the Job Capacity Assessment and prove disability to multiple authorising bodies. Whilst the bureaucratic reasoning behind this can be surmised, a DES provider noted that this process was exhausting for her clients. Continuing to prove permanent disability was seen as frustrating.

However, one survey respondent with multiple disabilities felt pleased that because it was only necessary for one of her disabilities to be recognised for eligibility, she was able to access DES. This meant that she did not need multiple recognition of all her disabilities to gain access to DES.

Impact of previous negative experiences with DES

Forum participant responses reflected that bad experiences with DES providers impacted on future access to DES services. One participant, who was new to Canberra and accessed DES, found staff at the DES provider she was referred to were curt and non-informative. This made her feel that any further interaction would be 'fruitless'. A DES provider also expressed that clients who have bad experiences are less likely to access services.

One interviewee had opted for referral to another provider after a negative experience with a provider. She spoke of looking forward to having her first interview in the coming week.

Skill recognition

Participants expressed both positive and negative experiences with skill recognition whilst accessing DES.

One participant, Audrey, reflected positively on her engagement with DES regarding skill recognition. Audrey has Asperger's Syndrome and Epilepsy. She had accumulated a decade of experience volunteering in an aged care facility in Canberra. When she accessed DES they acknowledged this and used it to secure her a paid part-time position

at another aged care facility. Audrey enjoys her job and feels that DES catered to her skills, interests and needs well.

'Although the disability employment service process took months to go through, my provider found me a fantastic job that suited my skills and experience and negotiated the flexibility I needed to ensure success.' –Survey respondent

Several survey respondents reflected that they had also had positive experiences with DES and skill recognition.

Another participant, Patricia, felt that the DES provider she had accessed underestimated her skills, professional history and educational background. She had previously worked as a primary school teacher but DES directed their recruitment efforts for Patricia into childcare roles. Patricia did not have any interest in working in childcare and felt that her DES provider underestimated and misdirected her skills.

Understanding client's career objectives and interests

'They kept writing off every idea I had for career paths and kept telling me I should get a job in a Health Food Store or Bunnings Garden Centre even though I wasn't interested in a retail career.' –Survey respondent

Listening to and accommodating client's career objectives and personal interests was seen as important and integral to job sustainability, job satisfaction and confidence building.

More often than not, respondents felt that their career objectives and personal interests were not catered for in the jobs they were offered.

Job search support

Respondents had mixed reviews regarding DES' job search support. Those who spoke about resume assistance said that they were happy with the way DES helped them tailor their resume to their various skills and interests.

The main disappointment expressed was that it took so long to find jobs and jobs tended not to fit what they were looking for, i.e.

Maria's experience with training opportunities with DES

Maria has qualifications in welfare and is a qualified interpreter. She only wants to work casually because of her health and Disability Support Pension.

When Maria became a client with DES she was enrolled in Train the Trainer training. She felt this training was inappropriate because she already held higher qualifications. She also felt frustrated or set up to fail because she was not proficient enough with the English language to succeed.

unpaid, temporary or inflexible jobs. This, however, is most likely a reflection of the current job market in the ACT.

Capabilities

Several respondents expressed concern over DES providers assuming their capabilities and competencies. There was feedback to suggest that DES case workers both underestimated and overestimated their client's capabilities. This led to DES enrolling or applying clients in unsuitable training or jobs.

Training and educational opportunities

The three respondents who reflected in detail on the training and educational opportunities given to them by DES expressed gratitude for receiving the training but actually felt it was inappropriate to their skill level, interests and disability.

As an example, Margaret received her Working with Vulnerable People and Teacher's Aid certificates with the support of DES. Her case worker helped her fill out the extensive forms. On the Teacher's Aid form Margaret disclosed her epilepsy. Once submitted, she was requested to obtain a medical report from her doctor to make sure it would be OK for her to work with children with her condition. The doctor felt that Margaret would be better suited to clerical work because of her disability. Margaret said she felt relieved because she said the stress of working with children may have been too much.

Ongoing Support

Most of the respondents expressed gratitude for the ongoing support offered by DES.

'...my provider attended [the] job interview with me and was at the work site on the first day.' – Survey respondent

'My consultant took the time to drive me to the other side of town to meet with prospective employer...Also, he would (week after week) meet with me 30 mins earlier!' – Survey respondent

Respondents who had positive experiences felt great appreciation for the thoughtfulness of case workers. They spoke of how DES case workers accompanied them to interviews, checked in on them from time-to-time and handled their concerns.

'I knew there was someone who would encourage me and who [I] could talk to about things I found really difficult about work culture, having been unemployed for so much time.' – Survey respondent

Two forum participants, who had the same caseworker, expressed that they enjoyed how down-to-earth, genuine and honest their case worker was.

In contention with this feedback, however, is the reported inconsistency found in DES delivery.

Juggling commitments/roles

Clients had difficulty juggling various responsibilities and needs with the desire or need to gain employment.. Caring responsibilities, volunteering, peer support groups and fitness commitments made it challenging for women to find flexible work opportunities and for DES to place them. To help women negotiate this, a more considered and holistic approach by DES case workers was recommended by respondents.

Underemployment

Respondents, particularly older women and those with tertiary education, found it difficult to find suitable employment through DES.

Adequate remuneration equivalent to the skills and experience of a person was a major concern. Several of the women reflected that being offered minimum wage or below was insulting to their skills and experience. For example, a university educated woman in her 50s was offered \$15.60 per hour.

That being said, there were some women who reflected that there are times when they were feeling unwell and a less demanding role would be more suitable.

Expansion of DES provision beyond 18 months

A respondent who had had a successful and extensive interaction with DES suggested that she would benefit from ongoing support beyond the 18 months availability. As a worker in hospitality she understood that changes to her workplace were frequent due to staff turnover and that issues may arise that would need the support of DES.

Ways the future DES can be improved to better meet the needs of women with disabilities

WWDACT identified the following areas which are in need of improvement in the future DES. Focusing on these will help to address current gaps in service provision and increase access to and use of DES by women with disabilities.

Address gaps in DES eligibility

A DES provider raised concern that some women with disabilities may not be eligible for DES support. This may include women who have not yet been accepted onto the DSP but need the support of DES to find them viable employment.

Better information provision and advertising of DES

'More advertising to increase general public [awareness] that these services exist.' – Survey respondent

Respondents expressed a need for greater information provision and advertising of DES.

'Just know[ing] you exist would help.' – Survey respondent

Some respondents expressed the need to increase awareness of DES access to enable more people with disabilities to enter, reengage or maintain employment in the workforce.

Improve the quality of DES caseworkers

Lack of specialised skills was identified as an issue for the effectiveness of DES case workers. One participant, who has extensive education and professional experience in disability and employment, found DES staff to be lacking in specialised training for the role.

Given that DES providers deliver a service which is both specific but multifaceted, it can be difficult to find qualified staff who can fill the role of case worker effectively.

Alice's experience with DES

'It would have been nice for someone to have suggested this to me sooner as I now realise I could have been back into the workforce years earlier.'

Alice has struggled to find suitable employment over the years that work well with her anxiety disorder.

Recently, she found information online about DES. Alice had not realised that her anxiety disorder made her eligible for DES. It was a relief to finally get some assistance.

Through DES Alice has been able to secure a suitable job that is flexible to her needs and reflects her past work experience and skills.

What Alice would like to see is more information provision and promotion of DES by government and non-government organisations and professionals who work with women with disabilities on a regular basis. This includes doctors, specialists, non-mainstream medical providers and peer support groups.

Respondents suggested raising the wages of case workers.

'increase funding to assist providers [to] pay for experienced staff' – Survey respondent

'...you get what you pay for.'-Survey respondent

Increasing salaries was identified as a way to attract better qualified staff and ensure greater sustainability of case workers.

Improve consistency

Several respondents across all data collection methods expressed concern over a lack of consistency by DES providers. This was mainly related to being passed between different caseworkers.

'...being handled by multiple people during the process was not great as information was not always passed on, requiring me to go over the same things each time.'-Survey respondent

'My caseworker just disappeared.'

Inconsistency was also found in information provided by various case workers.

'I was given incorrect information about the minimum working hours I'd needed to do under the disability employment service program.' – Survey respondent

As noted above, respondents felt that if the quality of workers was increased greater consistency could be maintained.

Source meaningful work, not menial

Several of the respondents expressed dismay at the quality of jobs offered to them by DES. One respondent spoke of wanting *'meaningful work in open employment, not just menial, meaningless jobs'*.

Amy's experience with DES

Amy had at least five changes in her case worker in the first six months of accessing DES. With every change she was reinterviewed and made to tell her story over again. She felt that if the new case worker read her existing file it would save her the trouble of having to go over her story again and again.

When she was asked to attend another interview with a new case worker she refused. She felt bullied by her DES provider.

Ultimately, the last straw for Amy came when she found out she was referred to the wrong DES provider. The DES provider specialised in employment for people with mental health issues rather than the disability she had. This made her feel frustrated and question their competence and understanding of disability.

She also felt frustrated that they were not able to help her find employment applicable to her education and employment qualifications and skills.

Cater to tertiary educated and/or experienced jobseekers

'I felt I wasn't really who they were resourced or prepared to work with (mental illness, tertiary educated, only experience in very low skilled jobs). – Survey respondent

Respondents who had tertiary education and/or significant employment experience expressed that they felt DES could not or struggled to cater for them. This may link to a perception of incapability due to disability, the scarcity of skilled jobs available or the quality and qualifications of the DES case workers.

Better connections between DES and a client's care team

'A heavy reliance on information provided by family/health care workers can serve to strengthen the negative cycles that have lead the client into needing employment support.' –Survey respondent

A lot of women with disabilities rely on a multitude of service providers to maintain their health and wellbeing. A respondent suggested that DES workers should build connections with their client's health team to help them better understand their client's needs and background.

Research

'Promote and support research in the field.' – Survey respondent

A respondent suggested that conducting more research on women with disabilities and employment would help to create more understanding in DES and the wider community. It would also help to increase DES efficiency and decrease dependence on service providers and government financial assistance.

Issues that impact on women with disabilities seeking, securing and maintaining employment

Seeking employment

Discrimination

Discrimination across multiple factors, including disability, gender, cultural or linguistic background and age, were identified by participants as major issues faced in job-seeking.

Disability stigma

'As soon as you say dyslexia you can see their eyes avoid you.' -Survey respondent

'What if you have a fit while assisting the child with their toileting?' -Survey Respondent

Stigma around the perceived capacity of people with a disability to work proficiently was the main response. Several respondents felt that when potential employers learnt about their disability they were looked at differently and not given a chance.

Unemployment and/or welfare stigma

The stigma of being unemployed and/or on welfare was identified as an issue for women with disabilities.

'Stop moralising about employment! Perhaps DES could work at undoing some of the stigma about not just disability but employment. The most damaging thing about being unemployed is the stigma perpetuated by the government – it is as if they think it is impossible to have a meaningful and contributing existence without being employed.' – Survey respondent

Some respondents expressed shame around being on welfare and felt they needed to justify their spending and reasons for being



Food for thought

These are a couple of the ideas floated by respondents to help women with disabilities obtain suitable employment through DES.

Creative approaches

Creatively approach opportunities for women with disabilities to find meaningful and flexible paid employment. Look at local social enterprises that pay, small business grants or make an inquiry with businesses which reflect a client's interests and skills.

Women specific DES

With the intersectional barriers women with disabilities face why not shape a women-specific DES provider?

Social enterprise

'...a micro business that could tick over while I was not well enough to be in a work environment but still able to do useful things (esp. creative things at home.)' -Survey respondent.

unemployed even though they qualified for the DSP. Most respondents expressed the desire to work but felt barriers that were well beyond their control, like job scarcity and discrimination, hindered their workforce participation. Many of the women volunteered in community organisations but still expressed a need for paid employment not only to better their financial position but to feel as though they were contributing.

Ageism

Ageism was identified as a major barrier in securing employment. This, combined with other intersectional factors, such as caring responsibilities, gender and disability, put older women with disabilities at a greater disadvantage in securing employment.

Confidence

Lack of confidence was considered an issue for some of the respondents seeking employment. This was largely related to feeling a lack of competency or skill and anxiety around flexibility.

Job Scarcity

Respondents reflected on the lack of jobs in the ACT and region. With the government freeze on employment, lack of part-time opportunities and competitiveness, suitable employment opportunities for women with disabilities were scarce.

'Number of jobs available that I feel I could do and would suit my skills.' – Survey respondent

Scarcity in part-time, flexible and family-friendly work arrangements was seen as a major barrier to employment.

Limited small business opportunities in the ACT

Small business was identified as a great way for women with disabilities to balance employment and health care needs. Respondents suggested offering more opportunities and support to establish their own small businesses.

Volunteering

Volunteering featured strongly in data collection.

'Volunteering keeps my value in the community' – Forum participant

Four out of the five participants in the forum reflected on their positive experiences with volunteering in Canberra. They felt that their positions at various not-for-profit groups kept them engaged in the community, maintained their various skills and gave them a sense of confidence and purpose. In one case, a respondent's volunteering experience led to paid employment.

'I want remuneration for my skills and efforts...' – Forum participant

There was, however, an issue around women with disabilities being trapped or exploited in volunteering positions. There was also contention between the right to earn a wage versus feelings of gratefulness at any opportunity unpaid or paid that arose. The right to earn a wage was stronger with one respondent who had had a long established career who had an acquired disability. Feeling thankful for opportunities was identified as stronger in women who had developed a disability at a younger age and who had less work experience and education.

There was also dissatisfaction when clients were placed into volunteer, rather than paid, positions by DES case workers.

'I was constantly questioned on why I needed to work, as there was no requirement for me to seek work. I was not sent for a single paid position. Only an unpaid volunteer role.'

As mentioned above, this may be due to Centrelink requirements.

Securing Employment

Application processes

'...people don't even want to get to know you or give you a chance to prove yourself.' – Survey respondent

'Employers are skeptical about taking a chance on a person with a disability and generally will choose an able bodied candidate over a person with a disability regardless of their experience and qualifications...I have found this in every state I have lived in.' – Survey respondent

Applying for an advertised position was an experience in discrimination by many of the respondents. Either potential employers expressed skepticism over the applicant's capabilities or the application process was not accessible. For example, applying for the ACT's major employer, the government, was difficult due to the lengthy application process which in many ways is structured against certain types of disabilities. This is reflected by private industry employing more people with disabilities than the government.

Interviews

'I can't do interviews – never won a job in my life and currently at APS 5 level. Only working with bad bosses that no one else would put up with is how I got to this level.' – Survey respondent

Interviews were seen and experienced as a major challenge in securing a position. In particular, contention between current mainstream interview practices and the needs of applicants with speech and hearing disabilities was identified.

'I have a speech and hearing problem, and interviews are a real barrier, even though I'm intelligent and qualified.' – Survey respondent

'No one wants to give you a go if you can't sell yourself verbally.' – Survey respondent

Negotiating wage and conditions

Negotiating the award wage, superannuation and conditions with an employer prior to employment and during was identified as problematic. Some of the women participating in the forum recalled experiences in which employers had not paid penalty rates and had offered wages below award rates.

This is a reflection not only on employers not adhering to national standards but also a lack of awareness around rights and standards amongst jobseekers and employees.

The benefit of DES case managers is that part of their role is to negotiate these terms with prospective employers on an initial and ongoing basis. This can be particularly effective if a jobseeker has been out of the workforce for a long time and is not familiar with current standards and rights. Furthermore, this can help ease anxiety related to inquiring about wages and also feeling under remunerated.

Maintaining Employment

Flexibility

'Flexibility.' 'Flexibility.' 'Flexibility.'

Respondents expressed the need for more flexibility in the workplace. This was considered especially important for women with disabilities due to the episodic nature and co-morbidity of many disabilities and chronic conditions.

'Difficulty maintaining things that keep me well because of a lack of time.' – Survey respondent

Flexibility in employment was also key to being able to juggle the many demands of negotiating the health system, as well as engaging in fitness and peer support commitments. The caring responsibilities of many women were also considered in need of greater employment flexibility.

'Finding the right workplace that will accept your disability and be accessible and supportive enough to ensure your success in maintaining employment.' – Survey respondent

Flexibility was considered an integral part of employment sustainability. If women were not supported effectively it meant that their health deteriorated and they were no longer able to fulfill their role.

Workplace culture

'Feeling ashamed about my lack of experience and understanding of work culture that others take for granted...' – Survey respondent

One survey respondent raised the interesting issue of lack of 'work culture' knowledge and experience due to long term unemployment. A lack of workplace experience resulted in this respondent finding it difficult to settle in with the expectations and responsibilities of the workplace.

'Not understanding what I need to do in a job, lack of supervision or mentoring.' – Survey respondent

Having someone to guide people reengaging with employment after long periods of unemployment was suggested as helpful.

Bullying

'I have been regularly bullied because of my disability.' -Survey respondent

'They kept shouting at me.' –Interviewee

Bullying in the workplace was identified as an issue for maintain employment by several of the respondents. This not only affected their health dramatically but also impacted on their ability to do the work, enjoy and feel positive about employment.

Disability awareness education and training for workplaces was suggested as a way of combating bullying.

Recommendations

WWDACT recommends:

- 1. Improvements to the quality and performance of DES delivery through increased wages, incentives to excel and recruitment of specialised staff.**

DES case workers need to be better qualified and offered competitive conditions to enable improvements in service delivery. Staff with specialised skills across disability, employment, education and gender should be actively recruited. Better conditions mean greater sustainability in a workforce and therefore, mean more consistency in service provision.

- 2. Increased training opportunities for DES staff to better understand and cater to the diverse nature of disability.**

Providing training and professional development opportunities for staff to better meet the complex needs of clients can assist the consistency, sensitivity and effectiveness of service delivery. This includes increasing staff's understanding of co-morbidity, episodic conditions and the various medical commitments of people living with a disability.

- 3. That DES build on their approaches to job seeking to better suit to the experience, skills, education and career interests of clients.**
- 4. The provision of training and educational opportunities that reflect a client's current skills, experience and needs.**
- 5. DES supports women with disabilities to seek creative employment opportunities, such as establishing small businesses in the ACT.**

This could include creating better links between New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, DES and Centrelink, or with government supported programs to encourage small business start-ups, such as the ACT Government Office for Women microcredit program.

- 6. More support for employers, including awareness and education training on disability and gender.**

This should include initial and ongoing support for employers and employees.

- 7. The expansion of DES support beyond 18 months.**

This would assist jobseekers and employees to find and sustain employment.

- 8. Campaign to increase awareness of DES amongst women with disabilities and the wider community.**

Target information to places where people with potential eligibility for DES and carers frequent, i.e. medical practitioners, fitness facilities, community centres and Centrelink. Ensure that information distribution and advertising is made accessible through multiple mediums, including audio and visual.

Conclusion

In this report WWDACT has collected the feedback and narratives of women with disabilities surveyed about their experience with DES in the ACT and surrounding region. Although small in number, the women who contributed to this project offered a richness of detail and a consistency across many of the main issues relating to DES.

Major issues to the access, and use of, DES centred on pre-employment support and understanding, including better skill recognition, greater understanding of the commitments of women and people with disabilities and the offer of appropriate training opportunities. Mostly, the ongoing support offered by DES was seen as a positive.

Gaps and issues which hinder the delivery of current DES were identified mainly at a funding and governmental level. This included the provision of better qualified staff through increased salary and training. In addition, poor information distribution and lack of advertising of DES was seen as a major barrier to accessing DES.

The most significant issues facing women with disabilities seeking, securing and maintaining employment included discrimination operating at different levels, stigma, job scarcity and lack of flexibility. Some of these issues can be and are somewhat mediated by DES case workers but others need to be addressed at governmental, economic and cultural levels.

A broad range of issues concerning the intersection of DES, women, disability and employment have been identified through this research project. Many of these issues, which are systemic in nature, continue to hinder women with disabilities enjoying the full benefits that come with employment in our society.

WWDACT looks forward to the review and revision of DES that will result from these investigations, and encourages the inclusion of recommendations that enable women with disabilities to partake in fulfilling paid employment through tailored, sensitive and non-discriminatory support.

Appendices

Appendix 1: WWDACT Forum Agenda



Women with Disabilities in the ACT and region

&

Disability Employment Services

Agenda

Time: 2:00pm-5:00pm

Date: Wednesday, May 28th 2014

Location: Advance Personnel Canberra Inc.

Yellow Room

PA Chambers

18 Corinna St

Phillip ACT 2606

2:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome• Acknowledgement of country• WWDACT Introduction• DES Forum Introduction	WWDACT Convener Sue Salthouse
2:10pm	DES presentation	Advanced Personnel representative

2:25pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator introduction • Consent forms • Confidentiality • Recording & note taking explanation 	Facilitator
2:30pm	<p>What are some of your experiences with DES as women in the ACT and region?</p> <p>Examples of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive experiences • Negative experiences <p>Areas for specific discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job-search support e.g. resume development, interview training and help searching for suitable jobs • Employment support e.g. on-the-job training and employer support • Ongoing support • Assistance to access relevant training • Assistance to help with workplace modifications e.g. support services and Auslan interpreting in the workplace • Personalised service Understanding and catering towards a client's employment needs, career aspirations and existing qualifications and experience. • Meeting client's participation requirements Wheelchair access, IT programs, Auslan interpreting, etc. 	
3:00pm	How could DES services be improved?	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providers • By government 	
3:30pm	Afternoon tea	
3:50pm	Exploring broader issues about finding and maintaining employment as a woman with disabilities in the ACT	
4:20pm	Any comments or questions?	
4:40pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks • Promotion of WWDACT's Membership • Voucher distribution • Transport remuneration as needed 	

Appendix 2: Forum Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Women with Disabilities Experiences with Disability Employment Services in the ACT

About WWDACT

Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities. Established in 1995, WWDACT adheres to a human rights philosophy, based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and works with government and non-government organisations to improve the status and lives of women with disabilities in the ACT and surrounding region.

About the research

The purpose of this research is to explore women with disabilities' experiences with Disability Employment Services in the ACT. We want to find out your experiences, ways you think Disability Employment Services could be improved and the broader issues which affect you in job-seeking and securing and maintaining employment.

The feedback you provide to WWDACT will contribute to the national report on Disability Employment Services by the peak non-government organisation Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA). This report aims to help the government understand the job-seeking experiences of women with disabilities and improve the delivery of Disability Employment Services locally and nationally.

Recording your feedback

As you give feedback the researcher(s) may take notes or record the discussion to help accurately record your views. Recording will only occur with your permission, and will not be linked with your name or other identifying characteristics.

Privacy and confidentiality

Any personal or identifying information you provide (e.g., consent forms) will be stored securely and remain confidential and anonymous. The information you provide will be used by WWDACT for research purposes and may be published in a report, however, your name or other identifying information will not be used.

After the forum/interview

You are welcome to ask questions or withdraw from this research at any time, and your feedback will always be listened to and respected. Please contact Jenni Gough at the WWDACT office on 02 6290 2166 or email j.gough@wchm.org.au for more information.

Yes, I have read and understand the above information. I agree to give feedback to WWDACT:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Survey

About This Survey

About Women With Disabilities ACT

Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) is a systemic advocacy and peer support organisation run by women with disabilities for women with disabilities.

If you would like to find out more about WWDACT see <http://www.wchm.org.au/WWDACT/wwdact>, phone 02 6290 2166 or email wwdact@wchm.org.au.

About This Survey

This short survey is about women with disabilities' experience with Disability Employment Services in the ACT.

We want to hear about:

- Your experiences with Disability Employment Services
- Ways you think Disability Employment Services could be improved
- Issues about finding and maintaining employment

The feedback you provide in this survey will contribute to the national report on Disability Employment Services by the peak non-government organisation Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA). This report aims to help the government understand the job-seeking experiences of women with disabilities and improve the delivery of Disability Employment Services locally and nationally.

WWDACT is happy to provide assistance to help you complete this survey. If you would like assistance or more information please contact WWDACT on wwdact@wchm.org.au or phone 02 6290 2166.

Please complete this survey by Monday, 2nd of June 2014.

WWDACT thanks you for taking the time out to contribute your experiences.

***1. This survey is for women with disabilities living in the ACT or surrounding region who have had experience with Disability Employment Services. Please confirm that this applies to you and that you have read the introduction page fully.**

Yes

No

Consent Form

Your responses to this survey will inform the work of Women with Disabilities ACT, Women With Disabilities Australia and ultimately, Disability Employment Services.

All information sourced from this survey will remain anonymous.

***2. Do you give consent to WWDACT to use your survey responses?**

- Yes
- No

About You

***3. What is your age?**

- 14-17 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older
- Prefer not to say

***4. Where do you live?**

- North Canberra
- Belconnen
- Woden Valley
- Weston Creek
- Tuggeranong
- South Canberra
- Gungahlin-Hill
- Molonglo
- Other (please specify)

Your experience with Disability Employment Services

***5. Please rate your experience with the following supports offered by Disability Employment Services.**

	Very Poor	Poor	OK	Good	Very Good	No Opinion
Job-search support, e.g. resume development, interview training and help searching for suitable jobs which meet your skills and needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employment support, e.g. on-the-job training and employer support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ongoing support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance to access relevant training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance to help with workplace modifications, e.g. support services and Auslan interpreting in the workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Please give an example of a time you had a positive experience with Disability Employment Services.

7. Please give an example of a time you had a negative experience with Disability Employment Services.

8. Do you think the Disability Employment Services you accessed understood and catered for your employment needs and existing qualifications and experience?

***9. How well did Disability Employment Services meet your participation requirements, e.g. wheelchair access, IT programs and Auslan interpreting?**

Don't know
 Not Well
 Fairly Well
 Very Well

Improving Disability Employment Services

10. In your opinion, what could Disability Employment Services do to improve their services?

***11. In your opinion, what could government do to help Disability Employment Services perform better for women with disabilities in the ACT?**

Disability and Employment

WWDACT is interested in hearing about your experiences in seeking, finding and maintaining employment as a woman with disabilities in the ACT.

12. In your experience, what are the major issues you have faced job-seeking in the ACT?

13. In your experience, what are the major issues you have faced applying for jobs in the ACT?

14. . In your experience, what are the major issues you have faced maintaining employment in the ACT?

Thank you!

Thank you for contributing your voice to the work of WWDACT, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) and ultimately, the delivery of the Disability Employment Services.

WWDACT Membership

Women and organisations that support the aims and objectives of WWDACT are encouraged to become members. Membership is free and enables members to:

- Provide input on policies
- Receive regular information on current activities via a email bulletin

If you would like to become a member visit <http://www.wchm.org.au/WWDACT/wwdact-support-us> to download a membership form or contact the WWDACT office by phone 02 6290 2166 or email wwdact@wchm.org.au now.

WWDACT Facebook

Like our Facebook page to keep up-to-date with WWDACT activities: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wwdact-Women-with-Disabilities-ACT/148865358489807?ref=hl>