

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

▼ EMPLOY OUTSIDE THE BOX: THE REWARDS OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE



Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland





KEY MESSAGES

- As a result of our ageing population, together with the demands of our economy, skill and labour shortages will intensify in coming years.
- Smart employers will seek a reliable supply of labour including people with disability.
- There is a strong business case for employing people with disability. It doesn't cost your business more to hire a person with disability and there is support through government assistance.
- It is easier than most people think to employ a person with disability. A Disability Employment Service Provider (DES) can do the hard work of recruitment.
- You can access free individualised support for recruitment, job analysis, job matching, advice and training.
- Financial assistance is available for workplace adjustments and equipment.
- Your business will be provided with ongoing support when you employ eligible people with disability.
- Employees with disability will benefit your individual business as well as society as a whole¹.
- If you focus on a good match between a person's skills and the job requirements you will find the right employee. That person may be someone with disability.
- By focussing on what a person is able to do rather than what they can't do, you can 'think outside the box', employ a person with disability and strengthen your business base.

1. A report issued by the Australian Network on Disability's (AND) reveals that Australia's GDP could be increased by \$43 billion over the next decade if more Australians with disability were included in the nation's workforce. Source: www.and.org.au; National Disability Services (NDS) has estimated that there are 200,000 people with disability who want to enter the labour force: www.nds.org.au.



WHY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY – EMPLOY OUTSIDE THE BOX

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry publication, *Employ outside the box – The rewards of a diverse workforce* outlines the labour force problems that exist because of our ongoing skills and labour shortages in some sectors and our ageing population². *Employ outside the box* identifies the untapped potential within the wider labour market and presents the case for the broader utilisation of these groups to meet our national labour supply needs and further grow our economy.

By better informing yourself about disability and thinking strategically, you will discover that there is a good business case for employing people with disability. By examining your employment strategy and employing outside the box, you can secure a good supply of motivated and skilled staff, as well as opening the door to new business opportunities.

THE CHALLENGE

Many businesses find staffing issues a challenge, particularly small and medium enterprises. Larger firms have HR departments, policies and procedures to attract, employ and retain their staff. Many smaller firms must either make do or buy in expertise to help them with staffing issues. Business chambers and industry associations can provide good advice and valuable assistance in this arena.

Employers will need to 'employ outside the box' if they want to have a dependable supply of labour into the future. A strong focus on staffing issues will be required as the pool of labour gets smaller and the population ages. The cost of labour will become more expensive unless the supply pool can somehow be expanded to include those who have not traditionally been seen as a source of labour. All sources of labour currently outside the box and not on the radar for business will come into play and should be considered as a means to fill skills and labour needs.

2. Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2012, *Employ outside the box – The rewards of a diverse workforce*, p 4



If the business community does not take action now, all businesses will be threatened in future years by the increasing costs of labour. The time for action is now as the rate of growth of the population aged 65 years and over will accelerate in the short and medium term before starting to decline around 2022³. National Disability Services (NDS) estimates that disability employment can fill about 15% of the projected shortfall in the labour force caused by the ageing of the population⁴.

SOME FACTS ABOUT DISABILITY

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics⁵, disability is defined as “any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months.”

This definition of disability is much broader than the previous ABS definition and therefore more likely to be evident in potential employment candidates presenting themselves to you. Society has also experienced a slight shift in attitude and increased acceptance of people with disability who are more likely to disclose their disability than they might have been 20 years ago.

There is a wide range of type and severity of disability. The disability may or may not be visible when first meeting a person. It may be temporary or permanent. It might have a small or large impact on what a person is able to do, much of which would not normally be noticed by colleagues and acquaintances. Many employers already employ people with disability, they just don't know it.

About one in five people have some type of disability. Many people with disability are able to work effectively with either minimal or no additional assistance. Currently, around two-thirds of disability pensioners have mild or moderate disability, yet less than 10% earn any income through work⁶.

3. ABS, 2009, 'Future Population Growth And Ageing' in 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, March 2009, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features10March%202009> p 3

4. www.nds.org.au

5. ABS, 2010, Catalogue 4430.0, Disability, Ageing And Carers, Australia: Summary Of Findings, p 3

6. Brown, Jessica; 2010, *Defeating Dependency: Moving Disability Support Pensioners Into Jobs*, Centre for Independent Studies



Many of these people are capable of working and want to work, but in many cases they lack the experience, opportunity or encouragement and support needed to get them into sustainable employment.

SOME EXAMPLES OF DISABILITY

- Physical, such as back injuries, muscle and joint problems, cerebral palsy, arthritis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease and repetitive strain injury (RSI)
- Visual impairment (eye/vision problems)
- Communication and hearing disorders, hearing loss, speech impairment
- Mental health, such as depression or anxiety, schizophrenia, stress, psychosis and depression
- Intellectual disability - slower general ability to learn, difficulties in communicating and retaining information.
- Acquired brain injury - caused by accidents, stroke, lack of oxygen and degenerative neurological disease. This type of disability can affect cognitive, physical, emotional and sensory functioning

Disability may be present at birth or it may be acquired during a person's lifetime. As the population ages, the number of people who acquire disability is increasing. Disability may be acquired through an accident or through the general process of ageing. Chronic back pain is one of the main disabling conditions in Australia particularly in older groups of the population. Mental health problems and mental illness are also a significant cause of disability⁷.

EFFECTS OF AGEING ON THE POPULATION

Australian statistics predict by 2056 there will be about two to three people of working age for every person aged 65 years and over.

Based on current trends, older persons with disability⁸ will become a larger proportion of the population placing significant demand on the caring workforce which is already struggling with skills and labour shortages. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the business community. Savvy businesses will be prepared for these changes.

7. ABS, 2011, Catalogue 446.0 - Disability, Australia, 2009

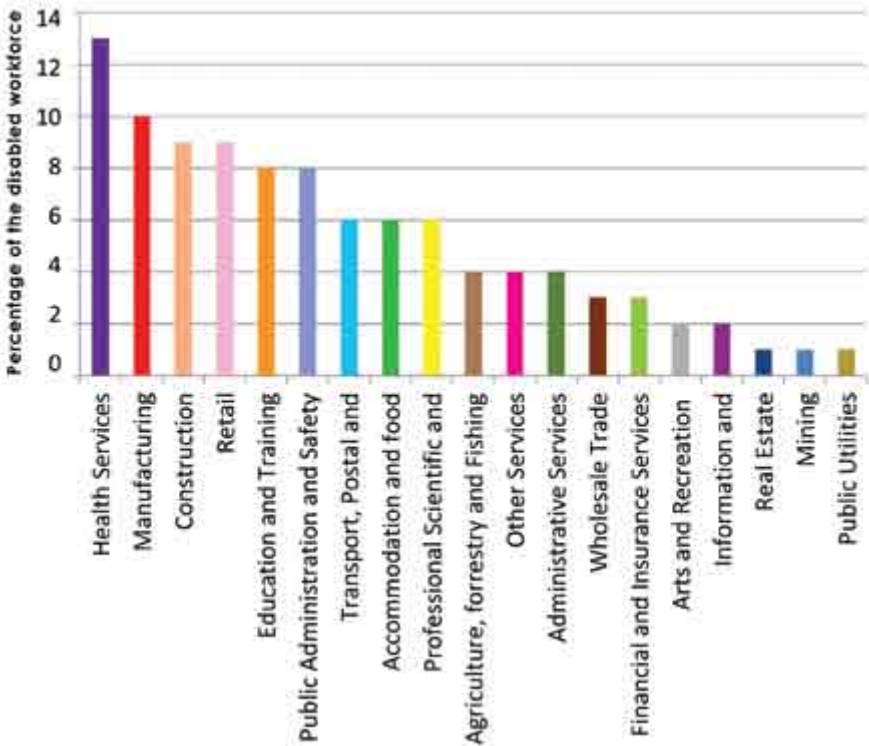
8. ABS, 2011, Catalogue 4446.0 - Disability, Australia, 2009



A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF LABOUR

There are many people with disability already participating in the workforce. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of what industries people with disabilities are currently working in.

Figure 1: Breakdown of the disabled workforce



Source: NDS analysis of ABS SDAC 2009 CURF Persons 15-64 employed with disability and not a carer living in households



There is a gap between the participation rates of people with disability compared to those without disability, particularly females. As well, in 2010-11 there were about 818,850 people on disability support pension⁹ up by nearly 200,000 over the past 10 years. Over 100,000 of the new recipients were aged 55 or over. This is partly because of the structural adjustment of our workforce from low skilled workers to high skilled workers.

This supply of labour is available to you to meet the challenge of future staffing. To access this supply in a smart way, you need to think about your workforce needs and know where to get support. You need to 'employ outside the box'.

9. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA), 2011, *Statistical Paper No. 9, Income support customers: a statistical overview 2010*



THE BENEFITS TO YOUR INDIVIDUAL BUSINESS

Not only do people with disability provide a partial solution to Australia's long term labour force needs, but as employees they can provide benefits to individual businesses.

- Independent studies provide evidence that people with disability have a very positive work attitude and work ethos. Employers see employees who have a positive attitude in the workplace as being valuable to their business¹⁰.
- An employee with disability can lead to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover, increased morale, more positive organisational culture and reduced workers' compensation¹¹.
- The costs of hiring staff, advertising, on-costs, induction and training can be reduced as generally there is less turnover for employees with disability.
- Ongoing costs for employees with disability are generally lower¹². The number of OHS incidents for an employee with disability is six times lower than that of an average employee and the number of workers compensation incidents is four times lower than that of an average employee.
- Employees with disability have lower days of sickness absence compared to an average employee. The accrued cost of sickness absence in employees with disability was less than half of the cost for an average employee (\$408 vs. \$881)¹³.
- Candidates with disability generally have very good problem-solving skills, as they have been challenged to find creative ways to perform tasks others may take for granted.
- There will be a potential boost to the morale and productivity within your workplace.

10. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, *Employer perspectives on recruiting people with disability and the role of Disability Employment Services*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/ResearchStatistics/ProgEval/Documents/EmployerServicing2011.pdf> p9

11. Disability Investment Group, 2009, *The Way Forward. A New Disability Policy Framework for Australia*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy/way_forward/Pages/default.aspx p 55

12. Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2007, *Are People with Disability at Risk at Work?* www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/.../359/ArePeopleWithDisabilityRiskAtWork_Review_2007_RTF.doc • DOC file

13. Ibid, p 35



- Your workplace becomes genuinely more inclusive.
- Hiring people with disability contributes to the organisation's overall diversity. It enhances the company's image among its staff, community and customers with positive benefits to the employer brand.
- There will be benefits to existing staff who find working with people with disability rewarding.

Finally, an employee with disability can help a business to develop marketing strategies to reach this growth sector of the market. One in five people have some type of disability and the rate of disability is increasing as the population ages. That is also one in five potential customers.

RETAIN EXISTING EMPLOYEES WHO ACQUIRE DISABILITY DURING EMPLOYMENT

These benefits also apply to existing employees who acquire disability while they are employed as it is often less expensive to keep them on with modified job requirements than recruit and train new staff.

There is specialised government assistance available for employees who are at risk of losing their job in the immediate future as a result of their disability. This assistance is available through a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider. A DES is funded by the government to assist job seekers with disability, injury or health condition who require assistance with employment but who are not expected to need long-term support in the workplace.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

One of the most common issues raised by employers is what risks will they be taking if they employ a person with disability. However this fear can be overcome by taking a few simple steps, planning recruitment and seeking support from experts who are readily available and in many cases paid for by government.



SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT DISCRIMINATION?

Like all job seekers, people with disability are protected under the law before you interview them and caution is needed. Guidelines provided by the Australian Human Rights Commission can be found in the ACCI Factsheets for your reference. It is wise to use the services of a DES to avoid any inadvertent discrimination. A DES takes the worry out of the recruitment process. In addition, JobAccess advisors can provide support and confidential advice about the recruitment process.

Note also that a person with disability is not obliged to tell you about their disability unless it affects their ability to do the tasks that must be carried out in order to get the job done. These are the 'inherent requirements of the job'. Disability may only become evident once the person is employed. Again, this is a good reason to use a DES in the first place as the employer is informed about the disability and supported to manage it in the workplace.



Figure 2: Myths and Misconceptions of employing people with disabilities

Myths	Reality
A person with disability won't be able to do the job.	Think about the job and duties you have and you may be surprised at what can be performed by a person with disability.
It is difficult to know how to interact with a person with disability.	It's a matter of courtesy and much easier than thought. Employers can educate themselves on do's and don'ts.
It costs more to recruit a person with disability.	It won't cost more. A DES is paid for by government to assist employers.
General liability insurance costs will be higher. WorkCover premiums will rise.	Insurance premiums are based on risk, a fact that all employers must consider when thinking of what coverage they need for their business. Insurance companies do not require employers to provide information on employees with disability. WorkCover premiums are determined by the risk profile of an industry and will only increase if the employee poses a genuine OHS risk in the workplace.
A person with disability won't fit into the workplace.	Employers already employ a person with disability and often don't know it. Disability Awareness and training is available to employers and co-workers of people with disability and can be accessed through the JobAccess Service .
There are OHS issues in employing a person with disability.	Research shows people with disability have fewer OHS incidents in the workplace.
The person with disability will have more sick days than an able bodied person.	Figures show that the amount of sick leave taken by people with disability is generally lower than that taken by counterparts without disability.
Adjustments to the workplace can be expensive.	There may need to be adjustments to the workplace but assistance is available through the Employment Assistance Fund to make these adjustments.
What about help with wages?	Wage subsidies may also be available to help employers to cover the initial costs of wages and training. There are a range of wage subsidies which employers may obtain from DES or a Job Services Australia provider, when they employ job seekers. There is also the Supported Wage System which pays for independent and reliable productivity-based wage assessment to determine fair pay for fair work.
What about financial incentives for apprentices with disability?	Financial incentives are available to employers who take on an apprentice or trainee with disability.
Don't people with disability have a low level of skills?	There are many people with disability who are university graduates and who hold managerial and supervisory positions. Disability doesn't necessarily affect the ability to learn. Every candidate should be assessed on what they can do and their own individual skill set. Training is also available to improve skill levels where gaps exist.
Ongoing support is not available.	Untrue. The difference between hiring a person with disability and an person without disability is that you are provided with ongoing support for as long as it's needed for a person with disability. This is a huge benefit over employing a person without disability.



HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

For the wellbeing of your own business and the ability to secure workers in the future, you should consider a commitment to change. It may take time but it is worth having sound policies and practices in place that can assist you to recruit and retain workers with disability. You should also be prepared to consider any extra training or reskilling that may be needed, in much the same way you look at training for any new worker. There is often government funding available to employers to help with reskilling where necessary.

GETTING STARTED





PREPARATION

1.



JOBACCESS

The Australian Government has a one stop shop website for employers and colleagues of people with disability designed to provide the information needed when getting ready to employ a person with disability. It contains useful information about disability, where to get help and how to access **free support services**.

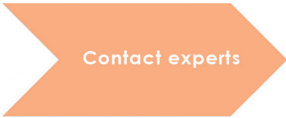
It also informs you about wage support and other government incentives that are available when a person with disability is employed. It can be found at www.jobaccess.gov.au.

If you can't easily access the internet and would prefer to talk to somebody, JobAccess Advisers can provide an expert individualised service including practical advice, referrals to experts (including qualified worksite assessors) and facilitation of workplace modifications. They can link employers to a range of workplace supports if they are required.

JobAccess Advisers can make your life easier by answering questions over the phone or directing you to the right source of help for their individual situation. Their service is confidential and free, just call **1800 464 800**.



2.



DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DES providers are experts in employment of people with disability. A DES provider can match your job vacancy with a suitably qualified candidate and advise you of government benefits available to your business. They can put you in touch with providers who can modify your workplace if needed and provide ongoing support to the employee with disability once they have commenced working.

- Help find the right person for your job vacancy.
- Provide job creation and design services to help you think creatively about the ways jobs are structured.
- Advise you about financial supports available for employing people with disability.
- Advise on and facilitate access to workplace modifications in the unlikely event these are required.
- Prepare you and your existing staff about what to expect from your new worker.
- Offer onsite support for you and your staff as long as it is required.

DES PROVIDERS DO NOT CHARGE EMPLOYERS FOR THEIR SERVICES.

High performing DES providers will have a good understanding of your business and your industry and will work with you to develop an understanding of your local labour market and skills needs. Use the ACCI Factsheets **Questions to Ask a Disability Employment Services provider** to help make sure your needs will be fully met.



NATIONAL DISABILITY RECRUITMENT COORDINATOR

The National Disability Recruitment Coordinator service¹⁴ is a program funded by the Australian government to work with **large** employers to employ people with disability, train staff in working with people with disability and provide information about the DESs and other support available to the employer.

AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICES

WIN-WIN: AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICES WITH DISABILITY

Taking on an Australian Apprentice with disability can be a win-win strategy for your business. Employers are strong supporters of the apprenticeship system mainly because it provides them with an opportunity to train workers to the standards that they want.

While apprenticeships are available to people of any age, employing a younger apprentice could provide your business with a strategy to build the skills required for your business and enable a person with disability to gain a qualification.

Government incentives are available to support employers who make this choice.

Australian Apprenticeships Centres are available to provide one-stop shops for those seeking to hire Australian Apprentices or to take up an create an Australian Apprenticeship as a career path.

Australian Apprenticeship Centres have expertise on employing apprentices with disability and will support employers to achieve a successful outcome. To find an Australian Apprenticeships Centre please visit www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au or call **13 38 73**.

14. http://jobaccess.gov.au/Services/A-Z_list/pages/NDRC.aspx



3.



Initially you would take a look at existing jobs in the workforce. This might involve considering job redesign or the reallocation of existing staff to create a vacancy more suited to a person with disability.

Consider how many staff you now employ. When will you next be recruiting? Are there existing jobs suitable for a person with disability that could be provided if you moved an existing employee to another position?

CONSIDER CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Modern employers understand the dynamics of the workplace and how it can contribute both towards the growth and development of their business and the individual progression of employees. Career development involves:

- Promoting an understanding of the industry in which your business operates.
- Identifying existing, new and emerging skills required for your business.
- Assessing where gaps exist and which staff can best meet those needs.
- Being systematic when planning to meet your staffing needs.

If your business has a good idea about employee strengths and weaknesses, attitude and behaviour, values and future aspirations and skills and competencies, you are able to make better use of employee skills and put them at the right place. You can improve your current skills capacity.

Career development brings better planning to the staffing needs of your business. You can think about the career development possibilities of the person with disability within your industry, not just your business.



4.

Good job matching

The recruitment decision is critical and can be either a good business decision or a costly one. Research shows that good matching between the needs of your business and the skills and capabilities of the applicant makes the difference.

Here are some pointers:

- Be clear in your own mind about what the job requirements are.
- Be flexible and open in considering the abilities of the applicant and how they might contribute towards your business.
- Understand the interview process may take longer than one interview to give enough time to agree on core mutual understandings about skills, interests and values.
- Ensure you are prepared for any special assistance that may be required for the interview process.
- When employing a person with disability focus on what the person can do rather than what they can't do.



5.



The person with disability will probably feel elated and scared at the same time on accepting an offer of employment, especially if they have not been employed for some time.

Make sure your staff are prepared for the arrival of the new staff member. While most people pride themselves on being effective communicators they can be inexperienced and uninformed about how to interact with a person with disability.

The ACCI Factsheets on courtesy towards people with disability provides the information needed to prepare properly.

The new employee will settle in quickly if you give them all the information they need to understand your business. Importantly, the new employee will be eager to understand your core business and to get a feel for the culture your business promotes. Simple induction information and the allocation of a 'buddy' can help to ease this process.

If problems come up it is important for the person with disability and existing employees to know where they can get help if they need it. Have a clear and transparent process in place for this.

SUPPORT FOR AWARENESS TRAINING

There is the provision of funding for access to awareness training programs to assist with the education of employers and co-workers. These include generic disability awareness training, deafness awareness training and mental health awareness training¹⁵.

15. Source: JobAccess www.jobaccess.gov.au



The aim of the awareness training is to improve the knowledge and skills of staff and managers by increasing their awareness and understanding of, for example, different communication styles or providing appropriate support and assistance to co-workers with disability. This assists with improving workplace attitudes and manager and colleague confidence that they are not being inadvertently discriminatory in the workplace. Some people have never interacted with people with disability and they are concerned that they are going to be inappropriate.

On the Job Support

On the job support includes specialist services provided by professionals with specific expertise in the areas of mental health or learning disorders. The Employment Assistance Fund provides funding of **\$1,500 per annum to the employer for each eligible employee (including GST)**.

In the case of mental health it can include professional counselling by a registered psychologist or psychiatrist, where the counselling will assist the person to carry out the functions of the employment. Most assistance is expected to be in this area, in response to depression, stress, mood disorders, anxiety and anger. It can include coaching programs or mentoring in the workplace, however, the program needs to be related to overcoming a barrier to work caused by the mental health condition.

For learning disorders it can include speech therapy or participation in special courses for people with autism and communication barriers that help them learn the routines (as delivered by a professional) and how to communicate with supervisors and co-workers.



6.

Mentor and support

Regular discussions between you, the employee with disability and the DES can alleviate any tensions that might arise in the employment process. There is strong evidence in other arenas such as apprenticeships about the benefits of using mentoring and support to employees.

You can get assistance with mentoring and support from the DES provider. The understanding and flexibility shown during the settling in period will establish a firm foundation for future success. Small matters can easily be resolved if discussed and support provided. For example, can the employee find transport to work, are they settling in well? Do they have access to basic facilities? Innovative solutions to problems will often be found through mentoring the new employee.

7.

Evaluate

Reflect on the process you have been through in employing a person with disability. Consider which things you would do again and what you would do differently. Keep a record of the process so you can refer to it in the future.

Be a business leader

You can share the positives of your experience with other employers in industry magazines or at networking opportunities. Employers value the information they get from other employers and may be encouraged to also take on a person with disability in their workplace.

It's easier than most people think and there is support along the way.



WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Your first port of call should be your local Chamber of Commerce or Industry Association. These organisations may already have specific programs in place to provide assistance to employers or may be able to link you to other programs.

Visit the ACCI website (www.acci.asn.au) for the contact details of your State or Territory Chamber of Commerce or relevant Industry Association.

Your local Job Services Australia or DES provider can help you in recruiting new staff as well as providing information on training options and some of the funding and incentives available to support you.

ACCI and its member industry associations have made some recommendations to government to make the task easier for you. See "Employ outside the Box" for more relevant information relating to the broader aspects of taking advantage of the talents of a diverse workforce.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Employ outside the box -
www.acci.asn.au/Research-and-Publications/Publications/Employ-Outside-the-Box

National Disability Services:
<http://www.nds.org.au/>

Disability Employment Services:
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES/Pages/default.aspx>

National Disability Recruitment Coordinator:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES/Employer_Support/Pages/NDRC.aspx

Job Access:
www.jobaccess.gov.au

Australian Apprenticeships:
www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au



Australian Network on Disability:

www.and.org.au

ACE Disability Network:

<http://www.acedisability.org.au/>

CRS Australia:

http://www.crsaaustralia.gov.au/helping_people.htm

[South African] Disability Toolkit:

http://www.fasset.org.za/downloads/research/disability_toolkit_book.pdf

Are People with Disability at Risk at Work:

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

Employment of People with Disability in the APS:

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/mac/disability.htm>



YOUR NOTES

ACCI CONTACT

Canberra Office
COMMERCE HOUSE
Level 3, 24 Brisbane Avenue
Barton ACT 2600

PO BOX 6005 Kingston,
ACT 2604 AUSTRALIA
T: 02 6273 2311
F: 02 6273 3286
E: info@acci.asn.au

Melbourne Office
Level 3, 486 Albert Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

PO BOX 18008
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
AUSTRALIA

T: 03 9668 9950
F: 03 9668 9958
E: melb@acci.asn.au

W: www.acci.asn.au

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Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland
375 Wickham Tce, Spring Hill QLD 4000
Telephone 1300 731 988

