

# Community Career Counselling

Enabling career guidance and learner choice for people with disability in adult education

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Whether directed through a rights based or an economic agenda, there is currently a strong policy commitment at all levels of Australian government to having people with a disability in the workplace.

In the current context of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) due to be implemented in 2016, it was timely for the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) to propose research into “What are the enablers of effective career guidance and learning choice for people with a disability? Which enablers are the most effective for educators?”

This summary covers some brief information around key concepts to the research and an outline of the key findings.

**What are the enablers of effective career guidance and learning choice for people with a disability? Which enablers are the most effective for educators?**

## 2. Key Concepts

### 2.1 Disability

This research covers all disability types. However, some learners have a level of impairment that does not interfere with their capacity to learn or work (Waterhouse et al, 2010), thus this research focuses on career development for those whose impairments restrict their ability to access those facilities normally available to others.

There is a tendency within government and other reports to speak of “people with disability” as a single cohort. This fails to recognise a) the differences between one form of impairment and another and b) the differences between people living with the same impairment type. Even so, there are still some

impairments, such as cognitive and psychiatric disability, which may impact on learning choices, career choices and employment more severely than others (Waterhouse et al, 2010, McClure, 2015).

**...this research focuses on career development for those whose impairments restrict their ability to access those facilities normally available to others.**

### 2.2 Learner choice

One of the key principles of the NDIS is to “enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). “Choice,” including learning choice, is central to the lives of all of us, including those with a disability. However, for some people with cognitive disability, “choice” may present problems associated with their impairment (Smyth and Bell, 2006; Ramcharen et al, 2013).

### 2.3 Career development

Career in the 21st century is no longer viewed as a single job for life, but rather something that encompasses an individual’s lifelong progression in learning and work (Campbell, 2010): and work may include paid and unpaid employment.

# Executive Summary

## 3. Key Findings

### 3.1 Challenges

*Challenges for students:* The two most frequently cited challenges relating to gaining employment or effective career guidance were:

- The disability, which in itself provided a challenge for students in obtaining employment where employers were reluctant to engage with disability
- Lack of self-confidence especially for those without any experience of work; those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and those lacking in a sense of self worth.

*Challenges for career developers:* The major challenge most career development practitioners cited was that of unrealistic expectations on the part of students and in some cases their parents.

*Employer attitudes:* A number of participants noted negative experiences in interactions with certain employers. These included:

- Resistance to employing people with a disability based on perceived fears around the impact of disability on ability to do the job required
- A perception of a large investment of time required in the supervision and support that employing someone with a disability entails
- The market being flooded with various organisations such as schools, training institutes and tertiary education sector seeking “placements” that effectively create competition that disadvantages people with disabilities who are frequently perceived as the more challenging option
- Occupational health and safety concerns
- Employer’s productivity imperative.

Participants also identified positive experiences with employers. The differentiation was often related to an organisation’s capacity to create a bank of prospective employers, where there was good networking and characterised by trust among employer groups, where there had been a real investment in community links that had been built up over time, or where the organisation had been entrepreneurial and established various social enterprises.

### 3.2 Enablers

#### 3.2.1 Learner choice

##### a) The “Conversation”

The process of discovering a learner’s choice and developing career plans requires an investment in time. In practice the conversation could last for anything up to four years, be a single event or intrinsic to a longer term and on-going relationship. This conversation can be individual or part of a group process; it may be formal or informal depending on the program and the individual student. What became clear over the course of the research was that time and effort expended in this engagement was an undeniable enabler.

##### b) Confidence building

Confidence building was key to participants who did well in enabling career development. There were a myriad of strategies to achieve this including: personal development courses, mentoring programs, introductory courses with an absence of “assessment requirements,” group activities, offering a practical experience of work through volunteering or social enterprises, assistance and support with personal appearance and hygiene issues, anger management programs, various social opportunities and the valuable strategy of ensuring the person with the disability understood that there were people who were interested in them as an individual and who cared about their personal outcomes.

#### 3.2.2 Learner choice and employment

##### a) Experience of work

Experience of work was identified more broadly than “paid work.” It included volunteer placements as well as social enterprises. Experience of work was an enabler in so far as it was identified as providing:

- Potential employees with a practical ‘taste’ of what the chosen work might involve
- Confidence in being able to perform the work required
- An opportunity to establish the expected standards in a particular workplace including “soft skills”
- An entry point for possible longer term paid employment.

# Executive Summary

## b) “Wrap around”

This term encapsulates the practice of engaging and enfolded a student into his or her community. This concept became increasingly evident as the research developed. “Wrap around” describes the principle of providing a sense of belonging, building confidence, building social connections, enhancing a sense of worth within each individual. Inherent in the concept of “wrap around” is an understanding of community development and the creation of community connections and social capital.

This contribution and investment in social capital and the “wrap around” was demonstrated in lasting commitments such as social clubs to which people continued to belong even after a paid position had been found. It underscored the clear and definable value of community based informal space that is apparent in the existing social architecture of Victoria such as neighbourhood houses. It involves career guidance tailored to the individual with a commitment to and understanding of the importance of listening as much as teaching. It is clear that the building of relationships of respect and trust are central “enablers.”

## c) Time

An investment in time as a perceived enabler and an understanding of the nature of this investment became apparent through responses related to:

- Provision of an adequate amount of time for the student to establish what they want to do and build sufficient confidence to pursue an identified area of work and ensure enough time to allow for false starts.
- The necessity to create networks amongst potential employers, agencies and leverage their spheres of influence.
- Relationship building which requires respect and trust in the first place with the student and then with a potential employer. Trust is a product of time (Buckingham, 2004).
- Staff and volunteers being most productive when there was time to build a multi-disciplinary team approach.

## d) People

A significant number of strategies articulated throughout the research and forming part of the participant’s career guidance are dependent upon a professional approach by someone skilled in

effectively exploring career options side by side with personal issues.

All managers of key participants without exception made reference to the calibre of staff and volunteers they engaged. The prime importance of recruiting staff and volunteers for their ability to empathise and listen to students without judgment was a common theme. There was also acknowledgement that with appropriately recruited staff and volunteers training in this area could also be effective. A key and enabling aspect of organisational management included an understanding of the nature and development of a team work approach.

### 3.2.3 Enablers for finding employment

- Networking

The ability to network with employers was considered an essential skill by participants.

The advantages that were identified by participants included:

- Broadening the field of potential employers for people with disability
- Building a relationship of trust with the employers that enables clear communication and joint strategy development around the challenge of any disabilities
- Developing pathways for students including from school to an adult learning context
- Enabling organisations to come together with a shared focus on the development of strategies that respond to the complexity of issues that some people present with.

## 4. Implications for the future

Guidelines for adult education providers and further implications are detailed in Section 8 of the main body of the report.

# 1. Introduction

In the current context of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) due to be rolled out in 2016, it was timely for the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) to propose research into “What are the enablers of effective career guidance and learning choice for people with a disability? Which enablers are the most effective for educators?”

In June 2014, a partnership between Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and ACE DisAbility was selected to conduct the research which was conducted in three phases: a literature review, analysis of surveys conducted by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, and interviews by the ACE DisAbility Network. The project was further overseen by a steering committee of ACFEB.

The research was conducted in three phases: a literature review, analysis of surveys conducted by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, and interviews by the ACE DisAbility Network.

# 2. Report outline

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the research into the enablers of career development and learner choice for people with disability, to discuss these and to suggest what implications for the future might be drawn from these results.

Prior to this, the report considers literature which might support the findings with regard to the key concepts involved: disability, career guidance and learner choice, and background literature such as current policy on employment and disability, career development theory and existing research into career development and employment challenges for people with disability.

Information is also provided on the methods used in the research process.

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## 3. Review of key concepts

### 3.1 Disability

The term “disability” has been contested for some time. Although the social model of disability, which promotes the concept of disability as being the barriers which society imposes on people with impairments has been accepted by most of the Western world, recent commentators such as Tom Shakespeare (2006), himself an academic with disability, in a re-evaluation of the social model, have pointed out that not to consider the impact that impairment has on the life and wellbeing of a person can be as problematic as disabling barriers.

Within an Australian, and more particularly a Victorian, context the two most pertinent documents for defining disability are the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Victorian Disability Act 2006. The former covers all physical, sensory, neurological and cognitive impairments present in a person, believed to be present in a person and which have in the past been present in a person. The Disability Act, however, considers the impact of impairment rather than its presence:

- (a) A sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof, which—
- (i) is, or is likely to be, permanent; and
  - (ii) causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication; and
  - (iii) requires significant ongoing or long term episodic support; and
  - (iv) is not related to ageing; or
- (b) an intellectual disability; or
- (c) a developmental delay.

Since some learners have a level of impairment

that does not interfere with their capacity to learn or work (Waterhouse et al, 2010), this research will be focussing on career development for those whose impairments restrict their ability to access those facilities normally available to others – that is, because of the impact of that impairment both as experienced by the person and as perceived by others such as employers. Thus we will be using the definition of disability provided by the Disability Act 2006.

There is a tendency within government and other reports to speak of “people with disability” as a single cohort. This fails to recognise a) the differences between one form of impairment and another and b) the differences between people living with the same impairment type. Even so, there are still some impairments, such as cognitive and psychiatric disability, which may impact on learning choices, career choices and employment more severely than others (Waterhouse et al, 2010; McClure, 2015).

### 3.2 Career guidance

Career in the 21st century is no longer viewed as a single job for life, but rather something that encompasses an individual’s lifelong progression in learning and work (Campbell, 2010), and work may include paid and unpaid employment. The OECD defines career guidance as: “services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (OECD, 2004 p 10). Watts (2009) also writing for the OECD refines this further as:

- “Career counselling, conducted on a one to one basis or in small groups, in which attention is focused on the distinctive career issues faced by

**From The Disability Act 2006 (Vic): A disability is:**

- (a) A sensory, physical or neurological impairment or acquired brain injury or any combination thereof, which—**
- (i) is, or is likely to be, permanent; and**
  - (ii) causes a substantially reduced capacity in at least one of the areas of self-care, self-management, mobility or communication; and**
  - (iii) requires significant ongoing or long term episodic support; and**
  - (iv) is not related to ageing; or**
- (b) an intellectual disability; or**
- (c) a developmental delay.**



individuals

- Career education, as part of the curriculum, in which attention is paid to helping groups of individuals to develop the competence for managing their career development
- Career information, provided in various formats (increasingly, web-based), concerned with information on courses, occupations and career paths.” (pp 1,2).

It is the first two of these approaches that will mainly be considered within this research project. Even so, the question must still be asked: “What is successful career guidance?” An Australian mentoring program for university and TAFE students with disability: Willing and Able Mentoring (Diversity Recruitment and Training, 2014), for instance, specifically states that its service is not about ensuring a job for the mentee. Yet, career guidance, to have any meaning must be linked to the eventual acquisition of employment, either paid or voluntary. Thus, this research will be considering successful career guidance as that which leads – or can show evidence of planning to lead – to further learning and/or to paid or unpaid employment which is meaningful: that is, it meets the expressed goals of the person concerned.

### 3.3 Learner choice

One of the principle objectives of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which is due to be rolled out beyond its trial sites in 2016, is to “enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). Thus, “choice,” including learning choice, is about to become a central feature of the lives of people with disability.

“Choice” may be defined as the process by which people come to a conclusion regarding different options that are perceived to be available. However, for some people with cognitive disability, choice may present problems associated with their impairment (Smyth and Bell, 2006; Ramcharen et al, 2013). These include:

- Cognitive ability, which may prevent people from weighing all possible consequences, or being easily confused by an overload of information.
- Lifestyle, which may limit a person’s exposure to

making decisions. This is of particular relevance where a person may have either been subject to long term institutionalisation, or a sheltered environment.

- Past experience of choice, especially where their choices have not previously been respected
- Lack of knowledge about choices and lack of awareness of where to get information.

“It’s My Choice: Toolkit” (Ramcharen et al, 2013), although written in a broad all-of-life context provides a guide for both educators and learners about the principles of choice and how these might be achieved. This covers choice at levels for everyday (e.g. choices between having tea or coffee); lifestyle (e.g. choices about one’s appearance, living arrangements); and pervasive (e.g. choices of hopes and goals). The guide works from the premise that everyone has a right to make their own informed choices, and that the starting point for choice must be the wishes of the person concerned, but that these are made within the limits set by community norms, personal resources etc. It is this document which will inform the concepts of choice within this research.

An important point the Toolkit makes is that while there should not be borders to choice constructed because of disability, there are issues such as:

- That “common sense” interpretations of choice may not account for the complexity of choice
- That statements such as “everyone has the right to choice” fail to acknowledge a person may not be able to pursue that choice or to expect outcomes
- That a focus on everyday choices may stand as a surrogate for choice by excluding higher order issues
- That choice does not always represent a single action, but rather involves a long term process
- That unlimited choice is not always possible (Ramcharen et al, 2013).

These last two points regarding time and limitations on choice in particular were reflected in the findings of this research.

## 4. Background literature review

The review will provide a policy context for the research, an outline of current career development theory and existing research literature on career development enablers. Although this project is primarily concerned with career guidance and learner choice, these are ultimately aimed at the achievement of employment. Thus the review also investigates existing research on the challenges facing people with a disability in finding employment.

### 4.1 Policy background

Whether directed through a rights based or an economic agenda, there is currently a strong policy commitment at all levels of Australian government to having people with disability in the workplace.

At an international level, the UN Convention Article 27: Work and Employment focuses on the rights of people with disability to work, and that all aspects of job acquisition and retention should be on an equal basis with others.

At a national level, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, introduced in 2013 and which moves responsibility for disability funding from State to Commonwealth is, in its conception, grounded in the rights of people with disability to adequate funding. However, arguments for its introduction have also been strongly couched in economic terms: such as that given better supports, more people with disability will be able to participate in the workplace thus increasing productivity (National Disability Service, no date).

Commonwealth policy has been further informed by “A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes: Interim report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform to the Minister for Social Services” better known as the McClure Report, 2014. This report on the social support system points out that Australia’s employment of people with disability is lower than the OECD average and includes recommendations for the future of the Disability Support Pension in that it should be reserved only for people with a permanent impairment and no capacity for work. In particular it targets those with mental illness whose capacity for work is often episodic rather than permanent (McClure, 2014). The tenor of the report is that an increase in people with disability in the workplace is of economic benefit to the country. Very recently the final report has been

released (McClure, 2015). Although the economic argument for employment of people with disability remains, some of its recommendations (such as the need for special consideration of people with mental illness and the need for community participation) fit with those of this research.

The policy framework around people with disability in the state of Victoria is directed by the Victorian State Disability Plan, 2013- 2016. Participation in employment for people with disability is reflected in Goal 2, Outcome 5 of this plan, albeit the actions detailed for this outcome are entirely focussed on the needs of young people with disability.

Nevertheless, the Adult Community and Further Education Board, a statutory authority which directs funding to community education centres (also known as Learn Local providers) who offer education for adult learners within the community, also sits within the State government. Within its strategy document (Adult, Community and Further Education Board, 2013) the Board promotes the social and economic benefits of employment outcomes for its participants. Among its strategies for achieving pathways to employment are the development of durable partnerships between training organisations and employment services (Strategic Direction 2) and improving career advice (Strategic Direction 3).

### 4.2 Career development theory

It is not the intention of this report to give detailed descriptions of career development theory but rather provide an overview of those theories which participants either said they were basing practice on, or which the researcher deduced they were using.

The trait and factor theory of career development has dominated career counselling since Parson’s (1909) contention that good career development consisted of matching a client’s traits – that is their interests, skill and personality types – with available occupations (Campbell, 2011). This seemed to form the content of initial dialogue with some respondents.

### 4.3 Career development research indicating successful enablers

Australian and overseas literature considers a variety of factors which can influence successful career guidance for people with disability. These include:

- Individualised person centred life, learning and work planning (Lee and Carter, 2012, Sinick, 1979; Lorenz, 2011, Lorey, 2000)
- Work experience (Lee and Carter, 2012)
- Strong networks with relevant agencies and other service providers (Lee and Carter, 2012; Lorenz, 2011, Hagner et al, 2001)
- Early curriculum based career development (Lee and Carter, 2012; Lorenz, 2011; Hagner et al, 2001)
- Family supports and expectations, which can work as both negative or positive factors (Lee and Carter, 2012; Lindstrom et al, 2007; Sinick, 1979; Lorenz, 2011, Cocks and Thoresen, 2013)
- Social and employment related skill instruction (Lee and Carter, 2012)
- Establishment of job-related supports (Lee and Carter, 2012, Cocks and Thorsen, 2013)
- Counsellor awareness of environmental and societal barriers (Lorenz, 2011)
- Job search support (Hagner et al, 2001)
- Employer and employee support (Hagner et al, 2001).

It has been pointed out that most of the strategies involved in career guidance are both time consuming and expensive and require trained professionals exploring career and personal issues (Lorey, 2000). In her research into career guidance in the UK and Canada, Lorey highlights the vast range of premises available in these countries that house career centres, which offer a range of facilities and career guidance enablers. Individuals have the choice to explore independently, seek assistance or to join groups to consider career options. It is also standard practice that Action Plans are developed to guide the participant. Most importantly it is the qualified human contact at the centres that is the greatest resource (Lorey, 2000).

#### 4.4 Research on employment challenges for people with disability

Although this research is primarily concerned with career guidance and learner choice, the aim of these should be the eventual acquisition of meaningful employment. It is therefore relevant to consider the employment climate for people with disability.

The majority of people with disability want to work and be as financially independent as possible (Council of Australian Governments, 2011) and

people with disability do get jobs. However, as Oliver (1990) has pointed out since the kind of jobs people with disability get offered are so low paid, financial rewards are often not an incentive. Further there is the question of the disability support pension: although not particularly generous, it is income.

Currently, should a person with disability be offered a job earning more than a specified amount, they will lose this pension. Once lost the pension is very hard to regain (McClure, 2015). Thus if they lose their job, they are left without the financial support they had previously. A recommendation of the McClure (2105) report is that a "Passport to Work" is created which entitles a person to return to the pension should their work cease or the hours decrease.

There is also some evidence that, with regard to work performance, some employers are predisposed to be more satisfied with employees with disability than those without disability (Smith et al, 2004). Nevertheless Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (2009) reflect that people with disability are not accessing the workforce to the same extent as the rest of the population and that they face particular hurdles when attempting to do so. ABS data (2009) shows that only 54.3% of people with disability participated in the labour force compared with 83% of people without disability.

**Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (2009) reflect that people with disability are not accessing the workforce to the same extent as the rest of the population and that they face particular hurdles when attempting to do so.**

It is important to note also differences in employment rates also occur within impairment types. The Australian Employers' Network on Disability (2008) for instance shows that only 40%

people with cognitive disability in the labour force are actually in work, compared with 50% people with physical disability. Further, 32% of people in receipt of the disability pension (that is, not working) do so because of psychiatric or psychological impairment (McClure, 2015).

This is further demonstrated in Waterhouse et al's report (2010) where it was found that employers found mental illness a significant concern in relation to employing people with disability, but that employing people with physical disability was not a major issue.

it was found that employers found mental illness a significant concern in relation to employing people with disability, but that employing people with physical disability was not a major issue.

It has to be recognised that employers' first consideration will be to maximise their productivity and profits. Some of the barriers people with disability face therefore are related to:

- Employer perceptions regarding costs in terms of money, time and productivity
- Employer perceptions regarding health and safety risks
- Employer concerns over lack of information about the impact of disability and about government assistance available (Waterhouse et al, 2010; Australian Network on Disability, 2011).

The Federal government does supply assistance for people with disability to access work through the Disability Employment Services. However it has been pointed out (Taleporos, 2014) that only 3% of employers reference Disability Employment Services when recruiting, thus limiting the employment available.

Barriers also exist because of the nature of

impairment. These may include:

- Poor literacy and numeracy
- Lack of assistive technology
- Pain and health problems
- Communication problems (Cocks and Thoresen, 2013).

Cocks and Thoresen also identified a challenge in discrepancies between the content and approaches required in the workplace and those emphasised in a training and educational environment (2013).

A study into transition options for people with disability (Buckingham, 2006) also found further barriers to job training and employment presented by transport issues, lack of education and workplace support and the shortage of suitable employment especially in rural areas. This was especially pertinent for people with high physical support needs and with mental health issues.

There are also issues once a person with a disability has a job. Buckingham (2004) found that more people with disability lost their jobs because being unable to fit in – that is they lacked the “soft skills” such as adapting to the social aspects of the job – than because they were unable to perform the inherent requirements of the work.

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## 5. Method

This section describes the process of the investigation, the methods used and questions asked, mode of analysis, validation and overall conclusions on the efficacy of the methods used.

### 5.1 Process

The process was overseen by a steering committee of ACEFB and monitored by a series of meetings and presentations.

Stage 1: Partnership (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and ACE DisAbility Network) agreement on methods to be used: that is, qualitative research using survey and interview; scope of investigation - that is that it should cover rural, urban and outer urban Victoria; allocation of investigation tasks.

Stage 2: Initial literature review by ACE DisAbility Network.

Stage 3: Analysis of survey results by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria to identify participants for interview.

Stage 4: Interviews - with identified participants from survey and additional participants identified through the process (ACE DisAbility Network).

Stage 5: Analysis using grounded theory and NVivo software (ACE DisAbility Network).

Stage 6: Report writing (ACE DisAbility Network).

Elements of these stages are discussed below.

### 5.2 Surveys

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria carries out annual surveys of its member organisations as part of its funding commitments. These are designed to provide a profile of organisations and their participants

and to highlight key issues. In 2013 Neighbourhood Houses Victoria conducted two such surveys. One of these received responses from 157 adult community education centres; the other was to participants in neighbourhood houses (adult community education centres) and received 46,720 responses.

As the results of these surveys were readily available and contained the information required, it was agreed by the research partners to use them as a starting point from which to find a sample of members who were adult education centres, who had been identified by participants with disability as providing benefits to them in terms of gaining job skills, and who also had comparatively high numbers of participants moving into work or further education. From this analysis 14 centres were asked to complete a further survey to assess their career development/guidance processes and to ask who the most relevant person in their organisation was to continue a discussion on career guidance and learner choice. From this ten were invited to participate in the project. Two declined leaving eight centres spread across regional Victoria, outer urban and inner urban areas of Melbourne as the key participants.

### 5.3 Interviews

Because of the spread of participants across the state, interviews were mainly conducted by telephone or Skype. Three interviews were conducted face to face.

All interviewees were provided with a list of questions they might be asked beforehand (Appendix 1) on the understanding that they need not answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with and that stories and anecdotes would be welcome. Interviews

### The Process

#### Stage 1

Partnership agreement between Neighbourhood Houses Victoria and ACE DisAbility Network

#### Stage 2

Literature review (ACE DisAbility Network)

#### Stage 3

Analysis of survey results (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria)

#### Stage 4

Interviews with participants (ACE DisAbility Network)

#### Stage 5

Analysis using grounded theory and NVivo software (ACE DisAbility Network)

#### Stage 6

Report writing (ACE DisAbility Network)

were then conducted with personnel identified as key to career development by centre management from these eight participants.

In addition to the eight centres identified through the survey, interviews were also conducted with organisations or people suggested by interviewees, by the steering group or who were known by the researchers to have success with career guidance with people with disability. All participants were given the same set of questions.

The purpose of the interviews was to discover enablers, that is, those things which worked positively to provide career guidance for people with disability and this was the key question asked. To assist interviewees, suggestions drawn from the literature review (Section 4.3) were provided. Other questions revolved around the impact of disability, resources used, challenges to the students and to the career advisor and what training had been involved.

The research was not intended to compare services.

## 5.4 The participants

### 5.4.1 Key participants

#### *Adult community education centres (KP 1-8)*

The key participants for the research were adult community education (ACE) centres. In Victoria, ACE is defined as community owned and managed and not for profit comprising: community learning providers, community participation providers and community VET providers thus providing an outreach of VET engaging and reengaging adults at lower levels of learning (Volkoff and Walstab, 2007).

**Key participants were adult community education (ACE) centres, community owned and managed and not for profit comprising: community learning providers, community participation providers and community VET providers.**

ACE providers are independent organisations and can be funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, the Adult, Community Further Education Board or both, plus other government and non-government grants. Their strengths are their effectiveness at engaging diverse communities especially those experiencing disadvantage and/or isolation (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2014a).

ACE is reported as having the highest proportion of adult students with disability enrolled in training (19% compared with 14% in TAFE and 4% in private training) and one of its stated characteristics is its focus on people who face barriers to participation in education and training (Adult, Community and Further Education Board, 2013).

**Thus a key feature of ACE provision is the support it can deliver for disadvantaged individuals in improving access and providing “second chance” education (Brown and North, 2010) and a key differentiation of ACE in comparison with other forms of adult education is its emphasis on social as well as human capital (Harris and Symons, 2003). ...it also aims to provide outcomes in the way of self-confidence building, social connection, community involvement and well-being.**

A further, more recent, indication of the provision for people with disability within the ACE sector is shown in a 2015 survey by Neighbourhood Houses Victoria showing that 93% of ACE centres surveyed provided services of some kind (not necessarily vocational) for people with mental illness, 35% on daily basis. Thus a key feature of ACE provision is the support it can deliver for disadvantaged individuals in improving

access and providing “second chance” education (Brown and North, 2010) and a key differentiation of ACE in comparison with other forms of adult education is its emphasis on social as well as human capital (Harris and Symons, 2003). As well as providing outcomes in the way of pathways to higher education and employment, it also aims to provide outcomes in the way of self-confidence building, social connection, community involvement and well-being.

While some ACE providers are quite large and some, in fact, cater specifically for people with disability, most are small – some are very small, with annual incomes of under \$100,000. Some of these operate out of one or two rooms and are staffed only by a handful of part time and volunteer staff. Eight ACE centres were interviewed spread over urban, outer urban and regional areas of Victoria identified through the survey. In each case the manager was interviewed and when indicated as useful by an interviewee, a teacher or case worker.

#### 5.4.2 Other participants

The main point of difference between other participants and key participants is that although most were also Learn Local providers they had not been specifically identified by people with disability as assisting them in career guidance.

*Disability Service Organisations (DSO 1-3):* These are organisations that provide services specifically for people with disability. Those interviewed were also involved in finding paid or unpaid employment for their clients. Two of these worked predominately with people with intellectual disability, one (also the case worker for a key participant) works with people with acquired brain injury (ABI). All also provide ACFEB funded learning.

*Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE 1-3):* These organisations provide in-house employment for people with disability and ACFEB funded learning. One organisation interviewed also looked for outside employment for their clients if required. The other two prepared people for external employment but did not find jobs. They referred people to the JSAs.

*Job Support Agencies/ Disability Employment Services (JSA 1-2):* These are Federal government funded employment organisations. Clients are referred from Centrelink and are kept on their books for 104 weeks. If a client has not found a job by this time,

they will be referred back to Centrelink. JSA outcome fees are payable once a job seeker has maintained employment for 13 or 26 consecutive weeks. JSAs have funds available for providing physical adjustments in a work place, for wage subsidies as incentive to employers and may provide disability awareness training. Both JSAs interviewed were also Disability Employment Services.

*TAFE college:* One Work Education officer from a TAFE college.

*Youth Employment:* This organisation has a reputation for career development for disadvantaged youth. Three staff members were interviewed together.

*Metro Access:* A metro access officer referred to us as having a reputation for innovative techniques for encouraging employers to take on people with disability.

*Dr Kevin Murfitt:* The coordinator of Willing and Able Mentoring – a mentoring program for people with disability.

In addition, input from Bernadette Gigliotti, CEO of Career Education Association Victoria was included with permission as well as input from Mr Graeme Innes AM, former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission; Mr Craig Harrison, CEO of Disability Employment Australia; Ms Lucy Macali, General Manager, National Disability Recruitment Coordinator, Dr George Talporos, Deakin University and Ms Stella Young, Comedian, Journalist and Disability Activist as part of “Conversations That Matter: Improving Employment Opportunities for People with Disability, 2014” at Deakin University was included with permission from Deakin University.

#### 5.5 Analysis

Analysis was conducted on interview notes using Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is a means of qualitative analysis through which the data, collected from a range of sources, determines the results of the query. Data collected is coded and categorized to develop patterns and concepts. In this case NVivo software was used to assist in the analysis.

## 5.6 Validation

*Cumulative validation:* Many of the findings of this research are supported by other studies as indicated in Section 4.3. In particular the need for person centred life, learning and work planning; the need for work experience; the importance of network building and awareness of environmental and societal barriers.

*Representative validation:* the voice of people with disability: One of the issues around any research involving people with disability is the need to include their voice. Because of time and funding limitations it was not possible in this research to track down and interview individual people with disability who had successfully found meaningful employment. The researchers acknowledge this as a limitation.

However, use of the survey in which people with disability had identified organisations which had assisted them, contributed to validation by using their opinions to direct the research process. Further voices of people with disability contributed through the Deakin seminar “Conversations That Matter: Improving Employment Opportunities for People with Disability, 2014” and through interviewing Dr Kevin Murfitt, a person living with blindness.

*Triangulation:* Because of this endorsement by people with disability those interviews from what were labeled “key participants” were acknowledged as providing the most valid data. However, interviews from other participants such as disability service organisations, ADEs and JSA/DES confirmed or provided a comparison to (the variations in time taken in career guidance would be an example) those of key participant strategies.

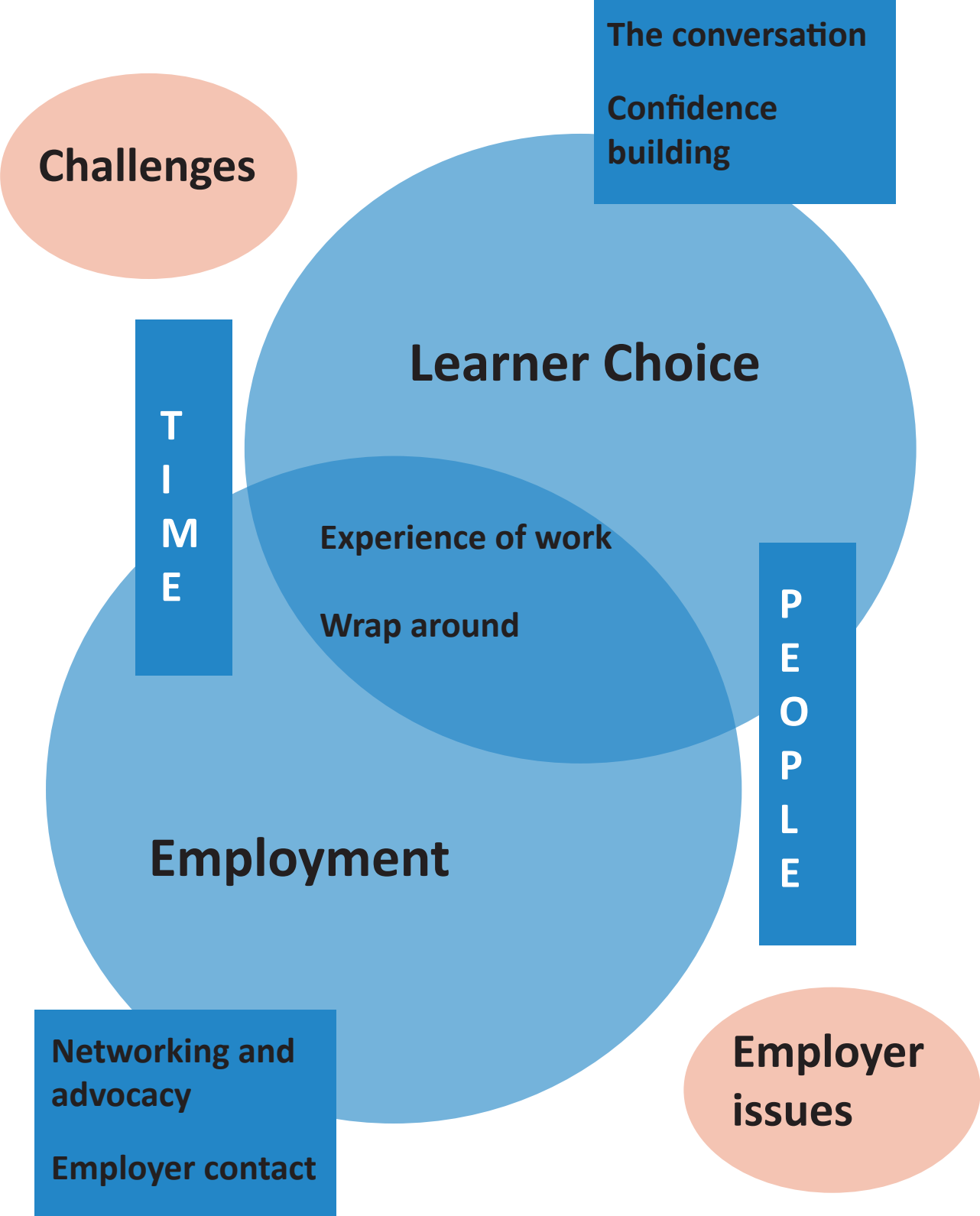
## 5.7 Conclusions on data collection methods

**Surveys:** The use of the Neighbourhood Houses Victoria surveys, apart from saving time and resources, provided the researchers with valuable information on those centres that had in the opinion of people with disability used strategies that had worked successfully for them.

**Interviews:** Interviewees were forthcoming and provided more information than was asked. Providing questions beforehand allowed them to be prepared with both strategies and stories and anecdotes.



# Career Guidance Diagram



# 6. Findings

## 6.1 Introduction

This section provides details of the findings of the research. Although this research was specifically directed at learner choice and career guidance rather than how to achieve employment, it was found that the two are intrinsically linked: some participants found it hard to distinguish between the two concepts as employment is the anticipated outcome of career guidance and it overlaps with regard to experience of work which was identified as a distinct enabler.

The processes of career guidance fell into two main categories: learner choice and employment with some overlap between the two concepts. Some organisations only dealt with learner choice which requires intense listening skills, guidance and the ability to instil confidence: a process the researchers called “the conversation”. Some were only concerned with work placement and employment and these processes required quite different skills: ability to network and then advocate with employers.

Some organisations did both and in some cases one person was responsible for both aspects. The actual process of career development in the key participants varied from formal classroom based sessions on career development built into other courses as part of the curriculum (either at the start or as an additional session each week) to totally informal processes (such as casual chats over a cup of coffee with the right volunteer) designed to develop confidence and a sense of worth which then led to employment.

Weighting the importance of the enablers was problematic. All participants, for instance, considered “experience of work” to be a key enabler, but it was not necessarily where the most emphasis was placed for some key participants for whom “wrap around” was a more important feature. NO participants used only one enabler. Most used all within the sphere of the career guidance practice they were responsible for, that is, learner choice or employment. The enablers discussed here are those which, using NVivo software, were found to feature most predominately. Thus this section of the report is structured according to the above diagram by considering:

- Challenges faced by both students and their career counsellors
- Enablers needed to guide learner choice: confidence building and the conversation around

career choices

- Enablers needed to guide both learner choice and employment: time, people, experience of work and wrap around
- Enablers for finding employment: networking and advocating with employers to obtain experience of work or a permanent job
- Employer issues.

The Career Guidance Diagram shows how the concepts are linked.

## 6.2 Challenges

Challenges for students: The two most often quoted challenges in either gaining employment or in careers guidance or both across all participants for students were:

a) The disability, which itself provided a challenge for student in obtaining employment: “There are not a lot of jobs around and given a choice an employer will always take the able bodied person. It’s hard to compete with able bodies, especially if there are learning deficits.” (Manager KP 5, Rural).

As highlighted in the literature review (Section 4.4), both employer perceptions such as lack of productivity and occupational health and safety fears plus the nature of the impairment itself such as pain, fatigue, communication issues can impact on the likelihood of people with a disability being employed (Cocks and Thoreson, 2013, ABS, 2009; Australian Employers Network on Disability, 2008).

All the key participants are working with people with cognitive disability including people with mental health issues. Waterhouse et al (2010) in their study of what would encourage employers to take on people with disability found that mental illness was the disability most likely to have a negative impact on employers. This was further confirmed by the key participants and by Dr Kevin Murfitt.

Most participants were working with people with a range of disability, but predominately cognitive disability. Whereas people with intellectual disability could be shown as reliable and well-motivated (Smith et al, 2004), people with mental illness were not: “Those with ID are very reliable, their commitment is high and they have low levels of sickness and absences. With people with mental illness the

level of application is low. They have real issues of engagement because of anxiety and depression” (Work Placement Manager, ADE 2).

Students living with anxiety, depression and trauma were present within most participant organisations. Some of these students have been convinced by others that they are incapable of work, some have a history of failed employment experiences, some are angry because of continual rejection. Further the nature of the impairment is that mental illness is often episodic, medication may affect performance and need review (Kendrick, 2004) causing workplace absences.

Nowadays an increasing number of people with a disability are looking at ways to engage with their local communities through volunteering (UNITE, 2011). However, people with disability looking for volunteer work may face the same issues as people with disability looking for paid employment. A project in Geelong, for instance, found that the number of potential volunteers with disability far exceeded the demand for volunteers and their analysis of why this was so included:

- The employer perspective: inability to assess skills, support issues and disclosure issues
- The volunteer perspective: lack of communication skills to sell themselves, access issues and transport issues. (Volunteering Geelong, 2009).

b) Lack of self-confidence provided a challenge to students in gaining employment and in coping with career guidance: “Some people will walk past the

door for 18 months before they can bring themselves to walk in in.” (Manager KP6, Rural).

This lack of confidence has been identified in the literature such as Amundson (2007). As one key participant said, sometimes people’s confidence is so low that even if they find employment, they self-sabotage the job with self-doubt. Further, one participant pointed out, confidence was not assisted by the 13 week gap between unemployment and being taken on by Job Services Agencies.

It was, however, the task of confidence building that key participants felt they addressed successfully. Strategies included working on personal appearance, and anger management to deal with issues around rejection but the two most common strategies felt to increase confidence were:

- Having an experience of work
- Creating a sense of worth and belonging for each individual
- Students from culturally and linguistically diverse communities especially those experiencing trauma face additional challenges. One key participant who catered for refugee and immigrant students pointed out that apart from mental illness, most of their students in this cohort were women with family responsibilities (both for children and elderly parents). They also needed to be able to pray throughout the day. One of their strategies had been to find them work in family day care services. Indeed, one group had set up their own child care company and centres.

## Challenges for students in gaining employment or in careers guidance

- The disability. “There are not a lot of jobs around and given a choice an employer will always take the able bodied person. It is hard to compete with able bodies, especially if there are learning deficits.” (Manager, KP 5, Rural)
- Lack of self-confidence. “Some people will walk past the door for 18 months before they can bring themselves to walk in.” (Manager, KP 6, Rural)
- Lack of literacy
- Low motivation
- Socio-economic background
- Homelessness
- Lack of job readiness
- Transport
- Lack of jobs
- Inability to navigate the systems e.g. Centrelink

Other challenges for students provided by participants included (in order of frequency): lack of literacy, low motivation, socio economic background and factors such as homelessness (“It’s difficult to attend to training if you don’t know where you are sleeping” (ADE 2)), lack of job readiness, transport (especially in country and outer urban areas) stigma, lack of jobs, inability to navigate the systems e.g. Centrelink.

*Challenges for career developers:* The biggest challenge most career development practitioners quoted was that of unrealistic expectations on the part of students and sometimes their parents: “A classic answer for young men is that they want to be a car mechanic. The reality is that they are unlikely to get near an engine” (TAFE college, Work Place Manager). The concern of career advisors was that they did not want to set people up to fail. Yet the complaint of people with disability is what Graeme Innes (past Federal Disability Commissioner) calls “the soft bigotry of low expectations” (Deakin University, 2014). This seeming contradiction regarding expectations will be discussed later in this report.

## 6.3 Enablers of learner choice

### 6.3.1 The “Conversation”

This refers to the process of discovering a learner’s choice and developing career plans in line with the findings of Lorey, 2000; Lee and Carter, 2012, Lorenz, 2011. Conversations could last from 20 minutes to four years, be a one off or on-going, be individual or part of a group process, be formal or informal depending on the program and the individual student. However the literature (Hansen and Amundson, 2009; Lorey, 2000) and some key participants suggests that some students benefit most from extended conversations.

The quality of these conversations had a profound effect on the career guidance outcomes and reflected dialogue and dialogical relations (Freire, 1970) which situate the learner as the subject rather than the object.

Some conversations were better achieved within informal spaces. One of the key participants made use of both a men’s shed and a “Ladies’ Lounge” - “a men’s shed without the woodwork and machinery” (Manager KP3, Rural) – spaces where a person can

come to chat, read the paper, or do a bit of craft with no expectations on them. In this space volunteer mentors may strike up casual conversations as a precursor to or part of a career guidance “conversation.”

Conversations could last from 20 minutes to four years, be a one off or on-going, be individual or part of a group process, be formal or informal depending on the program and the individual student. However the literature (Hansen and Amundson, 2009; Lorey, 2000) and some key participants suggests that some students benefit most from extended conversations.

It was during the conversation that issues of unrealistic expectations identified as a challenge for career developers could be teased out. Strategies for dealing with the issues of unrealistic expectations included:

- Providing tasters of work experience to allow students to experience the reality of their choice as a volunteer rather than as a paid worker.
- More often the realities of choice were dealt with at the stage of interview with the career developer. One DES consultant felt that it was best to encourage clients to take any job irrespective of preference since it was easier to get the job of choice if they were already in employment. More often careers developers tried to provide a range of related but less demanding alternatives.
- Another alternative to this, provided independently by two disability organisations, was to talk the student through the essence of their choice. A case worker from a disability organisation gave the example: “You ask why do you want to be a doctor? He says it is because he wants to wear a white coat. So we found him a

job as an orderly.” (Case worker, DSO 1).

An earlier study (Buckingham, 2004) found that many people with cognitive disability have been told so often that they cannot learn that have come to adopt this as part of their identity; and as Craig Harrison, CEO of Disability Employment Australia (Deakin University, 2014) pointed out, children with disability do not often have opportunity to take part in the conversations typical of most young people since childhood: what do you want to be when you grow up? Thus opportunities to balance aspirations with reality since childhood have not been allowed to many people with disability.

At least four of the participants had access to a person with post graduate qualifications in career development, three had access to someone with other career development qualifications. Where career developers followed some of the theories of academics such as Bright and Pryor (2011) or Amundson (1995) “conversations” were more penetrating (even if informal) and involved explorations of experiences, feelings, challenges, motivations, thoughts outside and within career thinking: “Some people feel their needs even if they can’t articulate them...you can use person centred planning techniques, you can sit down and chat over a cup of tea, you can observe what they react to. You will know when you have hit the mark because you will see a demonstrable change in behaviour and you will think: we need to pursue this.” (Program Manager, DSO 2).

### 6.3.2 Confidence building

“Faced with the challenge and stress of losing one’s job, people can easily begin to lose confidence and withdraw from the labor market and from other aspects of life. In many respects they quietly slip into passivity, stagnation, and a felt sense of loss of capacity.” (Amundson, 2007).

Lack of confidence was something noted by most participants particularly by those with a cognitive impairment. It was also quoted as being a major challenge for students with disability. As Buckingham (2006) says some people with disability have been told so often (both implicitly and/or directly) that they are incapable of learning or employment that they have come to believe it. Further, as one respondent pointed out some people have been rejected so often by employers they have given up.

Thus confidence building is often a building of trust by their teacher or counsellor so that when they say or demonstrate (for example through improved grooming) they can do or be someone or something the person believes them.

...some people with disability have been told so often (both implicitly and/or directly) that they are incapable of learning or employment that they have come to believe it. Further, as one respondent pointed out some people have been rejected so often by employers they have given up.

Confidence building was something all key participants felt they did well. Strategies included: personal development courses, mentoring, introductory courses with no assessment requirements, group activities, experience of work through volunteering and social enterprises, assistance with personal appearance and hygiene, anger management, social opportunities, letting them know someone cares.

**“One girl was so shy she couldn’t look anyone in the eye and has been unemployed for 18 years, but has just enrolled in a Cert III in Aged Care. Part of the program, especially for women ( and most are women) deals with health, beauty and grooming. This particular woman previously had poor grooming. Now she has dyed her hair, dresses well and wears make up. As a consequence she is now chatty and had made friends, where she was previously reluctant.” (Manager KP8, Urban).**

## 6.4 Enablers needed for learner choice and employment

### 6.4.1 Experience of work

As Lee and Carter (2012) discovered without hands-on vocational experiences students may have restricted career options, develop unrealistic vocational aspirations, make poor vocational decisions, or lack important resume-building experiences (p 992).

Across the board participants also considered that experience of work was an essential part of career development. This was not necessarily paid work but included volunteer work, externally or in the social enterprises some of the participants had set up: several cafes, a chutney making and marketing “pop-up” enterprise. One key participant had the advantage of running the local volunteer resource centre.

What an experience of work provided was:

- A taste of what the chosen work might involve, especially where extensive review followed the experience (Campbell, 2011) and where a wrong choice counted as a learning experience and not failure: “Sometimes people get jobs and find they are not right for them or don’t realise what the job involves, so he will take them through what they do next and look at something else for them.” (Manager KP 6, Rural).
- It gave students confidence.
- It set the standards of what is expected in a work place. Many people with disability (and especially younger people) have not had experience of, for example, turning up in time, routines, hierarchies, fitting in etc.
- It might give someone a real job. An example of this was given by one key participant whereby a young man showed interest in sign writing. They organised work experience in sign writing for him. This was so successful that he completed VCAL, went on to TAFE and is now in a job and sustaining it.

**“One guy had done half a drug and alcohol counselling course, but had dropped it and wasn’t sure if he wanted to do it. He is currently working (with a community group working with people using alcohol and other substances) as a volunteer to help with the meals to see if this is the sort of work he wanted to do at the**

**same time as use his existing skills as well as providing service to the community.” (Manager KP8, Urban).**

Not all participants saw it as their role to actually get the work experience placement although they would assist:

**“The student must make the first contact but if there are difficulties then a staff member will advocate and they will talk to employers and talk about reasonable adjustments.” (Manager KP2, Outer Urban).**

**“The student has to do the contacting and follow up. We will help but I will push to get them to do most of the work.” (Manager KP8, Urban).**

Others were more involved:

**“We seek out employers and try to match the employer with the student. The VCAL manager is the person who has the relationship with employers. We don’t have an employer bank we have to look for them. Often a teacher will accompany the student to the placement, will brief the employer on the student needs and will follow up with visits and talking to the employer.”(Manager, KP7 Outer Urban).**

Although it is not a work experience program, mention should also be made of the Willing and Able program. In this program, employers are asked to find volunteers within their workplace who would be willing to give 1-2 hours a week to mentor a person with a disability. The advantages of this scheme are a) increased confidence in the student, b) giving the student a person to act as reference and c) it improves the potential of employers to feel positively about people with disability without making them feeling threatened. “Even those (employers) with a negative attitude get a deeper understanding, 90% of them within the first two weeks.” (Kevin Murfitt.)

### 6.4.2 “Wrap around”

This was the term the researchers adopted to encompass the practice of enfolding a student into the community: providing a sense of belonging, building confidence, building social connections, creating a sense of worth in each individual. Using NVivo the researchers were able to identify that it was this strategy which most differentiated the key participants from the others – this is not to say

that other organisations didn't provide a sense of belonging etc. but that this was a consistent factor across all key participants and identified by them as one of their most important strategies.

**"People need a place to belong, to make contact with others, to be allowed to feel they are interesting and needed and that they can also have fun." (Manager KP 4, Urban).**

Individual means to effect "wrap around" differed: social clubs to which they continue to belong even after they have found a job; a sense of informality; one on one mentoring and listening; the building of relationships of trust; follow up:

**"Often they will go on to TAFE and the college will suggest a new course and they will come back to us saying 'TAFE tells me to do this what do you think?'" (Manager KP7, Outer Urban).**

**"I say 'Call me' and we have catch up meetings." (Teacher KP 2, Outer Urban).**

**"There was one woman whose anxiety was so great that she could not bring herself to enter the building even though she had been referred from a local aboriginal centre. She now has a job in a hospital, but it took four years. At first she just came in for coffee with no expectations that she would do anything she wasn't comfortable with. Her first visit barely lasted 20 minutes. I found someone I thought would be a good volunteer mentor for her. Thus through informal conversations which built up trust we found out that she loved to draw. It was suggested she might draw some murals for the new building. This was something she felt confident to do without having to rely on other people and with no expectation that she had to perform. She started to develop relationships and later was able to join a work for the dole class." (Manager, KP3 Rural).**

Part of the concept of "wrap around" is the creation of connections to the local community. A feature of neighbourhood and community houses is their ability to harness and build the types of social capital that are considered the corner stone of strong communities (Humpage, 2005). It is this ability to include people in a community beyond the organisation which key participants claimed can assist in a person's career development:

**"There was a young man with a lot of issues**

**including mental health. He didn't want to be at our centre. He was only just this side of jail and was quite violent. He had a bad name in the town. Now he is one year older and has a job and his employer is delighted with him. This was because his tutor involved him in the community and by the whole of the staff working with him, finding his interests and treating him as an adult" (Manager, KP6, Rural).**

**"We have a very supportive community, they bond together and people know each other. There are great networks and people are focussed on their community" (Manager KP7, Outer Urban).**

In effect "wrap around" has two components: the first involves encouraging students to be part of their community so that they feel that they belong to something and that someone cares about their progress, but secondly, in order to achieve this, counsellors need to have a level of connection with the community themselves in order to both to support and guide learners.

#### 6.4.3 Time

Time is an important factor reflected in literature (Lorey, 2000; Hansen and Amundson, 2009): "This (the counselling process) proceeds at its own pace ... and it is important that I don't try to force the situation. So what is it about slowness and "being" that seems to be so powerful?" (Hansen and Amundson, 2009 p.33).

The concept of time refers to:

- Time for the student to find out what they want to do, to find sufficient confidence to pursue the job they want and to allow for false starts: "We build them up from timid to having enough confidence to get a job or volunteer. This can take 1- 2 years or more while they look at different areas and consider what they like, what their skills are. The problem is that governments want quick responses yet it can take years for some people, years for someone to develop new skills. We are about encouraging personal skills through informal processes." ( Manager, KP3 Rural)
- Time for younger people to mature.

**"This young man was rebellious and he and his girlfriend, who was on the same program, had issues with drug abuse and homelessness. They were offered traineeships. The girl was**

a problem in the workplace, she was abusive and aggressive and the workplace cancelled her traineeship. The young man had issues to do with self-harm and drug abuse. He had a wobbly and anger management problems and lost his traineeship. We thought this was the end, but a year later we had a JSA call us. The young man had turned his life around and ditched his girlfriend...he had changed completely, even his physical appearance and has now completed his traineeship.” (ADE 2).

- Time for the building of networks: employers, job agencies
- Time for trust to build (i) with a student and (ii) with potential employers. As Buckingham’s discussion on trust (2004) suggests, trust is a product of time
- Time for staff and volunteers to build and work as a team.

#### 6.4.4 People

As Lorey (2000) points out most of the strategies involved in career guidance require trained professionals exploring career and personal issues. All managers of key participants exhibited a passion for what they were doing in their interviews. They also made reference to the calibre of staff and volunteers they employed. A significant part of the wrap around is an investment in staff and volunteers. Ideally every member of staff and volunteer is chosen (or trained) for their ability to empathise and listen to students without judgment.

With regard to specific staffing, five of the key participants and one other participant had access to a person trained in career development. This included three of the key participants and the youth organisation having access to staff with post graduate qualifications in career development. One further key participant had access to a person who had done extensive research (including overseas) into career development.

A key aspect of staffing was found to be team work:

**“Staffing is key. The house assists in building up career guidance skills for staff with professional development. We feel that having one career guidance person may lead to some people falling through the cracks. Sometimes it might be a casual trainer who is the one a person relates to, so they get trained.” (Manager KP 2, Outer**

**Urban).**

**“We work from the premise that a person is a team effort. If they don’t get on with one person there is always someone here for them.” (Manager KP6, Rural).**

With almost all the key participants “staff” included volunteers recruited and/or trained to empathise and listen.

### Enablers needed for learner choice and employment

- Experience of work
- “Wrap around” i.e. the practice of enfolding a student into the community
- Time: to find out what they want to do; to mature; to build networks; to build trust; for staff and volunteers to build and work as a team
- People: trained professionals exploring career and personal issues.

## 6.5 Enablers for finding employment

### 6.5.1 Networking and employer contact

Hagner et al (2001) maintains that the hands on assistance in job search and on-going contact is more intensive with students with disability than those usually provided by career centre services. Thus the ability to network with employers was considered an essential skill by participants.

However, as a participant pointed out:

**“Networking is more than just picking up the phone when you need something.” (Manager, KP 7, Outer Urban).**

One manager networked by being on the committee of management of several mental health organisations and having them on her committee; another ran professional development for local employers and developed a relationship with the economic unit of council; another belonged to the local Employment Working Group which included Centrelink and JSAs as well as other local forums. In three cases the



person with responsibility for finding employment was already embedded in the community:

**“He has been doing this job for 20 years. He has grown up in this town, he is a local, part of the footie team, has five children and is embedded in the town so that he has been able to build all these networks.” (Manager KP 6, Rural).**

The advantages of networking is that it can a) widen the sphere of potential employers of people with disability, b) help to build up a relationship of trust with employers which can help overcome the challenge of disability both through advocacy and through brokerage and supporting employers to employ people with disability (Waterhouse et al, 2010), c) develop pathways for students for example from school to adult learning, and d) enable organisations to come together to deal with the complexity of problems that some people present with.

**“We had a man with schizophrenia, which developed while he was studying engineering at RMIT. He had no family support, became homeless and had several suicide attempts. He came into our men’s program doing cookery and gardening. He is now in a Community Care Residence and also doing a computer class and has re enrolled in engineering at RMIT. His computer teacher worked one on one with him. The factors that worked for him was the partnership system in that all services: police, homeless agencies, mental health agencies and the neighbourhood house all worked together.” (Manager, KP4 Urban).**

All of the key participants had relationships with their local JSA. These varied in quality: as one participant pointed out it wasn’t the JSA itself which determined the level of involvement but individual JSA officers. Networks with JSAs were better maintained where there was a stability of JSA staff.

There were however limitations on use of JSAs which included: high turnover of staff creating frustrations, perceptions that JSAs only took students in accredited classes, or that they only accepted students at the top end of the disability scale.

## 6.6 Employer attitudes

A key challenge for people with disability to find employment is an employer’s attitude to hiring people with disability.. The issues around employer

reluctance to hire people with disability (Waterhouse et al , 2010) and barriers created by the nature of an impairment (Cocks and Thoresen, 2013) have been iterated in Section 4.4 and these are reflected in the employment statistics for people with disability (ABS, 2009; Australian Network on Disability, 2011; Taleporos, 2014).

A number of participants claimed to have negative experiences in dealing with employers. These included:

- Employer resistance to employing people with disability
- Employers having no time for supervision and support
- The market being flooded with various organisations such as schools, training institutes and tertiary education sector seeking “placements” that effectively create competition that disadvantages people with disabilities who are frequently perceived as the more challenging option
- Occupational health and safety concerns
- The need for employers to have productivity.

Unlike JSAs, key participants did not have funds to provide incentives to employers although one participant was hoping to apply for a grant to enable them to do this.

**“D. had worked for a supermarket for 10 weeks and doing a fantastic job. Afterwards I asked if he could have a permanent job. They were worried in case he did something like leave the building, even though he had never done that before.” (Work Placement Coordinator, DSO 3).**

Nevertheless, some of the key participants expressed positive experiences with employers. These were normally where an organisation had built up a bank of prospective employers, where there was good networking and trust among employer groups, where the local community links had been built up over time, or where the organisation had created their own social enterprises.

**“We had a woman who had been with us for several years; she came to us to do a literacy course. She volunteered in our café and found she loved to make cakes. She is now involved in catering and created a small income for herself and loves it,” (Manager KP7, Outer Urban).**

While the study did not collect statistics of job

placements (since that was not the focus of the exercise) it was volunteered by one adult education centre that they place 75% - 85% of students who had work experience including those with disability, and another claimed that they had made 400 placements including people with disability. One key participant also claimed that local employers called on them before placing job advertisements on SEEK (a web based job search facility). In all cases these participants were using a combination of all the enablers discussed.

There is also work being done to improve employer attitudes. Seven Metro Access Officers, for instance, funded and organised a breakfast for 180 private sector employers with well-known disability advocate as speakers as part of the "Employ Outside the Box" project. This was evaluated by Deakin University who found a marked change in employer attitudes (Metro Access Officer).

## 7. Discussion

This section is used to consider further factors pertinent to career guidance and disability and some of the implications raised by both the literature review and the research findings.

### 7.1 The challenges faced by both students and their career counsellors

#### 7.1.1 Having a disability

As already stated, people with disability should not be regarded as a homogeneous group even within disability cohorts: every person needs to be viewed individually. However, there are characteristics attached to specific impairments which warrant consideration.

Most participants were working with people with a range of disability, but predominately cognitive disability including people with mental illness. In spite of this, it is people with mental illness that the interim McClure Report (McClure, 2014) advocates should be encouraged to participate more in the workplace, although the final report (McClure, 2015) concedes that far more consideration needs to be given to work programs involving people living with mental illness.

On top of this, they may have to face a reluctance of employers to give people with disability and especially those living with mental illness jobs (Waterhouse et al, 2010).

The evidence from this and other studies is that most people with disability want to work (Council of Australian Governments, 2011), but that they lack confidence, and self-worth. Some, such as those with episodic mental illness face larger challenges which might be met with slower and more intense work on their confidence and feeling of self-worth plus increased advocacy to employers.

#### 7.1.2 Balancing expectations

Whereas almost all career guidance counsellors cited unrealistic expectations on the part of students to be a challenge, people with disability at the Deakin University seminar felt that employers displayed “the soft bigotry of low expectation” (Deakin University, 2014).

Kevin Murfitt in interview suggested that for many students there is a sense of “learned helplessness” in that they have aspirations but don’t believe that they can achieve them. An earlier study (Buckingham,

2004) also found that many people with cognitive disability have been told so often that they cannot learn that have come to adopt this as part of their identity. And as Craig Harrison, CEO of Disability Employment Australia (Deakin University, 2014) pointed out, children with disability do not often have opportunity to take part in the conversations typical of most young people since childhood: what do you want to be when you grow up? Thus opportunities to balance aspirations with reality since childhood have not been allowed to many people with disability.

The concern about unrealistic expectations was often articulated with genuine concern for the person with disability: not wanting to set people up to fail. It seems to be a question of balance.

As Campbell (2011) iterates: on the one hand it is important that people are encouraged to dream - dreams do come true, but it is vital that over time they investigate the realities of their dreams. For instance, they need to understand that working in MacDonaldis will not lead to becoming Masterchef (Workplace Manager, TAFE). As Pryor et al (2008) have written it is a question of working in terms of convergent or probability thinking and emergent or possibility thinking.

Further the strategy of looking at the essence of a job- what it is about a stated career that is the real attraction for the student (for example, wearing a white coat) - may make the choice fall more into the realms of the realistic. This requires skills in empathetic listening. While these sort of skills may be learned from experience, they can be taught and exposure to some of the more recent thinking in career guidance and the some of the new tools available is an advantage especially since there are apparently new resources in career guidance appearing every three months (Bernadette Gigliotti, CEO of Career Education Association of Victoria).

### 7.2 Enablers needed to guide learner choice

Before discussing enablers, it is important to note that one enabler cannot be isolated as being more efficacious than another. They were used in combination depending on the emphasis of the participant organisation: ie as being involved in primarily in learner choice or in job placement.

### 7.2.1 The “Conversation”

As discussed in the literature review, many people with a disability (especially cognitive disability) may need support in making choices, may be reluctant to make choices as a result of past experiences, and may not know what choices are available. The findings of this study suggest that the theories of, for instance, Admunson (1995, 2007) and Bright and Pryor (2011) are pertinent here.

What is needed is for a careful discovery, with the student, of patterns in the complexity of their lives discovered through empathetic listening and watching over time, and including all aspects of their history, their present lives, dreams and feelings. Some people with disability may not be able to articulate their choices (and some may not be able to articulate at all). This requires more than just listening, it requires in depth knowledge of the person developed over time and the skill and empathy to recognise non-verbal responses.

**Some people with disability may not be able to articulate their choices (and some may not be able to articulate at all). This requires more than just listening, it requires in depth knowledge of the person developed over time and the skill and empathy to recognise non-verbal responses.**

There are tools such as Pattern identification Exercise (Amundson, 1995) and Guiding Circles (McCormick et al, 2002) which have been developed for other disadvantaged cohorts and which are, in essence, action plans which develop from the informal conversation process and which were identified by some participants (as well as through literature research). There are also person centred planning tools such as PATH (O’Brien et al, 2009) which are not career or employment focussed but were developed for people with cognitive disability. Some of these

are already being used for some students but which could be formally evaluated and adjusted to fit career development and people with disability.

Conversations took place in a variety of ways. Some were conducted through a formal interview process, some in a classroom setting and may involve group exercises. However, where a student’s confidence was particularly low, informal spaces such a coffee lounge or a men’s shed where there were no expectations placed upon the students were found to be helpful. Although the geography of some organisations may prohibit dedicated informal spaces, the importance of the “conversation” and the low confidence of some students would suggest that some equivalent be found within the community.

### 7.2.2 Confidence building

The change required for people is in the way they consider themselves - that is, in their identity. In many cases of people with disability this identity has been formed by them through negative influences sometimes since childhood: they have been told they cannot learn or are unable to work and have come to believe this.

It requires time, empathy and a range of interventions to recreate a more positive identity of self-belief. Most of the key participants considered that this was something they did well and focussed attention on. As previously shown this could involve altering a person’s appearance through grooming, through formal classes but with no assessment involved, through small classes, though one on one support, through game playing, through social enterprises, through personal development learning units, project work, through mentoring both in their learning environment and in a work environment, through socialisation with other neighbourhood houses participants, through anger management classes.

## 7.3 Enablers needed to guide both learner choice and employment

### 7.3.1 Experience of work

The research shows that work experience is a valuable enabler that practitioners can use to support career guidance and learner choice. Students undergoing a Certificate I in Work Education will have work experience built into their course

requirements; however the work experience needs to be a worthwhile experience for the learner. Often the work experience undertaken through the certificate is a one off and if it wasn't successful may leave a student unfulfilled. Additionally, for a lot of students, work experience isn't a mandated feature of their course work.

While the research shows that work experience is a valuable enabler, our analysis leads us to conclude that it is better to refer to this aspect as "experience of work" and thus encompass volunteer work, or work within a social enterprise (or even one-off "Pop-up" internal employment, as in one case, where students with high anxiety worked in a food skills program to make chutneys from a glut of over ripe pears, labelled and marketed them (Manager KP8, Urban)).

Because of the issues around finding employers willing to employ people with disability, some of the following strategies were working for participants:

- Very short term employment ( 1-2 weeks for 3-4 hours),
- Volunteer work
- Social/community enterprises
- "pop-up" enterprises
- Mentoring schemes such as *Willing and Able Mentoring*.

Getting experience of work through volunteerism was seen as providing many of the advantages in terms of career development for people with disability, sometimes within the participant organisation, sometimes externally. It also goes towards meeting some of the fears of employers worried about the costs of employing people with disability. Similarly the social enterprises run by key participants often provided confidence building and sometimes a job.

Whether the student is supported to find work or finds it for themselves seems to vary and would also depend on the capabilities of the student. What is more important about experience of work is that it is comprehensively reviewed, and that incompatibility in a workplace is not seen as failure, but as an opportunity to learn. Even so, care would be required for say, students on the autism spectrum for whom short term employment may be unsettling and therefore inappropriate.

### 7.3.2 "Wrap around"

The key participants in this study were all adherents to the principles of community development and made a point in each case of their community connections. It was the "wrap around" strategy of enfolding a person into the community which most distinguished the key participants, that is the adult community educators, from other career practitioners. In some places, not necessarily all rural areas, it was considered that the town or suburb itself was a place where a sense of community was valued and that people looked after each other including those with a disability. Thus a sense of belonging could be more easily achieved. One participant manager, in an inner urban environment however considered that her community had changed and become more gentrified and that it was incumbent on her to generate a new sense of community by entreating local people to "give back." To effect this they auspice the Helping Hands volunteer program; they have a one on one volunteer tutor program for students that want it and they have volunteers with the "right experience" on their committee.

The contribution and investment in social capital and the "wrap around" demonstrated was evident in lasting commitments such as social clubs to which people continued to belong even after a paid position had been found. It underscored the clear and definable value of community based informal space that is apparent in the existing social architecture of Victoria such as neighbourhood houses. It involves career guidance tailored to the individual with a commitment to and understanding of the importance of listening as much as teaching. It is clear that the building of relationships of respect and trust is central to "enablers." Inherent in the concept of "wrap around" is an understanding of community development and the creation of community connections and social capital.

### 7.3.3 People

Professional knowledge and training: The ability to realise techniques such as Amundson's "Pattern Identification Exercise" (1995) may possibly be (and in at least one case evidently was) inherent in staff members or volunteers, but they can also be taught, as can listening skills. What cannot be taught is the passion for career development evident in many of the interviewees. This can however be bought.

Although many of the key participants had access to a trained (and passionate) career guidance counsellor, it is unlikely that such personnel will be available to many ACE providers. However it should be possible through networks, clusters or other arrangements to share the services of a trained career guidance counsellor who can then train others in an ACE team.

All the key participants and disability service organisations and some of the other participants relied on the service of volunteers as class supports, mentors, and sometimes as counsellors. However, although many volunteers bring experience and skills to the job, they also need management and specific job training (Volunteering Australia, 2014). This requires resourcing.

Team work: Staff and volunteers in key participant organisations worked as a team (often in teams that had worked together for many years) in order to ensure that no one fell through the cracks.

**“If (students) don’t get on with one person, there is always someone here for them.”  
(Manager KP6, Rural).**

Successful team work requires not only time for people to work together effectively, but also training in at least counselling skills. Training in disability awareness was not mentioned as a factor.

#### 7.3.4 Time and resources

Most enablers identified in this study could be applied to those with and without a disability. Time however was one that seemed especially pertinent to people with cognitive disability. Buckingham (2004), in her research into the meaning and practice of inclusion of adults with intellectual disability into learning, concluded that time is a key contributor to inclusion. Nevertheless, although time was seen as a key factor in enabling career guidance, there were also factors which worked against adequate time being allocated:

- Organisations were not resourced to spend time on career guidance or in finding employment for people.
- Students were not resourced to experience “tasters” in learning. Tasters may enable students to test industries and employment opportunities so that they don’t enrol in certificates that they may not like, but this may then impact on their ability to enrol in another government funded certificate of the same

level. For instance if they enrolled in Cert I in Horticulture, which they subsequently found they did not like, they may not be funded to change to a Cert I in Hospitality but must progress to a Cert II.

- A lack of literacy was identified as one of the challenges for people with disability. Yet, one of the impacts that having an intellectual disability may have on a person is that it often takes them longer to learn and this slower learning capacity may also be accompanied by short-term memory problems (Buckingham, 2004). They often need longer time to cope with the challenges of short term memory loss and thus acquire better literacy skills. However, currently there are limitations on the length of time they may remain in a class.

Obviously funding and government bodies need measureable outcomes in order to assess whether strategies have worked, but pressure to produce outcomes in time may work against some people with disability:

**“The problem is that the government wants quick responses, yet it can take years for someone to develop new skills.” (Manager KP3 Rural).**

#### 7.4 Enablers for finding employment

##### 7.4.1 Networking

The research identifies that the ability to network with both employers, employer organisations and the wider community was a key enabler to assist people to get jobs. However organisations, particularly those in adult community education, are not specifically resourced for managers to spend time networking and developing wider community connections.

It is important to note, that the research identifies that community is not just the people who turn up at an adult community education centre. Many of those who were making a success of career development were including a wider constituency into their community: local government, local employer groups, other community groups, Job Support Agencies, mental health organisations, and this inclusion involved spending time in regular forums and meetings.

For instance, one neighbourhood house, which is

not resourced as an employment service, networks with local disability residential houses, also with a disability service organisation to run work experience in their social enterprise café, and then with a local DES for job placements. Another provider uses a wide network of employers to find those aligning with the person's interests to come and talk about what the job involves.

### 7.5 Employment

Career guidance is by definition (OECD, 2004) not necessarily about paid employment. It is rather a lifelong progression through learning and work that may encompass both paid and unpaid activity which is meaningful to the student. It is evident from this study that some adult educators are achieving career outcomes for people with disability.

Nevertheless, in lay terms, career is still connected with paid employment and although the question of educating and incentivising employers was not the purpose of this study, without this being addressed in future, career guidance, however good, is meaningless.

The research identifies the ability to network with both employers, employer organisations and the wider community was a key enabler to assist people to get jobs.

## 8. Guidelines and further implications

### 8.1 Guidelines for adult education providers

Not every ACE provider is able or wishes to be involved in career guidance. For those that do this research suggests the following strategies:

1. Know and be involved with the local community in depth and breadth in order to know and be known by employers and others who can provide students with experience of work. That is: networking with employer groups/employers/JSAs/volunteer groups and community groups. This may involve attending regular forums, being on management committees, boards, CALD community groups, disability/mental health organisations etc. Have on-going connections with JSA/DESS – they often have the resources other organisations don't such as incentives for employers.
2. Have an organisation wide commitment and team approach to career guidance. In this way people are less likely to fall through the cracks. All staff and volunteers should have some training in listening skills/counselling and in how to achieve in depth knowledge of client. It is also worth investing in training in techniques such as McCormick et al's Guiding Circles(2002), Poehnell and Amundson's Hope Filled Engagement (2011) or Amundson's

Pattern Identification Exercise (1995) or some of the resources from peak bodies such as the Career Education Association of Victoria.

3. Have access to at least one person in (or accessible to) the organisation with leadership, passion and training in career guidance.
4. Recognise that anyone (with appropriate training) can be a career counsellor – it is a matter of getting the right people connected to each other.
5. Develop a sense of belonging and trust in order to repair the damage caused by low self-esteem and lack of identity in some students, recognising that trust is a product of time.
6. Find out what a person needs to build their confidence and sense of hope and purpose – anger management, grooming. Informal spaces are preferable and well developed listening skills essential.
7. Recognise that a) an inability to progress in a course or work experience is not "failure" but may be the next step along the pathway; b) pathways may not be linear.
8. Provide informal spaces such as coffee rooms

where people who are experiencing low confidence and anxiety can make initial contact with the organisation and/or people without having expectations placed upon them.

## 8.2 Further implications

### 1. Dissemination of research findings

This report and its key findings have the potential to support the development of good social policy that recognises the challenges and enablers facing people with various disabilities. The distribution and discussion of the findings of the report at a forum of key policy developers and decision makers would be both strategic and timely in light of the roll out of the NDIS.

### 2. Further research

a) In a year's time the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will be rolled out. Anecdotal evidence from the trial sites suggests that nothing in the field of disability will be the same, especially in the area of employment. It is not expected that the findings in this report will alter substantially, yet further information will need to be gathered to indicate the impacts of the NDIS.

b) Although this research has focussed on career development rather than employment, as already discussed it is difficult to separate one from the other. Government policies at all levels are stressing the importance of having people with disability in employment both as a social and economic imperative. However as also discussed, employers, especially small to medium employers (Waterhouse et al, 2010) are proving reluctant to engage with people with disability.

There are currently investigations being undertaken by the Australian Human Rights Commission into employment and disability and by Disability Employment Taskforce, Department of Social Services into the Disability Employment Services. These will, possibly, be considering ways of approaching the issue of employer engagement from a government perspective.

We would like to suggest further research into the development of strategies for the other end of the employment equation – the work experience facilitators - to improve employer uptake of people with disability with especial emphasis on people

living with mental illness.

c) The research indicated (e.g. Lorey, 2000) that action planning whether formal or informal via “the conversation” is important. There are existing tools designed to support career guidance for other disadvantaged cohorts. There are other tools to enable person centred planning. An evaluation and adaptation of these existing tools should be considered, as they might assist people with disability create long term career strategies, which should incorporate learning and employment (paid or unpaid).

We would like to suggest further research into the development of strategies for the other end of the employment equation - the work experience facilitators - to improve employer uptake of people with disability with especial emphasis on people living with mental illness.

### 3. Investment in access to career development professionals

Career development has moved on considerably in the past few years. It is now recognised as an academic discipline. As previously discussed in Section 4.2, the old trait and factor techniques (Parsons, 1909) once the mainstay of career guidance, have been replaced by newer models and new resources and ideas are being developed all the time.

All school career guidance staff must now have a minimum of a Cert IV in Career Development. Why not adult education? Nevertheless it is understood that organisations need the resources to employ trained staff. In which case those adult education providers interested in providing career guidance need access to ( even if they can't directly employ) a qualified Career Development professional for a) advice and b) training in developing counselling skills and learner choice techniques as well as



assisting in the development of quality standards and competencies.

The community practice of career development suggests that a “barefoot” concept could be applied to community education and career development whereby local volunteers are trained in basic career development practices but with the ability to connect to a professional career development practitioner, shared across several communities, for advice and further training in a similar way that China, immediately post revolution, introduced the barefoot doctors.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. Investment in community development**

The McClure report (2015) recommends community participation as a core value for reform.

Victoria has a rich history of investment in social capital and this is apparent in such initiatives as Learn Locals and the 400 Neighbourhood Houses that have been supported by a diversity of communities for more than 40 years. The Neighbourhood House sector alone provided opportunities for an average of 5,500 volunteers each week in 2014 (Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, 2014b). The number of not for profit organisations investing in the development of social and community enterprises is also increasing exponentially and attracting more research into their social impact.

These examples demonstrate the value and economic sense of investing in community development as a means to achieving career outcomes for people with disability, especially since this research has shown that some community based organisations are already achieving outcomes with regard to career guidance, learning pathways and employment. Part of their success been this emphasis on community development processes (taking time to allow people to reintegrate into their communities) and also on their ability to develop and maintain networks both with regard to business forums and agencies and with social welfare organisations in breadth and depth. They are not, however, resourced as career developers or job placement agencies. The need for further investment is undeniable but in many cases the “wheel” does not require “reinventing” it simply requires a little “oil.”

<sup>1</sup>In order to provide health services effectively and cheaply across such a vast country, the system was instituted whereby non medically trained locals in small towns and villages were trained in basic techniques such as inoculations, wound management and preventative health strategies. More complex medical treatment could be referred to a professional doctor.

#### **5. Investment in volunteerism and social enterprises<sup>2</sup>**

One of the key enablers discussed in this report has been experience of work. As also discussed paid work is not always a viable option given the reluctance of some employers to take on people with disability, but also because some people are not yet ready for the paid workforce, in which case volunteerism, including within social enterprises, is a viable alternatives.

Further, the volunteer employment of people with disability is less likely to engender fears around productivity and may allow employers to experience disability first hand and this may dispel negative attitudes.

Over five million Australians offer their volunteers services each year, contributing mainly to sport/ physical recreation, community/welfare, religious groups and administration. Volunteer time is currently valued at \$24.09 an hour and contributes \$15.7 billion to the Australian economy (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Considering this enormous contribution to the economy, being a volunteer could be seen as a destination as well as a pathway for some people.

There is another aspect to volunteerism which fits within the enablement of career development and that is the use of trained volunteers to be used as counsellors and mentors, where there are not the resources to employ career guidance professionals, provided they had access to professionals for training and advice.

However both volunteerism and social enterprise require investment. They need managers and they need quality standards.

<sup>2</sup> A social enterprise is an organisation that seeks to be financially successful while creating social and/or environmental impacts. Several key participants were running these, mainly in food related areas, and employing people with disability.

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate those factors that might enable educators to assist people with disability in career guidance and learner choice. The emphasis here (because of the funding source and choice of researchers) has been on educators within the adult community education sector, although reference has been made to other organisations, including those providing employment for youth, in the course of the research process. One of the more surprising results of this study was to find the extent of the work being done in career development by community based organisations, some quite small (annual budget less than \$500,000). Their emphasis was primarily on community development processes, often supported by professional knowledge of recognised and up to date career development techniques.

Adult community education organisations, while they may enable learner choice and career guidance, are not resourced to as employment agencies to people with or without disability. Nevertheless experience of work was seen as an important part of career development and most participants included this as part of their program. Some of these experiences led to jobs.

The research process was greatly enhanced by the willingness of participants to share their experiences, often beyond the initial questions. The use of Grounded Theory as an analytical method allowed for all the information provided to support and augment the data collection along with that gleaned from the literature.

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# Appendix 1

## Research questions

By career guidance we mean a process through which people can make educational, training and job choices. Successful career guidance is that which leads – or shows evidence of planning to lead – to paid or unpaid employment that is meaningful to the person concerned.

1. Thinking of someone with disability you successfully provided career guidance to:
  - a. What were the processes?
  - b. What was most successful – tell me about it?Some processes you might have used:
  - Career development as part of curriculum – how did this work?
  - Partnerships and networking – who with, what did they do, do you have an ongoing relationship?
  - Job seeking support – how did you go about this? How did you find an employer?
  - Job support once they had a job – what strategies did you use?
  - Mentoring – what did this involve?
  - Follow up – for how long, what did it involve?
  - Work experience – how did you find an employer?
  - Careers conversations – what was said?
  - Family assistance?
  - Active participation in own planning?
  - Other.
2. What impact did their disability have on career guidance processes?
3. What mechanisms do you use to ensure learners have choice?
4. Do you use different strategies depending whether people have physical or cognitive disability? What are they?
5. What resources have you used? E.g. Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework
6. What challenges did you find you/person concerned come across? How were these overcome?
7. Has anyone in your organisation had any career guidance training? Who with?
8. How confident do you feel about career guidance? What would help you be more confident?
9. Is there anyone else we should be talking to?

This is an example of the type of questions I will be asking. I may not ask all questions if they don't seem relevant or again I may ask further questions pertinent to your organisation.

Anecdotes and stories that can illustrate your answers would be most welcome.