

Support Online



Presentation to Virtual Disability Conference

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**

Acknowledgment of Country

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which our organisation operates.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging.



Outline



1. Online platforms in disability support? Context & why now?
2. Main interview themes – people with disability & carers
3. Main interview themes – support workers
4. What's being done? What should we do about it?

'Gig' work - in disability sector?



The Sydney Morning Herald

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Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke will use a speech in Sydney to accuse the sector of driving down the wages of up to 1 million workers.



The Sydney Morning Herald

'Gig work ... like a cancer': Labor takes aim at gig economy

smh.com.au • 2 min read



Support Online explores experiences of platform users in disability support



What does gig work look like in disability support?

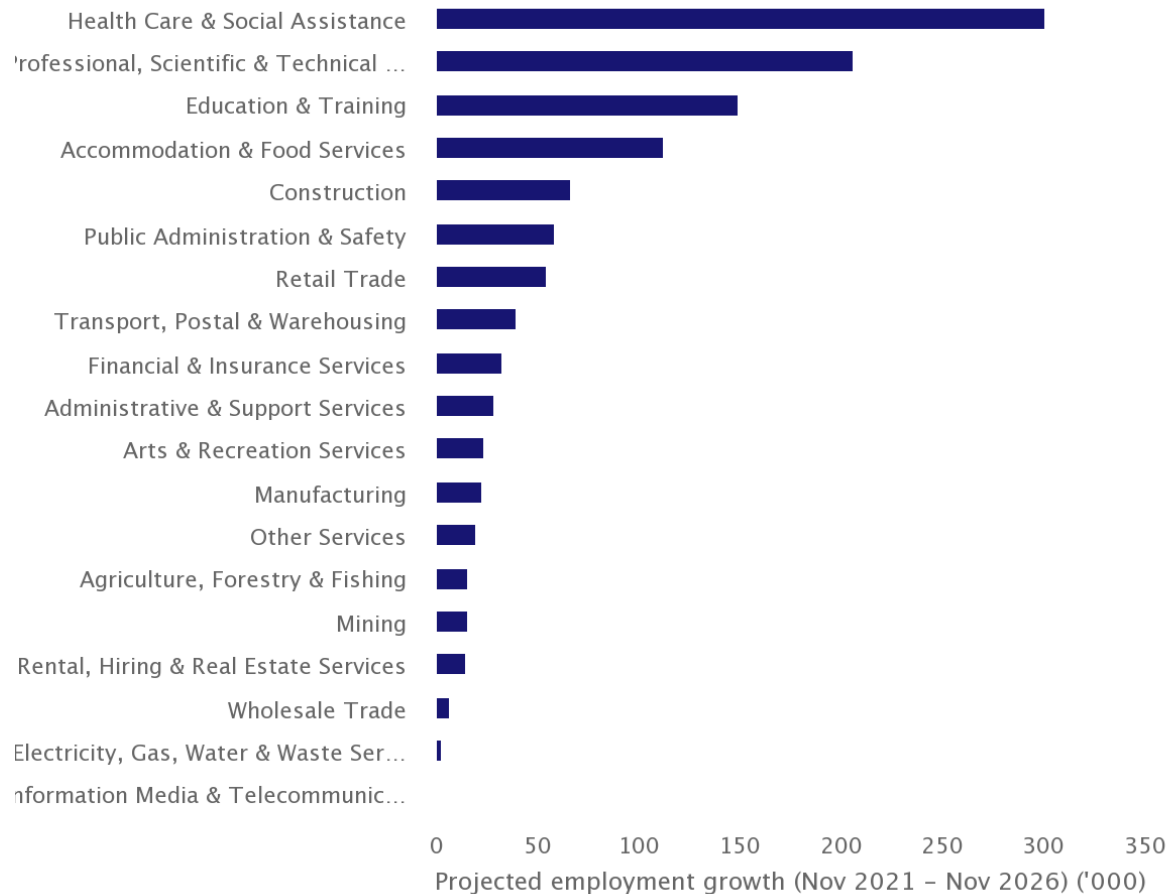
- A spectrum of employment models amongst platforms
- Many of the hallmarks of gig economy work – irregular schedules, fluctuating demand for services, provision of their own capital equipment, organized around digital mediation - are all present.
- Platform work in disability care is different than in other sectors (transport, manual labour, food)

What is Support Online?

- Exploratory project that aims to understand the experiences of platform users (support recipients, providers)
- Contribute an original piece of research that embeds lived experiences and perspectives of people with disability as central tenets of understanding implications of online platforms.
- **Method:** desktop policy scan, lived experience interviews, final report

So...why explore this issue now?

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry will see the most jobs growth in the next 4 years



Government has been thinking about this space for a while

- State and federal legis/senate committees on issue
- New Senate Committee on Work and Care this parliament

HCAS workforce issues high on political agenda

- New federal government, who both plan to revitalise the NDIS and address gig economy ('employee-like' test in National Employment Standards)
- Jobs and Skills Summit

Solutions are already being tested at state level

- Gov already thinking and advancing policy solutions to this...are they working?

People with disability overall spoke positively about their experiences using online platforms for support



1. People with disability were able to find services they need ... but systemic issues aren't solved (e.g. thin markets)

- 'Think I like .. particularly that sort of screening and choice at the very earliest stages, is what I find better'
- 'I interviewed about 300 people on [app name] and the same issue. There wasn't anybody there with [enough] Auslan skills to be able to work with me.'

2. Most people with disability felt they had choice and control over their funding while using the apps

- 'The apps are a tool, the apps are a tool, if you're able to use that tool to your advantage, then yes, you have the choice and control. If you're not able to use that tool to your advantage, then no, you don't have choice and control.'
- 'I didn't have a choice of agency. I didn't have a choice of support workers. And sometimes I didn't even have a choice of what time or what day they were coming. I was basically just told how my life is going to be'

3. People with disability felt strongly about the need for more safeguards for both them and workers

- 'Because support workers are unregulated. So there's no control and supervision, not like doctors and nurses and other professions where there is supervision, support workers don't have that level of supervision'
- 'Where is your responsibility? If you design an app now? Yep. What are you getting paid for designing the app? Or making sure that people are safe? And well cared for?'

Support workers felt their work existed in a grey area and wanted more clarity about entitlements, pay, and training



1. Most workers *and* people with disability called on the platforms to provide more training opportunities

- 'Because we're all independent contractors with the platform. We have no formal structure around us as such. There's no anything and that's problematic in many regards. And so opportunities for training or education are up to you - you got to pay for it, which is a disincentive'

2. Workforce issues were brought up by support workers, including pay, burnout, and gendered nature of work

- 'the undervaluing of the role, and all roles in that area and we all feel it...But it starts from parenting really, doesn't it so any caring, or welfare role. But with the person with the disability or the elderly person isn't valued. Their workforce isn't valued'

3. All interviews pointed out the lack of clarity engaging with platforms about what to do when something goes wrong, provision of insurance, platform responsibility, etc.

- 'It's just gonna take you know, a worker to be harmed and this makes the media for things to hopefully change' 'And somebody had one the other day where they did say and I don't know if that's all insurance policies but it did say something about sexual assault or something like that and you're not covered and that was a bit of 'what? really?'
- 'They're there for the money. They're not there to take on the responsibility of good care, and keeping people safe, not just the person you're looking after also the carers.'

Government is testing solutions - are they working?



'We will pay their entire HECS debt': Free uni degrees for Victorian nurses, midwives



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Disability

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(Further) avenues for policy development

1. A regulated structure of training and professional development (available to independent contractors)

- Providing the opportunity for lifelong training and upgrading, within the context of a more regulated professional structure for the industry, would help to provide disability support workers with similar opportunities and responsibilities as exists within other allied health professions

2. Clarification of the role of the NDIA in this space

- Online platforms aren't required to register with the Quality and Safeguards Commission (QSC)
- NDIS Workforce Capability Framework released by QSC last week

3. Rethinking industrial relations for nonstandard work arrangements

- Jobs and Skills Summit commitment to all workers in care sector having access to collective agreements
- Employee-like condition in National Employment Standards (which changes remit of Fair Work Commission!)
- Role of unions?