

## Establishment of a Disability Employee Network and Draft Terms of Reference

### Summary and outcomes of the Consultation Session 7 December 2017

On the 7 December 2017, the ACT Government organised an open forum with staff across all directorates to discuss the establishment of a Disability Employee Network. The session was facilitated by the Australian Network on Disability and was open to all employees of the ACT Government.

The session was attended by over 40 people from all areas of the ACT Government. The session comprised of a short presentation that outlined the different roles that Disability Employee Networks can fulfil within organisations. Attendees were then divided into two discussion groups and each group was asked to work through a set of questions (and capture responses to those questions) as a way of establishing common themes that would then inform the purpose and role of a Disability Employee Network.

The questions and a summary of discussion are outlined below. The key themes have also been summarised and placed into a draft Terms of Reference which may then inform further discussion and development.

### Presentation and Questions provided to each group (7 December 2017)

The questions were provided to the group in the context of a presentation about the potential role and function of Disability Employee Networks.

### Key points from the presentation

The presentation made the following points about Disability Employee Networks:

- The networks can fulfil several functions including being a:
  - **Support network** for people with disability;
  - **Forum to raise issues** and report back on key issues in the workplace- e.g. workplace adjustments, flexible hours;
  - **Important corporate resource:** can play a key role in consultation on all aspects of business from design that is inclusive of people with disability (for example ICT systems and communications) through to funding, implementation and monitoring of those systems;
  - **Sounding board and forum for discussion** regarding changes within an organisation.
  
- A case study was provided as an example of how a Network can bring about positive change in an organisation. The case study looked at employees with disability who

needed assistive technology and adjustments (such as equipment) and the organisational reasons why they were not receiving adjustments. These included:

- Perceived funding constraints in line areas;
  - Managers who did not know what to do- or have the right information;
  - A work health and safety area that focussed on rehabilitation and compensable workplace injuries rather than a broader holistic approach to disability and integrated support for employees;
  - Disability not considered or factored in to planning and procurement – for example assistive technology not factored in to IT r equipment purchases or support.
- The case study then highlighted how forming a group within the organisation was then successfully able to address these issues by:
    - Establishing a strong support network including formalised roles and a clear and agreed purpose;
    - The group identified the need for inclusion and consultation in key corporate areas and offered representatives to tap into these processes;
    - The group established a prioritised action plan for activities: for example: Responsibility for funding assistance technology was moved from line areas to centralised funding with a clear application process for assistance;
    - A disability coordinator role was established- key task was to take issues back to senior executive with solutions developed by the DEN;
    - Liaison with the DEN when purchasing IT, office equipment and communications solutions including an ICT testing group set up with members of the DEN;
    - Access issues were addressed across the Department including;
    - Auslan Interpreters for all staff meetings;
    - Hearing loops and ramps installed;
    - Progress was monitored and reported on at a senior level.

#### Questions provided to the group for consideration

The questions were distributed to attendees prior to the meeting to encourage discussion. These were as follows:

- 1. What do you think is important to include in the role and scope of the group?** For example, is it:
  - Membership – who can be a member of this group?
  - To be consulted on management decisions that affect employees with a view to providing feedback/points to be considered on these issues such as recruitment-workplace adjustments- Information and Communication

Technology Changes (ICT), accommodation changes and access to learning and development?

- Provide a forum for peer to peer employee support?
- Be a forum to raise issues and promote disability awareness?
- To have an advocacy role?
- To undertake fundraising and event management?
- To work with the Senior Managers or Champions on any of these issues?

**2. What are two things that you would like to see this group achieve in the next 12 months**

**3. What might the group look like - positions and Governance- noting these are voluntary roles- and how will these be filled. For example:**

- Network Chair and co-chair
- Network participants
- Network Senior Managers/Champions
- The Diversity Champion
- Network campaign and communication officers
- Any others roles/ position that it would be useful to have.

### Summary of responses

The input from both the groups has been summarised from material provided by the note takers and the facilitator and arranged thematically.

### Membership

Employees and anybody who has an interest maybe a passion

As inclusive as possible

Staff and allies

Important that persons with a disability have a voice

Must have people with lived experience of disability in group

People with disability must be able to have direct input on issues that affect them in the workplace People without disability not to make decisions for people with disability without consultation

Committee Members - different mechanisms for persons to have a voice within the group – some group members may be shy or feel they can't be heard

Group needs people with authority to make decisions- including WHS, HR, Executive, people with disability.

### Purpose

We need to know who we are and what we do:

Mission statement: Consultation implementation and systemic advocacy - the group doesn't organise the directorates do - not a counselling group but informal peer support - more concerned with systemic issues not a complaints management team.



Focus of the group is concerned with the workplace not home life.  
Decisions based on employment of the worker not necessarily external community events  
(Group can play a role in) Work(ing) out an appropriate inclusion policy - a whole of Government approach.  
Influencing design stages and providing feedback.  
Management need to be aware of how to implement disability awareness.  
The group should have an advocacy role.  
(Education role) Disability is a broad spectrum not just physical also mental.  
Group needs to be consulted for changes within the work place (for example activity based work).  
Group needs to have a very real presence so workers know they exist.  
(Forum to raise) Activity based work concerns.  
To look at equity in things such as recruitment processes.  
To be consulted and represented on matters that impact on people with disability in the workplace.  
Be a link to service providers for workplace adjustments- visual/ audio.

### **Champions/ Governance/Authority**

Someone in senior management need to be able to sign off regarding implementation of disability/ inclusive workplace ideas  
Champions should be a safe place to talk about things  
Role of champions is not to attend every meeting however to be available to take suggestions and then implement them if they impact on people with disability.  
The group needs the power to approach a champion - Executive Sponsor for each directorate to champion groups concerns  
EBA - bargaining representatives from the group to be part of the consultative process (leave bank issues for persons with a disability)

### **Areas of potential development as raised by both groups**

Managers not aware of workplace adjustment policy.  
Better communication and training.  
Low awareness of workplace adjustment policies- raise awareness of workplace adjustment policy.  
Need to assess existing workplace adjustment policies and set up monitoring of performance so Improvements can be seen year on year.  
Need to provide feedback on workplace adjustment policies- how are they working  
Survey of implementation of adjustments.  
Managers to have Greater awareness and liaison with service providers/adjustments when implementing adjustments.  
RED contact/inclusion officers.  
Would be great to have a single contact point who can broker adjustment solutions on behalf of an individual or group.



Review equity of recruitment processes.

Look at establish a leave bank for people who need additional leave.



## Draft Terms of Reference - ACT Government Employees' Network for Disability Action (AGENDA)

ACT Government

Committee Name

ACT Government Employees' Network for Disability Action (AGENDA)

The ACT Government is committed to increasing the number of people with a disability in the workforce to better represent the community in which we serve, by supporting, improving opportunities and identifying and removing barriers. All directorates aim to provide a workplace that is inclusive, enabling and values diversity.

### Purpose

AGENDA is committed to recognising, supporting and improving workplace opportunities for people with disability. The network will support an inclusive workplace through involvement in all aspects of ACT Government business including:

- the design of premises, accessibility, workstations and work, human resource and recruitment policies, ICT procurement and communication strategies
- the development and monitoring of workplace adjustments
- manager/supervisor training to improve disability awareness
- improving career development pathways to develop the skills and talents of employees with disability
- Advocating for change and peer support.

### Scope

The scope of AGENDA's work is to bring forward issues at the organisational level that affect people with disability who are employees, in any capacity, of the ACT Government. This includes:

- Being a point of contact for staff with disability who are seeking information about a range of workplace issues.
- Being a consultative and advisory group for the development and implementation of policies and procedures that affect employees in areas such as recruitment-workplace adjustments - Information and Communication Technology Changes (ICT), accommodation changes and access to learning and development.
- To provide feedback on key workplace policies and processes that impact on people with disability.
- To work with the Champion on identified issues.
- Providing a forum for peer to peer employee support.
- Circulating information that may be of assistance to staff with disability.

- Being a forum to raise issues, promote disability awareness and contribute to cultural change
- Where appropriate, to have an advocacy role and work in conjunction with other areas of the ACT Government
- Where appropriate to support fundraising and event management related to disability.

### Out of scope

Due to the purpose of the group there are issues that will be out of scope.

These include:

- Being a forum to for individual complaints about managers, performance management and other staff
- Providing specialised advice on the implementation and monitoring of workplace adjustments or worker compensation matters
- Providing legal advice
- Being delegated work that is the responsibility of other areas of the ACT Government.

### Authority

**This will need to be defined.** The Governance structure would reflect the purpose of the group and include any decision making or advisory roles.

### Membership

All ACT Government Employees are welcome to join the network whether they identify as having a disability or not.

Membership of AGENDA is voluntary.

An individual may choose to share about disability and this is always voluntary.

Members of AGENDA will share a commitment to building inclusive workplaces that provide support, understanding, accessibility and opportunities and actioning any agreed priorities in the groups workplan.

Membership includes employees of the ACT Government in any capacity who are:

- Employees with a disability;
- Employees who have a genuine interest in raising the profile of the disability;
- Other employees genuinely interest in disability and carer Issues, and shaping the ACT Government to become an employer of choice for employees with disability;
- Representatives from the HR, workplace health and safety and diversity who are key contact points and may not always attend meetings.



**Membership for dedicated positions** is to be established through a nomination process conducted annually.

**Membership for general members** can be established by writing to the Chair/Secretariat and asking to join the group.

### **General member's role and responsibilities**

General members of the network will have the opportunity to work on projects that contribute to the ACT Governments disability objectives and goals and are expected to support and assist with the implementation of projects. This is a valuable opportunity for staff to interact with members of the Executive and make a constructive contribution to the culture of the ACT Government.

### **Dedicated positions role and responsibilities.**

The Committee has several dedicated positions which are core to the functioning of the Committee. The positions and their role are outlined below.

### **Network co-chairs**

AGENDA will have two Co-Chairs. The role of the Co-Chairs will be to:

- Provide guidance and leadership to the network;
- In conjunction with other members develop an Annual Work Plan(AWP);
- To identify and advocate for any resources to support the (AWP);
- Work cooperatively with Champions senior managers;
- Set meeting dates and Agendas in conjunction with the Secretariat and other members.

### **Network Secretary and secretariat**

AGENDA will have two individuals to perform the secretariat role. The core functions of this role will be:

- Monitor mailboxes and/or contact points and raise issues with the Co-Chairs;
- With the co-chairs agree meeting dates and prepare agendas;
- Communicate meeting dates and times with all members;
- Take notes in the meeting which describe the events and identify any action items;
- Distribute meeting notes and action items;
- Follow-up on action items prior to the next meeting.

### **Network campaign and communication officers**

The Network will have two campaign and communications officers. The role of these officers will be:

- To support the Secretariat and Co-Chairs and associate chairs with communication about meetings and events;
- If required, to assist with other network members in planning and running events.

## Role of Champions

The Disability Champions will play a key role in progressing areas of activity as identified by AGENDA. While Disability Champions would not attend every meeting, Champions will play a key role in progressing positive and inclusive structural and cultural changes.

Disability and Diversity Champions are:

A new champion is needed to replace Bronwen Overton Clarke

## Meeting arrangements

### Privacy

A member of the Network is not obligated to share their disability or health status when joining or participating in the Network.

The Secretariat holds the confidential members' list, the use of this list is limited to member communication and permission will be sought from members prior to it being used for any other purpose.

Members and other parties sharing information at AGENDA meetings will be asked whether they would like to share that information, including being captured in meeting notes, or whether it should be kept confidential. Where a person is not present at the meeting the Chair may determine whether an individual's privacy would be breached by open discussion about the subject (not the person).

## Meeting Frequency and location

**Meetings will be held up to 4 times** a year, or at other times when necessary at a time and place to be nominated by the Chair and Secretariat.

**A minimum of 5 network members** including one of the Co-Chairs and one secretariat, will need to be present to constitute a formal meeting.

**Items to be considered at meetings** are to be prepared and sent out for comment to members two weeks prior to the meeting. Members may nominate agenda items by emailing the Chair and Secretariat.

**A record of meeting outcomes**, including a broad description of the topic and any action items will be kept and distributed to members of the Network after the meeting. The notes will be taken and distributed to members by the Secretariat. Corrections or additions can be made at the following meeting.

**Communications** including consideration of key issues or inviting input on identified issues may be circulated by email out of session.

**Mailboxes** a mailbox can be established for communications more broadly across the Directorates and can be monitored by the AGENDA Communications Officer

**Records** are to be kept in a central location to be agreed.

### Reporting

The Committee through the Chair will report to the Co-Chairs on outcomes against the **Annual Action Plan** once a year by the end of the Financial Year 30 June.

### Resources and budget

Will AGENDA have a budget or dedicated resources? - and if so what is this, and how does it link to the Annual Work Plan?

### Deliverables

The Committee will develop an **Annual Work Plan (AWP)** that forms part of the terms of Reference at **Attachment A**. Progress against the AWP will be reviewed at each meeting and interim steps added to items as required.

### Review

The **Terms of Reference** are to be reviewed after one year of operation of the Committee, and annually thereafter at the end of the financial year.

**All roles in the Committee** are to be renewed every 12 months.

### ANNUAL WORK PLAN (EXAMPLE)

Attachment A

Project	Deliverables	Timeframes	Priority
Raise awareness of existing workplace adjustments policies	-email from Champion to raise awareness of upcoming sessions -training sessions organised for staff, including managers - establish a monitoring system to view uptake and effectiveness		Eg low, medium and high
Identify representatives to sit on committees that oversee ICT, Corporate policies, accommodation changes			

Project	Deliverables	Timeframes	Priority
Survey of implementation of adjustments			
Establish a RED contact/inclusion officer			