'Ticket to Work'

An employment and transition model for students with a disability

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Executive Summary

Many students with disabilities continue to struggle to successfully make the transition from school to employment. The rates of employment for people with disabilities in Australia is half that of their peers and is actually reducing. There is a strong link between the labour market aspiration and expectations of the community (including parents and schools) for young people with disabilities, and whether such young people take an employment pathway.

The correlation between undertaking work experience during schooling and higher post-school employment for young people with disabilities is well documented. However the poor labour market statistics for persons with a disability suggest a critical need for more work-based learning opportunities (be that an apprenticeship, traineeship or part-time work) during the secondary schooling years.

While apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates for persons with a disability remain low, those without a disability also register low levels of completion; evidencing that a young person's disability does not necessarily affect their capacity to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship. Indeed, research would suggest that completion rates are more greatly affected by other individual characteristics than by the disability itself. These characteristics include personal ones such as persistence, resilience, self-determination, self-discipline and that the incentive to meet their vocational goals and a passion for the job were motivating factors that overcome barriers to completion.

Research has shown that young people with a disability who are enrolled in an apprenticeship or traineeship have better employment outcomes, when compared against other types of VET courses, largely because of the employment relationship embedded in the arrangement. Furthermore, training that involves practical experience in the workplace is more likely to lead to employment for young people with a disability, and completion of a VET qualification increases the likelihood of ongoing labour market inclusion. All of which underscores the need for a disability-focussed Australian School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT, ASBAT or ASBA) program within the region.

The legislative Education Standards under the *Disability Discrimination Act* requires education and training providers to make "reasonable adjustments" and to "consult" to accommodate students presenting with a disability. Recent research indicates that providers are both keeping pace with contemporary policy and equity principles as well as indicating a willingness to be inclusive and meet the needs of a diverse student cohort.

Although more people with a disability are undertaking VET courses or apprenticeship and traineeships, there are still barriers that affect participation rates. Research shows that an individual student's chance of successfully completing their VET studies or a SBAT may be improved if they get additional support such as career counselling; a supportive training environment; natural supports; disability diversity recognition; self efficacy development; and, travel confidence.

A number of stakeholders must be involved when students with a disability are pursuing an SBAT pathway, including: state training service/s; Australian Apprenticeship Centre; education department regions; parents and carers; school staff; employers and their staff; TAFE Institutes /Registered Training Organisations (RTOs); Disability Employment Services (DES); Workplace Learning Coordinators; significant others; and, LLENs (Victoria) or Partnership Brokers (Australia-wide). The sheer number of SBAT stakeholders with key roles means that a clearly articulated strategy to implement and coordinate any pilot disability SBAT program is required.

Research has identified that the greatest obstacle confronting people with disability when seeking to secure an apprenticeship of their choice is in the sourcing a suitable agency willing and able to provide the necessary placement and post-placement assistance. Most of the employment support providers (such as Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia) do not have any significant involvement in the VET sector but are experienced in supporting persons with a disability. Conversely, those organisations

(such as Group Training Organisations [GTOs], Apprenticeship Field Officers and Apprenticeship Centres) that operate within the apprenticeship and traineeship arena work extensively within the VET sector but acknowledge that they have little expertise or resources to place and support and trainees with a disability. As such, there are obvious synergies in Disability Employment Services and the Apprenticeship / Traineeship sectors collaborating to pool their expertise and resources for mutual advantage. A regional pilot SBAT program could assist with creating the partnerships and linkages between these sectors and their organisations.

A range of supports are available to young people with a disability - the involved agencies, training providers and employers – who can both increase the likelihood of success and act as marketing and sourcing mechanisms. These supports and mechanisms include employer relationship development strategies, resources for Australian Apprentices with a disability (including SBAT funding support) and on-the-job training models.

Research has shown that a barrier to finding an apprenticeship for young people with a disability is convincing prospective employers that they are 'apprenticeship competent'. Once secured the next obstacle faced by such young people is often was dealing with co-worker misconceptions and disability stereotyping. In an effort to maximise sourcing success and minimise potential workplace negativity, disability employment best practice have adopted a 'case management' approach to marketing people with disabilities and, more recently, a 'customised employment' approach.

With 'case management' a relationship is built up between the employment agency and an employer, whereby an understanding of the employer's business is built up over time. The 'customised employment' approach is a process through which the relationship between employer and employee is negotiated and personalised in a way that meets the needs of both - a method conceived as a way for companies to welcome and serve individuals with disabilities.

It is clear from the literature that a variety of factors can influence the employer's decision to employ a person with a disability including: attitudes; myths and preconceptions; perceived costs; the structure of jobs; technology; legislation; unionisation; and, available support and advice. More than for other workers, addressing concerns, the correct matching of skills to the job and the effective use of access technology will be critical in contributing to the productivity of people with disabilities in the workplace.

In any regional disability SBAT pilot program it will be important to clearly identify what resources will be required, whether the funding will meet identified resource requirements and, if not, what other funding or resources may be available to meet shortfalls.

A wide range of recommendations pertaining to both the proposed pilot SBAT program and individual SBAT arrangements, that would enhance success, are outlined within the body of this Paper. One of the most significant systemic deficits for potential apprentices/trainees and employers is the lack of a clearly articulated approach or model to implement best practice strategies, minimise barriers, and identify processes that will efficiently and effectively coordinate them. A regional pilot which initiates a SBAT within a Special School will attempt to address and redress this. A clear message to emerge from the search for best practice is that apprenticeship services and disability employment agencies are natural allies in recruiting, placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disabilities. It is also evident that a holistic and collaborative approach with a range of regional stakeholders will be required if a successful disability SBAT pilot program is to succeed.

A large number of clear and specific recommendations for a future SBAT pilot program and individual student SBAT success emerge from the research and commentary provided herein. They have been broadly categorised and are detailed within the body of this Paper, under the following groups: 'Pre-SBAT Preparation'; 'Education and Training Provider Support'; 'Partnership Development'; and, 'Employment Preparation'.

1.   Research and Pilot Program Background

This Paper is both a literature review of strategies and approaches to apprenticeships and traineeships for people with a disability and recommendations for how to develop a best practice Australian School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (known as SBAT, ASBAT or ASBA) model for young people with disabilities.

This Paper was specifically written to assist the 'Youth Disability Pathways Network (Inner Melbourne)', of stakeholders within the BGK LLEN and IE LLEN regions, to initiate a pilot SBAT Program ('Ticket to Work') for young people with a disability currently enrolled in local Special Schools. The need for such a program recognises the limited levels of regional SBAT participation by students with disabilities and the need to increase their access to this pathway option in the senior years of schooling, as identified by a wide range of regional stakeholder organisations. These organisations include the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Southern Metropolitan Region, Department of Human Services, BGK LLEN, IE LLEN, National Disability Coordination Officer (Southern Melbourne), local special schools (Berendale and Montague Schools) and a range of regional employment and youth transition support agencies.

The *Ticket to Work* pilot program would incorporate the establishment of the 'Youth Disability Pathways Network (Inner Melbourne)', made up of key stakeholders, to steer the project's development, implementation and evaluation. The project itself, whilst still in development, is likely to see a number of special needs school students be placed into an SBAT with local employers. In addition, the pilot would also incorporate the development of resources, models and approaches which can then be used to sustain and scale-up the program locally and even support implementation across other regions.

2.   Work Experiences at School

For decades, research has shown the strong relationship between the experience of work during secondary school and higher post-school employment for youth with disabilities (Benz, Yovanoff & Doren, 1997; Colley & Jamison, 1998). However, as the continuing disappointing post-school employment rates for youth with disabilities suggest, there remains a critical need to expand quality work-based learning opportunities for these young people and to integrate these experiences into secondary education. Indeed, Leucking (2010) states that "while work experiences are beneficial to all youth, it has been found they are particularly valuable for young people with disabilities". Research has also found that a young person doing part time work while at school is more likely to have higher levels of full time employment and substantially lower unemployment post school (Wakeford, 2009).

3.   Apprenticeship and Traineeship Completion

Ball (2005), who analysed the demographic and institutional factors that influenced the likelihood of apprenticeship or traineeship completion, found that the probability of completion for a student with a disability was 42%. While this seems disturbing, comparison against those with no reported disability shows their completion rate to be a mere 46%, evidencing that a young person's disability does not necessarily affect their capacity to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Recent work by Karmel & Nguyen (2008) shows that completion rates were more greatly affected by other individual characteristics than by the disability itself. The factors, as identified by Harris et al. (2001), that help to increase retention rates include:
● a strong sense of personal agency and self efficacy;
● support from family or friends;
● supportive workplace supervisors, work and learning cultures;
● a high value placed on the occupational situation; and,

- an ongoing commitment to the industry, demonstrated by students undertaking pre-vocational courses such as Vocational Education and Training (VET) in School.

While many would reasonably consider a student's abilities, aptitude and skills to be the major contributing factor in apprenticeship and traineeship completion, much of the research indicates that personal attributes, support systems and personal efficacy and motivations are strongly associated with success. This may explain the similar completion rates for young people with disability to those without.

Similarly Milsom and Dietz (2009) and Gideon (2010) found that students with learning disabilities who have the greatest chance of success at school and in post-school pathways display personal characteristics such as persistence, resilience, self-determination and self-discipline. These qualities enable the individual to persevere in pursuit of their goals, despite potential setbacks, because they believe in their personal ability to achieve and maintain a clear focus on those goals. Furthermore, Borgå (2007) revealed that the incentive to complete their vocational goals and a passion for the job were primary motivators in seeking and sustaining employment.

4.   Employment Outcomes

It has been found that students with a disability enrolled in an apprenticeship or traineeship have better employment outcomes, when compared against other types of VET courses (Barnett 2004; Clark 2007). This may be because of the employment or on-the-job relationship embedded in the apprenticeship and traineeship models. Therefore a student undertaking an SBAT is more likely to have long term employment prospects. Likewise, training that involves practical experience in the workplace is more likely to lead to employment for young people with a disability (Dawe 2004; Clark 2007).

Students with a learning disability, however, are under-represented in vocational courses and are therefore excluded from the labour market opportunities that such learning provides upon completion. As noted by Knapp (2004) many of those who do participate in vocational courses in spite of a disability have had the ability to learn the skills of the trade, and that those who participate in spite of having an intellectual disability have the intelligence and reasoning to learn the skills of the trade.

Polidano (2010) confirms that completing a VET qualification not only helps people with a disability to find work, but it also increases their chances of sustaining employment into the future.

5.   Policy and Legislative Requirements

A learning disability is identified under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* as a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction, and the legislation therefore places an obligation on education and training providers to make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate these students (Shaw, 2004). Although training organisations are required to make reasonable adjustments for students, the focus is on improvement and building on their strengths so they are able to participate on the same basis as those without disabilities.

Cotton's (2010) study shows that awareness and application of strategies by vocational course lecturing and support staff is keeping pace with contemporary policy and equity principles. In addition, it indicates a willingness to be inclusive and deliver training to meet the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

A TAFE NSW (1998) report revealed a widespread support system in place for the Education Standards with generally high satisfaction levels amongst students with disabilities. However, it is also clear that a well articulated strategy to implement these intentions, supported by processes that will efficiently and

effectively coordinate them is somewhat lacking. This has been noted as a current deficit by members of 'Youth Disability Pathways Network (Inner Melbourne)'.

6.   Supportive Intervention Strategies

Although more and more people with a disability are undertaking VET courses or apprenticeship and traineeships, there are still barriers that affect participation rates. An individual student's chance of successfully completing their VET studies or an SBAT may be improved if they get additional support (Montague & Hopkins 2002). These supports include: career counselling; supportive training environment; natural supports; disability diversity recognition; self efficacy; and, travel confidence.

6.1   Career Counselling

Students' understanding of available training and employment pathways is influenced by the attitudes of those providing advice (often parents, peers, teachers etc.). These formal and informal advisors may have preconceived ideas about the options available to, and suitable for, young people with a disability. Clark (2007).

Bowman (2004) suggests that a lack of access to suitable user-friendly information about training options and poor career guidance for those with a disability make it difficult for them to make informed choices about VET and apprenticeships during periods of transition (e.g. beginning senior secondary school, when leaving school).

6.2   Supportive Training Environment

There are a range of factors and instructional strategies that contribute to successful completion of formal training undertaken by apprentices with an intellectual disability. As indicated above, not all of those may relate to their disability.

The key messages drawn from the report 'Breaking down the barriers: strategies to assist apprentices with a learning disability' (Cotton, 2010) are:

- The apprentices surveyed reported having the most difficulties with literacy (eg. reading and understanding texts). Focus group participants pointed out that the frustration this causes students can lead to other problems such as withdrawal from class participation and denial of the problem. Non-disclosure was also seen as a big concern as it limited the amount of support students could be given.
- Instructional approaches that accommodate students' different learning styles, individual mentoring or tutoring to help clarify concepts, and supportive relationships were strategies endorsed by both the apprentices and the staff as effective in helping the students to complete units of competency.

It is important to note, however, that many students with learning disabilities that affect their literacy and numeracy skills can have some compensatory characteristics. These include strong visual–spatial awareness and a unique problem-solving capacity; strengths that may present as a natural aptitude for certain trades (McNulty 2003).

Lewis (2002) found the most common training issues that arose for apprentices with a disability were:
- adjusting to the adult learning environment of TAFE (e.g. self advocacy and taking responsibility for own learning);
- academic difficulties, requiring additional tutorial support; and,
- difficulties with practical components of the course, requiring a mentor with practical skills in that trade area, and difficulty in applying theory to practical work.

Many apprentices with intellectual disabilities experience linguistic processing difficulties that create barriers to accessing the theoretical components of the training, in addition to the above mentioned barriers. Such individuals may be further disadvantaged by frustration, anxiety, low self-esteem and low

self-efficacy as a result of the long-term impact of disappointment and failure in the learning environment (Cotton, 2010)

Cotton's (2010) research identified that apprenticeship training which provides them with opportunities to build on their strengths, interests and aptitudes (such as being 'hands on' or having good problem-solving skills) can restore their confidence and motivation and assist in a positive completion.

Cotton's research also recognised that support staff and mentors provide an opportunity for students to relate what is taught in class to their own experiences. Success was more likely amongst lecturers using an instructional approach that delivers concepts which build on the students' learning strengths. As one teacher noted, "the apprentices cover more theory when they're up to their elbows in it and they've got a piece of equipment in front of them". The importance of skill practice and application was also noted in Cotton's research. It identified that employer support is paramount in providing the apprentice with practical skill application, as well as the value in trainers contacting employers to request that the apprentice receive workplace exposure to certain skill-building tasks.

As noted in Table 1 (below), Cotton's research sought apprentice input regarding strategies that positively influenced their VET course participation and completion.

Strategies	Student responses	
	Number	*%*
Mentoring/tutoring	14	77.8
Understanding staff	12	66.7
Practical experiences	11	61.1
Handouts	11	61.1
Practical demonstrations	10	55.6
Extra time	9	50.0
Verbal assessment	7	38.9
Note-takers	6	33.3
Help with organising study e.g. study skills	6	33.3
Peer note-taking	4	22.2
Technologies e.g. use of the computer	4	22.2
Other	3	14.3
Number of respondents	18	

Table 1: Strategies that have assisted with Unit of Competency completion rates

The summary in Table 2 (overleaf) indicates strategies that have been nominated by all groups as influencing success, as well as what needs to be involved in the application of individual strategies and the advantage of this application for apprentices with a disability.

Successful strategy	Specific action	Advantage for apprentices
Mentoring / tutoring	Clarifying concepts, simplifying terms e.g. technical	Presentation of material in plain spoken language provides access to course information
	Chunking or breaking down the information	Tasks become achievable and memory overload due to poor retention is avoided
	Meta-cognitive strategies	Improves organisation, time management and develops study skills for self-reliance and confidence
	Questioning techniques	Enables student to display knowledge, build on prior knowledge and increase confidence
Instructional approaches	Use of multi-sensory or holistic approach	Uses strengths e.g. 'hands on' to develop other skills and reduces dependency on reading for information
	Practice and repetition	Assists with retention and transfer from short-term to long-term memory
	Use of equipment and relate to everyday life	Brings abstract ideas to life and shows the job relevance
	Demonstrate using concrete examples	Modelling brings meaning to written instructions
	Extra time	Compensates for processing difficulties to access information or show competency in assessment
	Handouts	Compensates for those who find it difficult to write and listen or those who write slowly as a result of processing speeds
Relationships	Understanding staff and helpful lecturers	Reduces anxiety and improves opportunity to learn

Table 2: Summary of most significant strategies and reasons for trainee success

Many of the strategies outlined in Table 2 are suitable for the training context and provide a 'hands-on' approach in a practical learning environment. They add value to delivery for all apprentices beyond 'chalk and talk', through utilisation of equipment and concrete examples. Indeed, strategies that build on students' strengths and advance an inclusive approach enhance the quality of delivery and advantage all learners, not just those with a disability.

Figure 1 (overleaf), drawn from Cotton (2010), summarizes the factors and strategies that address the barriers experienced by students with a learning disability.
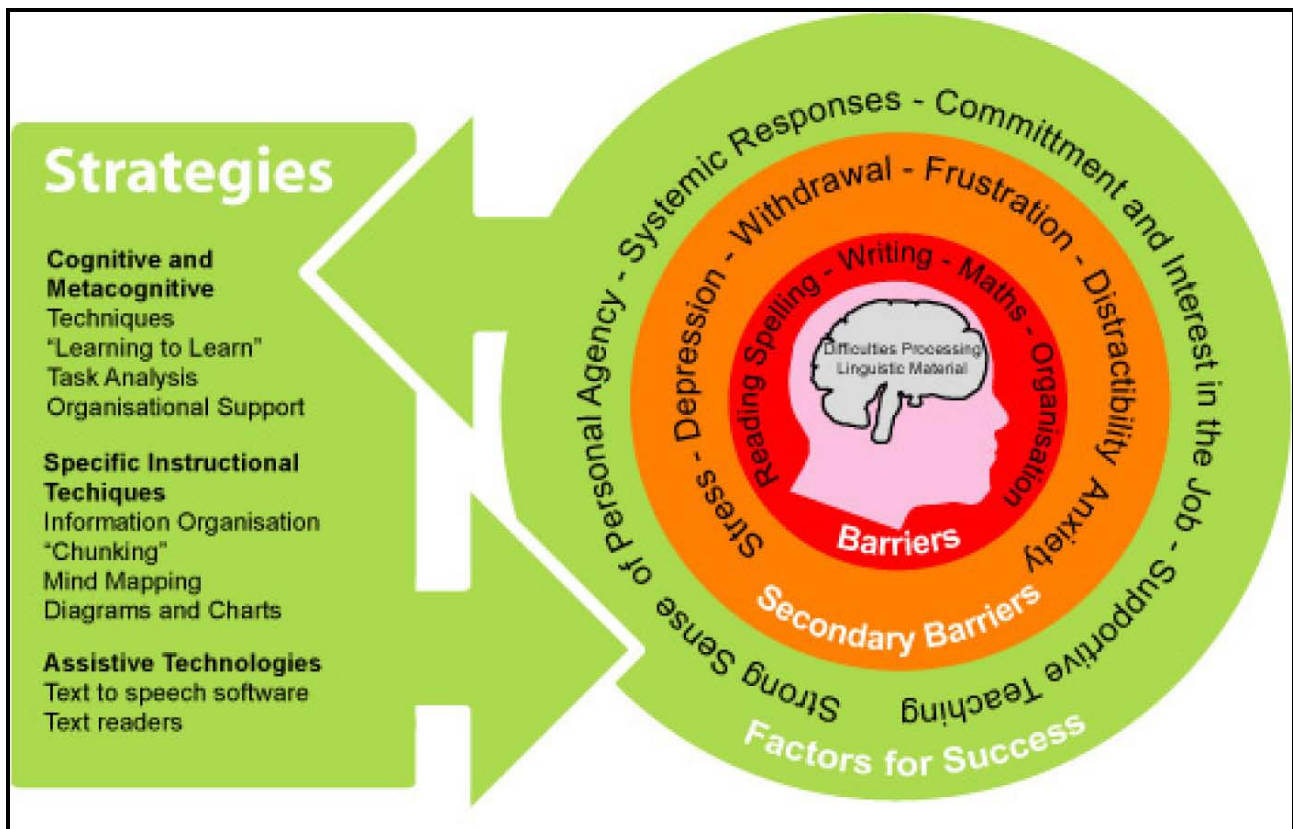
Figure 1: Strategies that address learning disability barriers (Cotton 2010)

6.3   Natural Supports

Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (2007) research identified the importance of positive relationships and supportive environments for students/apprentices in creating an atmosphere for success. This support can come from specialty agencies and organisations such as Disability Employment Agencies but often it is the capacity of natural supports, and how they are resourced, which play a positive role in the completion of apprenticeships.   In many cases these natural supports involve an identification of, and connection with, the students' existing networks.

Natural supports in an SBAT include:
- school /teachers;
- trade trainers and lecturers;
- employer, supervisors and co-workers; and,
- family, friends and other important people in that young person life.

The apprentice's family and/or other important people play a significant role in the capacity of the young person completing their apprenticeship or traineeship. It is vital to engage with them, address concerns, ensure their support and maintain an open communication. Research conducted by Lewis (2002) into a pilot program undertaken with the Western Australian based 'Edge Training Solutions' identified concerns expressed by family and other important people. These concerns included: the individual's ability to complete the apprenticeship or traineeship; the pressure that may be placed on the worker; and, risk of exploitation by co-workers.

In Lewis' study (2002) parents felt that their contributions, such as revising the concepts covered in the formal traineeship/apprenticeship training, played a significant support role. One apprentice stated that the support he received from his family helped him to "understand things" and kept him focused.

Cotton (2010) states that the training aspect of apprenticeships and traineeships involve a range of delivery styles and strategies designed to create a supportive working environment. This usually involves listening to

the students, building trust through group activities and setting up a buddy system where the strengths and weaknesses of the students are balanced in an encouraging team atmosphere. In this research, one tutor maintains that apprentices are "more receptive to learning when they are happy and their stress levels are down". These practices confirm the need for a supportive learning environment, as proposed by Reiss and Colbert (2004), so that apprentices with a learning disability overcome social, emotional and developmental barriers to learning.

6.4   Disability Diversity Recognition

Within the general category 'students with a disability' there is substantial diversity. Participation, outcomes and student characteristics vary by the type of disability reported, as do the level and type of support required to successfully participate in VET or an apprenticeships/traineeship; with some students requiring substantial support and others no support at all. Recent research by Karmel & Nguyen (2008) found "that it is not helpful to treat students with a disability as one group". Similarly within this Paper it is difficult to make clear findings as it is dependent on the type and nature of the individual student's disability and therefore difficult to provide definitive best practice examples for each and/or all types of disability.

6.5   Self Efficacy Development

Important factors, identified by Harris et al. (2001), that help increase retention rates for apprentices with a disability was a strong sense of self efficacy and of personal agency. This research concluded that it is these elements, which are not necessarily directly related to the student's disability, that have the greatest effect on apprenticeship or traineeship success.

Arulmani (2010) defined self efficacy as the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals – that is, 'if we think we can, we are more likely to be able to'. This researcher also asserted that a number of factors affect self efficacy.

The significance of personal agency for the adolescent in the training environment is explained by Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) as "one's capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes … influenced by the belief in one's effectiveness in performing specific tasks". Underpinning this sense of personal agency is what Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) refer to as a resilient sense of self-efficacy that can sustain students' efforts to learn in a self-directed way. A sense of 'personal agency' is characterised by Harris et al. (2001) as the ability of successful apprentices and trainees to make friends, to talk easily with adults or authority figures and to work towards long-term goals.

Hill and Dalley-Trim (2008) also identified the influence of personal qualities or attributes on apprenticeship completion rates. These include a positive attitude and initiative, the fostering of relationships, access to support (especially familial networks), and a passion for the apprenticeship. The motivation of the apprentice to obtain a certificate to ensure future employment has also been identified as a significant factor by Snell and Hart (2008). Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) identified the importance of these personal attributes in explaining certificate attainment goal-directed behaviour as the motivation that can manifest itself in effort, persistence and choice of activities.

Self efficacy development by both formal and informal networks is therefore a key success factor for young people with a disability engaging in VET, apprenticeships and traineeships or any other form of employment.

6.6   Travel Confidence

Another access obstacle for people with disabilities is transport. Many young people with disabilities do not have access to private transport, which is vital for apprentices who have to move regularly between home, work and TAFE – all of which may be some distance apart. Travel training may be required to support access to the VET work placement, apprenticeship or traineeship.

7.   Stakeholder and Agency Support

For a student with a disability to ensure a successful SBAT outcome, a number of stakeholders must be involved, including:

- state training service/s;
- Australian Apprenticeship Centre;
- education department regions;
- parents and carers;
- school staff;
- employers and their staff;
- TAFE Institutes /Registered Training Organisations (RTO);
- Disability Employment Services (DES);
- Workplace Learning Coordinators;
- friends and other supports; and,
- LLENs (Victoria) or Partnership Brokers (Australia-wide).

The sheer number of stakeholders with key roles means that we require a clearly articulated strategy to implement any pilot disability SBAT programs and also need to identify processes that will efficiently and effectively coordinate the participating stakeholders.

Research conducted by Lewis (2002) into a pilot project aimed at increasing participation in apprenticeships and traineeship for people with disability found that the greatest obstacle confronting people with disability securing apprenticeships of their choice is sourcing a suitable agency that is willing and able to provide the necessary placement and post-placement assistance.

Most of the employment support providers, such as Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia, do not have any significant involvement in the vocational education and training sector. As such, these agencies are often not skilled or inclined to actively seek apprenticeship placements for their clients with disabilities nor learn about apprenticeship arrangements or operations.

Conversely, Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Apprenticeship Field Officers and Apprenticeship Centres operate extensively and effectively within the VET sector. However, most claim to lack the expertise, skills or resources to recruit, indenture, place and support apprentices and trainees with a disability (Lewis, 2002).

Lewis (2002) also found that Disability Employment Services (DES) feel under-informed and under-funded to support people with disabilities through a four-year apprenticeship. At the time, Lewis found that there were no more than a handful of Disability Employment Services (amongst 300 service outlets Australia-wide) that were supporting more than 10 apprentices. It is worth noting that as at 2010 Disability Employment Services currently receive the same amount of funding regardless of whether they place and support a person in an eight hour per week menial job or a 40 hour per week apprenticeship which, as noted earlier, requires a greater level of coordination and involves a greater number of stakeholders. Traditional Disability Employment Services have not worked with school leavers (teenagers) so they would require support from Apprenticeship Field Officers regarding the nature of young people generally and apprenticeships and traineeships specifically.

Apprenticeship Field Officers are typically well-versed in industry requirements, apprenticeship arrangements and pastoral care needs for young people. However, research indicates that few appeared to have more than a rudimentary knowledge of disability or the strategies and techniques available to improve the chances of a disabled person securing and successfully completing a SBAT or full-time apprenticeship.

There are obvious synergies in Disability Employment Services and the apprenticeship / traineeship sectors collaborating to pool their expertise and resources for mutual advantage. The proposed 'Ticket to Work' regional pilot SBAT program could assist with creating the partnerships and linkages between these sectors.

8. Marketing and Sourcing Apprenticeships and Traineeships

A range of supports are available to young people with a disability, the involved agencies, training providers and employers to both increase the likelihood of success and act as marketing and sourcing mechanisms. These include employer relationship strategies, resources for Australian Apprentices with a disability (including SBAT funding support) and on-the-job training models.

8.1 Employer Relationship Development Strategies

Lewis (2002) found an apprenticeship sourcing barrier for young people with a disability is convincing prospective employers that they are capable of completing an apprenticeship or traineeship and, in the case of apprenticeships, becoming a competent tradesperson. When an apprenticeship or traineeship was secured the next obstacle that often arose was dealing with co-worker misconceptions and disability stereotyping, particularly by other apprentices or trainees.

In an effort to maximise sourcing success and minimise potential workplace negativity, disability employment best practice have adopted a 'case management' approach to marketing people with disabilities and, more recently, a 'customised employment' approach.

With 'case management' a relationship is built up between the employment agency and an employer, whereby an understanding of the employer's business is built up over time. Once the relationship is established, the employer already knows and trusts the agency/ies involved. A joint approach between a disability employment agency and an apprenticeship service helps to assure the employer that the prospective apprentice or trainee is coming with the full support and back-up of those involved.

The 'customised employment' approach is discussed in detail by Button (2007). Customised employment is a process through which the relationship between employer and employee is negotiated and personalised in a way that meets the needs of both. This method was conceived as a way for companies to welcome and serve individuals with disabilities.

Customised employment will often take the form of:
- **Task re-assignment:** Some of the job tasks of incumbent workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows the incumbent worker to focus on the critical functions of their job (i.e. primary job responsibilities). Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is modified—containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.

Customised employment would lend itself well to SBATs as they are part-time arrangements and come with a number of employer subsidies. This would be economically attractively to the employer, as his existing workforce can focus on the key tasks they are employed for, and the student employee with a disability can undertake customised tasks which best suit the student's capabilities and the business' needs.

It is clear from the literature that a variety of factors can influence the employer's decision to employ a person with a disability. These include: attitudes; myths and preconceptions; perceived costs (eg. accommodations, training and support time, absenteeism); the structure of jobs; technology; legislation; unionisation; and, available support and advice.

More than for other workers, addressing concerns, the correct matching of skills to the job and the effective use of access technology (eg. computer adaptations), will be critical in determining and contributing to the productivity of people with disabilities in the workplace.

8.2   Resources for Australian Apprentices with a Disability

There are a number of funding opportunities available to support people with disabilities undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships:

- **Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS)** is available to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice with a disability who has been assessed as a person requiring assistance.
- **Assistance for Tutorial, Interpreter and Mentor Services**. Assistance is payable directly to the Registered Training Provider in respect of an Australian Apprentice with a disability who has been assessed as eligible for DAAWS and who requires additional assistance with off-the-job training. An Australian Apprentice with a disability may attract this form of assistance regardless of whether their employer receives the DAAWS.
- **Workplace Modifications Scheme**: Funding for necessary modifications to the workplace may be provided to employers of Australian Apprentices who are disabled.

Lewis (2002) found that the above supports in their then form acted as an obstacle to people with disabilities entering apprenticeships of their choice. In the pilot program examined by Lewis, the waiting time for a DAAWS application to be processed averaged 12 weeks and required approx. 25 hours of paper work as well as completion of a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA). An additional difficulty was that a new application was required for each continuing apprentice per annum, something that not only included a full submission but also updated General Practitioner and Occupational Therapist reports. In the Lewis (2002) pilot program, this resulted in a three month wait for supports, which often resulted in the employment falling through or being retracted.

In the proposed 'Ticket to Work' regional disability SBAT pilot it will be important to clearly identify what resources will be required, whether the above listed funding will meet identified resource requirements and, if not, what other funding or resources may be available to meet any shortfalls.

8.3   On-the-Job Training Models

Many disability employment agencies utilise 'total task training' as their primary on-the-job training strategy. Total task training exposes the worker to the entire task step sequence from the outset. The steps are performed in the order required and instruction is provided for each step as it is being performed by the worker. As the worker learns each step and external assistance is reduced, the worker begins to chain the responses together without interventions between steps.

Total task training maximises the worker's independence early in training, especially if some steps are already familiar. Total task training is suitable for workers of all abilities (and disabilities), can be successfully applied to all jobs and mirrors what naturally occurs in the workplace. It is an approach that can also be applied to SBATs and Structured Work Placement (associated with VET courses delivered during senior secondary schooling) and greatly enhance the likelihood of training completion and success.

9.   Recommendations

As articulated throughout this Paper, one of the most significant systemic deficits for potential apprentices/trainees and employers (be that a full-time or school-based arrangement) is the lack of a clearly articulated approach or model to implement best practice strategies, minimise barriers, and identify processes that will efficiently and effectively coordinate them. The proposed 'Ticket to Work' pilot program which will see a supported SBAT model offered in regional special schools will attempt to address and redress this.

A clear message to emerge from the search for best practice is that apprenticeship services and disability employment agencies are natural allies in recruiting, placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disabilities. Neither the apprenticeship sector nor the disability employment sector has all of the resources or knowledge that is needed to ensure there is SBAT success for those with a disability.

As indicated in the inaugural meeting of BGK LLEN and IE LLEN region stakeholders it will be important to establish a holistic and collaborative approach with a range of regional stakeholders if the 'Ticket to Work' SBAT pilot program is to succeed.

Some key recommendations for a future pilot program and individual student SBAT success emerge from the research and commentary provided herein. They are:

9.1   Pre-SBAT Preparation

 Adequate pre-placement preparation
 Careful selection of students
 Preparation students for the world of work and employer expectation
 Ensure family and friends are engaged and supportive
 Ensure and develop SBAT candidate's sense of personal agency and self efficacy
 Ensure candidate places a high value on the occupational situation
 A passion for the job shown by SBAT candidate, an ongoing commitment to the industry
 Ensure school support, commitment and an understanding of their responsibilities
 Conduct a job development profile on the SBAT candidate to determine employment interest and abilities and match this with relevant SBAT vacancies
 Ensure a full understanding of every SBAT candidate's disability and its likely impact on any given SBAT
 Provide successful SBAT candidates with travel training

9.2   Education and Training Environment Support

 Provide orientation to an adult learning environment
 Ensure the support provider is understanding, committed and willing to work in partnership
 Ensure that the training uses instructional approaches that accommodate the particular learning needs of the SBAT students
 Provide individual mentoring or tutoring to help clarify concepts
 Encourage supportive relationships with peers and teachers that increase sense of self
 Identify and develop strategies that build on students' strengths
 Ensure utilisation of an inclusive learning approach, which enhances the quality of delivery and advantages all learners not just those with a disability
 Ensure utilisation of a creative approach to completing and assessing structured workplace learning and completion of VET modules
 Establish a Memorandum of Understanding with involved RTOs that makes provision for flexible training and assessment (incorporating reasonable adjustments) of SBAT

9.3   Partnership Development

 Establish a strategic partnership to place and support people with disabilities in an SBAT
 Provide time to develop the partnership with a clear understanding from all parties
 Establish a clear partnership agreement with comprehensive project plan indicating individual roles and responsibilities
 Ensure that participating staff have complementary skills and together are able to adequately support an SBAT for a student with a disability
 Provide training to your partner's staff (apprenticeship arrangements, disability awareness training and what works in employment)
 Become involved with nominated schools and clearly identify to them their SBAT responsibilities to facilitate the joint preparation of SBAT students with a disability

- [ ] Where required, customise induction process and job finding techniques to best practice employment techniques so as to better accommodate disabled SBAT students entering the workplace
- [ ] Develop a joint marketing strategy with partners
- [ ] Adopt a case management approach when marketing disabled SBAT students to employers
- [ ] Market the 'package' of the person to be inclusive of the SBAT student's abilities, combined support services, subsidies and back-up rather than just focusing on the person
- [ ] Establish a system of regular communication between all stakeholders including regular meetings to discuss progress

9.4 Employment Preparation

- [ ] Undertake careful selection, training and support for host employers
- [ ] Undertake a staged induction process developed in consultation with SBAT students
- [ ] Collaborate with the employer to identify and agree upon the on-site support that will be provided by all partners
- [ ] Immediately address any issues or potential issues with the employer
- [ ] Ensure co-workers and supervisors are prepared, trained and supported
- [ ] Ensure supportive workplace supervisors, work and learning cultures
- [ ] Determine the need for any workplace modifications or specialised equipment
- [ ] Determine access to workplace modifications and wage subsidy funding and apply for DAAWS funding where applicable
- [ ] Regularly monitor progress to resolve any difficulties as they may arise
- [ ] Source and/or provide adequate post-placement support for young people
- [ ] Develop and encourage natural supports (eg. the employer , families, school staff)
- [ ] Pursue workplace mentoring
- [ ] Utilise 'total task training' as its primary on-the-job training strategy (NB. Total task training exposes the worker to the entire task step sequence from the outset, with steps performed in the order required and instruction provided for each step as it is being performed by the worker).

Acronym Glossary

AAC	Australian Apprenticeship Centre
BGK LLEN	Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network
DAAWS	Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria
DEECD (SMR)	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Southern Metropolitan Region), Victoria
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DES	Disability Employment Service
GTO	Group Training Organisation
IELLEN	Inner Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network
JCA	Job Capacity Assessment
NDCO	National Disability Coordination Officer
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SBAT	School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (formally known as Australian School Based Apprenticeships - ASBA)
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools

Table 3: Acronym Glossary

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