

Building Employer Confidence to recruit and retain employees with communication disability and low literacy.

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Short Abstract

Scope's Building Employer Confidence project is developing a suite of training and practical resources to enable mainstream organisations and businesses to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to recruit and retain employees with communication disability and low literacy. While there are many resources available to support employers to facilitate access and inclusion for people with physical and sensory disability, resources to support this cohort of employees and prospective employees specifically, are currently limited.

Approximately 1.2 million Australians (27.4%) live with communication disability. One on seven Australians will experience a communication disability at some stage on their life. Nearly 44% of Australian adults (7.3 million) have literacy levels at level 2 and below, which means reading skills at early secondary school level.

National consultation conducted revealed that employers experience challenges in successfully recruiting and retaining employees with communication disability and low literacy, often because they are unsure of their access requirements and how to adapt and adjust processes and resources.

This project aims to increase employment opportunities for people with communication disability and low literacy by breaking down myths, changing employers' perceptions and attitudinal barriers, and providing practical training and targeted resources to support employers and employees alike.

Long Abstract

The Building Employer Confidence project will enable Scope's Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre (CIRC), in partnership with Thriving Communities Australia and employees with a lived experience of disability, to develop a suite of training and practical resources to enable mainstream organisations and businesses to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to recruit and retain employees with communication disability and low literacy. Made possible by an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project, funded by the Department of Social Services.

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44% of Australian adults (7.3 million) have literacy levels at level 2 and below, which means reading skills at early secondary school level. While there are many resources available to support employers to facilitate access and inclusion for people with physical and sensory disability, resources to support this cohort of employees and prospective employees specifically, are currently limited.

National consultation conducted with organisations across financial, telecommunications and utilities companies, revealed that employers experience challenges in successfully recruiting and retaining employees with communication disability and low literacy, often because they are unsure of their access requirements and how to adapt and adjust processes and resources.

Scope will lead the project and partner with Thriving Communities Australia (TCA) to build capacity of employers and address the gaps in resources currently available to employers by:

- Recruiting a minimum of five national organisations, through TCA's members to take part in a pilot
- Co-designing, customising and testing resources for use by employers to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence on how to hire, support and retain employees with communication disability and low literacy
- Building engagement from top down in each organisation of the benefits, opportunities and the 'how to' in relation to hiring, support and retention
- Conducting a pre and post survey and interviews with senior managers inc. Human Resource and Operational Managers to determine their confidence level with the targeted cohort
- Promoting and sharing resources on the TCA national hub portal; Scope website; Job Access website and Disability Gateway and promote resources to NDIA and Disability Employment Service Providers

The project will produce outputs that enable this group of valuable talent to thrive in the workplace and journey through their employment lifecycle. Resources such as Easy English recruitment practices and inclusive induction and development practices will be explored.

This project aims to increase employment opportunities for people with communication disability and low literacy by breaking down myths, changing employers' perceptions and attitudinal barriers, and providing practical training and targeted resources to support employers and employees alike.

Every person regardless of their disability should have equal opportunity to participate in the workforce and achieve economic and social participation.