

# TICKET TO WORK OUTCOMES EVALUATION – CUSTOMISED EMPLOYMENT REPORT



A REPORT FOR NATIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES

FINAL REPORT

APRIL 2019

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## **Disclaimer**

The analysis of data and measurement of outcomes presented in this report has been conducted and verified by ARTD Consultants. The introduction, supporting evidence and research commentary has been produced by NDS.

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# 1. Introduction

This report is one of four reports by ARTD consultants that National Disability Services (NDS) commissioned on the outcomes of Ticket to Work. Ticket to Work supports effective school to work transition for high school students with disability. This report exclusively focuses on a set of activities offered in the Ticket to Work initiative called 'Customised Employment'. Outcomes are being measured by comparing employment, wellbeing and social inclusion outcomes for current and former Ticket to Work participants with the same outcomes for a comparison group of other similar young people appearing in national longitudinal and other research data sets.

We also conducted semi-structured interviews that captured qualitative data including:

- analysis of participants' outlook, aspirations, and feedback on the transition process;
- an analysis of parents' views of their child's transition;
- an analysis of the employer experience of providing experiences to students with disability.

The four reports are:

- Outcomes for all Ticket to Work participants who have left school
- Outcomes in NDIS trial sites
- Outcomes for Ticket to Work participants who completed customised employment processes (this report)
- Attitudes of Ticket to Work network members.

## 1.1 Employment of young people with significant disability

Transition from education to employment is critical for the social and economic futures of young adults with disabilities. A successful transition to work can help towards persons achieving full social and economic participation – a key ethos underpinning the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006.<sup>1</sup>

The convention states that learners with disabilities should receive the support to ensure the effective transition from learning at school to vocational and tertiary education, and work.<sup>2</sup> The National Disability Strategy (key policy strategy 5.5) identifies the need for high quality programs designed to create smooth transition from education and employment in Australia<sup>3</sup>. The strategy also clearly identifies that improving transition to work and increasing economic participation of young people with disabilities require the intersection of, and improvement in, all policy areas.

Although improving the transition from school to work for young adults with disability has been the goal of many government inquiries in Australia, it has not been well actualised in practice.<sup>4</sup>

There has been a steady decrease in the rate of economic and social participation for young people with disability in Australia.<sup>5</sup> Young Australians with disability have very similar career and financial aspirations and priorities to other young people but are more than twice as likely as other young people to not be employed and to be dissatisfied with their employment opportunities and job prospects.<sup>6 7</sup>

Young people often encounter great uncertainties and tremendous developmental challenges during the transition from school to work, and these challenges and uncertainties are intensified for young people with disability. Research shows that that between the ages 15 to 25 young people with disability become increasingly disadvantaged compared to young people without disability.<sup>8</sup> For example, young people with disability in transition from school to work are more likely to experience social exclusion than their peers.<sup>9 10 11</sup>

Failing to address the gaps in school to work transition for young people with disability is costly to individuals, but also to the economy; the OECD identified that 'high and increasing dependence on welfare payments by people with disability has been identified as unsustainable in Australia'.<sup>12</sup>

Many young Australians with significant disability with employment goals have not had access to employment support to enter the open employment market. Access to Disability Employment Services (DES) generally requires an assessment to determine work capacity, which is conducted by Centrelink. Those individuals that came in the bandwidth under 8 hours, do not have access to DES, many young people with significant disability were therefore unable to access open employment supports.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has opened up opportunities for people with significant disability to access employment with access to supports. Yet with this opportunity comes challenges. There are a lack of established models of support, knowledge or expertise in Australia in supporting employment participation by people with significant disability, so a careful approach is needed to establish a framework, training and good practice guides.

There have been some previous state-based programs such as Transition to Employment in Victoria, Transition to Work in NSW and the current NDIS School Leaver's Employment Supports (SLES) that look to support transition to work for people with significant disability. NSW Transition to Work program supported 31% of their participants in open employment over 5 years.<sup>13</sup> There is no public data on the effectiveness of Victorian Transition to Employment program nor the NDIS SLES, though both are based on the NSW model.

A 2017 report found that the NSW Transition to Work program had not been a successful model in gaining employment outcomes for participants. 22% of all providers never obtained an open employment outcome and 19% achieving only one outcome.<sup>14</sup> The report found that there are serious concerns about an employment program that consistently fails to achieve employment for their clients and recommended 'transparency of data, a regulatory framework to deal with poor performance, communication and duplication of successful approaches'.<sup>15</sup> The report recommended a focus on customised transition and onsite training that meets the mutual needs of the jobseeker and employer. This would more likely enable people to move into meaningful employment since this cohort seldom have all the skills needed to satisfy a typical open employment job vacancy.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.1.1 The National Disability Insurance Scheme**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) can be the key driver of improved employment participation for people with significant disability and will require effective practices that support people with more significant disability into work.

Research by Charles Sturt University estimates that when fully implemented the NDIS could lead to between 25,000 and 40,000 new jobs for people with significant disability. They found an aggregate estimated potential GDP gain of up to \$23 billion, which is significant in macroeconomic terms.

The challenge is ensuring that the NDIS will empower people who receive funded support to overcome barriers to employment, especially as the NDIS is not a labour market program.<sup>17</sup> Customised Employment could be part of the solution.

## **1.2 Customised Employment (CE)**

Customised Employment techniques have been used to support effective school to work transition for those individuals with significant disability. CE was developed as a multi-strategy approach to improve open and self-employment outcomes for people with significant disability.

The US Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act defined CE as

*'... competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability.... designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer.'*<sup>18</sup>

CE is described as a process driven concept with four essential components:

- **Discovery** - Gathering information from the job seeker and the CE support team to determine the job seeker's interests, skills, and preferences related to potential employment that guide the development of a customised job.
- **Job Search Planning** - Using the information learned about an individual job seeker in Discovery to develop a plan toward a meaningful employment and to determine a list of potential employers.
- **Job Development/Negotiation** - Working collaboratively with the individual and the employer to negotiate a customised job, including the provision of supports, and the terms of employment that will match the individual's interests and skills, conditions necessary for success, specific contributions and will fill the unmet needs of an employer.
- **Post-Placement Support** - Setting up ongoing post-placement supports and monitoring the employment relationship to ensure satisfaction of both the individual and the employer.<sup>19</sup>

Customised Employment differs from usual practices of disability employment in Australia. Customised Employment was developed for individuals who are not likely to succeed, even with support, when going through a typical competitive employment application.

Customised Employment is not a quick-fix for anyone, but a creative alternative that enables job candidates and employers the opportunity to negotiate individual job tasks and/or reassign basic job duties to improve overall productivity in the workplace.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.2.1 Overseas practices

Overseas, particularly in the United States and Canada, CE has become a widely used strategy to support people with more significant disability to obtain employment. CE was first implemented in the United States in the early 2000s and has become popular practice, driven by evolving policies and initiatives that embrace open/ integrated employment. This included the implementation of CE in school transition settings to address the poor employment outcomes for youth and young adults with significant disabilities.

Overseas implementation of CE was fuelled by the 'Employment First' movement of the 1990's. 'Employment First is a framework for systems change that was centred on the premise that *all* citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. This resulted in widespread social and political reform that included changes to government legislation, policies, practice and research designed to increase integrated employment in the general workforce for citizens with disabilities.

These initiatives continue today and are typically directed at the transition from school setting where 'open employment is the first and preferred option when exploring goals and a

life path for students with disabilities' and 'young people with disabilities have work experiences that are typical of other teenagers and young adults'.<sup>21 22</sup>

In the US, the rise of CE for secondary aged students was largely enabled by three key reforms:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (1990) mandated schools to deliver school to post-school transition planning services. Schools must begin planning for a student's transition to the adult world beginning at age 14, when curricular options within the school are considered and no later than age 16, where a detailed transition services plan must be implemented.<sup>23</sup>
- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014) mandated that Disability Employment/Vocational Services work with schools to provide transition services to all students with disabilities and requires that the agencies allocate at least 15 percent of their federal funding toward such transition efforts.<sup>24</sup> It also indicated that individuals with disabilities age 24 and younger are no longer be allowed to work for less than the federal minimum wage unless they first receive pre-employment transition services at school and support from employment vocational services.
- Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act (2016) assures that students with disabilities can receive Pre-Employment Transition Services and all other individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to receive open employment information and career counselling services.<sup>25</sup>

CE has become increasingly recognised by professionals, parents, employers and individuals with disabilities as a valuable way to provide essential support for people with disabilities who have never worked before or who have been viewed as not having the potential to succeed in the Labour Market<sup>26 27 28</sup>.

There has been an increase in CE initiatives in secondary schools<sup>29</sup> as transition-led efforts, schools and academics are all calling for employment support before exiting school.<sup>30</sup> This movement to a 'seamless transition' from school to adulthood includes a customised employment approach that is tailored to students with more significant disabilities.

## **1.2.2 Evidence base of Customised Employment**

Although CE is now a widely used strategy in many jurisdictions overseas, there is still limited experimental research that has examined the effectiveness of CE. In particular, there is lack of research on the use of CE programs in schools, despite the clear need for an integration of transition and employment supports for young people with disability.<sup>31 32</sup>

A literature review of CE conducted in 2015 identified 25 relevant articles, of which only 10 reported quantitative findings, while the remaining 15 articles used qualitative methods to describe CE models, characteristics, or the implementation of programs.<sup>33</sup> No experimental

or quasi-experimental studies were identified.<sup>34</sup> The 10 articles that did use some quantitative methods did not use an experimental or quasi-experimental approach. The literature review stated that, for articles reporting quantitative results, the proportion of individuals participating in CE who were employed varied between 45% to 89%.<sup>35</sup>

Two recent reviews (2018) concluding that there is still a lack of experimental and quasi-experimental research on customised employment interventions.<sup>36 37</sup>

Recommended for future research include:

- a) validate the effectiveness of CE;
- b) develop a CE fidelity of implementation scale;
- c) conduct further research on employer engagement;
- d) investigate the sustainability of outcomes; and
- e) investigate the effectiveness of CE in the context of transition from school to employment.<sup>38</sup>

It should be noted that despite the lack of quantitative research overseas there is much anecdotal evidence of the success of CE, even in Australia where CE is relatively new. For people who employment was never thought possible, CE has allowed them to take their place in the labour market.<sup>39</sup>

### **1.2.3 Fidelity**

CE fidelity scales have been developed in the US to ensure quality, with the first one 'Discovery Fidelity Scale' published late 2018.<sup>40 41</sup> The Discovery Fidelity Scale has been adapted to reflect the Australian systems using a modified Delphi methodology. This work has been completed by research partners the Centre for Disability Employment Research and Practice (CDERP) and the University of Melbourne. At publishing of this report, they were undergoing validity trials.

As CE is relatively new in Australia it would be wise for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to develop a framework for success, benchmarks, transparent data collection, utilising the fidelity scale and training in the CE techniques. Without these elements in place providers of NDIS employment supports will not be able to assess if they have the relevant abilities, knowledge or skills to create positive outcomes, and the results may be similar to the NSW Transition to Work program where some providers did not achieve any open employment outcomes over a five-year period.<sup>42</sup>

Further investigation of the overseas experiences is also warranted. Research from other jurisdictions would assist in developing benchmarks to increase the disability sector's understanding of what success looks like in school to work initiatives for young people with significant disability. We expect this research would be highly useful to Australian providers.

## 1.3 The School to Work pilot (NDIS)

This evaluation looked at outcomes for participants in school and out of school that have had CE approach through the School to Work pilot, funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in Western Australia.

National Disability Services (NDS) described the pilot as below:

*The pilot gives students in Year 10 and above access to 150 hours (approx. \$8,300) of support focused on achieving open employment. Support was available to about 500 NDIS participants at secondary school.<sup>43</sup>*

This pilot was founded on the belief that all students who wish to work are capable of doing so if they are given the appropriate support.

National Disability Services (NDS) delivered training on the CE approach to key stakeholders, including disability organisations, NDIS planners, Department of Education and other school staff, parents and people with disability. 17 NDIS providers in the pilot have also been embedding the CE approach in their organisation and have been receiving ongoing mentoring in CE by National Disability Services (NDS). NDS's aim was to establish a common framework and to develop the knowledge, skills and resources to deliver quality CE support.

### 1.3.1 Customised Employment activities in the WA School to Work pilot

A defining feature of the pilot was the use of the 'Discovery' process, the first step in CE. Discovery guides job seekers through a process of finding out who they are, what they want to do, and what they have to offer. Discovery is a strength based individualised approach, grounded in a belief that assisting job seekers to develop a full understanding of who they are is a critical step in successfully securing sustainable employment. The process includes comprehensive assessment of the participant in all of their everyday environments to discover which types of employment options and conditions will work best for them. The Discovery process is undertaken with each participant and their support circles, including family members, educators (principal and education assistants), employment consultants from Disability Employment Services (DES) and/or Supported Employment Enterprises, and community members (e.g. sports team coaches).

Of the 150 hours of support the students received in the pilot, approximately 25 to 30 hours was dedicated to the Discovery process. Discovery relies on experiential situations in real environments to reveal clues about vocational interests. During Discovery process, information is gathered about an individual's interests, strengths and skills, the types of supports that suit their needs, and the types of environments and activities where this person is at their best. This information is gathered in a series of interviews, observations, and activities that occur in natural environments and that are familiar to the individual.

NDIS providers have been supporting students to develop a Discovery Record that showcases the student's competencies and interests. Organisations use the Discovery Record to negotiate a match between what the student has to offer and what the employer needs.

A 2017 case study <sup>44</sup> reported that the School to Work pilot has successfully implemented:

- the exploration and prioritisation of employment goals
- the development and implementation of employment pathways
- a more comprehensive and collaborative planning process than was previously available.

The case study also reported the following short to medium term outcomes including:

- buy-in from all stakeholders
- collaboration with multi sectorial partnerships was fostered, for example
  - capitalising on DES expertise and connections
  - drawing on the expertise of therapists to undertake job analysis
  - the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding by some providers in order to strengthen their partnership
  - capacity building of mainstream services and systems to address the need of young people with disability through a collective impact framework.

Other career and work development activities that young people in the WA School To Work pilot participated in included:

- vocational education at secondary school
- Australian School based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbAT)
- work experience/placement
- after school work
- self-employment during secondary school (microbusiness).

Most participants in the pilot participated in a range of activities, therefore it was difficult to isolate the individual success element or whether it was a combination of all activities. It is also possible that the young people in this report participated in other work development activities that, due to limitations around monitoring data, have not been included in this report.

### **1.3.2 CE data**

In 2018, of the NDIS providers supported by National Disability Services (NDS):

- 71 secondary students received CE employment supports through their NDIS plan, of those
- 25 were in paid work or had their own business and
- 46 were in work experience or volunteer work.

## **1.4 This evaluation**

### **1.4.1 Aim**

The primary aim of the evaluation was to assess employment, educational, and social outcomes between CE participants and a comparison group comprised of similar young people.

The secondary aim, to aid in the interpretation of findings, was to collect data about the extent of participation in different aspects/ activities of CE and assess what aspects/ activities may require further development.

### **1.4.2 Method**

The study used a quasi-experimental treatment and comparison group design. The treatment group comprised those who had participated in CE and had left school (n=7). The comparison group was composed of similarly aged young people with comparable disability types identified in the following data sets:

- Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA)
- ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Outcomes Framework Pilot Study (NDIS).

Specifically, the comparison group was defined as people who had left school, were 25 years of age or under, had disability and had a long-term health condition relating to difficulty learning or understanding things.

The study collected the same data on employment, social participation and independence to allow for a comparison of outcomes that could be attributed to the benefits of Ticket to Work over and above the base case, or business as usual. The data was collected using a structured interview approach with all former participants that could be contacted and consented to participate.

### **1.4.3 Participants**

A total of 14 participants that undertook Customised Employment participated in the evaluation; 7 who are still in school and 7 who have left school. The initial WA School to work pilot aimed to support approximately 500 students, though exact numbers have not been published. This represents a response rate of 3% of all possible participants in the study.

### **1.4.4 Ethics**

In order to inform the decision as to whether an external review and clearance was required, ARTD Consultants completed an internal review and risk assessment of the proposed

methodology for the evaluation activities. Emphasis was placed on the ethical requirements and risks around interviewing and surveying young people with disability.

An assessment of the methods and risks relating to the evaluation was prepared, taking account of existing guidance provided by the NHMRC. Members of ARTD not directly involved with the project then reviewed and provided feedback on the rationale and risk assessment.

The review concluded that no external ethics review was considered warranted, as the activities fell under the scope of evaluation and the data collected from survey activities would be non-identifiable and involve negligible risk to participants. However, to further ensure compliance with ethical principles and mitigate risks, additional requirements relating to gaining consent, de-identification of data, and review of data collection instruments were incorporated as part of the evaluation.

### **1.4.5 Limitations**

The sample size for this report remains small (n=14)<sup>i</sup>. This has hampered the ability to confirm statistically significant results. Data would be enhanced by improving the monitoring system to routinely collect data about participation, the extent of their participation, and short, medium and long-term outcomes.

The results of this evaluation do not provide a guarantee about the outcomes for anyone that participates in CE. As with all programs or intervention, context will be key to success or failure. In this case important features of context will include the student themselves (and their capacities, skills and interests), their family, potential providers for employment experiences, and the local labour market.

As the sample have chosen to participate in CE, they have not been randomly allocated. While this may be considered a biased sample from an experimental position, it would be equally true that randomly allocating people to CE might not only be unethical, it would counter the emphasis on 'choice and control'. An experimental study to test the hypothesis that Customised Employment is effective should only randomly allocate only those that *chose* to participate as it is possible that the decision to participate or not (as opposed to participation in a drug trial where human decision making may not be so relevant) is relevant to success.

CE is new to Australia and could be a significant technique to support those NDIS participants wanting open employment. The School to Work pilot should be further investigated and the NDIA gather data on all the students that participated in the pilot from 2016 -2018, exploring the social and economic benefit to participants.

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<sup>i</sup> Including CE participations who are current high school students and CE participants who have left school

## 1.5 Structure of this report

This report is produced in three sections and two appendices.

**Section 1** (this section) introduces the evaluation.

**Section 2** presents results of the quantitative quasi-experimental analysis of outcomes in terms of employment, well-being and social inclusion.

**Section 3** provides a summary of the supports and activities that CE participants received.

**Section 4** provides a qualitative analysis of participants' outlook, aspirations, and feedback on the transition process.

**Section 5** provides a discussion of the evaluation findings and implications for future research and evaluation of CE.

**Appendix 1** provides additional tables of data on levels of participation in various elements for *current high school students* who are participating in CE in addition to the standard suite of work preparation activities provided as part of Ticket to Work.

**Appendix 2** provides additional tables of data on outcomes and levels of participation in various elements of Ticket to Work for *school leavers* who participated in CE in addition to the standard suite of work preparation activities provided as part of Ticket to Work.

## 2. Quasi-experimental analysis of employment, education, wellbeing and social inclusion outcomes

### 2.1 Summary of findings

Customised Employment (CE) participants who have left school have higher labour market participation, school completion, social participation and independence that similar other young people with disability. The differences between CE participants and the comparison groups were not as pronounced as the wider Ticket to Work group. This is to be expected given the significant levels of disadvantage present in the CE group, and the findings below should be interpreted with this in mind.

#### Employment

- CE participants are more likely to be employed (50%) than the comparison group (33%).

#### Education

- School leavers had higher rates of high school completion (100%) than the HILDA comparison group (52%).

#### Social participation

- CE participants rates of social interaction, in terms of 'going out as often as desired', were higher (86%) than those in the comparison group (65%).

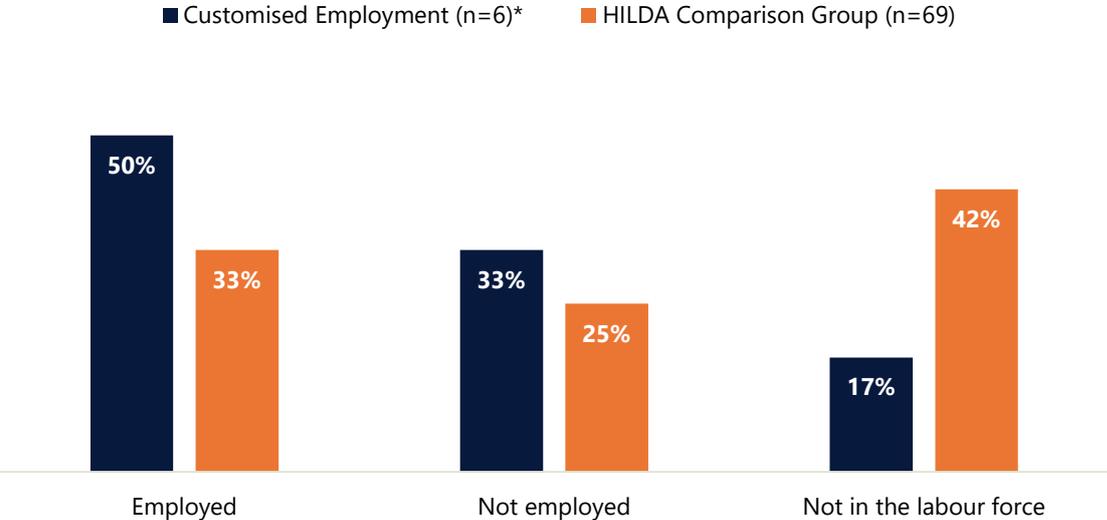
These quantitative findings are supported and explained with qualitative data collected from stakeholders, including participants, network members, parents and employers as incorporated in the following sections.

**NOTE:** The sample of CE participants is very low across all outcomes ( $n \leq 14$ ). Therefore, conclusions that can be made from the comparative analysis with the HILDA Comparison Group ( $n=69$ ) is very limited. However, these results do align with results of a comparative analysis between the wider Ticket to Work group and the HILDA Comparison Group.

## 2.2 Labour force participation

Half of all Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school were employed post school, compared to only one third of those in the HILDA comparison group<sup>ii</sup> (Figure 1). While there were slightly more unemployed school leaver participants (33%) than HILDA respondents (25%), a greater number of those in the HILDA comparison group were not in the labour force post school (42%) compared to school leavers who had participated in CE at school (17%) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Current workforce status, Customised Employment vs HILDA Comparison Group.**



\* 1 missing/ unsure

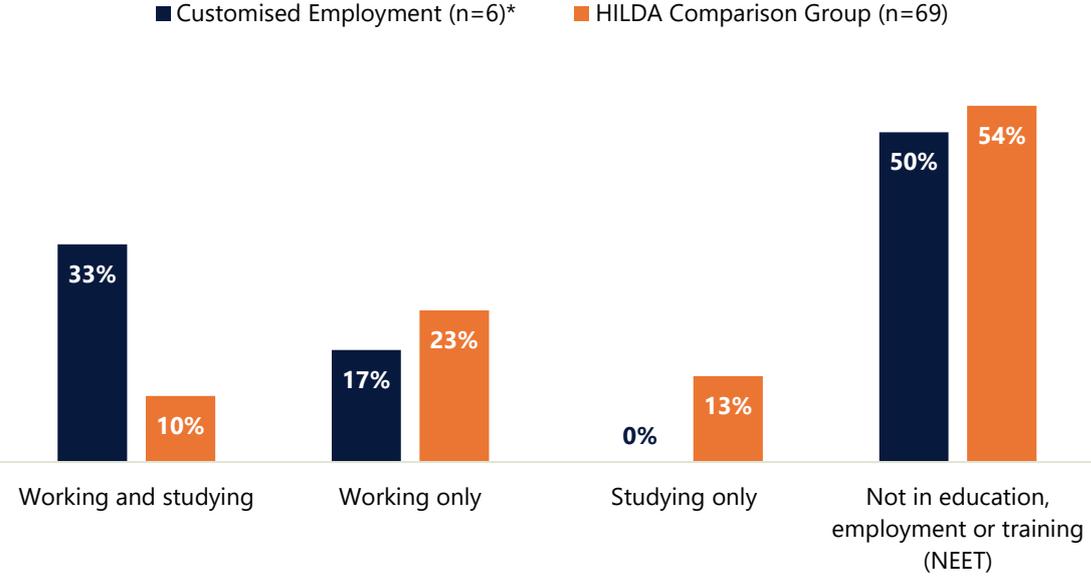
Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018, HILDA Survey 2018<sup>iii</sup>

A higher proportion of CE participants are working and studying than those in the HILDA comparison group (33% to 10%) (Figure 2). A higher proportion of those in the HILDA comparison group are either working only (23%) or studying only (13%) in comparison to CE participants (17% and 0%, respectively). CE participants and those in the HILDA comparison group have similar rates of economic inactivity with 50% of CE participants and 54% of HILDA respondents not studying, working, or training (Figure 2).

<sup>ii</sup> This result may under-estimate the effectiveness of Customised employment as HILDA data does not discriminate between supported employment (ADE), open employment or the supported wage system, the 33% of those employed from the HILDA comparison group may include young people on sub-minimal wages (paid below award rates), whereas the NDIS school to work pilot focuses on Open employment.

<sup>iii</sup> The HILDA comparison group is comprised of the subset of respondents to the Wave 16 questionnaire who met the following criteria: had left school, were 25 years of age or under, had disability, and had a long-term health condition relating to difficulty learning or understanding things.

**Figure 2. Current workforce and education status, Customised Employment vs HILDA Comparison Group.**



\* 1 missing/ unsure  
 Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018, HILDA Survey 2018

## 2.3 Educational achievement

### 2.3.1 School completion

Customised Employment (CE) participants have completed high school, while approximately half (52%) of those in the HILDA comparison group had completed high school (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. School completion, Customised Employment participants vs HILDA comparison group.**



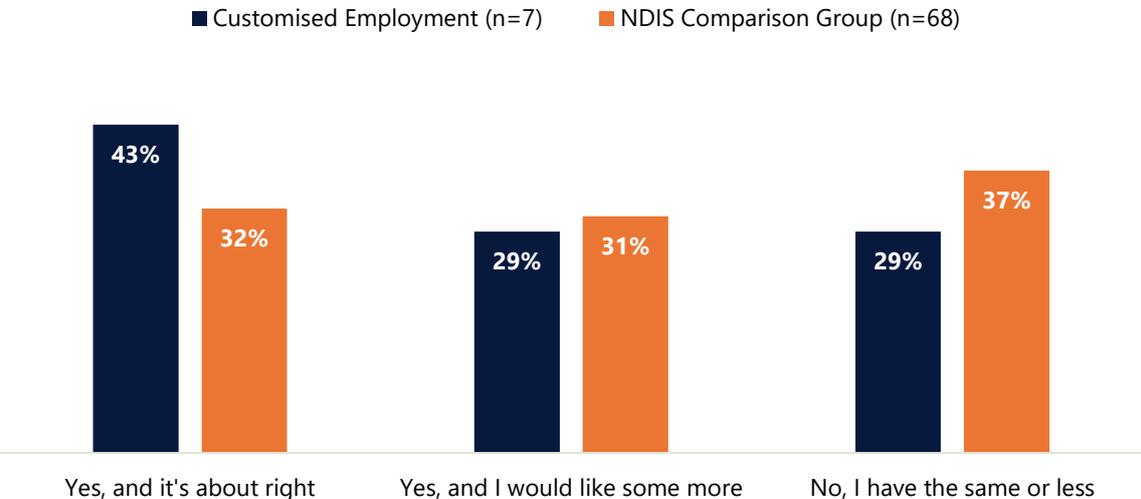
Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018, HILDA Survey 2018

## 2.4 Social outcomes

### 2.4.1 Independence

A greater percentage of school leaver participants in Customised Employment (CE) said they had sufficient independence (43%) than those in the 2015 NDIS Outcomes Framework Pilot Study (32%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** 'Do you have more independence than you did two years ago?', Customised Employment participants vs NDIS comparison group



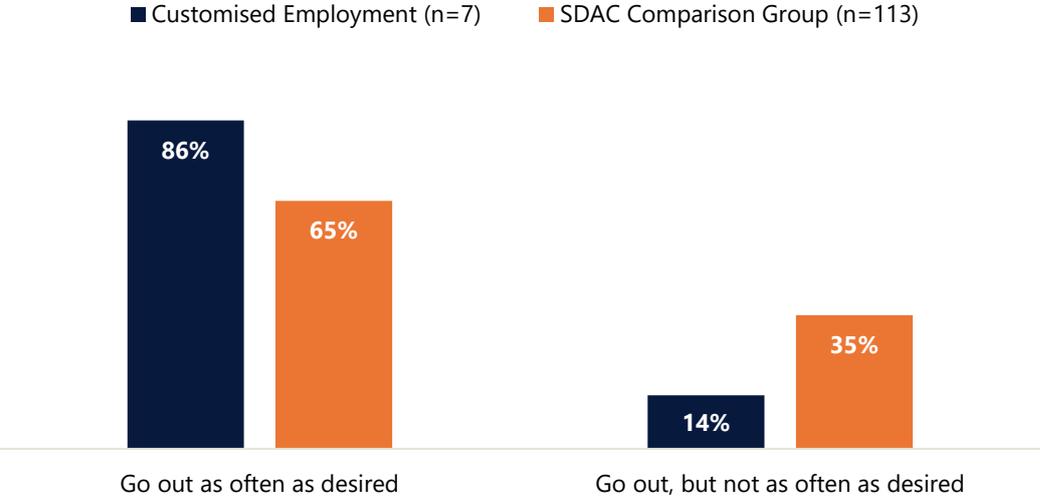
Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018 and 2015 NDIS Outcomes Framework Pilot Study<sup>iv</sup>

### 2.4.2 Social interaction

Social interaction, in terms of 'going out as often as desired', was also higher in CE participants (86%) than in those from ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers comparison group (65%) (Figure 5Error! Reference source not found.).

<sup>iv</sup> This group is comprised of NDIS participant respondents from the Barwon, Hunter and Tasmanian trial sites aged between 15 and 24 years of age.

**Figure 5.** 'Do you go out as often as desired?', Customised Employment participants vs SDAC comparison group.



Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018 and ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings—2015<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>v</sup> The SDAC comparison group is comprised of the subset of respondents between 15 and 24 years of age, with intellectual disability and difficulty learning or understanding things.

## 3. Activities summary

### 3.1 Discovery process

As Customised Employment (CE) is a process, in this evaluation we asked participants if they participated in the following:

- the Discovery process
- the development of vocational profiles.
- informational interviews with employers

All of the CE participants who were still in high school received support to do the Discovery process (100%). When we looked at the components of Discovery more than half (60%) of student participants had support conducting formal interviews with employers (Table 4), while 80% had developed a vocational profile as part of Discovery process (Table 5).

**Table 1. Elements of Customised Employment**

	Discovery process		Vocational profile		Informational interviews with employers	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Received support	14	100%	8	80%	6	60%
Did not receive support	0	0%	2	20%	4	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>
Missing/ unsure	0		4		4	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

It is not clear why elements of the CE process were not completed in the NDIS School to Work Pilot. This may have been due to decisions made by providers certain elements of CE were not required for some individuals or whether that it was difficult for the providers to perform a particular stage of Discovery. A similar issue was found in the development of CE in other countries, where not all stages of the Discovery process were implemented which led to a Discovery fidelity scale being developed in the US.

The fidelity scale will support government, its agencies and researchers to refine best practice within the field to ensure more consistent provision of quality services. In the United States it is thought that this data publicly available would create incentives to reward practitioners who provide exemplary CE services with fidelity and also support the development of

measures that establish the quality of these services. This may also be the case in Australia with the market-base model of the NDIS if data transparent.

### 3.2 Work development activities

As part of the Customised Employment (CE) process or additional to their participation in the pilot, CE respondents participated in a range of career and work development activities whilst at school.

The most common activity participated in was work experience (100%), of which all of the respondents had experienced. Half (50%) of participants were or had enrolled in vocational education or training (VET) as part of their senior school certificate, and one completed their VET as part of an Australian School-based Traineeship or Apprenticeship (ASbAT) (7%). Under half of the respondents (42%) had an after school job while at school.

**Table 2. Participation in work development activities**

Work development activity	Count	Percent
Work experience	14	100%
Vocational education and training in school	7	50%
After school job	6	42%
ASBAT	1	7%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 4. Views of participants

This section provides summary data on the views of participants who were still in high school and those who had left school about their experience in Customised Employment (CE) and work aspirations for the future.

### 4.1 The present: Customised Employment participants' experiences of being 'on track'

#### 4.1.1 High school students

When asked to what extent they felt they were on track, two thirds of participants who were still enrolled in high school felt that they were '*still developing*,' expressing that they were mostly on the right path but still needed support. No participants felt that they were not on track.

*'I feel I am progressing slightly with my independence from school work experience, but feel I need further help from support work to be able to be fully independent one day.'*

*'A bit – room for improvement.'*

*'I am still ... looking at options that work for me.'*

#### 4.1.2 School leavers

When school leavers were asked the same question, one participant felt that they were not on track. A greater number of participants felt they were on track and each provided different reasons for feeling that way.

*'Yeah, having my mentors help me reach getting a job or having my own gardening business.'*

*'Yes – I feel happy with life at the moment.'*

*'Developing independent travel skills (and) work skills at work placement.'*

An equal number of school leavers felt that, while there were making progress, there was still '*room for improvement*.'

*'(I) feel like stuff is getting done. We are going slow but stuff is happening.'*

*'More on that track would be good. Get out there!'*

## 4.2 The future: Customised Employment participants' aspirations

### 4.2.1 High school students

All high school student participants aspired towards future employment, and most had other aspirations alongside being employed. These included having more independence and being more socially connected.

*'Get a good job, revolutionise an industry (and) have more independence.'*

*'I would like to be able to catch public transport independently ... I would like to be employed full time one day in the horticulture industry. I would like to be part of a FW driving social club.'*

*'Get a job (and) do fun activities with friends.'*

*'To be a bartender, live with my friends, get my license and get a car.'*

*'I would like to work with horses.'*

### 4.2.2 School leavers

Many school leaver participants had more than one aspiration, though the majority expressed a desire to be employed. Having more independence was also a major theme among school leavers' aspirations, while a small amount aspired to be more socially connected.

*'A job I enjoy, more independence, my own place one day (and my) driver's license.'*

*'I would like to open my own business.'*

*'Meet new friends, get out and about in the community. Employment in open employment.'*

*'Independence with life skills (and) work skills.'*

*'Have my girlfriend come to Australia hopefully next year and, employment wise, to work for a gardening company.'*

*'To live independently.'*

## 4.3 Customised Employment participants' suggestions for improvement

### 4.3.1 High school students

When asked how they might improve the transition from school to work, most high school respondents said that more support would be beneficial, with some specifying that support programs needed more emphasis on developing social skills.

*'More work experience opportunities. More chances to connect with friends.'*

*'The support needs to continue post school,'*

*'More support to help give advice.'*

One student thought about actions that they themselves could take to improve their transition from school to work, suggesting that being *'more focused on (my) Cert III'* and *'studying towards (my) career goal'* would benefit them.

### 4.3.2 School leavers

The majority of school leavers also suggested that more support in developing social skills in a social setting would help improve their transition from school to work. One participant stated, *'it's not always my disability that stops me from doing stuff, but my anxiety and others' interactions with me,'* highlighting the need for assistance in developing social skills.

*'Assistance with social support for group activities and community access.'*

Other school leavers felt that they needed a greater level of support in finding employment while at school.

*'More one on one support to help people find a job in open employment.'*

*'More help for people with disabilities to get a job is needed.'*

Two participants had no suggestions to make, with one stating, *'I'm pretty happy with how things are going.'*

## 5. Discussion

Customised Employment (CE) participants had better economic and social outcomes than their peers, suggesting that CE is an effective support for young people with disability in their transition from school to work. However, interpretation of these findings must take into account the small sample size of the CE cohort that participated in this evaluation, especially when considering the fact that the evidence base for CE programs for school students is also quite limited.

On the other hand, the social and economic outcomes for CE participants do follow a similar trend to the larger Ticket to Work initiative, which found strong evidence that participation in Ticket to Work during school had a positive impact on post-school outcomes.

### ***Further research and evaluation***

CE is relatively new to Australia and its evidence base is quite limited. More work is required to build the evidence base for the CE model when implemented in school. A quasi-experimental design would again be appropriate, and the availability of monitoring data in combination with follow-up data on former participants should improve sample sizes. A monitoring framework for CE should also align with a version of the CE fidelity scale that CDERP has adapting for use in Australia (see 1.2.3).

# Appendix 1. Detailed data tables for high school students

## 1. Customised Employment supports

All of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school received support to do the Discovery process (Table 3). When we looked at the components of the Discovery process, more than half (60%) of student participants had help conducting formal interviews with employers (Table 4), while 80% had developed a vocational profile as part of Discovery (Table 5).

**Table 3. Number of participants who received support to do the Discovery process of Customised Employment**

Discovery process	Count	Percent
Received support	7	100%
Did not receive support	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

**Table 4. Number of participants who had help conducting formal interviews with employers**

Help conducting formal interviews	Count	Percent
Yes	3	60%
No	2	40%
Total	5	100%
Missing/ unsure	2	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

**Table 5. Number of participants who developed a vocational profile**

Vocational profile	Count	Percent
Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%
Missing/ unsure	2	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 2. Vocational education and training in school

Over half (57%) of Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school were enrolled in vocational education or training as part of their senior school certificate (Table 6), with hospitality being a common field. Of those who had enrolled in vocational education or training, two students had enrolled in two vocational education or training courses while the remaining students had enrolled in one course.

**Table 6. Number of participants enrolled in vocational education and training in school.**

Enrolled in vocational education or training	Count	Percent
Yes	4	57%
No	3	43%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 3. After school job

The majority (83%) of Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school did not have an after school job (Table 7). The one student who did have an after school job participated in just one after school job, and was no longer employed by the same employer.

**Table 7. Number of participants that participated in an after school job.**

After school job	Count	Percent
Yes	1	17%
No	5	83%
Total	6	100%

1 missing/ unsure.

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 4. Participation in work experience

All Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school had participated in work experience. (Table 8). Common fields where students participated in work experience included hospitality, retail and warehouse work.

**Table 8. Number of participants who engaged in work experience while at high school.**

Work experience	Count	Percent
Yes	7	100%
No	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 5. Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (ASbAT)

Only one Customised Employment participant who was still in high school undertook a School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (ASbAT) (Table 9). This student undertook one course, which they completed. They still work in the same industry but not with the same employer.

**Table 9. Number of participants that undertook an Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship.**

ASbAT	Count	Percent
Yes	1	14%
No	6	86%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 6. Microbusiness

None of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school participated in the microbusiness work preparation activity (Table 10).

**Table 10. Number of participants that had a microbusiness while at school.**

Microbusiness	Count	Percent
Yes	0	0%
No	7	100%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 7. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Plan

All of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school had an NDIS plan (Table 11).

**Table 11. Number of participants that had an NDIS plan.**

NDIS Plan	Count	Percent
Yes	7	100%
No	0	0%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 8. Assistance from Disability Employment Service (DES)

Nearly all (83%) the Customised Employment (CE) participants who were still in high school did not receive assistance from a Disability Employment Service (DES) (Table 12).

**Table 12. Number of participants that received DES assistance.**

DES assistance	Count	Percent
Yes	1	17%
No	5	83%
Total	6	100%
Missing/ unsure	1	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## Appendix 2. Detailed data tables for school leavers

### 9. Level of participation

Over half (57%) of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school participated in two activities designed to increase their employability, whereas nearly one in three school leavers (29%) participated in three work preparation activities (Table 13). Nearly three quarters (71%) of school leaver participants displayed low levels of participation (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

**Table 13. Level of participation in work preparation activities while at school.**

Level of participation	Count	Percent
One activity	1	14%
Two activities	4	57%
Three activities	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

### 10. Vocational education and training in school

Less than half (43%) of Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school were enrolled in vocational education or training courses as part of their senior school certificate (Table 14).

**Table 14. Number of participants who participated in vocational education and training in school.**

Enrolled in vocational education or training	Count	Percent
Yes	3	43%
No	4	57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

All school leavers who had enrolled in vocational education or training courses during school are employed, while only a quarter of participants who had not enrolled in such courses are employed (Table 15).

**Table 15. Workforce status by enrolment in vocational education**

Workforce status	Enrolled	Did not enrol	Enrolled	Did not enrol
	Count	Count	Percent	Percent
Employed	2	1	100%	25%
Unemployed	0	2	0%	50%
Not in the labour force	0	1	0%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

1 missing/ unsure.

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018, HILDA Survey 2018

All the school leaver respondents who had not enrolled in vocational education or training reported having trouble finding work post school, whereas roughly two thirds (67%) of school leaver participants who were enrolled in vocational education or training courses reported having trouble getting work (Table 16).

**Table 16. Job search difficulty by enrolment in vocational education in school.**

Experienced difficulties getting work	Enrolled	Did not enrol	Enrolled	Did not enrol
	Count	Count	Percent	Percent
Yes	2	1	67%	100%
No	1	0	33%	0%
Total	3	1	100%	100%

3 missing/ unsure.

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 11. After school job

Nearly three quarters (71%) of Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school had participated in an after school job while they were at school (Table 17).

**Table 17. Number of participants that participated in an after school job.**

After school job	Count	Percent
Yes	5	71%
No	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

The school leaver participant who did not have an after school job while at school was not in the labour force (Table 18).

**Table 18. Workforce status by participation in an after school job by Customised Employment participation.**

Workforce status	AS job	No AS job	AS job	No AS job
	Count	Count	Percent	Percent
Employed	3	0	60%	0%
Unemployed	2	0	40%	0%
Not in the labour force	0	1	0%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

1 missing/ unsure.

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018, HILDA Survey 2018

All school leaver participants who did not have an after school job while at school reported experiencing difficulty in getting work post school, whereas only one in three (67%) school leavers who did have an after school job while at school reported having trouble finding work (Table 19).

**Table 19. Job search difficulty by participation in an after school job.**

Experienced difficulties getting work	AS job	No AS job	AS job	No AS job
	Count	Count	Percent	Percent
Yes	2	1	67%	100%
No	1	0	33%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

3 missing/ unsure.

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 12. Participation in work experience

All school leavers participated in work experience while at school (Table 20). Common fields where school leavers participated in work experience included hospitality, retail and warehouse work.

**Table 20. Number of participants who engaged in work experience while at high school.**

Work experience	Count	Percent
Yes	7	100%
No	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

### 13. Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (ASbAT)

None of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school had undertaken a School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (ASbAT) while at school (Table 21).

**Table 21. Number of participants that undertook a School based Apprenticeship or Traineeship.**

ASbAT	Count	Percent
Yes	0	0%
No	7	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

### 14. Microbusiness

None of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who had left school participated in the microbusiness program while at school (Table 22).

**Table 22. Number of participants that had a microbusiness while at school.**

Microbusiness	Count	Percent
Yes	0	0%
No	7	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 15. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan

All of the Customised Employment (CE) participants who have left school have an NDIS plan (Table 23).

**Table 23. Number of participants that had an NDIS plan.**

NDIS Plan	Count	Percent
Yes	6	100%
No	0	0%
Total	6	100%
Missing/ unsure	1	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

## 16. Assistance from Disability Employment Service (DES)

Only one school leaver participant received assistance from a Disability Employment Service (DES) (Table 24).

**Table 24. Number of participants that received DES assistance.**

DES assistance	Count	Percent
Yes	1	25%
No	3	75%
Total	4	100%
Missing/ unsure	3	

Source: ARTD Ticket to Work Survey 2018

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<sup>14</sup> Tianxi Xu & Roger J. Stancliffe (2017)

<sup>15</sup> Tianxi Xu & Roger J. Stancliffe (2017)

<sup>16</sup> Tianxi Xu & Roger J. Stancliffe (2017)

<sup>17</sup> Long, B (2015) *An Estimate of the Economic Effects of the Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme* Charles Sturt University  
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