

# Inclusive Pathways to Employment pilot

## Final evaluation report – executive summary

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2025



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## **Published by**

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**Suggested citation:** Pahor, T, Bond, S & Pilkinton, J 2025, *Inclusive Pathways to Employment pilot: final evaluation report*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

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## **Acknowledgments**

We are deeply grateful to the Paul Ramsay Foundation and another philanthropic supporter for funding this evaluation.

We thank the program participants and their families and supporters for generously sharing the information that made this evaluation possible.

We also acknowledge the delivery partner services and their staff for their critical role in supporting participants and their networks, contributing data and informing the evaluation's implementation.

Staff from the National Collaboration on Employment and Disability at BSL, along with others involved in the Inclusive Pathways to Employment Initiative, provided valuable input that shaped the evaluation's design and delivery.

From the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team at BSL, Meghan Auken managed service data administration, cleaning and preparation, and supported data collection. Chris Hacon provided oversight of service data processes and Juana Jimenez contributed to planning for service data collection.

We would like to thank Chloe Sumner, IPE Youth Advisor, for the illustration on the cover of this report.



# Executive summary

*I actually never thought I'd see him go to a job five days a week, due to the whole overwhelming thought of it ... I have struggled for ten years to get him to go to school five days a week ... What this has given us – and the confidence that it has given this kid – is just mind blowing. Hopefully something may come out of where he's been doing the traineeship, or we can walk forward with something. But that [traineeship] can definitely go on his résumé.<sup>1</sup>*

The Inclusive Pathway to Employment (IPE) pilot trialled ways mainstream youth employment services can support young people with disability to pursue their interests, aspirations and goals, and be socially and economically included in their communities. This pilot offered new access and enhanced support pathways along with the practice, cross-sector collaboration and service-capability development necessary to provide effective career support for young people with disability.

IPE was delivered in four youth employment services across different regions in Australia and overseen by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) National Collaboration on Employment and Disability (NCED). It included three streams:

- **Stream A:** Intensive support for young people with significant disability.<sup>2</sup>
- **Stream B:** Enhanced support for young people with disability already in the Transition to Work (TtW) youth employment service.
- **Stream C:** School and community-based career-development activities for young people in school or the community.

This evaluation aims to inform the development of programs and practice that create employment pathways for young people with disability, documenting outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations for future implementation.

The evaluation has a primary focus on Stream A participants, followed by streams B and C. It explores the adaptation of the TtW service model focusing on young people's outcomes, the value of the practice approach and how employment services can be strengthened to support young people with disability.

## Findings

The IPE pilot provided young people with disability early integrated transition support that offers a cohesive, aspiration-focused and inclusive service across systems. The pilot demonstrated the benefit of young people with disability receiving enhanced support from a youth employment service on their career journey that could start while they were still at school and be sustained.

Between mid-2023 and the end of 2024, there were 149 Stream A participants, 428 Stream B participants and 806 Stream C attendees.

There were positive outcomes for participants:

- **Activities:** Stream A and B participants had high engagement in initial career exploration and early Work Preparation activities. Note that engagement in Work Opportunities and Post-placement Support is likely to have increased after data collection for the evaluation concluded, which, for practical reasons, was six months before the end of the pilot.

<sup>1</sup> Inclusive Pathways to Employment participant family member

<sup>2</sup> 'Significant disability' was defined in IPE as being either a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant; an individual receiving the Disability Support Pension (DSP); an individual who has or had allocated 'additional educational funding' due to their disability while at secondary school; or an individual who has attended or is in a disability specialist school or a disability specialist class in a mainstream school.

- **Progressive outcomes:** Most surveyed Stream A participants reported IPE helped with their self-knowledge (84%), social connections and networks (83%), and employability skills (72%). Over a third (38%) reported IPE helped with lifeskills.
- **Opportunities:** Surveyed Stream A participants said their job service had given them enough opportunities to work towards what they wanted in a job (100%) and most agreed they felt more hopeful about reaching education/training goals (84%) or getting a job (80%) in the next six months.
- **Outcomes:** Some participants achieved education, training or employment outcomes (Stream A: 36%; Stream B: 46%), though many are still on their journey, and some may have achieved outcomes after data collection concluded.

Accounts offered by young people in Stream A and their families illustrate the value of IPE. Stream A participants said IPE offered a positive experience as an accessible, inclusive and supportive service. For example, most Stream A participants said the service was easy for people with disability to use (82%) and that service staff thought about what people needed and made things so everyone could join in (96%). IPE supported the career journey of young people with disability through facilitating a transition from school and opportunities for exploration as well as building young people's job readiness. One Stream A participant commented:

***This job service is easy for young people because they make sure that everyone is included with the activities and make it easy to discover what we want to do in the future as a job.***

**Participants said IPE offered a positive experience as an accessible, inclusive and supportive service.**

IPE built the capability of youth employment services to be inclusive and support young people with disability. To do this, it made new access points to youth employment services and enhanced existing systems to create universal career-support pathways that included young people with disability. IPE implemented aspiration-focused and inclusive practice to support engagement and outcomes through the practice model, a focus on accessibility and working with family members. Collaboration with family members and supporters, schools, employers and community organisations was core to implementing these pathways and practice.

The changes introduced for IPE expanded the capability of delivery partner services, relying on the expertise, time and buy-in of staff. The dedicated staffing funded by IPE was essential along with the models, practices, tools, reflection and other development activities facilitated by the NCED as an enabling organisation.

## Recommendations

The evaluation has identified four principles that can inform the development of inclusive youth employment services to support career development for young people with disability:

1. **Build inclusive employment pathways by providing accessible career support for all young people with disability.** Effective universal services require developing integrated transition pathways that begin while young people with disability are still at school and offer sustained support. It is important to involve young people with disability when designing and implementing the career-support programs and policies that affect them.
2. **Embed aspiration-focused and inclusive practice that invests in young people's aspirations and provides the structural supports for success.** Do this by broadening outcomes so they value and measure exploration and progress in wider life domains. To deliver this practice and the outcomes for participants, provide inclusive and accessible service settings, offer individualised coaching and group activities, and provide coordinated key supports.

3. **Include cross-system collaboration in pathways and practice by integrating school, employment services and other supports so they provide integrated transition support.** This will facilitate starting employment service support in schools for a scaffolded transition. Young people with disability must be assisted to access opportunities and supports through navigation support and the funds to access opportunities and supports. Collaboration is also needed to improve the opportunities for young people by removing barriers to education and training, supporting inclusive workplaces, and offering community spaces and activities. For this cross-system collaboration to be an ongoing part of pathways and practice, networks will need to be facilitated and resourced beyond funding cycles to be sustained in the long term.
4. **Invest in capability development for youth employment services and their staff to implement more inclusive pathways and practice, while fostering collaboration.** Ensure organisational support within the youth employment service and resource an enabling organisation with the relevant professional expertise to coordinate and build capability. With this enabling support, the youth employment service should build their staff capability by employing staff with expertise to support young people with disability, enabling staff retention and transition, embedding inclusive practice, limiting caseload and group sizes, and fostering staff professional development and network-building.

**For this cross-system collaboration to be an ongoing part of pathways and practice, networks will need to be facilitated and resourced beyond funding cycles to be sustained in the long term.**

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### **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 and present.



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