



# ACE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT NETWORK CONFERENCE 2008

Speech by Mary Hicks,  
Director of Education and Training

June 2008





**ABN 85 008 391 795**

**Canberra Office**

24 Brisbane Avenue  
BARTON ACT 2600

PO Box 6005  
KINGSTON ACT 2604

Telephone: (02) 6273 2311  
Facsimile: (02) 6273 3286  
Email: [info@acci.asn.au](mailto:info@acci.asn.au)

**Melbourne Office**

Level 3  
486 Albert Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

PO Box 18008  
Collins Street East  
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

Telephone: (03) 9668 9950  
Facsimile: (03) 9668 9958  
Email: [melb@acci.asn.au](mailto:melb@acci.asn.au)

Web: [www.acci.asn.au](http://www.acci.asn.au)

© Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2008.

This work is copyright. Reproduction is permitted, with direct attribution and notification to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you Brett and thank you also to Lucy Macali for the invitation to be part of this panel discussion this afternoon.

My name is Mary Hicks and I'm the Director of Education and Training for the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is a network of business and industry organisations with which I'm sure you're familiar and with which there are many strong relationships.

The first Budget of the Rudd Government was delivered on 13 May 2008 and outlined a number of reforms to the provision of employment services in Australia.

Notable amongst them is the new model to be introduced by 1 July 2009 and the new DEN arrangements from 1 February 2010.

Last Monday, ACCI business and industry organisations held a Ministerial Roundtable with Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Disability and we will be meeting with Brendan O'Connor, Minister for Workforce Participation in the near future.

Our interest in this area is active and one which we see as being an important part of our policy to access largely untapped human resources. These ideas make good business sense.

The meeting with Bill Shorten was particularly fruitful, with Bill outlining his vision for fully integrating People with a Disability into the workforce as an idea whose time had come.

The idea is people are ahead of industry and industry is ahead of government, which comes a pitiful last when it comes to changing the culture around employment of people with a disability.

The Minister has been listening to stakeholders and has heard the message about too much paperwork and bureaucracy in the delivery of services and told us of his desire to see processes streamlined, services improved and outcomes achieved.

To illustrate his point about this being the right time for people with disability to be better integrated into the workforce, he drew on past examples of women entering into male bastions, such as in the profession of jockey. He also drew a parallel with achieving a critical mass for momentum such as what happened with our awareness and involvement with breast cancer.

Using these parallels, Bill inspired us with his passion to the cause and the argument that despite the ongoing rhetoric in this area, that time really had come for social change and it was just a matter of making it happen.

He told us he understood the power of business and the power of business networks in achieving this vision. On the day, he also made a commitment to work with business and industry groups to achieve this vision.

I found his talk to our member organisations inspirational and his determination was evident.

The next question though is HOW to engage in a meaningful way that can achieve real outcomes for people with disability and I'll come to that shortly.

Firstly though, I'd like to focus on the overall approach of the government and the role they see for employers in the policies they have announced.

The new government has brought together many policy silos and a new approach to linking education, employment and workplace relations.

This is an approach being mirrored to a certain extent amongst business and industry groups across the country in terms of their own policy development and connecting the dots to achieve productivity outcomes.

Systems that are responsive to industry provide an important focus for the government's policies and are a lense to illuminate the vision of achieving other social inclusion objectives as expounded in the models put forward for employment and training.

For example, in terms of the productivity places that are to be funded, the government has determined a new system of allocating places that involves a direct relationship with industry through the formation of Skills Australia.

In its Budget statement the government has stated that industry needs should be at the core of the training system. The strategy recognises that the supply of skilled labour represents a major constraint on the capacity of industry to keep pace with increasing demand.

The strategy adopts a demand-driven approach to training delivery, with areas of skills to be identified through consultation with industry, and then addressed by delivering training in those areas.

These measures will increase, improve and deepen the skills capacity of the Australian workforce, by ensuring that the national training system delivers the skills that industry requires.

How this will work involves Industry Skills Councils that will undertake an environmental scan to provide a detailed picture of the workforce, skills and training environments in each of the industry sectors covered by their Council.

They will identify the key areas of attention that are required by each industry area.

In the context of the Australian Government's Productivity Places Program Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) have a primary role of brokering high quality training for existing workers.

The Commonwealth will be taking a major role in determining places for those currently outside the workforce and it has not yet been determined whether Skills Australia will be providing advice to the Minister on those places as well as for the places for existing workers.

Clearly, the better the connection with industry, the better the chances are for the potential employee of securing a position where there is a real need and there will be less likelihood of training being undertaken for its own sake without an employment outcome being achieved.

Turning now to employment, a central feature of the new employment model is also based on a direct relationship with employers and further, the incentive payments to employment service providers will support a demand driven system by providing payments for providers that make a placement.

A payment will no longer be automatically made for an employment outcome not achieved by the provider.

Payment will only be made where the provider has achieved the placement with an employer, encouraging providers to make a better effort with employers as there will be a financial incentive to do so.

How does all of this fit with the provision of productivity places and employment services for people with a disability?

The policy dots have not yet been connected and the devil will be in the detail and will be better informed as work on the development of a National Disability Strategy happens.

While the policy settings outlined above will apply to all potential employees, additional policy settings will be required to engage People with Disabilities with the workforce.

There are many skills barriers faced by those with a disability trying to engage or reengage with the workforce. People with a disability generally have a lower level of formal education on average, than the broader population.

In 2006, 25% of the Australian workforce had Year 10 or less compared with 63% of people with a disability (NCVER 2008)

Even in times of generationally low unemployment, those with relatively low levels of formal education are severely disadvantaged in the paid employment market.

Research undertaken by the Queensland Department of Education and Training using ABS Census Population and Housing 2001 data has identified a significant skills-jobs mismatch, particularly in jobs requiring a VET qualification.

This analysis identifies a demand that involves 62.3% of all jobs across Australia requiring the technical skills gained from a VET pathway against a supply of 29.9% of the working-age population in Australia holding VET qualifications.

But this mismatch does not mean that people with a disability undertaking VET courses are ensured a work outcome.

The lack of employment outcomes for those with a disability graduating from VET programs are stark in comparison to those with no recorded disability.

People with a disability represent some 16.6% of the population (ABS 2004) yet only 5.9% of total VET enrolments of students in 2005 identified themselves as having a disability.

In addition to the low numbers of people with a disability engaging with VET, of the 96 000 people with a disability who undertook a VET qualification on 2005, only 13 218 registered a completion; and of those, only 54% recorded an employment outcome.

That is 7138 people or 7.5% of those studying VET achieved an employment outcome.

So a training solution will not always lead to an employment outcome.

How can this result be improved?

The rate of employment outcome for people with a disability represents a difference of only 5% in the rate of employment before commencement of training to after completion of the course of study (DEST 2006).

While it is desirable to achieve any increase in the uptake of employment of People with Disabilities, achieving the vision outlined by Bill Shorten will not happen without concerted effort and commitment on the part of industry to become involved.

In particular, leveraging off ACCI's employer network of business and industry groups to provide a strategic framework for engagement is required.

The perceptions of employers about employing People with a Disability needs to change and this needs to be undertaken at a national level with support to business and industry groups to engage their memberships to understand the opportunities and business advantages to be gained.

In previous work undertaken by ACCI, discussion identified the following six areas to promote the employment of PWD:

- **Make it easy for employers:** reassure employers they are not taking a risk; build employer information networks;
- **Make it easy for employees:** get transitions right; create a culture for disclosure; make it 'a whole of life approach';
- **Make it real:** make campaigns factual, honest, and open; utilise various media; spotlight success stories; bust myths; focus on ability not disability; recognise and reward best practice;
- **Make the case for business:** locate business leaders, create 'hard nosed champions' to figurehead campaigns; make it part of normal business;
- **Establish a business model:** help employers see PWD as an untapped resource critical to long term advantage; promote the employment of PWD as good management and as commercially sensible; and
- **Make it a national priority:** give priority to healthy partnerships among stakeholders; link social investment to national economic and business sense; make the point that the employment of PWD is a labour market imperative.

As well as these measures to change employer perceptions and promote the benefits of employing persons with disabilities, working more directly with employers through the new Productivity Places Program and employment services model will be necessary at the more general level.

The first port of call will be to use existing employability skills tools that are available to job seekers to identify an individual's employability skills strengths.

This can also identify to job seekers those employability skills that require further development and training, and can provide a more targeted approach than generic courses that train areas of existing proficiency as well as those in deficit.

The strengths can then be used by the job seeker to promote themselves to potential employers.

The tool can also identify to job seekers those employability skills that require further development and training, and can provide a more targeted approach than generic courses that train areas of existing proficiency as well as those in deficit.

Using the Employability Skills Profiler, Employment Service Providers can further link with Industry Skills Councils or directly with employers to identify which skills are needed in their business and therefore the most appropriate course to undertake.

This is much more likely to achieve an employment outcome than simply enrolling a person in a course and hoping for the best.

Employers would also need to be educated to identify skills needs in advance and to wait for a time period before the trained person becomes available.

This is a role that business and industry groups can undertake with appropriate levels of resourcing.

There remain many unknowns. It is not clear exactly how the allocation of the Productivity Places will work in the future, and the employment services model is still being refined as the National Disability Strategy is developed.

Likewise, greater work needs to be done with employers and their representative organisations to work out the fine details of how to engage effectively so that real employment outcomes can be achieved.

I'm not going to pretend to you - this is difficult area for business and industry organisations and without appropriate resource support from government it will be very difficult.

However, at the higher level, a possible pathway is becoming clearer and it is clear that no stakeholder can achieve this vision in isolation.

It is clear that we can help each other because we both have what each other needs.

It is just a question of building the right bridges between job seekers and the skills employers need, to make the right match.

On the part of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we are willing to come to the table to progress these issues and look forward to continuing engagement with the ACE Community.

Thank you

## ACCI MEMBERS

### CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

#### ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry

12A Thesiger Court  
DEAKIN ACT 2600  
Telephone: 02 6283 5200  
Facsimile: 02 6282 5045  
Email: [chamber@actchamber.com.au](mailto:chamber@actchamber.com.au)  
Website: [www.actchamber.com.au](http://www.actchamber.com.au)

#### Business SA

Enterprise House  
136 Greenhill Road  
UNLEY SA 5061  
Telephone: 08 8300 0000  
Facsimile: 08 8300 0001  
Email: [enquiries@business-sa.com](mailto:enquiries@business-sa.com)  
Website: [www.business-sa.com](http://www.business-sa.com)

#### Chamber of Commerce & Industry Western Australia (Inc)

PO Box 6209  
EAST PERTH WA 6892  
Telephone: 08 9365 7555  
Facsimile: 08 9365 7550  
Email: [info@cciwa.com](mailto:info@cciwa.com)  
Website: [www.cciwa.com](http://www.cciwa.com)

#### Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory

Confederation House  
1/2 Shepherd Street  
DARWIN NT 0800  
Telephone: 08 8936 3100  
Facsimile: 08 8981 1405  
Email: [darwin@chambernt.com.au](mailto:darwin@chambernt.com.au)  
Website: [www.chambernt.com.au](http://www.chambernt.com.au)

#### Commerce Queensland

Industry House  
375 Wickham Terrace  
BRISBANE QLD 4000  
Telephone: 07 3842 2244  
Facsimile: 07 3832 3195  
Email: [info@commerceqld.com.au](mailto:info@commerceqld.com.au)  
Website: [www.commerceqld.com.au](http://www.commerceqld.com.au)

#### Employers First™

PO Box A233  
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235  
Telephone: 02 9264 2000  
Facsimile: 02 9261 1968  
Email: [empfirst@employersfirst.org.au](mailto:empfirst@employersfirst.org.au)  
Website: [www.employersfirst.org.au](http://www.employersfirst.org.au)

#### NSW Business Chamber

Australian Business Centre  
140 Arthur Street  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060  
Telephone: 13 26 96  
Facsimile: 1300 655 277  
Email: [navigation@australianbusiness.com.au](mailto:navigation@australianbusiness.com.au)  
Website: [www.australianbusiness.com.au](http://www.australianbusiness.com.au)

#### Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd

GPO Box 793  
HOBART TAS 7001  
Telephone: 03 6236 3600  
Facsimile: 03 6231 1278  
Email: [admin@tcci.com.au](mailto:admin@tcci.com.au)  
Website: [www.tcci.com.au](http://www.tcci.com.au)

#### Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce & Industry

GPO Box 4352  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001  
Telephone: 03 8662 5333  
Facsimile: 03 8662 5367  
Email: [vecci@vecci.org.au](mailto:vecci@vecci.org.au)  
Website: [www.vecci.org.au](http://www.vecci.org.au)

**NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS****ACCORD**

Dalgety Square  
Suite C7, 99 Jones Street  
ULTIMO NSW 2007  
Telephone: 02 9281 2322  
Facsimile: 02 9281 0366  
Email: [bcapanna@acspsa.asn.au](mailto:bcapanna@acspsa.asn.au)  
Website: [www.acspsa.asn.au](http://www.acspsa.asn.au)

**Agribusiness Employers' Federation**

GPO Box 2883  
ADELAIDE SA 5001  
Telephone: 08 8212 0585  
Facsimile: 08 8212 0311  
Email: [aef@aef.net.au](mailto:aef@aef.net.au)  
Website: [www.aef.net.au](http://www.aef.net.au)

**Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association**

30 Cromwell Street  
BURWOOD VIC 3125  
Telephone: 03 9888 8266  
Facsimile: 03 9888 8459  
Email: [deynon@amca.com.au](mailto:deynon@amca.com.au)  
Website: [www.amca.com.au/vic](http://www.amca.com.au/vic)

**Association of Consulting Engineers Australia (The)**

75 Miller Street  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060  
Telephone: 02 9922 4711  
Facsimile: 02 9957 2484  
Email: [acea@acea.com.au](mailto:acea@acea.com.au)  
Website: [www.acea.com.au](http://www.acea.com.au)

**Australian Beverages Council Ltd**

Suite 4, Level 1  
6-8 Crewe Place  
ROSEBERRY NSW 2018  
Telephone: 02 9662 2844  
Facsimile: 02 9662 2899  
Email: [info@australianbeverages.org](mailto:info@australianbeverages.org)  
Website: [www.australianbeverages.org](http://www.australianbeverages.org)

**Australian Hotels Association**

Level 1, Commerce House  
24 Brisbane Avenue  
BARTON ACT 2600  
Telephone: 02 6273 4007  
Facsimile: 02 6273 4011  
Email: [aha@aha.org.au](mailto:aha@aha.org.au)  
Website: [www.aha.org.au](http://www.aha.org.au)

**Australian International Airlines Operations Group**

c/- QANTAS Airways  
QANTAS Centre  
QCA4, 203 Coward Street  
MASCOT NSW 2020  
Telephone: 02 9691 3636

**Australian Made, Australian Grown Campaign**

486 Albert Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002  
Telephone: 03 8662 5390  
Facsimile: 03 8662 5201  
Email: [ausmade@australianmade.com.au](mailto:ausmade@australianmade.com.au)  
Website: [www.australianmade.com.au](http://www.australianmade.com.au)

**Australian Mines and Metals Association**

Level 10  
607 Bourke Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9614 4777  
Facsimile: 03 9614 3970  
Email: [vicamma@amma.org.au](mailto:vicamma@amma.org.au)  
Website: [www.amma.org.au](http://www.amma.org.au)

**Australian Newsagents' Federation Ltd**

Level 3  
33-35 Atchison Street  
ST LEONARDS NSW 2065  
Telephone: 02 8425 9600  
Facsimile: 02 8425 9688  
Email: [tracy@anf.net.au](mailto:tracy@anf.net.au)  
Website: [www.anf.net.au](http://www.anf.net.au)

**Australian Paint Manufacturers' Federation Inc**

Suite 1201, Level 12  
275 Alfred Street  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060  
Telephone: 02 9922 3955  
Facsimile: 02 9929 9743  
Email: [office@apmf.asn.au](mailto:office@apmf.asn.au)  
Website: [www.apmf.asn.au](http://www.apmf.asn.au)

**Australian Retailers Association**

Level 2  
104 Franklin Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9321 5000  
Facsimile: 03 9321 5001  
Email: [vivienne.atkinson@vic.ara.com.au](mailto:vivienne.atkinson@vic.ara.com.au)  
Website: [www.ara.com.au](http://www.ara.com.au)

**Live Performance Australia**

Level 1, 15-17 Queen Street  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9614 1111  
Facsimile: 03 9614 1166  
Email: [info@liveperformance.com.au](mailto:info@liveperformance.com.au)  
Website: [www.liveperformance.com.au](http://www.liveperformance.com.au)

**Master Builders Australia Inc.**

16 Bentham Street  
YARRALUMLA ACT 2600  
Telephone: 02 6202 8888  
Facsimile: 02 6202 8877  
Email: [enquiries@masterbuilders.com.au](mailto:enquiries@masterbuilders.com.au)  
Website: [www.masterbuilders.com.au](http://www.masterbuilders.com.au)

**Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association Australia (The)**

525 King Street  
WEST MELBOURNE VIC 3003  
Telephone: 03 9329 9622  
Facsimile: 03 9329 5060  
Email: info@mpmsaa.org.au  
Website: www.plumber.com.au

**National Baking Industry Association**

Head Office:  
Bread House  
49 Gregory Tce  
Spring Hill QLD 4000  
Phone: 1300 557 022  
Email: nbia@nbia.org.au  
Website: www.nbia.org.au

**National Electrical and Communications Association**

Level 3  
100 Dorcas Street  
SOUTH MELBOURNE VIC 3205  
Telephone: 03 9645 5566  
Facsimile: 03 9645 5577  
Email: necanat@neca.asn.au  
Website: www.neca.asn.au

**National Fire Industry Association**

PO Box 6825  
ST KILDA RD CENTRAL VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9865 8611  
Facsimile: 03 9865 8615  
Email: info@nfia.com.au  
Website: www.nfia.com.au

**National Retail Association Ltd**

PO Box 91  
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006  
Telephone: 07 3251 3000  
Facsimile: 07 3251 3030  
Email: info@nationalretailassociation.com.au  
Website: www.nationalretailassociation.com.au

**Oil Industry Industrial Association**

c/- Shell Australia  
GPO Box 872K  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001  
Telephone: 03 9666 5444  
Facsimile: 03 9666 5008

**Pharmacy Guild of Australia**

PO Box 7036  
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610  
Telephone: 02 6270 1888  
Facsimile: 02 6270 1800  
Email: guild.nat@guild.org.au  
Website: www.guild.org.au

**Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association Inc**

Level 2, 263 Mary Street  
RICHMOND VIC 3121  
Telephone: 03 9429 0670  
Facsimile: 03 9429 0690  
Email: info@pacia.org.au  
Website: www.pacia.org.au

**Printing Industries Association of Australia**

25 South Parade  
AUBURN NSW 2144  
Telephone: 02 8789 7300  
Facsimile: 02 8789 7387  
Email: info@printnet.com.au  
Website: www.printnet.com.au

**Restaurant & Catering Australia**

Suite 32  
401 Pacific Highway  
ARTARMON NSW 2604  
Telephone: 02 9966 0055  
Facsimile: 02 9966 9915  
Email: restnecat@restaurantcater.asn.au  
Website: www.restaurantcater.asn.au

**Standards Australia Limited**

286 Sussex Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Telephone: 1300 65 46 46  
Facsimile: 1300 65 49 49  
Email: mail@standards.org.au  
Website: www.standards.org.au

**Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce**

7th Floor  
464 St Kilda Road  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000  
Telephone: 03 9829 1111  
Facsimile: 03 9820 3401  
Email: vacc@vacc.asn.au  
Website: www.vacc.motor.net.au

