

Social Policy and Research Centre

Improving employment outcomes for young people with disability

Insights from the P2E program trial

Deborah Warr, Liam Fallon, Andrew Thies and Amber Mills
2022



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

Let's make
change
that lasts

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is a social justice organisation working alongside people experiencing disadvantage to address the fundamental causes of poverty in Australia. Our mission is to pursue lasting change, to create a more compassionate and just society where everyone can thrive. Our approach is informed directly by the people experiencing disadvantage and uses evidence drawn from our research, together with insights from our programs and services, to develop practical solutions that work. For more information visit <www.bsl.org.au>.

Deborah Warr, Liam Fallon, Andrew Thies and Amber Mills are members of the Inclusive Communities team in the BSL Social Policy and Research Centre.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the key informants and program participants for taking the time to be involved in the interviews and for the thoughtful and perceptive insights that they shared with us.

Photos: Front cover – Jacob Lund/Shutterstock.com; page 11 – Ground Picture/Shutterstock.com

Published by

Brotherhood of St. Laurence
67 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy, Victoria 3065
Australia

ABN 24 603 467 024

ARBN 100 042 822

T (03) 9483 1183

www.bsl.org.au

Suggested citation: Warr, D, Fallon, L, Thies, A & Mills, A 2022, *Improving employment outcomes for young people with disability: insights from the P2E program trial*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

© Brotherhood of St. Laurence 2022

Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism, or review, as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968* and subsequent amendments, no part of this paper may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Contents

Summary	4	5 Key informant perspectives on the P2E model	16
Key insights from the evaluation	4	Reflections on program design	16
1 Background to the P2E program trial and evaluation	6	Using an Advantaged Thinking practice	16
Promoting open employment for people with disability	6	The coaching role	17
Poor outcomes of specialist employment programs	6	Linking up with LAC services	18
Taking a place-based approach	7	Advantaged Thinking in LAC settings	19
Core elements of the P2E program	8	Does P2E show how TtW can be adapted?	19
2 Methods for the evaluation	9	6 Outcomes for the young people	20
3 What the administrative data tells us	10	Insights from 'check-in' questions with program participants	21
Limitations	11	7 The significance of the P2E model	23
4 Contexts for P2E	12	A mix of program components	23
Low expectations of people with disability	13	Program innovation	23
Ambivalence about disability as an identity	14	Program gaps to consider	23
Experiences of other employment programs	14	Limitations of the study	24
Impacts of COVID-19	15	Conclusion	24
		References	25

Summary

Pathways to Employment (P2E) was a small, proof-of-concept trial to test the efficacy of mainstream employment pathway support for young people in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Despite implementation constraints associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation shows that the P2E trial generated encouraging results, as well as highlighting areas for further development.

P2E was designed as a mainstream employment service that created a tailored pathway for young people with a disability into work opportunities. It was intended to function as a bridging program, integrating 'supply-side' activities to build jobseekers' capacities with 'demand-side' activities to create employment opportunities. The program was based on the [Transition to Work \(TtW\) model](#) developed by BSL and implemented by a national TtW Community of Practice. That model featured an Advantaged Thinking approach that supports young people to recognise and develop their talents and strengths and then identify and explore employment aspirations. Importantly it also connects them with employment-related resources, opportunities and networks. A notable innovation of P2E was linking up with Local Area Coordination (LAC) services delivered through the NDIS to create a referral pathway for young NDIS participants into the program.

The trial was implemented in BSL's TtW and LAC services in a region of outer suburban Melbourne, from June 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, P2E could not be delivered as planned. Restrictions meant that it had to be largely delivered online; and demand-side activities to engage local employers could not be implemented. Thirty-eight young people aged between 18 and 25 years enrolled in the program, and 23 maintained regular involvement in program activities.

Key insights from the evaluation

Promising outcomes for young people

- The P2E program model contributed to positive outcomes for participants, notably by shifting attitudes about their capability and their employment prospects. It generated an encouraging number of education and employment outcomes. Participants also reported increased confidence, reduced feelings of stress, the development of work-related skills, and motivation to pursue work and careers.
- P2E showed the value of linking into LAC planning processes to identify and refer young people with employment goals into a mainstream employment program.
- The Advantaged Thinking practice which informed the P2E model was helpful in 'undoing' the effects of negative community attitudes, including low expectations of the capacities of people with disability, which are absorbed by young people with disability.

P2E was intended to function as a bridging program to integrate 'supply-side' activities to build jobseekers' capacities with 'demand-side' activities to create employment opportunities.

Trial limitations

Implementation of the trial was affected by practical constraints:

- COVID-related lockdowns meant that delivery of the P2E model was largely restricted to an online mode which may not have suited some young people with disability, and particularly those with learning and psychosocial disability. This meant the model was not meaningfully tested on young people with moderate to significant disability.
- In addition, demand-side activities to engage local employers could not be implemented during lockdown. As a result, the trial focused largely on the supply-side activities of supporting young people to develop their strengths and explore their employment aspirations.

Model gaps and challenges

The evaluation identified challenges to be considered when developing future iterations of the model. These include:

- Current eligibility requirements for access to TtW services are difficult for young people with disability to meet. Further, P2E is not linked to government incentives for employers to employ young people with disability. Some eligibility requirements and incentive schemes may put young people with disability at a disadvantage in relation to other vulnerable jobseekers.

- Many young people required levels of intensive support from the Youth Development Coaches that were not anticipated in planning P2E. This has implications for program duration and intensity, staff training and caseloads.
- It is critical to collect accurate individual-level data to enable inputs and outcomes of employment programs like P2E to be measured effectively.
- Measuring the outcomes of employment programs for young people with disability should recognise the participants' diverse starting points. This will help to reveal the program's impacts on young people in varying circumstances.
- Engaging family members and carers of young people with disability could be explored, to extend the value of Advantaged Thinking approaches.
- Consistent approaches need to be developed to address potential disincentives for employers. A key issue is the responsibility for insurance cover when young people are involved in work tasters and placements.

What young people told us

'I'm feeling ... more hopeful about my future and more excited and willing to get out there more'

'I'm excited to figure out what I like to do in my life to come'

'I feel like I've come a long way from when I actually started'

'I always feel that I've gotten something out of it every time that I have a session'

1 Background to the P2E program trial and evaluation

Promoting open employment for people with disability

The P2E program responds to concerns that young people with disability are not offered the same opportunities as other young people to develop and pursue employment aspirations. Rather, many young people are directed into Australian Disability Enterprises (formerly known as ‘sheltered workshops’). In these settings, people with disability can be paid much less than the minimum wage and interact largely with other people with disability, with risks of becoming disconnected from wider community life.

There is now growing recognition of the social and economic benefits for people with disability of working in mainstream or ‘open’ employment settings. These include increased skills and knowledge, a higher standard of living and financial independence, better health and wellbeing, a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction, and involvement in diverse social networks (Saunders & Nedelec 2014; Australian Human Rights Commission 2016; Lysaght et al. 2017; Australian Federation of Disability Organisations 2018; Meltzer et al. 2018; Wehman et al. 2018). Employment rates for people with disability in Australia are lower than in some other OECD countries, suggesting room for improvement (Thomas & Vandenbroek 2022). One analysis of data from a high-performing employment support program suggests the potential for a majority of people with moderate intellectual disability to be sustainably employed in open employment settings (Pearce 2017).

As part of efforts to improve employment outcomes, the NDIS developed an NDIS Participant Employment Strategy (2019–22) with the aim of having 30% of working-age participants in paid work by June 2023 (National Disability Insurance Scheme 2019). The Strategy lays out a multifaceted plan for achieving this target, that includes working with people with disability to explore and identify their employment aspirations while building the confidence of employers to create work experience and employment opportunities.

Poor outcomes of specialist employment programs

As at mid-2022, the most widely available specialist employment programs for young people with disability are the School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) program and Disability Employment Services (DES).

SLES, delivered by various not-for-profit and for-profit organisations, target young people in their final years of secondary school and up to the age of 22. Funding is available for up to two years and can be used to develop foundation work-related skills and vocational training according to young people’s needs and employment goals. SLES produce mixed results. These can be attributed to a range of issues, including challenges in navigating a complex disability employment system which left over 50% of NDIS participants unable to utilise their available funding, and the need for improved oversight and accountability of SLES programs (Hawkins 2022; Pearce 2017).

DES are available to people with a disability aged 14 and over and offer a range of support services to find and maintain employment, in addition to wage subsidies and funding for workplace modifications. DES are modelled on jobactive employment services (replaced by Workforce Australia on 4 July 2022) for the general jobseeker population. DES have a poor track record in securing work for people with disability. A recent review found employment outcomes declining since 2018; and service providers, employers, program participants and disability advocates who were surveyed for the review registered 'negative sentiment about the [DES] program' (Boston Consulting Group 2020, p. 48). In other research, many NDIS participants reported dissatisfaction with disability employment services for failing to provide person-centred planning and support, an approach that is essential for improving employment outcomes for people with disability (NDIA 2021).

Evidence of the benefits of open employment, persistently low employment rates among people with disability and poor employment outcomes from specialist employment programs suggested the potential benefits of adapting TtW, a mainstream employment support model, to meet the needs of young people with disability. This was the rationale for the development and implementation of the P2E model.

Taking a place-based approach

P2E takes a place-based approach which involves tapping into local networks and developing partnerships between organisations in local

communities (including schools, employers and employment services). It seeks to respond to local contexts and opportunities in labour markets. The decision to site the trial in the local government area (LGA) of Hume was practical, with BSL providing both TtW and LAC services there. Eligibility for P2E was accordingly limited to young people with disability who lived in this LGA. Located on Melbourne's fringe with a mix of suburban and semirural areas, Hume is also a highly multicultural municipality: around 35 per cent of its residents were born overseas, from 156 different countries, and speaking over 150 different languages (Know Your Council n.d.). Just under a third of residents are under 18 years of age; and key local industries include motor vehicle and parts manufacturing, electronic equipment manufacturing, and transport services (with Melbourne Airport a major employer) (Know Your Council n.d.). According to the latest Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data, out of Victoria's 79 LGAs, Hume City is the equal eleventh most disadvantaged LGA (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016).

The Hume City Council supports a local employment partnership that brings together representatives from education, business and community sectors to identify and promote local employment opportunities for local people. Hume LGA has also faced pointed challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic: during the Delta outbreak in 2021, it accounted for around one-third of all Victorian cases (Ilanbey & Cunningham 2021). Contributing factors included the municipality's high household density, the percentage of essential workers who need to travel to work (sixth-highest in metropolitan Melbourne), and an initially low vaccination rate.

P2E takes a place-based approach which involves tapping into local networks and developing partnerships between organisations in local communities (including schools, employers and employment services).

Core elements of the P2E program

Transition to Work is a Commonwealth employment program targeting young jobseekers. From 2016 to 2022, BSL delivered TtW programs in three sites across metropolitan Melbourne while convening a national TtW Community of Practice (CoP) involving 11 TtW service providers across Australia. The CoP, which concluded in 2021, had 'a shared aim of developing and documenting an effective response to youth unemployment, through collaborative and multi-sectoral effort' (McColl-Jones et al. 2021, p. 4). These 11 sites offered an enhanced TtW model that featured an Advantaged Thinking practice. Advantaged Thinking is an approach for working with young people that recognises that their aspirations and abilities are the basis for effecting change and transformation (The Foyer Federation 2022). Applied to improve youth employment outcomes, Advantaged Thinking practice uses a phased approach that involves:

1. Guidance and exploration
2. Work preparation
3. Workplace opportunities
4. Post-placement support.

Together, the four phases integrate 'supply-side' activities building the capacities of jobseekers with 'demand-side' strategies that engage employers to offer employment tasters, work experience and jobs to young people with disability.

The P2E model aimed to adapt the Advantaged Thinking framework for working with young people with disability. A further aim of the P2E model was to trial the feasibility of linking with NDIS Local Area Coordination (LAC) services to streamline processes for identifying young NDIS participants with employment goals and providing 'warm' referrals into available employment programs.

It was estimated that across Hume City around 240 NDIS participants aged between 15 and 24 years engaged with LAC services and had expressed employment goals in annual plan reviews. Members of the LAC team initiated contact with NDIS participants and/or their families to let them know about the proposed trial. If appropriate, participants were referred for follow-up by Youth Development Coaches (YDCs) delivering the P2E program.

P2E was rolled out in June 2021 and ran for six months, with one of the YDCs providing limited ongoing support for a further six months. A total of 38 participants, aged between 18 and 25 years, enrolled. This age range addressed a perceived service gap between the SLES program, available to NDIS participants in the final years of secondary schooling and the initial years after leaving school, and DES, which largely cater for adults.

Implementation of the P2E trial was impacted by ongoing restrictions (including extended periods of lockdown outlawing travel for 'non-essential' activities) that were imposed by the Victorian Government to manage risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, program delivery was largely delivered through online sessions; and plans to collaborate with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in phases three (workplace opportunities) and four (post-placement support) of the Advantaged Thinking Framework could not be realised as originally envisaged. This evaluation therefore focuses largely on phases 1 and 2 of P2E program delivery.

Advantaged Thinking is an approach for working with young people that recognises that their aspirations and abilities are the basis for effecting change and transformation.

2 Methods for the evaluation

A formative evaluation was conducted to identify emerging outcomes and appraise the feasibility, appropriateness and acceptability of the P2E model. Key questions guiding the evaluation were:

- What worked well to achieve objectives of the P2E trial?
- What challenges have been encountered?
- How have challenges been resolved or do they remain outstanding?
- What have been the outcomes and impacts for program participants?

Another aim was to trial methods for gathering the insights and reflections of young participants, including young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or using non-verbal communication styles. These perspectives are largely overlooked in research yet are critical for understanding how programs work and the outcomes generated. We therefore explored inclusive and accessible techniques for gathering young people's perspectives on their involvement in P2E.

The evaluation had three components: descriptive analysis of administrative data, interviews with BSL staff and community stakeholders, and interviews with the young program participants. The methods for gathering and analysing these data are explained below.

Descriptive analyses of administrative data were used to identify selected sociodemographic characteristics of P2E participants, their involvement in program activities and outcomes generated through the program. This information is routinely recorded by staff involved in delivering the P2E program; and data was aggregated and de-identified before being sent to the evaluation team.

Key informant interviews (17) were conducted with BSL staff involved in developing and delivering the P2E program and community stakeholders. Staff in program development roles contributed to program design and identifying objectives. Program delivery roles involved frontline staff putting programs into practice. Key informant interviews were also conducted with a small number of external stakeholders, including people from local employment networks and parents of program participants. Interviews were conducted online, and interviewees were given transcripts to review and revise if required to ensure they reflected intended meanings.

Interviews (6) with young P2E program participants were conducted online. The method for recruiting, interviewing and supporting program participants was developed in consultation with the YDCs who had good understanding of participants' communication needs and other issues. The interviews explored young people's engagement with, and perceived outcomes of, the program. While the plan was to visit the delivery site to conduct interviews at two points in time, we were restricted to conducting online interviews and it was more practical to conduct one interview. Two 'check-in' questions explored how participants recalled feeling at the start of their involvement in the P2E program and then how they were feeling now (three to four months into their involvement). They could choose from two emojis (nervous/excited) or use their own words to describe their feelings. Program participants were reimbursed with a \$50 gift voucher in acknowledgement of the time they contributed to the study.

3 What the administrative data tells us

Table 1 presents selected sociodemographic characteristics of program participants from the 'Effort to Outcome' (ETO) database. Data is missing for some categories and, relying on aggregated rather than individual-level data, we were unable to explore individual timelines and the cumulative impact of involvement in P2E activities.

Administrative data showed that 38 young people enrolled in the P2E trial. Program participants tended to be at the upper end of the age range and lived with a range of disabilities. Almost half of the participants were currently involved in secondary school, vocational training or university studies. Most participants reported living at home with their families (21), and 22 reported being currently unemployed and looking for work.

The ETO data also confirms that there was progressive decline in activities completed across the program phases, which was linked to the inability to deliver the entire program as envisaged. Phase 1 (guidance and exploration) had the most activities completed (95), followed by Phase 2 (81, work preparation) and Phase 3 (only 25 workforce opportunities delivered). Outcomes recorded for young people include:

- 15 employment outcomes
- 16 education/training outcomes
- 6 volunteering outcomes
- 5 work experience outcomes.

Table 1 P2E participant characteristics

Characteristic		Number	Characteristic		Number
Age	16-18	3	Disability	Autism	8
	19-21	17		Intellectual	8
	22-25	18		Hearing	3
Gender	Female	16		Learning	3
	Male	21		Vision	3
	Prefer not to self-describe	1		Psychosocial	3
Country of birth	Australia	21		Physical	2
	Other country	10		Other	8
Current educational participation	Not studying	14	Current employment status	Not employed, not looking for work	6
	Studying part-time	6		Unemployed, looking for work	22
	Studying full-time	10		Working part-time	5

Note: Some data was missing for some of the 38 participants

An employment outcome was defined as a young person taking up employment, and an education/training outcome as a young person enrolling in a course. The ETO database records individuals taking up these opportunities but could include the same individual taking up multiple opportunities.

All of the employment outcomes were recorded in the period January to June 2022, which was after the P2E program had been formally completed and two to eight months after the interviews discussed in this report were conducted. Education and training outcomes were also recorded after the program had formally been completed, between December 2021 and June 2022, while volunteering and work experience outcomes were recorded during the formal program delivery period.

Limitations

There are some limitations to these data, including the use of aggregated data and some missing data. Missing data include the number and description of the sessions delivered. Using aggregated, rather than de-identified individual data limited our capacity to assess the timeline and cumulative impact of each participant's involvement in P2E activities. Tracking participants' involvement in P2E activities over time could show more specific associations between exposure to types of activities and outcomes across program phases. This could inform how programs could be tailored to meet the needs of young people with diverse disabilities. Identifying efficient and accurate ways of recording activities while minimising the burden for members of the program delivery team will be important.



4 Contexts for P2E

Sections 4, 5 and 6 discuss insights from interviews with BSL staff, community members and program participants. Table 2 summarises themes and subthemes that were identified in these interviews.

Table 2 Themes and subthemes in interview data

Core theme	Themes	Subthemes
Contexts for the P2E program	Personal, familial and social contexts for program participants	Seeking mainstream employment
		Low family and community expectations
		Social isolation
		Lack of opportunities for employment and training
		Negative former experiences in employment programs and education
	Impacts of COVID-19	Implications for new jobseekers
		Online formats not accessible to some people with disability
		Impacts on local services and employers
	City of Hume as a setting	Relatively young, multicultural population
Characteristics of local labour markets		
Program elements	Program elements	Flexible participation
		Fills gap in market
		Practical dilemmas/issues
	Intra- and inter-organisational cooperation	Collaborating for program planning and implementation
		Importance of, and barriers to, effective cross-team communication
		Developing effective governance
		Sustaining relationships with AHRC and other external actors
	Advantaged Thinking approach	Conceptual framework and rationale
		Strengths-based conversations
		Promoting autonomy for young people
	Coaching model	Blending LAC and TtW principles
		One-to-one engagement
	Role of LACs	Lack of preparation for LACs
		Managing expectations
		Issues with referral process
Clash of NDIS and TtW frameworks		
Work-related activities	Aspirations, plans and activities that couldn't be implemented	
Outcomes for program participants	Outcomes observed by staff and community members	Work-related skills developing
		Personal development
		Identified strengths and capabilities
	Outcomes reported by participants	Participation in education, work and training

The remainder of this section discusses contextual insights that are relevant for understanding P2E program design and ways of working with young people.¹ Key informants (KIs, including BSL staff and community stakeholders) described how young people tend to 'drift' after leaving school and encounter many challenges in finding employment. Program participants described their awareness of low community expectations of the capacities of people with disability. The COVID-19 pandemic was also a significant context influencing outcomes from the P2E trial.

Low expectations of people with disability

Effective employment programs for young people with disability must provide opportunities to build work-related skills and experiences and also undo the cumulative effects of being denied these opportunities. For instance, KIs working with young people with disability noted that they came into the program having previously experienced little encouragement to develop aspirations and expectations for the future and few opportunities for training and employment. This was corroborated by the accounts of program participants who had attended both mainstream and special schools where they had not been encouraged to explore career and work options.

KIs explained that experiences at school can have other adverse effects such as fostering anxiety and even resentment towards education and training:

Because of that negative past experience in education, [they] aren't willing to try a course or something like that, that could ... help them ... in achieving their goals. (KI02)

There was strong agreement that when young people leave secondary school many end up 'drifting', isolated and dependent on their families for social interaction. One program participant explained their own situation:

[After school] it was really hard for me to get engaged with the community ... I've been out of school for three years now. And I haven't really done much. (Bobbi)

For varied reasons, families and carers can discourage efforts to expand young people's horizons:

It's actually the informal supports that [are] disabling the person because [parents and carers] keep saying, 'No, he can't do that. He won't be eligible', or they try and put [their children] in a bubble because they don't want to explore anything that may put the person at risk. (KI10)

In these ways, families were sometimes considered part of the problem, although the family members we spoke with were keen to support their children in finding employment. This involved transporting and accompanying their children to attend training and employment-related activities and reaching out to service providers to identify training and employment opportunities. Parents also felt isolated and described having 'no luck in [finding] work placements or volunteer work' during their child's secondary schooling and facing ongoing struggles to identify meaningful options after they left school, leaving them not 'know[ing] where to go and what to do' (KI17).

¹ In this section interview quotes have been mildly edited to promote clarity and minimise potential for participants to be identified. Quotes from project staff and community stakeholders are attributed to 'key informants (KIs)' and gender-neutral pseudonyms refer to program participants.

Ambivalence about disability as an identity

Low expectations of people with disability meant that young people could understandably be ambivalent about being labelled as having a disability. One staff member noted that young people ‘themselves want to access a mainstream service’ (KI04), and when P2E was first rolled out, potential participants were deterred by a program targeting people with disability. While ‘some of the young people [in the program] don’t really strongly identify with their disability, or perhaps even see it as a negative thing’, others ‘pretty strongly identify with having a disability’ (KI01). Tensions produced through this ambivalence were explored in coaching sessions:

We have discussions around, ‘Should you put your disability on your cover letter?’ Or ‘Should you mention to an employer that you have a disability?’ And a lot of the young people will just flat out say, ‘No, no, no! They don’t need to know.’ [That] perception has obviously come from somewhere. They’ve had these negative experiences in the community, whether it’s been during their schooling, or whether it’s been applying for other jobs and being rejected. (KI02)

One worker observed that even when employers or managers are supportive, other employees bring their own attitudes and prejudices:

It’s hard to control [the attitudes of other employees], you know, whether the workplace is going to be supportive, and not filled with—you know, doesn’t have someone who’s going to be ableist or really nasty. Yeah, so it’s hard. Because we want to make sure that where they’re going is going to be supportive and not damaging as well. (KI01)

Identifying strategies and opportunities for reframing ways of understanding disability was described as really ‘tricky’ (KI01).

Experiences of other employment programs

Both staff and young people compared P2E favourably with other disability employment programs—such as SLES and DES—they had been involved in. They pointed to the ways employment goals are identified and the lack of success in securing work through those programs. For example, one KI in the LAC team perceived these services as lacking interest in exploring young people’s own employment goals and having inflexible processes for working with young people even though ‘not everybody is a fit’ (KI12). They went on to note that they ‘can’t recall many participants [they’ve] worked with who have had a positive experience [with a DES].

Speaking of their involvement in a SLES program, a young person explained:

The [employment coaches] kind of latched on to [anything I said]. I did work experience in [at school] ... and [they] would look into that without sort of consulting me about it, even though it’s not a path I’m into now. It was more sort of, ‘Oh it’s convenient, so let’s look into this’. It got to the point where my employment coach would send off expressions of interest, and I’d only find out about them the next day and she hadn’t even asked me about it. And when I asked, ‘Oh, is it possible, maybe, to look into some volunteering opportunities or anything like that, or any kind of work experience that might possibly relate to the course I’m studying?’ ... she was like, ‘Ah no, sorry, we can’t offer that for you’. And it was more sort of, you know, ‘We can get you a job at Kmart’, or, you know, something that I really couldn’t do. (Pete)

Another was pressured to apply continually for jobs, without much attention to a suitable fit:

I have joined employment services before ... and I found that the employment services are very kind of, you know, like, you go in there, you look for jobs, and it’s kind of apply, apply, apply. (Jas)

Impacts of COVID-19

The timing of the P2E rollout meant that it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This necessitated a shift to online delivery of program activities exploring aspirations and talents in one-on-one coaching sessions. In addition, economic downturns diverted employers' attention towards retaining and supporting their current workforce rather than signing up for new employment programs.

Limited to online, one-on-one sessions, around a third of young people who enrolled in P2E deferred their involvement until it was possible to resume face-to-face sessions. As interviewees commented, some young people simply 'prefer that face-to-face learning' (KI03) and 'seeing people in person' (Nic).

The changed format necessitated revising program content to focus more on developing interpersonal and work-related skills, such as building confidence, exploring employment aspirations, identifying training and employment pathways, preparing résumés and interviewing.

A few program participants, however, reported favouring online sessions:

I love that it's all through Zoom. It's really accessible for me, so I don't have to worry about getting down there for any of my meetings. (Jas)

The advantage of virtual meetings in minimising exposure to COVID-19 was important for some. Building rapport in online sessions was considered easier, however, when there had been some prior in-person contact with YDCs.

The COVID-19 pandemic constrained capacities to engage with employers to identify opportunities for work tasters and placements. Local employers were focused on other priorities:

Three [large retail] stores all said the same thing, which is, 'I've got enough kids that I can't give shifts to, [and] I just don't have the capacity to take on any more work experience at the moment and take that away from someone who is already employed'. (KI02)

Contexts where young people can become socially isolated and their ambivalence in identifying as having a disability must be considered in designing employment support programs and understanding the time it can take to achieve meaningful outcomes. The importance of being responsive to these contexts is suggested in young people's dissatisfaction with other available employment programs, and confirmed by some KIs' observations. These contexts and issues informed the design of the P2E program. Delivery of the program, in terms both of the young people who were able to participate and the aims to engage with employers to offer work experience and create employment opportunities, was curtailed because of restrictions on in-person contact during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 Key informant perspectives on the P2E model

This section draws largely on the interviews with program development and delivery staff to explore views on the elements of P2E program design, the value of an Advantaged Thinking practice, the role of the YDCs and integrating the program with Local Area Coordination activities.

Reflections on program design

The aim of P2E was to adapt Transitions to Work, 'a tried and tested model ... to work with young people' (KI04), to 'ensure that how we deliver programs is really accessible and inclusive' (KI05). Innovative aspects of the program were incorporating Advantaged Thinking practice for working with young people with disability and linking up with LAC services for referring young people with employment goals into the program.

Program development and delivery staff were unanimous in perceiving the value of the model for reasons encapsulated by this KI:

P2E fill[s] a huge void in the market, as far as I can see, [for] people who had tried, particularly, with Disability Employment Services, [and] not had good results, [had] not felt listened to or that their opinions and goals were important. [They] ultimately had left those types of arrangements feeling very dissatisfied and unsure of where to go next. And that seems to be the feedback that I've had many, many times with participants I've worked with through the years. So, I think this being a more personalised approach has been really well received by the participants that I'm thinking of. (KI12)

Using an Advantaged Thinking practice

Following the TtW Community of Practice model, P2E applied an Advantaged Thinking framework to work with young people. Advantaged Thinking practice emphasises exploratory, rather than directive, conversations with young people to reflect on their aspirations and talents and how these could influence the kinds of work they might consider. Many informants considered Advantaged Thinking was 'the most meaningful part of [the program]' (KI02).

One staff member offered a helpful explanation of Advantaged Thinking practice:

It's concentrating more on their [young people's] ability and asking, 'Okay, what's your aspiration? What are you good at? Where do you want to go? What do you want to do? How do you want to drive this?' So the participant has the ownership of it. (KI10)

As noted, the Advantaged Thinking framework has four cumulative phases, but these could not be fully implemented due to COVID restrictions. Rather, its application was largely restricted to 'guidance and exploration' and 'work preparation' phases, although where relevant and practicable participants were supported in job searches, identifying work experience opportunities, applying for jobs, preparing for interviews and commencing new positions. The COVID-19 restrictions in force at the time meant that

participants' interactions with coaches were limited to one-on-one online sessions.

Both KIs involved in delivering the program and program participants pointed to the value of an Advantaged Thinking framework for countering the effects of low expectations and experiences of social isolation. As one young person reflected: 'I've kind of always struggled when it comes to talking about myself in a positive way' (Jas). Nonetheless, for young people unfamiliar with strengths-based activities, it takes time to shift patterns of thought and develop new skills:

[Young people with disability] might have a lack of experience in advocating for themselves. There are some people who, because of their disability, really struggle with self-reflection, and actually struggle to kind of conceive a goal, because it's not something literal that they can understand. (KI02)

I think a lot of the young people have possibly never had this sort of opportunity where they're the ones who get to lead things and not ... hav[e] someone tell them what to do. (KI01)

Despite the novelty of the approach, program participants were observed to respond positively to an increased sense of influence over their future:

We're supporting the young person to figure out what they want to be doing and how they want to do it as well and what steps they want to take to do it. So I think for young people to experience that ... when maybe they haven't experienced that in high school or in their personal life, where they've actually had a bit of control over what they're doing, I think that's been really great. (KI01)

In practice, applying an Advantaged Thinking approach required:

A delicate balance ... of strategic questioning ... being very perceptive to micro-parts of conversations that might tell you what that young person's interests are, and knowing to dig deeper on those parts, to let them have their own narrative. I think a lot of people would just kind of go, 'It's hard to get information out of this young person, so I'll just write this'. Whereas we absolutely can't do that, we take the hard course, and if it takes sessions and sessions and sessions for us to set a goal, then that's what we'll do. (KI02)

The coaching role

The YDCs who were responsible for delivering the P2E program bridged the two BSL organisational divisions involved in implementation (Community Programs and NDIS Services). The YDCs were intentionally recruited from the LAC team to contribute their deep understanding of the needs and circumstances of people with disability and familiarity with the NDIS operating environment. This environment includes high caseloads and limited time for incorporating additional processes and activities into the planning meetings with participants. It is also a highly bureaucratic environment ... that's really KPI-driven, where you've got really clearly defined timelines, outcomes and targets' (KI07). In preparation for their P2E roles, the YDCs participated in training, delivered by members of the Transition to Work team, to apply Advantaged Thinking practices that are 'compatible with how [the TtW team] work' (KI04).

Building on their experience in LAC roles, the YDCs had expanded conversations with the young people, exploring employment goals and identifying training and employment pathways. The coaches' attentiveness to their capacities and experiences was noted by the young people:

They help explain everything to others. They really, like, take it step by step, at your own speed, which is really good. (Max)

Program participants explained that a flexible approach and extra support when required was important when you'd experienced many rejections applying for work, and eased some of the anxiety they had felt:

Finding employment [when you have] a disability is really difficult [and] having ... a person ... there to be in your corner [who] is, like, your number one supporter is really beneficial, I would imagine, to most people. Because like, unfortunately ... if you don't have a great support network around you, it can be quite a confronting process going through, you know, multiple rejections. (Remy)

Linking up with LAC services

Linking youth employment services with LAC services is a signature feature of the P2E model. Given the pressures in the LAC roles, adding tasks associated with the P2E trial required careful planning. Sessions were held with LAC team members to develop processes and identify potential issues.

One concern of the LAC team was that referring NDIS participants to a BSL program (P2E) would present a conflict of interest for the organisation. Another was whether some participants, particularly young people with complex needs, would be adequately supported during their involvement in P2E.

The first issue relates to NDIS rules that prohibit organisations delivering LAC services from referring participants to programs run by the same organisation. Advice was sought from the NDIA which confirmed that referrals to P2E would not present a conflict of interest 'because Transition to Work is actually a community mainstream support' (and not an NDIS-funded BSL service) (K110).

The second issue focuses on the situations of young people with disability who would require additional support to be involved in program activities but don't have funding in their current NDIS plans to access such support. This issue was more difficult to resolve within the timelines of the P2E program.

Some LAC staff were concerned that 'when people with a disability are engaged in something that doesn't work well, it will set them back a really long way' (K113). Ensuring adequate and appropriate support for young people to participate in P2E requires forward planning, such as anticipating requirements in annual plan reviews. LACs managed this risk by 'be[ing] strategic in terms of targeting [NDIS participants] who had previously expressed 'a strong, resounding employment goal' to ensure the referral 'would be a hit or a sure acceptance' (K110). This compromise solution means that the trial cohort is likely to have a bias towards young people with disability who were perceived by LACs as likely to succeed and who would not require additional support. This suggests that the model wasn't meaningfully tested on young people with complex disabilities, including intellectual and learning and psychosocial disabilities, who are likely to be NDIS participants.

For young people referred to the program, the YDCs' connections with the LAC team facilitated 'warm handovers' (K112) that assisted in understanding and meeting diverse communicative and accessibility issues. On some occasions, it also assisted in identifying needs for other support services, 'not just for education and employment, but also just generally support services that are out there' (K102). The YDCs were able to make referrals to relevant community services and noted that this flexibility in their role is important because:

It recognises that people aren't going to be able to work if they've got this other stuff going on that's unaddressed. (K101)

Advantaged Thinking in LAC settings

While LAC staff acknowledged the value of an Advantaged Thinking approach, they noted this kind of approach has much in common with their practice:

There's a lot of harmony [between how LAC and TtW work, they are] just different ways of articulating similar core principles. (K107)

At the same time, this informant questioned the feasibility of incorporating its tenets into interactions with NDIS participants:

With caseloads being as high as they are, it becomes a real, practical barrier to that deeper work and [you] need time and the ability to build a relationship that isn't constrained by plan submission KPIs. (K107)

In summary, for collaborations involving LAC teams it is critical to understand the NDIS operating environment. This particularly applies when seeking to link into LAC processes. Working with LAC teams to explore ways of incorporating and tailoring the Advantaged Thinking framework for the operating environments of the LACs is important. Checking in during implementation phases can assist in identifying and resolving emerging issues.

Does P2E show how TtW can be adapted?

These insights into program design show that P2E was positively perceived by staff delivering the program and by program participants. However, it's not clear whether P2E can be considered an adaptation of the TtW model or represents a hybrid model that incorporated selective aspects of the TtW Community of Practice approach. For instance, the two programs have markedly different timelines: the TtW team work with some young people for 18 months or longer, while the P2E trial was slated to run for around six months. TtW also has strict eligibility criteria that did not apply to P2E. To register for TtW, young people

must be unemployed or not currently studying, and receiving income support other than a Disability Support Pension. Young people also can be compelled to participate in TtW services as a requirement for accessing income support.

Other distinctions are also noted. The TtW Community of Practice approach involves employment support providers and young people committing to a 'Deal' that emphasises their respective rights and obligations. By contrast P2E was voluntary, with participants determining the frequency of their meetings with the YDCs. Also, young people with disability were not interacting with the larger cohort of young people involved in TtW. Finally, informants explained that while TtW participants attract wage subsidies these are not available to P2E participants. Some KIs considered subsidies are important incentives for employers, although there is mixed evidence for their long-term effectiveness (Mallett et al. 2021; Boston Consulting Group 2020). If the aim is to adapt TtW services for young people with disability, then these policy and practice issues need to be carefully considered, trialled and evaluated.

Working with LAC teams to explore ways of incorporating and tailoring the Advantaged Thinking framework for the operating environments of the LACs is important.

6 Outcomes for the young people

At the time of the interviews, none of the young people had yet achieved the employment and training outcomes noted in Section 3; however, in interviews both staff and young people described a range of positive employment-related outcomes generated through the P2E trial. These included improved confidence, formulating employment goals, preparing résumés, searching and applying for jobs, and developing interview skills. Looking forward, a few young people expressed a new eagerness 'to get out there more' (Nic) and look for work. Young people described their interactions with YDCs as offering a 'positive engagement with someone' (Remy) that was a catalyst for making progress.

Staff noted that young people 'who had been disengaged from services for years' were guided to explore and identify employment aspirations and went 'from having no interview experience to having sat through four interviews' (KI01). Another KI observed:

Everyone that I've worked with continuously, they've seen some kind of improvement or outcome. (KI02)

This was attributed to having extra, appropriate support:

A lot of [young people] who just need a bit of extra support around getting a job [and] there's really a gap ... [they] leave high school, they might do a work education course ... or a TAFE course or just do nothing ... and then it's like, 'What do I do now?' Or people don't finish high school and never

really moved on to anything else ... there's a big cohort who just need some extra support and motivation to really explore their options and get their foot in the door and this project has identified that gap quite nicely. (KI01)

Young people themselves described the value of Advantaged Thinking in supporting them to identify their strengths and capabilities:

With the Youth Development Coach, like talking to her, she's kind of helping me find my strengths or, you know, good things about myself in terms of work ... Because it's just something I struggled to do on my own ... she's trying to help me see the improvements I've made, even since I've started the program till now. (Jas)

Young people described their interactions with YDCs as offering a 'positive engagement with someone' that was a catalyst for making progress.

Another young person reflected that:

I've learnt that I am definitely the type of person who will sort of be quiet and not talk about my achievements. So I think that's something I've definitely been working on, getting my confidence up around talking about myself and not feeling like I'm boasting or bragging in like a negative way. Like, this is who I am. And that's just what I can bring to the table. And that's been really good for me ... So definitely, I think how I present myself has been probably the most I've learned about myself that I've taken with me. (Remy)

This had influenced some program participants to rethink how they understood the significance of their disability. One explained they 'have a lot of fear around having a disability', but being involved in P2E had helped them to think about:

What I can do to make sure that I present myself in a way where my disability isn't a 'weakness' ... actually [it] makes me a great [employee] because I have a different perspective on [my field] than a lot of my colleagues would ever have. (Remy)

Another participant came to understand that:

There's actually a lot more jobs out there for people like me [and this] boosted my confidence a bit more to try and find a job. (Max)

Program participants described how P2E supported them to explore their career aspirations and develop work-related skills:

When I first started I didn't know what I wanted to do, I had no idea at all. But I'm starting to picture what I want to do. (Bobbi)

I feel that every session I have I'm getting something out of it, because we do activities that kind of really focus on me [that are] strength-based, like future tools ... looking at, 'What have you wanted to do in the past? What about the future?' Really delving deep and having a look at my life and what I want to achieve. (Pete)

While some young people remained uncertain about career aspirations, they reported considerable personal growth and increased confidence that motivated them to continue searching for meaningful work. These outcomes prompted one of the staff to note that for these participants, 'what might look like a smaller outcome from the outside ... is a really big deal' (KI02).

Insights from 'check-in' questions with program participants

'Check-in' questions elicited young people's reflections on how they were feeling at the beginning of the program and at the time of the interview. Ideally, these questions would be asked at two points in time, but we only had one opportunity to interview program participants and we asked them to think back to how they were feeling. Table 3 presents excerpts of these responses, showing that positive sentiments about the value of the program either developed or strengthened during their participation in P2E.

Table 3 Summary of program participants' responses to 'check-in' questions

Participant no.	How I felt at the start of P2E	How I'm feeling now
Nic	I'd say I was feeling excited to get things like help with my résumé and help with interview skills. I'd say excited or hopeful .	I feel like I've kind of just improved a lot more on my skills, and I'm more confident and it's really helped me a lot ... I'm feeling, you know, more hopeful about my future and more excited and willing to get out there more.
Jas	Honestly, I was very kind of stressed out about it, like anxious , because for me, like, jobs are something that, it's always been a bit of a, you know, university, work has always been a bit of a trigger point for me. So when it comes to like joining this, I was scared because I thought ... I was going to be under pressure to just hurry up and apply for a job.	I'm feeling happy , I'm feeling a little confident and ... the coach just, you know, she helps me address all my concerns. I'm like, 'Well, what about this? What if this happens, what if that happens?', and she kind of just reassures me that there's always a way around it ... I feel a lot more confident . I'm still anxious about looking for work ... But [I'm] progressing [and] have actually done my résumé and to the point where I want to actually at least start looking at jobs. Like, I feel like I've come a long way from when I actually started.
Pete	I was excited after the positive things I'd heard about the staff that worked there, and who would be working for me. And I was, yeah, interested to see how this program was different from my past experiences. I was, you know, half excited, half ... I mean, I guess everyone's really a bit nervous sometimes about how this is going to go, what's going to happen, but yeah, mostly, I was actually quite excited. And keen to start, get started.	Excited , more confident and more positive . Every time I go into the program, I'm always looking forward to it and feeling very motivated and happy to attend. Because as I said, I always feel that I've gotten something out of it every time that I have a session.
Remy	I was definitely like, positive , like, you know, I think any kind of experience where you can sort of grow and learn is, I think, is important. So I was definitely very positive. Not sort of nervous, or anything like that. Because obviously, you know, it can be a daunting process, but it's also just sort of, you know, how you look at things as well.	I feel really confident , comfortable with my coach and I think that's really important. I'm really excited to see what will happen in the future.
Max	Sometimes I have trouble talking to people I don't know. I was worried that I might not be able to talk to the person. And I was worried all about that.	After communicating with my worker, I've been feeling a lot less nervous about talking to people on the phones ... I'm [feeling] a lot more confident . Like before the program I probably wouldn't have been able to do these kinds of calls. I'd be too anxious to speak up on them. But now I'm feeling much more confident to be able to do it all.
Bobbi	I was just excited to start to get my life on track and to find a job or a TAFE course to do.	I'm still excited to figure out what I like to do in my life to come in the future. So it's really exciting. Yeah. I wouldn't say I'm nervous .

7 The significance of the P2E model

The ambition of P2E was to trial a bridging intervention that combined ‘supply-side’ efforts to build work-related skills and experience of young people with disability with ‘demand-side’ efforts to foster the interest and capacities of employers to provide young people with work experience and sustainable, meaningful employment. There is growing consensus that interventions that combine supply-side and demand-side initiatives are important for improving employment outcomes for people with disability, although there are calls for robust evidence to demonstrate their impacts (Wilson et al. 2022; Kavanagh et al. 2021; Mallett et al. 2021). Due to circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the P2E trial was limited to focusing on supply-side issues and this limited the outcomes that could be generated.

A mix of program components

Insights from key informants reflecting on program elements and the employment, work experience and education and training outcomes that were recorded offer encouraging evidence for the value of the model. Key program elements were Advantaged Thinking and person-centred practice, coaching sessions with staff with experience in disability-related issues and tools and resources adapted from the TtW Community of Practice model. Collectively, these elements enabled the YDCs to deliver what Wilson and Campain (2020, p. 9) conceptualise as an effective blending of ‘highly individualised strategies ... supported by programmatic structures’ for supporting young people with disability. Coaches noted, however, that program participants required levels of intensive support beyond what was anticipated in program planning, and this should be considered when determining caseloads and timelines in future iterations of the model.

Program innovation

Two notable features of the P2E model should be underlined. First, it sought to adapt a mainstream employment program for young people that has demonstrated effectiveness—the TtW Community of Practice model—to meet

the needs and circumstances of young people with disability. This aligns with the ethos and ambition encapsulated in the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability to promote social and economic inclusion for people by linking to mainstream programs. This is likely to appeal to young people who are ambivalent about identifying as having a disability. The second distinctive feature of the P2E model is linking with LAC services to create a clear and supportive referral pathway into an employment program that caters for young people with moderate to significant disability.

Program gaps to consider

Critically, the evaluation suggested some gaps in the model to consider. Engaging with families and carers is currently not a focus in the P2E model; however, the circumstances of young people with disability can differ from those of their peers in the role that families and carers play in their lives. Families and carers can be influenced by pervasive social attitudes towards disability in ways that shape their expectations of young people’s futures, and they can also have extended involvement in decision-making processes and providing informal support to young people. These circumstances suggest the value of engaging families and carers in understanding Advantaged Thinking approaches.

Questions of how to support and incentivise employers to create employment opportunities for young people and enhance their competitiveness in labour markets were also raised by key informants. These ranged across complex issues such as the value of wage subsidies, responsibility for insurance cover and post-placement support. Eligibility and amounts available for wage subsidies vary for jobseeker groups and there are contrasting views on their value for people with disability (Kavanagh et al. 2021). Currently, there are other models for providing post-placement support, such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Customised Employment models, and it would be helpful to learn from these programs how insurance and other practice issues are managed for young people participating in workplace experiences.

These issues underline an important opportunity in further developing employment programs for young people with disability to build in a concurrent policy function that can monitor and respond to trends in government policy across relevant sectors.

Limitations of the study

When considering the findings from this evaluation, a significant limitation is that the P2E program could not be implemented as planned due to ongoing COVID-19 related restrictions that were in place for much of 2021. This impacted on how the trial could be delivered, the motivation of program participants and the attention of employers.

While the trial achieved its target for enrolments, many program participants had minimal or no engagement with online program activities. While the COVID-19 restrictions are likely to account for this, we cannot be certain that other factors—including some associated with the program itself—are not relevant. The low number of program participants interviewed for the evaluation may also be explained by limited connection with the P2E program or by the online format.

Only one of the six program participants we interviewed was a young man, although 23 out of 38 young people enrolled in the program were male. Young men may be more reluctant to be interviewed or might feel they had little to say about their involvement. The original plan was to spend time at the 'office' where P2E was to be delivered and so build some familiarity that might have encouraged more participants to talk with us about their experiences of the program. It would also have increased the scope to adapt interview structures to accommodate participants' communication styles.

While the participants who were interviewed are very positive towards the P2E model, they also cannot be considered representative of the population of young people with disability. The sample may be skewed by attributes that attracted some young people to get involved in P2E or agree to be interviewed for the evaluation. Moreover some KIs suggested they inclined towards referring young people for the program who had previously expressed 'a strong, resounding employment goal' (KI03), and who would not require additional funded support (KI14). It is also significant that P2E is a voluntary program and, as one KI explained, '[participants have] come to us ... already [with] a level of willingness' (KI02).

Conclusion

Our small study shows that P2E offers a promising model for an employment program that is responsive to the needs of some young people with disability. Expanded trialling is required to understand its suitability across diverse circumstances and settings. It is also important to note that improving employment outcomes for people with disability requires other coordinated strategic efforts (see Thies et al. 2021). These include tackling low community expectations of the abilities of people with disability, adopting government policies that understand and prioritise the needs of people with disability and making concerted efforts to engage and support employers.

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, *Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016*, ABS, Canberra. Viewed 12 May 2022.
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) 2018, *The future of supported employment in Australia*, AFDO. Viewed 5 September 2021.
- Australian Human Rights Commission 2016, *Willing to work: national inquiry into employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability*, AHRC, Sydney.
- Boston Consulting Group 2020, *Mid-term review of the Disability Employment Services (DES) Program*, on behalf of the Department of Social Services, Canberra.
- Hawkins, M 2022, NDIS Employment Supports Update, presentation at the Disability Employment Conference, Sydney, 31 May – 2 June.
- Ilanbey, S & Cunningham, M 2021, 'How coronavirus closed in on the City of Hume', *The Age*, 26 September. Viewed 1 November 2022.
- Kavanagh, A, Brown, D, Dickinson, H, Mallett, S, Marck, C & Weld-Blundell, I 2021, *Evidence review: strategies to increase employment and economic participation for people with a cognitive disability*, The University of Melbourne.
- Know Your Council (n.d.): *Hume City*, Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. Viewed 1 November 2022.
- Lysaght, R, Petner-Arrey, J, Howell-Moneta, A & Cobigo, V 2017, 'Inclusion through work and productivity for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities', *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, vol. 30, no. 5, pp. 922–35.
- Mallett, S, Brown, D & Finnis, J 2021 *Environmental scan part 2: views of experts on effective employment interventions for people with disability*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Melbourne. Viewed 4 September 2022.
- McColl-Jones, N, Cull, E, Joldic, E, Brown, D & Mallett, S 2021, *Transition to Work Community of Practice: practice guide – revised*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne. Viewed 1 November 2022.
- Meltzer, A, Robinson, S & Fisher, K 2018, 'Barriers to finding and maintaining open employment for people with intellectual disability in Australia', *Social Policy & Administration*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 88–101.
- National Disability Insurance Scheme 2019, *Participant Employment Strategy (2019-2022)*. Viewed 8 August 2022.
- 2021, *NDIS participant outcomes summary report to 30 June 2021*. Viewed 11 October 2022.
- Pearce, D 2017, *Securing savings from open employment: the case of persons with moderate intellectual disability*. Centre for International Economics, Canberra.
- Saunders, S & Nedelec, B 2014, 'What work means to people with work disability: a scoping review', *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, vol. 24, pp. 100–10.
- The Foyer Federation 2022, *Adventures in Advantaged Thinking*. Viewed 6 December 2022.
- Thies, A, Warr, D, Mallett, S & Brown, D 2021, *10 strategies for improving employment outcomes for people with disability*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.
- Thomas, M & Vandenbroek, P 2022, 'People with disability and work', *Parliamentary Library briefing book: key issues of the 47th Parliament*, Australian Parliamentary Library. Viewed 1 November 2022.
- Wehman, P, Taylor, J, Brooke, V, Avellone, L, Whittenburg, H, Ham, W, Molinelli Brooke, A & Carr, S 2018, 'Toward competitive employment for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities: what progress have we made and where do we need to go?', *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 131–44.
- Wilson, E, Qian-Khoo, J, Campaign, R, Joyce, A & Kelly, J 2022, *A guide to classifying employment supports. A typology of employment support interventions related to people experiencing injury, illness or disability*, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Vic.

Improving employment outcomes for young people with disability

Insights from the P2E program trial

Deborah Warr, Liam Fallon, Andrew Thies and Amber Mills
2022

This report discusses an evaluation of the Pathways to Employment (P2E) program which explored the potential of adapting a mainstream youth employment program to meet the needs of young people with disability. Applying an Advantaged Thinking approach, the program linked up with NDIS Local Area Coordination services to create a referral pathway into employment programs for young people with employment goals. Insights from the evaluation show that the P2E trial supported some young people to build confidence, acquire work-related skills and experience and highlighted areas for further development.

Acknowledgement 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.



Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty