



**ADACAS**  
Advocacy

# Disability Employer Confidence Program: Our Impact Report

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**2024–2025**



# Acknowledgements

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## Acknowledgement of diversity

We acknowledge the diversity of our community. We acknowledge LGBTIQ+ people's right to self-expression and self-determination. We celebrate the rich diversity of people's bodies, genders, sexualities and relationships.

We recognise the needs and contributions of people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds for our society.

We value and strongly support the inclusion and participation of people with lived experience of disability and mental ill-health and Carers in every part of community life.

We offer our respect to older persons and recognise the life experience and wisdom they provide.



## Acknowledgement of funding

We acknowledge funding via Department of Social Services – Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program's – Building Employer Confidence and Inclusion in Disability Grant.



**Australian Government**

## Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which we live and work, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. We would also like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the Dharawal, Yuin, Wiradjuri communities whose traditional lands include the areas in which ADACAS works across NSW.

ADACAS extends our respect to Elders: past, present, and emerging and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

And we celebrate the rich history, diverse cultures, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.

Always was, always will be. Sovereignty never ceded.



*Wings of Advocacy August 2024*

ADACAS is proud to share *Wings of Advocacy*, a commissioned artwork by contemporary artist Sarah Richards, a Ngiyampaa woman born on Gadigal land, living and painting on Ngunnawal and Ngambri countries since 2012.

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# Our Program

# Disability Employer Confidence Program

## Why the Program is needed:

- ✓ One in five Australians of working age are living with disability, but only 48% of these people are employed compared to 80% of the rest of the population.
- ✓ Despite this, employees with disability have a greater retention rate, take fewer sick days, provide unique perspectives, enhance collaboration, and promote a culture of problem-solving.
- ✓ Employing people with disability can help create a stronger workplace culture, strengthen recruitment and retention opportunities, and enhance your business' community image.

## How the Program works:

- ✓ We work with **employers to build their knowledge of disability and erase myths and uncertainty.**
- ✓ We work to **increase employers' understanding** and discover the benefits that people with disability can bring to their business.
- ✓ We help employers **build their confidence** to hire, support and retain employees with disability and mental ill health and create a truly inclusive workplace.
- ✓ We work with employers and their staff to **create inclusive workplaces** focusing on a person's abilities and potential, identifying any barriers or modifications required to help people with a disability to be successful in their employment journey.

## The support we offer

### 1 Attraction

We help guide businesses to craft inclusive job descriptions and effective outreach strategies to connect with a wide pool of talented candidates with disabilities.

### 2 Selection

We facilitate accessible and inclusive recruitment and interview processes, helping to remove barriers to fair assessments and selection of new staff.

### 3 Onboarding

We assist employers to create welcoming environments by delivering robust disability awareness training, and clearly defining support pathways for both employees and managers.

### 4 Retention

We offer ongoing assistance to ensure necessary workplace adjustments can be made by employers. We also help foster supportive environments, and advocate for inclusive and equitable workplace practices.

The Disability Employer Confidence Program, delivered by ADACAS, empowers businesses in Canberra and surrounding regions to create inclusive workplaces where individuals living with disabilities can thrive.

This report showcases the impact of our Program – highlighting real stories, key achievements, and ongoing commitments to driving positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities and help businesses identify the value of a diverse workforce.

Measuring the impact of our Program is vital to ensure we are doing the best job we can.

We have engaged with nearly 100 businesses in ACT and NSW and our data shows:



Employing people with disability can help create a stronger workplace culture, strengthen recruitment and retention opportunities, and enhance a business' profile.

By centring choice, control, and dignity, the Program helped people take steps toward employment and build lasting confidence.



We actively supported people with disability to build the skills, confidence, and networks they need to pursue meaningful employment. This included tailored support with resume writing, interview preparation, and job searching strategies, as well as one-on-one coaching to explore strengths, set goals, and navigate barriers to employment.

For many, this was the first time they had received support that recognised both their aspirations and the structural challenges they face.

“Everyone I spoke to enjoyed the presentation and found it eye opening how much we can do to assist people with disability in the workplace. They have now been able to implement a lot of what you said into the workplace. It was a very positive and beneficial experience on our end.

Brate Group



Many employers don't know how easy it is to support their employees with disability. ADACAS makes it easy with the Disability Employer Confidence Program, a free program that helps businesses expand their recruitment pool.

We focused on not only finding people work but also supporting employers to retain staff who have a disability.



### Engaging with businesses

ADACAS proactively engaged with Businesses, exploring their interest and addressing concerns. This individual approach was greatly valued and led to a number of successes achieved across the program.



### Employer workshops delivered

We delivered interactive workshops focused on job readiness, workplace rights, and confidence-building.

These sessions equipped participants with the practical skills and knowledge needed to navigate employment pathways and thrive in the workplace.



### Employment retention achieved

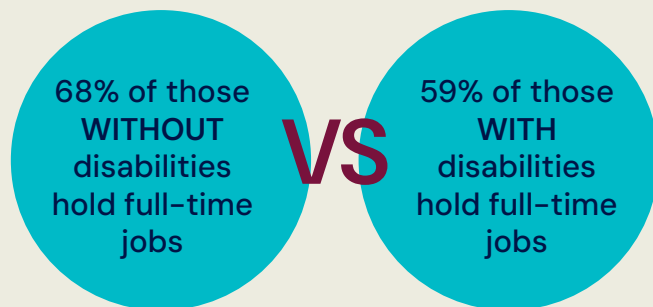
More than 90% of participants who secured employment through the Program have remained in their roles.

This high retention rate reflects the Program's person-centred approach, strong employer relationships, and ongoing post-placement support.

ADACAS worked with the businesses to support a further 7 individuals to negotiate adjustments, resolve challenges, and maintain sustainable employment.

# Disability and employment

In Australia, there is a noticeable gap in employment rates between individuals with and without disabilities. While 68% of those without disabilities hold full-time jobs, this figure drops to 59% for individuals with disabilities. Importantly, this trend reverses in part-time employment, where 40% of people with disabilities are employed part-time compared to 31% of those without disabilities.



**Approximately one-third** (32%) of working-age individuals with disabilities face severe or profound employment restrictions, resulting in a significantly lower labour force participation rate. Within this group, **only 6% are employed, while 88% are not in the labour force**. In contrast, individuals with mild or moderate restrictions exhibit higher employment rates at 68%.

**The under-employment rate for people aged 15–64 with disabilities stands at 10%**, more than double the rate for those without disabilities, which is 4%. This rate escalates to 13% for individuals with severe or profound disabilities.

Workforce participation declines with the severity of disability. For those with profound or severe limitations, the rate of workforce participation is at 37%.



A substantial 45% of employed individuals with disabilities have reported experiencing unfair treatment or discrimination from their employers within the past year. This highlights a significant obstacle in obtaining employment and maintaining and advancing within their careers.

These statistics highlight the urgent need for focused interventions and support systems to enhance employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the ACT. Priorities include reducing discrimination, providing robust support for those with severe disabilities, and ensuring equal access to full-time employment opportunities.

## References

Australian Human Rights Commission, Disability and Employment in Australia 2024.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with Disability in Australia.

Diversity Council Australia, Inclusion@Work Index 2023–2024.



“ I was impressed with the practical strategies in the Disability Employer Confidence Program. They really helped us to understand how we can support our team members that are neurodivergent and explained things that we can fairly easily implement to give them the best chance of having a good experience with us at Vinnies.

Sarah Dunn  
Homelessness Programs Manager  
Vinnies Canberra Goulburn

# Our team

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## Chris Fox

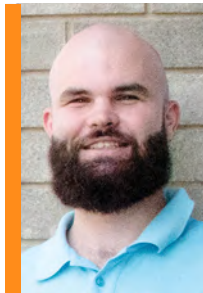
Chris is our Marketing and Communications Manager at ADACAS and has been supporting the Program roll out since he joined the Team in January 2024.

Chris' wealth of experience and deep commitment to social justice has been pivotal in shaping the Program's messaging and community engagement. He is passionate about workplace inclusion and is driven to amplify voices that are often overlooked.

Chris ensures the Disability Employer Confidence Program resonates with both employers and the wider community. His work includes developing inclusive messaging, designing resources, and leading stakeholder engagement that promotes disability confidence across workplaces.

"When we centre lived experience and communicate with authenticity, we can break down the stigma and build lasting change," says Chris.

His approach is grounded in collaboration, empathy, and a clear focus on impact – making him an essential part of the team that's helping workplaces become more inclusive, informed, and empowered.



## Benjamin Nash

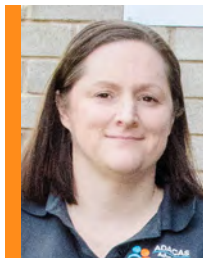
Coming from the fast-paced world of hospitality and sales, Benjamin Nash's journey to joining ADACAS is anything but ordinary. A passionate advocate for inclusion and a skilled business development officer, Ben's work today revolves around bridging the gap between businesses and employees with disability.

After a decade in the hospitality industry, from Woolworths to the Hilton Hotels and Marriott, Ben now finds himself driven to build better, more inclusive workplaces.

Ben, who has cerebral palsy, understands the barriers that often exist in the workforce for people with disability. As Business Development Officer at ADACAS, he leads efforts to create inclusive employment environments for people with disability, focusing specifically on helping businesses build confidence in hiring and retaining employees with diverse abilities.

Ben's role involves working directly with businesses, offering support across the employee lifecycle, from recruitment and selection to onboarding, retention, and beyond.

Ben emphasises is that "it's not a one-size-fits-all scenario" when it comes to creating inclusive work environments, and "Each employee, regardless of ability, brings their own set of needs and strengths to the workplace, and it's important to tailor support accordingly."



## Karen Weir

As a dedicated advocate, Karen has been instrumental in the Program Team – supporting individuals with disabilities, ensuring their voices are heard and rights upheld.

Karen's work centres around providing guidance and support to those navigating complex systems. She uses a person-centred approach, emphasising the importance of understanding each individual's unique circumstances and needs.

In her current role, she is championing the rights of people with disabilities, focusing on creating inclusive environments and promoting equitable access to services. Her efforts contribute significantly to our goal of empowering individuals and fostering systemic change.

Karen believes that "True inclusion begins when we listen, understand, and act upon the diverse experiences of those we support."



**Our Partners**

We believe that everyone deserves the chance to contribute their skills and talents, including people living with disability.

With one in five Australians of working age living with disability, this Program helps bridge the gap, as currently only 48% of people living with disability are employed, compared to 80% of the general population.



## Why it matters

Hiring people living with disability isn't just the right thing to do – it's great for business. Employees living with disability often stay in their jobs longer, take fewer sick days, and bring fresh perspectives that enhance teamwork and problem-solving. Inclusive workplaces aren't just more welcoming; they're stronger and more resilient.

## How we help

We have engaged with nearly 100 businesses in ACT and NSW to boost their confidence in hiring and supporting people living with disability.

Through workshops and tailored support, we help businesses:

- Understand the benefits of inclusive hiring.
- Break down myths and uncertainties about employing people living with disability.
- Identify any simple adjustments that might be needed to help employees succeed.

By focusing on what people can do rather than any limitations, we help businesses tap into a diverse talent pool, creating a more innovative and supportive workplace for everyone.

## Creating lasting impact

The Disability Employer Confidence Program benefits businesses and the wider community by offering people living with disability more opportunities to contribute and thrive. It has been extremely pleasing to see that some of our clients who have sought advocacy are sometimes referred to this Program to help them gain employment. With our support, businesses can create inclusive workplaces that benefit their staff and strengthen their reputation and community connections.

“The vast majority of our clients come from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds, having experienced wars, displacement, or other atrocities that forced them to leave their homelands. When these clients arrive in Canberra, they often suffer from physical disabilities and mental ill health, compounded by separation from families and little to no grasp of English. Many of these clients don't qualify for government supports, NDIS, or Job Access due to visa restrictions, so having the Program support us has been extremely beneficial.

Nigel Maloney  
Employment Manager  
Multicultural Hub Canberra

# Impactful Partnerships

## RSPCA Partnership

“ The support from ADACAS has been instrumental in retaining our staff with disabilities and making necessary workplace adjustments. We are committed to continuing this inclusive journey.

RSPCA ACT  
Manager

The RSPCA partnered with ADACAS to improve their understanding and support for employees with disabilities. This collaboration led to successful retention and accommodation of staff with disabilities, demonstrating the tangible benefits of the initiative.



## Eagers Car Rental

Eagers Car Rental utilised ADACAS resources to include disability awareness in their staff training platform, reaching over 380 employees. This has helped create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for their employees with disabilities.



“ Including ADACAS's training materials in our staff platform has been a game-changer. Our staff are now better equipped to support colleagues with disabilities.

Eagers Car Rental  
Manager

The training video prepared and supplied by ADACAS was uploaded to Eagers Car Rental's staff training platform and approved by their Regional HR, demonstrating a proactive step towards inclusion.

## Hotel Realm

Hotel Realm, a luxury hotel in Canberra and part of the Doma Group, joined the Program to strengthen its commitment to inclusive employment.

The hotel's leadership team was motivated by a desire to create a more welcoming and accessible workplace for people with disability.

While their intentions were clear, they recognised a need for support in navigating legal obligations, understanding workplace adjustments, and improving recruitment practices.

Hotel Realm faced a number of common challenges before participating in the program, including a limited knowledge of disability and relevant legal responsibilities and uncertainty about how to make appropriate and effective workplace adjustments.

“ In one department, a simple communication adjustment helped a new hire settle in successfully. Some of the Hotel team mentioned there was improved collaboration and morale ... small changes can have a wider impact on workplace culture.

Benjamin Nash  
Development Officer  
ADACAS

Our Program Team delivered a mix of activities tailored to Hotel Realm's needs, including Disability Awareness Training, review of policy and processes, workplace adjustments, with practical examples relevant to hospitality.

While the journey is still unfolding, the Program has provided Hotel Realm with a solid foundation for ongoing improvement and a clearer path toward inclusion.

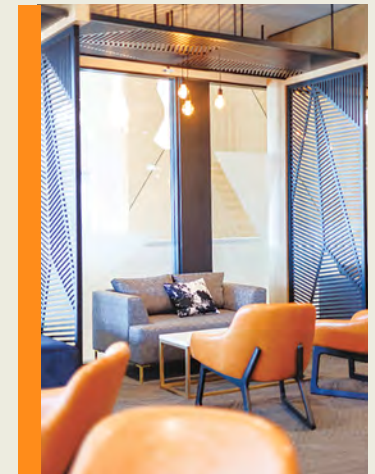
## Eastlake Club

“ I enjoyed the training from ADACAS – it was simple and effective. It opened our eyes, and I now feel more confident when interacting with people who have a disability. Our next step is to work on hiring and retaining of staff with disability.

Eastlake Club  
Venue Manager

“As managers we have had the opportunity to debrief with the ADACAS staff and get their support. We had a session to help us understand barriers and how to work with people with a disability. We continued to work with ADACAS staff when we went into recruitment mode.”

Eastlake Club  
Manager



## St Vincent dePaul Society

“ The training provided valuable tools for understanding and leveraging the strengths of neurodivergent employees at Goodies, and it was a reminder that when we’ve met one autistic person, we’ve only met one autistic person. Everyone is individual and we need to adjust our practices in the workplace to suit each individual’s needs.

Andrew Barber  
Operations Manager  
Goodies Junction

We have been driving positive outcomes with St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn.

In early 2024, Vinnies became the latest organisation to benefit from our comprehensive neurodiversity and disability awareness training. The training, which we deliver in partnership with Employ for Ability, is focused on creating an inclusive environment for Vinnies’ members, volunteers, and employees.



## Moving forward

The success of this training at St Vincent de Paul Society sets a promising precedent for other local businesses. ADACAS has announced plans to expand their Disability Employer Confidence Program throughout 2025, offering customised workshops that can be delivered both virtually and in person.

“ The success of the St Vincent de Paul Society training demonstrates how the Program can help organisations create genuinely inclusive workplaces where all employees can thrive.

Sarah Dunn  
Programs Manager  
Vinnies Homelessness



## Our Clients

# Sophie's journey

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## How ADACAS helped Sophie overcome barriers to employment.

Sophie\*, a resilient woman navigating the impacts of trauma and long-term unemployment, first connected with ADACAS through our individual advocacy work.

As her advocate listened to her story, it became clear that alongside the issues she was facing with service systems, Sophie also needed help finding her way back into the workforce – something she hadn't felt confident doing for many years.



\*Not their real name or photograph.

Sophie was confronting several challenges that made employment feel out of reach:

### Long-term unemployment

Years without work had chipped away at Sophie's confidence and sense of self-worth.

### Mental health and trauma

These deeply personal challenges affected her belief in her ability to rejoin the workforce and shaped how she engaged with services.

### Systemic hurdles

Employers were hesitant to offer opportunities to someone with a history of mental health issues and a gap in employment, often insisting on face-to-face interviews even for roles that didn't require customer interaction.

### Lack of practical support

Sophie's didn't have the wraparound assistance she needed to re-enter employment – from interview preparation to practical expenses like transport and clothing.

## We provided:

### 1 Collaborative support

We were able to explore the kind of future Sophie wanted – including work. Her advocate made a seamless referral to our Disability Employer Confidence Program.

### 2 Building confidence

Sophie enrolled in a four-week training program with an external provider to build essential skills – resume writing, job searching, and interview preparation. The focus wasn't just on securing a job but on rebuilding confidence now and for the future.

### 3 Ongoing encouragement and interview support

We coached her through the interview process, including support the day before and on the morning of the interview. During this recruitment process, we discussed with the employer some of the reasonable adjustments that they could make to their interview process, in addition to supporting them during Sophie's onboarding and induction.



## Impact

### Our Program built relationships that paved the way for Sophie's success.

Sophie got the job, and her success has sparked a renewed sense of belonging, independence and purpose.

Sophie is continuing to build on her success. She's now equipped with skills, support, and a belief in herself that will help her stay engaged in the workforce and take further steps toward her long-term goals – including reconnecting with her family.

# Jordan's journey

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## How ADACAS helped Jordan overcome barriers to employment.

Jordan\*, a thoughtful and capable young person with a passion for land management, was juggling part-time work and study when he was referred to ADACAS through a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider.

Jordan had successfully completed his Certificate III in Land Management at TAFE, but a paperwork error meant he couldn't access his transcript – putting his job, and his confidence, on the line.



\*Not their real name or photograph.

Jordan's journey was made more difficult by a combination of barriers that many people would find overwhelming:

### **Job security at risk:**

Jordan's continued employment depended on having their qualification officially recognised. Without the transcript, their job future at work was uncertain.

### **Communication challenges:**

Jordan's speech disorder made it tough for them to explain the enrolment issue to TAFE staff, despite their determination to advocate for themselves.

### **Administrative error:**

An error on their enrolment form meant Jordan was wrongly charged thousands of dollars in course fees. This was a costly mistake that should have been avoided, especially given he qualified for a Fee-Free TAFE program.

### **Mental health impacts:**

The stress of possibly losing their job – and not being heard – took a toll on Jordan's mental wellbeing, affecting work performance and everyday life.

## **Action plan and support services**

When Jordan connected with ADACAS our team worked alongside to work things out with the employer and multiple levels of TAFE to sort things out.

- 1 Standing up for Jordan**  
We engaged with local and state-level TAFE staff, highlighting how Jordan's disability had impacted the enrolment process and making the case for fee relief.
- 2 Navigating the system**  
With support from Training Services NSW, we confirmed Jordan's eligibility for Fee-Free TAFE and advocated for the release of his transcript.
- 3 Employer support**  
Jordan's employer was reassured by our involvement and Jordan's clear track record of success in the workplace.
- 4 Positive outcome**  
TAFE ultimately agreed to waive the incorrect fees and release Jordan's transcript, clearing the path.



### **Impact**

Jordan didn't just keep a job – they received a well-earned promotion and a pay rise. For Jordan, it wasn't just about money – it was about being seen, supported, and recognised for hard work.

Jordan now has a solid foundation to continue building a career. With the ongoing support of the ADACAS Disability Employer Confidence Program, they are better equipped to navigate challenges, speak up for his needs, and keep moving toward the future.

# Ethan's story

Through our promotion of the Employer Confidence Program, a local employer – newly aware of the staff member's disability – reached out to ADACAS for support. We met one-on-one with the employee, creating a safe and respectful space to explore what was working, what wasn't, and what might help.

**Action:** We worked to identify the barriers affecting performance and discussed practical solutions tailored to the role. A report was prepared outlining these challenges and offering clear, actionable recommendations for workplace adjustments.

The employee was actively involved in reviewing and approving the report to ensure it reflected their experience. To support understanding and reduce stress, all communication was delivered in the employee's preferred format and tone.

**Impact:** The process helped build confidence on both sides – empowering the employee to thrive and reassuring the employer that with the right adjustments, success was within reach. Inspired by the experience, the employer has since requested disability inclusion training for their entire leadership team.



\*Not their real name or photograph.

# Jackson's story

Jackson was midway through a carpentry apprenticeship when a serious workplace accident left him with a permanent hand injury. The physical and emotional toll of the incident deeply impacted his confidence and mental health, casting doubt on whether he'd ever return to the trade he loved.

**Action:** The Program Team worked closely with Jackson and his family to co-design a plan for his successful return to work. We worked to get a Plan that addressed Jackson's needs, balancing a gradual re-entry into hands-on work and flexible scheduling during his transition (with time for medical appointments and therapy). We partnered with his Training Organisation to help him resume the theory components of his apprenticeship, ensuring he received the right accommodations to stay engaged and on track.

**Impact:** Jackson re-entered the workforce and is thriving in his full-time apprenticeship. He meets regularly with ADACAS, his Industry Association, and his employer to ensure his mental health and progress stay on track. His story shows the value of employers who are willing to be flexible and inclusive – and how the right support can turn a setback into a comeback.



\*Not their real name or photograph.



# Our Call to Action



## What is the impact of employment programs for people living with disability?

When we committed ourselves to delivering The Disability Employer Confidence Program, we knew that supporting businesses in creating inclusive workplaces could have significant positive impacts on people living with disability.

It's about diving in and supporting those people living with disability who want to work! The impact we want is change – a change that helps people achieve greater financial independence and social connection.



The impact we want is change – a change that helps people achieve greater financial independence and social connection.

**We aim to collaborate with more businesses, drive systemic change, and continue empowering people living with disability across the Canberra and Queanbeyan regions.**

When we committed ourselves to delivering the Disability Employer Confidence Program, we knew that supporting businesses in creating inclusive workplaces can have significant positive impacts on people with disability.

Over the coming year, ADACAS will expand the Program.

We aim to support even more employers to support employees living with disability.

We will be offering customised workshops to organisations interested in building more inclusive workplaces. These customised workshops will be delivered by educators with expert knowledge and lived experience and will be designed to create lasting positive change in workplace culture.

Together, we can build stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone can flourish.

Businesses interested in fostering inclusive workplaces are invited to engage with ADACAS.

For more information or to book a tailored workshop:  
Visit [www.adacas.org.au/employer](http://www.adacas.org.au/employer)  
Contact us at (02) 6242 5060







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### Get Involved

Businesses interested in fostering inclusive workplaces are invited to engage with ADACAS. Together, we can build stronger, more inclusive communities where every individual has the opportunity to flourish.

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