

Employment Guide for People with Disabilities

Pathways to meaningful work, financial confidence, and greater independence in Australia

SAFE HANDS SUPPORT

Employment Guide for People with Disabilities

Pathways to Meaningful Work and Independence

Prepared for Safe Hands Support
Australian resource edition | March 2026

Purpose of this guide

This resource explains how people with disability can prepare for work, find a job, ask for support, keep employment, and plan for long-term independence. It is written in plain language and designed for participants, families, carers, support workers, and inclusive employers.

General information only. Rules, payments, and programs can change. Always check official sources before making legal, financial, or benefit decisions.

Welcome from Safe Hands Support

Employment can change a person's life. It can bring income, routine, confidence, friendships, stronger decision-making, and a feeling of being part of the community. For many people with disability, work is also a major step toward independence and self-determination.

At the same time, getting a job is not always simple. Barriers can include transport, confidence, health changes, employer attitudes, inaccessible systems, or confusion about benefits and supports. This guide was created to reduce that confusion and turn a big goal into small practical steps.

Safe Hands Support believes employment should be built around the person, not the other way around. That means looking at strengths first, support needs honestly, and long-term wellbeing as well as wages. The right job is not only about getting hired. It is also about safety, fit, growth, and dignity.

Who this guide is for

People with disability, school leavers, job seekers, families, support workers, plan managers, coordinators, and employers who want a practical Australian guide that is easy to use.

How to use this guide

You do not need to read the guide from start to finish in one sitting. Some people will want to begin with self-assessment and goal setting. Others may already be ready for resumes, interviews, or workplace adjustments. Use the table of contents to jump to the sections that match your current stage.

Throughout the guide you will find checklists, worksheets, comparison tables, scripts, and examples. These are included so the document can be used as a working resource, not only something to read once and forget.

If you support another person, you can use the worksheets together. Many people do better when job planning is shared between the participant, their trusted supports, and a provider or employer.

Guide map

Part	What you will find
Part 1	Why work matters and what pathways exist in Australia
Part 2	Self-assessment, strengths, goals, and job planning
Part 3	Training, volunteering, work experience, and career exploration
Part 4	Resumes, cover letters, applications, and interviews
Part 5	Workplace adjustments, rights, and support services
Part 6	Money, DSP, transport, health, and practical barriers
Part 7	Keeping a job, growing a career, and becoming more independent
Part 8	Guidance for families, support workers, and employers
Part 9	Self-employment, case studies, worksheets, glossary, and resources

Reading tip

Start with Part 2 if you are still working out what kind of job suits you. Start with Part 4 if you already know the type of work you want. Start with Part 5 if you have an offer or a current job and need support to stay in it.

Part 1 | Why Employment Matters

Employment is often spoken about as a financial issue, but for many people it is just as much about identity. A job can create structure in the week, increase social contact, and improve confidence in other areas of life such as travel, communication, money management, and decision-making.

Meaningful work does not look the same for everyone. One person may want a full-time role with clear career progression. Another may want a few shifts each week close to home. Another may prefer supported employment, self-employment, or volunteering while building confidence. Success should be defined by fit, sustainability, and personal goals, not by one narrow idea of work.

Australian data shows there is still a gap in access to work. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 53.4 per cent of people with disability aged 15 to 64 were in the labour force, compared with 84.1 per cent of people without disability. The same release showed an employment rate of 47.8 per cent for people with disability compared with 80.3 per cent for people without disability. This tells us two things at once: barriers are real, and there is a major opportunity to improve access and outcomes when the right supports are in place.

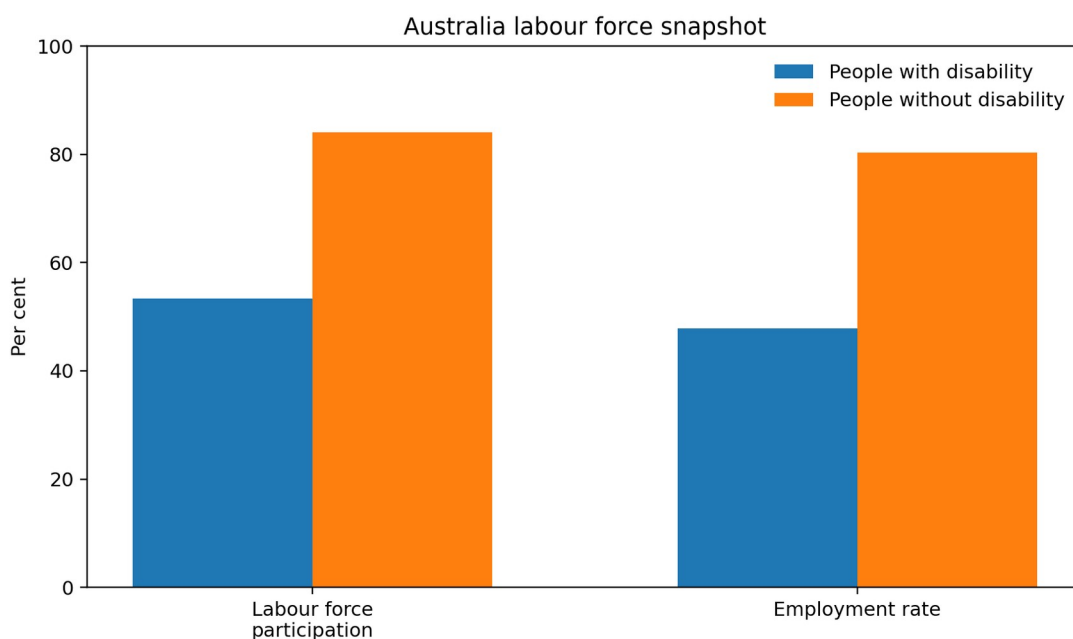


Figure 1. ABS labour force snapshot for Australians aged 15 to 64. Source data drawn from ABS disability and labour force reporting.

Key message

A person may need support to get into work, but support is not the same as inability. The goal is to match the person, the task, the environment, and the right adjustments.

Why many people still want to work

Even when people are not currently employed, many still want a job. ABS reporting for March quarter 2025 found that among people with disability aged 18 to 75 who did not have a job, were not retired, and were not permanently unable to work, 38 per cent wanted paid work. That matters because it shows demand is there. The challenge is creating realistic pathways.

Wanting work does not always mean being ready for immediate open employment. Some people need a long preparation phase. This can include confidence building, travel training, health stabilisation, communication practice, work experience, digital skills, or simply time to understand what type of environment feels safe and manageable.

Myths and facts

Common myth	What a more accurate view looks like
People with disability cannot work reliably.	Many people work very successfully when the role matches their strengths and the workplace removes unnecessary barriers.
Asking for adjustments is asking for special treatment.	Reasonable adjustments are a normal way to create equal access and let a person do the job safely and effectively.
Only full-time work counts as success.	Part-time work, supported employment, casual roles, traineeships, self-employment, and volunteering can all be valid stages in a work journey.
Disclosure always hurts job chances.	Disclosure is a personal choice. Timing, wording, and job context matter. Some people disclose early, some later, and some only when adjustments are needed.
A gap in work history means a person is unemployable.	Gaps can be explained through study, health, caring, volunteering, or skills development. Employers often care more about fit and readiness than a perfect timeline.

Part 1 | Employment Pathways in Australia

There is no single correct pathway into work. A helpful employment plan starts by asking what the person can do now, what support they need, and what is realistic over the next six to twelve months.

In Australia, current employment supports for many job seekers with disability sit within Inclusive Employment Australia, which replaced Disability Employment Services on 1 November 2025. The program is designed to help people with disability, injury, or health condition get ready for work, find jobs, and keep them with ongoing support where needed.

Pathway	Best for	Main strengths	Things to think about
Open or competitive employment	People ready to work in the general labour market	Award wages or ordinary wages, career growth, community inclusion, varied industries	May require careful adjustment planning, travel, and confidence with recruitment processes
Part-time or flexible employment	People managing health, fatigue, caring, or study	Lower pressure, easier transition into work, can build stamina over time	Income may vary and rosters may need to be negotiated
Supported employment	People with high support needs who benefit from extra support at work	Structured support, routine, development of work habits, additional assistance on the job	Important to understand wages, rights, and whether the role matches long-term goals
Customized employment	People whose strengths do not fit a standard job description	Role can be shaped around strengths, interests, and practical capacity	May take longer to organise and often needs strong advocacy and employer engagement
Apprenticeships or traineeships	People who learn best by doing and want a qualification while working	Skill building, wages while learning, pathway into long-term employment	Need commitment to training, employer support, and travel planning
Self-employment or microbusiness	People with a clear service, product, or niche skill	Flexibility, autonomy, can build around strengths and pace	Requires business planning, marketing, bookkeeping, and realistic risk management
Volunteer work or work experience	People building confidence or recent experience	Good for routine, references, skills, social confidence, and testing interests	Usually unpaid, so it works best as a stepping stone with a clear goal and review date

Current government programs and supports

Support	What it does
Inclusive Employment Australia	Helps eligible people with disability, injury, or health condition prepare for work, find jobs, and keep them. JobAccess states it can support eligible people who are generally aged 14 or over and able to work below full-time hours, depending on program rules.
JobAccess	National hub for disability employment information. It provides guidance about rights, responsibilities, workplace adjustments, and funding options.
Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)	Can help cover the cost of workplace changes, equipment, Auslan interpreters, and other support services for eligible people with disability and employers.

Support	What it does
NDIS employment supports	Can help some participants build work capacity, especially when a support is related to disability and employment goals. School Leaver Employment Supports are one example.
Supported Wage System	Allows wages based on assessed productivity in eligible situations where disability reduces work productivity.
Services Australia	Provides information about Disability Support Pension, work rules, and reporting obligations.
<p>Important update When older resources mention Disability Employment Services or DES, check the date. The Australian Government replaced DES with Inclusive Employment Australia from 1 November 2025.</p>	

Part 2 | Start with the Person

A good employment plan begins with the person's strengths, preferences, and support needs. Many job searches fail because people start with job ads before they understand themselves. When this happens, the result is often a poor fit, fast burnout, or repeated rejection.

Self-assessment is not about deciding what is impossible. It is about understanding what conditions help a person succeed. Some people work best in quiet spaces. Some need movement and variety. Some enjoy structured routines and clear tasks. Some prefer people-focused roles. Others do best with hands-on practical work.

Try to collect information from different angles: what the person says, what trusted supporters notice, what past teachers or supervisors have seen, and what actually happens in real environments. Real-world evidence is usually more useful than assumptions.

Strengths checklist

- Good attention to detail
- Friendly with customers or team members
- Strong routine and punctuality
- Can repeat tasks accurately
- Learns well by watching
- Good computer or phone skills
- Physically active and enjoys movement
- Creative or visually minded
- Careful with hygiene and safety
- Good memory for steps or systems
- Patient and calm under pressure
- Motivated to help other people

Work preferences worksheet

Question	Your notes
What kind of tasks do I enjoy?	
What kind of tasks do I strongly dislike?	
Do I prefer working with people, objects, animals, data, or technology?	
What times of day suit me best?	
How many hours per week feel realistic right now?	
What environment helps me feel calm and focused?	
What environmental factors make work harder for me?	
What transport options do I have?	
What support do I need before I can start work?	

Transferable skills

Transferable skills are skills that can move from one area of life into work. They might come from study, sport, caring, volunteering, online selling, household responsibilities, or managing your own appointments and routines.

For example, someone who helps organise medication times at home may already be showing time management and responsibility. Someone who games online with a team may be practising

communication, problem solving, and persistence. Someone who regularly looks after younger siblings may already be using planning and care skills.

Life activity	Possible work skill
Managing a weekly routine	Time management and reliability
Using public transport	Travel independence and planning
Helping at home	Responsibility, organisation, and following a process
Sport or martial arts	Discipline, stamina, listening to instructions, teamwork
Selling items online	Customer service, pricing, communication, packaging
Using social media well	Basic marketing, content awareness, digital literacy
Gaming or online communities	Pattern recognition, teamwork, persistence, task focus
Volunteering	Workplace behaviour, references, punctuality, service skills

Support needs are not weaknesses

Many people avoid talking about support needs because they worry it will make them seem less capable. In reality, knowing what support is needed is a strength. It makes planning more accurate and helps prevent crisis later.

Support needs can include transport practice, check-in calls, written instructions, extra time to learn a task, sensory adjustments, flexible breaks, job coaching, assistive technology, modified communication, or fatigue management.

Good planning question

What conditions help me do my best work, and what barriers make good work harder than it needs to be?

Part 2 | Goal Setting and Career Direction

Goals work better when they are clear, time-based, and linked to actions. Saying I want a job is a good start, but it is too broad for planning. A stronger goal is: I want a part-time retail or warehouse role within six months, close to public transport, with morning shifts and clear training.

Career direction can also be staged. A first goal does not need to be the final destination. Many people move through stepping-stone jobs that build confidence and references before they reach their long-term preferred role.

Long-term and short-term goals

Type of goal	Example
Long-term goal	Work in disability support administration, community services, animal care, hospitality, warehousing, gardening, retail, cleaning, business support, or another chosen field.
Six-month goal	Complete a resume, build interview skills, visit two employers, and apply for ten suitable jobs.
One-month goal	Create a list of strengths, gather ID documents, and organise one work experience or volunteer placement.
Weekly goal	Spend one hour on job search, one hour on skills building, and one support session to review progress.

Use SMART goals in simple language

SMART part	What it means	Simple question
Specific	Clear and concrete	What exact job or action am I aiming for?
Measurable	You can track it	How will I know I made progress?
Achievable	Realistic for now	Is this possible with my current supports and health?
Relevant	Matches my life and values	Does this move me toward the kind of independence I want?
Time-based	Has a deadline	By when will I review or complete this step?

Career exploration questions

Do I want a calm environment or a busy environment?

Do I prefer a routine job or a job with variety?

Would I rather work indoors, outdoors, or a mix of both?

How much customer interaction feels okay for me?

How much physical work can I do safely and consistently?

Do I need a workplace close to public transport or family support?

Would I prefer weekdays, weekends, mornings, or evenings?

Do I want a job now, a qualification first, or a mix of both?

Career planning template

Career area to explore	Why it may suit me	Skills I already have	Skills I need to build	Next step this month
Retail				
Hospitality				
Administration				
Cleaning or maintenance				
Disability, aged care, or community services				
Warehouse or logistics				
Creative or digital work				
Self-employment idea				

Part 3 | Building Skills Before Employment

Not everyone should jump straight into paid work. For some people, the best next step is building skills first. That does not mean putting life on hold. It means preparing in a way that increases the chance of success and reduces stress.

Skill building can happen through formal study, short courses, volunteering, work experience, community programs, self-directed practice, or support through disability services. What matters is whether the activity helps move the person closer to a real employment outcome.

A strong pre-employment plan usually covers practical skills such as punctuality, following instructions, communication, customer service, basic digital use, travel, and asking for help appropriately.

Core work readiness skills

Skill area	What it looks like in real life	How to build it
Punctuality	Arriving on time, preparing the night before, knowing transport time	Use alarms, calendars, trial runs, and a written morning routine
Communication	Greeting people, asking questions, confirming tasks	Role-play, scripts, customer practice, social groups
Task focus	Staying with a task and knowing when it is complete	Timed practice, checklists, visual steps, reduced distractions
Personal presentation	Clean clothes, hygiene, safe footwear, suitable uniform	Set up a ready-to-go outfit plan and grooming checklist
Digital basics	Email, online applications, phone use, simple documents	Library classes, practice accounts, guided support
Safety awareness	Understanding hazards, lifting limits, when to ask for help	Induction practice, WHS videos, supervised tasks
Self-advocacy	Explaining support needs or raising concerns respectfully	Short scripts, coaching, reflective practice after appointments

Education and training options

Some career goals need a qualification. Others do not. Even when a role does not require formal study, training can still improve confidence and employability.

Good options can include school-based transition programs, TAFE courses, microcredentials, first aid, food handling, digital literacy programs, barista training, RSA, white card, forklift training, customer service programs, bookkeeping basics, or industry-specific short courses.

Before paying for a course, ask three questions. First, does it match a real job target. Second, is the environment accessible. Third, will the provider offer support if learning needs come up.

Questions to ask before enrolling

- What jobs does this course actually lead to?
- Is there work placement, and if so, is support available?
- Can assessments be adjusted if needed?
- Is the campus or training site physically accessible?
- Can I get help with note-taking, extra time, or learning support?
- What are the costs, travel requirements, and weekly hours?
- Will this course suit my health, stamina, and communication needs?

Volunteering and work experience

Volunteer work and work experience can be powerful stepping stones when used properly. They can provide current references, examples for interviews, social confidence, and a chance to test a work environment without the pressure of a long-term contract.

The main risk is staying in unpaid work too long without clear purpose. To avoid this, set a review date. Ask what skills are being built, what references can be gained, and what the next step will be after the placement.

Activity	Best use	How long to try before review
Volunteer role	Build routine, confidence, social contact, and basic experience	Four to twelve weeks
Work experience	Test a specific industry or employer	One day to a few weeks
Job shadowing	Observe a role before applying	One day or several short visits
Informational interview	Learn from a worker in a role of interest	One meeting
Trial shift or practical assessment	Show ability in a real setting	Short, employer-led opportunity

Smart volunteering rule

Volunteer where the tasks look like the kind of job you want later. That gives you more useful examples for your resume and interviews.

Part 3 | Exploring Real Job Options

Career planning becomes much easier when ideas are linked to real job families. Instead of only asking what do I like, also ask what does the job actually require. The best fit sits where interest, ability, support, transport, and hiring demand overlap.

Below are examples of common job areas that may suit different strengths. These are examples only. They are not limits.

Job area	Can suit people who...	Typical tasks	Things to check first
Retail	Like routine, customer contact, or stock tasks	Greeting customers, filling shelves, basic cleaning, cash register support	Noise, standing time, shift variability, customer pace
Hospitality	Enjoy busy environments and practical service work	Tables, kitchen hand tasks, dishwashing, barista support, food prep	Heat, pace, sensory load, weekend shifts
Administration	Prefer computers, structure, and written tasks	Email, filing, reception support, data entry, scheduling	Typing speed, concentration, phone confidence
Cleaning	Like visible results and clear tasks	Surface cleaning, bathrooms, bins, restocking, housekeeping	Chemical safety, physical stamina, travel
Warehouse	Prefer hands-on work with less social demand	Picking, packing, stock movement, scanning, labelling	Lifting, standing, shift times, transport
Gardening or outdoor maintenance	Enjoy movement and outdoor tasks	Weeding, mowing support, watering, rubbish removal	Weather, sun safety, physical demands
Animal care	Enjoy calm practical work and animal contact	Cleaning enclosures, feeding, basic customer interaction	Weekend work, smells, lifting, infection control
Community services	Want work with purpose and human connection	Support work, reception, program support, transport assistance	Communication, boundaries, qualifications, clear supervision
Creative or digital	Like independent work and making things	Content creation, editing, design support, photography, online selling	Client management, deadlines, income consistency

Local job research method

Use job sites, local shopping centres, small businesses, councils, and community organisations to see what is actually hiring near the person's home. This is especially important if transport is limited or if shorter travel times reduce fatigue and missed shifts.

Track patterns. If the same kind of role appears again and again, that may be a better target than an appealing job that rarely becomes available.

Research task	Notes to record
Five common jobs in my area	
Average travel time to each area	
Which roles often ask for weekend work	
Which roles require a licence	
Which roles need a qualification	

Research task	Notes to record
Which roles are realistic within three months	

Part 4 | Resumes that Focus on Ability

A resume is not meant to tell your whole life story. Its job is simple: show enough evidence that you may be a good fit for the role and should be interviewed.

For many people with disability, the biggest resume mistake is underselling real ability because they think paid experience is the only thing that counts. In reality, employers also look for reliability, attitude, willingness to learn, and examples that show you can follow through.

A strong resume uses plain language, clear headings, and examples that are relevant to the role. It should not be crowded. It should be easy to scan in less than a minute.

Resume structure

Section	What to include
Contact details	Name, phone number, email address, suburb or local area if useful. Do not overcrowd with unnecessary personal details.
Professional profile	Two to four lines on strengths, type of role sought, and personal qualities relevant to work.
Key skills	Short bullet list such as customer service, punctuality, stock handling, cleaning, Microsoft Office, teamwork, food preparation, or safety awareness.
Experience	Paid work, volunteering, work experience, school-based placements, informal roles, or project examples.
Education and training	School, TAFE, university, short courses, certificates, first aid, white card, RSA, or online learning.
Referees	Two people who can comment on your reliability and behaviour, such as a teacher, supervisor, coach, volunteer coordinator, or employer.

Professional profile examples

Profile example

Reliable and motivated job seeker looking for a part-time retail or customer service position. Strong punctuality, friendly communication, and a willingness to learn. Enjoys structured tasks and working as part of a team.

Profile example

Detail-focused applicant seeking entry-level administration or reception work. Confident using computers, email, and basic office systems. Works well with routines, written instructions, and clear priorities.

Profile example

Hard-working candidate looking for warehousing, cleaning, or stock support roles. Comfortable with practical tasks, following safety procedures, and maintaining consistent work standards.

Turning everyday experience into resume language

Everyday example	Resume wording
Helped run family errands and appointments	Demonstrated reliability, time management, and organisational skills through regular scheduling and support tasks.

Everyday example	Resume wording
Volunteered at a community event	Assisted with event set-up, customer service, and maintaining a clean and welcoming environment.
Sold personal items online	Managed online listings, communicated with buyers, handled packaging, and organised simple transactions.
School canteen or fundraising support	Worked with a team, handled food or stock safely, and followed instructions in a busy environment.
Regular gym or sport commitment	Showed discipline, routine, persistence, and ability to work toward goals.

Resume checklist

- One to two pages for most entry-level roles
- No spelling mistakes or messy formatting
- Skills matched to the actual job ad
- Recent and relevant examples first
- Plain email address and current phone number
- At least one referee who can be contacted
- Saved as PDF when sending unless told otherwise

Part 4 | Cover Letters and Applications

Not every job application needs a long cover letter. Some need only short targeted answers. The key is relevance. You do not need complicated language. You need clear evidence that you understand the job and can contribute.

A useful cover letter usually answers three questions. Why this role. Why you. Why now.

Simple cover letter structure

Paragraph	Purpose
Opening	State the role you are applying for and where you saw it.
Middle	Explain the strengths, experience, and personal qualities that match the role.
Final	Show motivation, availability, and interest in discussing the role further.

Application habits that improve results

Keep a spreadsheet or notebook so you know what you applied for, when you applied, and whether a follow-up is needed.

Tailor every application. Even small changes matter. Move the most relevant skill or experience higher up. Use words from the job ad when they truthfully fit.

Apply for roles that are genuinely realistic. A smaller number of targeted applications is usually better than sending many low-fit applications in a rush.

Date	Employer	Role	How I applied	Follow-up date	Outcome	Notes

Follow-up tip

If the employer gave a closing date, wait until after it passes. If not, a short polite follow-up in about five to seven days can be reasonable.

Part 4 | Interviews and Disclosure

Many capable job seekers struggle with interviews not because they cannot do the job, but because interviews are artificial. They require quick thinking, self-promotion, and calm under pressure. The good news is that interview skill improves with structure and practice.

You do not need perfect answers. You need clear examples, good eye contact if comfortable, professional tone, and a calm way of showing that you can learn and work safely.

Common interview questions and what employers are really asking

Question	What they want to know	Good answer focus
Tell me about yourself.	Can you summarise yourself clearly and professionally?	Strengths, work goal, and a few relevant qualities.
Why do you want this job?	Are you interested or just applying everywhere?	Show you understand the role and why it suits you.
What are your strengths?	Do you know what value you bring?	Choose strengths that match the job and give examples.
Tell me about a challenge.	Can you stay calm, learn, and solve problems?	Use a real example and focus on what you did.
How do you work in a team?	Can you cooperate and communicate?	Share a practical example from school, sport, work, or volunteering.
Why should we hire you?	Can you connect your ability to their need?	Summarise fit, attitude, reliability, and willingness to learn.

Simple STAR method

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result. It helps keep answers focused.

Situation means the background. Task means what needed to be done. Action means what you personally did. Result means the outcome or what you learned.

STAR part	Prompt
Situation	What was happening?
Task	What needed to be done?
Action	What did I do?
Result	What changed, improved, or was learned?

Disclosure decisions

Disclosure means telling an employer about disability, health condition, or support needs. This is a personal decision. There is no one answer that fits everyone.

Some people disclose early because they need adjustments at the application stage, such as extra time, accessible interview spaces, or different communication supports. Some choose to disclose after they get an offer. Some only disclose what is necessary to organise safe work and support.

A useful question is not should I disclose everything. It is what information is necessary, helpful, and relevant for this stage.

Possible timing	When it may make sense	Example
Before interview	You need accessible arrangements or communication support	I would like to request an accessible interview room and written instructions if possible.
At interview	The topic comes up naturally or you	I work well with written task lists and

Possible timing	When it may make sense	Example
	want to explain an adjustment positively	clear routines, which helps me perform consistently.
After offer	You do not need recruitment adjustments but do need support once employed	Before I start, I would like to discuss a few workplace adjustments that help me work safely and effectively.
Not at all unless needed	No relevant adjustments are required and the person prefers privacy	Use only if it is safe and appropriate for the job context.

Interview practice worksheet

Question	My example	What I want to improve
Tell me about yourself		
Why do you want this job		
What are your strengths		
Describe a time you solved a problem		
Describe a time you worked with others		
Do you need any support at work		

Part 5 | Workplace Adjustments

A workplace adjustment is a change that helps a person with disability do their job or take part in recruitment more fairly. JobAccess explains these as reasonable adjustments. They can include changes to equipment, workspace, communication methods, work tasks, scheduling, or support services.

Many adjustments are simple and low-cost. Sometimes the most useful adjustment is not expensive equipment. It may just be written instructions, quieter seating, flexible start times, a phased induction, or permission to use noise-reducing headphones where safe.

Examples of common adjustments

Need area	Possible adjustments
Physical access	Accessible entrance, parking, desk layout changes, ergonomic furniture, modified storage height
Sensory support	Quieter workspace, reduced glare, lower sensory load, written instructions, predictable routines
Communication	Plain language, written steps, extra processing time, captioning, interpreter, visual checklists
Fatigue or health management	Flexible start times, part-time hours, pacing of duties, seated tasks, extra short breaks
Learning or memory support	Task lists, pictures, checklists, repeated demonstrations, job coach input
Mental health support	Clear supervision, phased return, defined priorities, regular check-ins, calm workspace where possible
Hearing or communication access	Auslan interpreting, captioning, assistive listening devices, quieter meeting spaces
Vision access	Screen readers, magnification, contrast changes, large print, clear walkways

How to ask for adjustments

It helps to focus on the work outcome, not only the diagnosis. A practical request sounds like this: I can do this role well when tasks are given in writing and when I have a quieter place to complete detailed work. This lets the employer connect the adjustment to performance and safety.

You do not need to use complex legal language. A short professional explanation is usually enough to start the conversation.

Simple script

I am excited to do this role well. There are a few adjustments that help me work at my best, including written task instructions and a clear start-of-shift priority list. Could we discuss what might work in this workplace?

Employment Assistance Fund

JobAccess states that the Employment Assistance Fund can help cover the cost of workplace changes and equipment for eligible employees with disability. It can also fund Auslan interpreters and other workplace support services. The scheme can support people who are looking for work, already working, or working for themselves, as well as employers making changes for staff.

This matters because some employers wrongly assume adjustments will always be costly. Knowing that funding support may be available can make adjustment discussions easier and more confident.

EAF can help with	Examples
Equipment	Assistive technology, ergonomic items, specialised devices
Workplace changes	Minor modifications to help access or task performance
Communication support	Auslan interpreters and related supports
Service support	Workplace assessment and other approved support services

Part 5 | Rights and Protections at Work

In Australia, disability rights at work are protected by law. The Australian Human Rights Commission explains that the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 makes disability discrimination unlawful in many areas of public life, including employment. The Fair Work Ombudsman also explains that employees and job applicants are protected from adverse action and discrimination because of physical or mental disability.

These protections matter at every stage of employment. This includes recruitment, interview processes, promotions, training, daily treatment at work, performance management, and dismissal.

What discrimination can look like

Example	Why it may be a problem
Refusing to interview a suitable person because of disability	This may be unlawful discrimination in recruitment.
Mocking or isolating a worker because of support needs	This may be harassment or bullying.
Ignoring a reasonable adjustment request without proper discussion	This may deny equal access to work.
Punishing an employee after they raise a disability-related concern	This may be adverse action or victimisation.
Using inaccessible training or meetings when adjustments are reasonable	This can exclude a worker from equal participation.

What to do if a problem happens

1. Write down what happened, when, where, and who was present.
2. Keep copies of emails, rosters, medical letters, and any adjustment requests.
3. Raise the issue internally if it feels safe to do so, such as with a supervisor or HR.
4. Ask for support from an advocate, provider, union, trusted support person, or legal service.
5. Check official pathways through Fair Work, the Australian Human Rights Commission, or another relevant body.

Know the difference between poor fit and unlawful treatment

Not every difficult work experience is unlawful discrimination. Sometimes the role is simply the wrong fit. Sometimes supervision is poor for everyone. Sometimes performance genuinely needs improvement. The key question is whether the person is being treated unfairly because of disability or being denied fair access through a barrier that could reasonably be addressed.

This is why good records and clear examples are important.

Rights reminder

Having support needs does not remove the right to dignity, privacy, fairness, and a safe workplace.

Part 5 | Australian Support Services

A person does not need to figure everything out alone. Australia has several services that can support job seekers with disability, although each service has its own purpose and eligibility rules.

The best results often come when supports are coordinated. For example, a person might use Inclusive Employment Australia for job search support, JobAccess for adjustment information, and NDIS-funded support for work capacity building or travel training where appropriate.

Inclusive Employment Australia

The Department of Social Services states that Inclusive Employment Australia replaced Disability Employment Services on 1 November 2025. JobAccess explains that the program can help eligible people with disability, injury, or health condition find and keep a job.

JobAccess also notes key eligibility rules, including age and work-capacity requirements. The exact rules should always be checked before referral or sign-up.

What it can help with	Examples of support
Getting ready for work	Goal setting, confidence building, job search planning, resume help, interview support
Finding a job	Employer contact, job matching, application help, vacancy leads
Keeping a job	On-the-job support, employer communication, workplace changes, ongoing support where relevant
Changing providers or pathways	Reviewing fit if the current approach is not working

NDIS employment-related supports

NDIS support is not the same as a job placement service, but employment-related supports can still be important. The NDIS provides information about finding, keeping, and changing jobs, and it highlights supports such as School Leaver Employment Supports for participants moving from school toward employment.

School Leaver Employment Supports can help build skills and confidence, create work experience opportunities, and support the transition from school to work. The right employment goal in an NDIS plan can make a big difference, especially when a participant needs capacity building before paid work becomes realistic.

Supported employment

The Department of Social Services describes supported employment as jobs where people with disability with high support needs can receive extra support while they are at work. For some people this is the best current fit. For others it may be a stepping stone or one of several options to compare.

When considering supported employment, ask practical questions about wages, development opportunities, support quality, worker rights, transport, and whether the role aligns with the person's long-term goals.

Supported Wage System

JobAccess explains that the Supported Wage System lets employers pay an employee with disability based on assessed productivity in eligible situations. This can apply in open employment or supported employment where disability reduces work productivity and the scheme's rules are met.

This is a specialised option and should be understood carefully. It is important for the worker, family, provider, and employer to understand how assessment works and what the wage arrangement means in practice.

Choosing who helps you

Question to ask a provider or support service	Why it matters
How many people like me have you helped into work recently?	Shows whether the service has relevant experience.
How will you tailor support to my goals instead of using one standard plan?	Checks person-centred practice.
What happens if the first job target does not work out?	Looks at flexibility and problem solving.
How will you support me after I start work?	Keeping a job matters as much as finding one.
Will you involve my family or support worker if I want that?	Supports stronger communication.
How do you measure progress?	Helps keep the process accountable.

Part 6 | Money, Benefits, and Financial Planning

Money worries stop many people from exploring work. A common fear is losing all support too quickly or ending up worse off financially. These fears should be taken seriously, because transitions into work can affect payments, travel costs, energy use, uniforms, food, and other daily expenses.

At the same time, avoiding all work because of fear can also limit income and independence for years. The best approach is informed planning: understand the rules, report correctly, and compare likely earnings with likely costs.

Do not guess. Always check current payment rules with Services Australia or a qualified adviser before making major decisions.

Disability Support Pension and work

Services Australia states that if you get Disability Support Pension, you can have paid work up to 29 hours a week without losing the payment, provided you still meet the income test. Services Australia also states that you must tell them within 14 days if you or your partner start work and provide the relevant work details.

This means work and DSP are not always an either-or choice. For some people, a gradual increase in work hours can be a safer pathway than trying to jump straight into high hours.

Questions to ask before starting work

- How many hours per week will I work?
- What is the hourly rate and how regular are shifts?
- What travel costs will I have each week?
- Will I need uniforms, shoes, equipment, or childcare?
- Do I need to report income or hours, and how often?
- What happens if my hours change from week to week?
- Who can I speak to for accurate payment advice?

Budgeting for the transition into work

A simple work budget helps reduce surprises. Include both income and hidden costs. Many people only compare wages to benefits and forget travel, laundry, meal costs, internet, phone data, or the need for backup transport when public options fail.

It can also help to build a small buffer if possible. The first weeks of work often involve irregular timing: delayed first pay, extra travel, and emotional adjustment.

Budget item	Estimated weekly amount
Wages after tax	
Current payment impact	
Transport costs	
Food bought while out	
Uniform, shoes, or work items	
Phone or data costs	
Extra support costs	
Net position after work costs	

Financial planning tip

Before accepting a role, map the best case, normal case, and worst case. The normal case is the one to trust most when planning weekly living costs.

Part 6 | Transport and Access

Transport is one of the biggest practical barriers to employment. A good job can become unmanageable if travel is too long, too complex, too expensive, or too unreliable.

For some people, the best work plan starts with travel training rather than the job itself. Learning routes, backup options, and timing routines can increase confidence and reduce missed shifts.

Transport planning checklist

Question	Answer / notes
How long does the trip take door to door?	
What time do I need to leave home?	
What is the backup option if public transport is delayed?	
Can I do the route independently or do I need support at first?	
What is the weekly cost?	
Is the workplace accessible from the station or bus stop?	
What happens if the shift ends after dark?	

Travel practice routine

6. Do a trial run on the same day and time as the likely shift.
7. Write down each step from front door to workplace.
8. Save the route in your phone and take screenshots.
9. Work out a backup method such as taxi, ride-share, family contact, or alternative bus.
10. Practice what you will do if you are delayed, including who to call.

When travel is the main barrier

If transport is the main barrier, the answer may be to change the job target rather than force a difficult route. Roles closer to home, remote tasks, local volunteering, or smaller hours may be a better starting point.

The best employment plan is not always the highest paying role on paper. It is the role that can actually be sustained week after week.

Part 6 | Fatigue, Anxiety, and Health at Work

Work capacity is not only about skill. It is also about energy, recovery, stress, and consistency. A person may be capable in short bursts but struggle across a full week without pacing strategies.

Planning around health is not giving up. It is risk management. Sustainable work is better than repeated cycles of burnout and job loss.

Practical fatigue strategies

- Choose hours that match your strongest time of day
- Plan recovery time after shifts, especially at the start
- Use checklists so tiredness does not increase mistakes
- Pack food, water, medication, and essentials the night before
- Ask whether tasks can be broken into stages
- Track what makes fatigue better or worse across the week

Practical anxiety strategies

- Visit the workplace before day one if possible
- Ask for a written first-day plan
- Practise the route and entry process
- Prepare short scripts for asking questions
- Use one trusted support person for debriefing instead of many competing voices
- Focus on the next step, not every future scenario at once

When to ask for help early

Ask for support early if you are regularly late because of transport confusion, if you are missing instructions, if pain or fatigue is increasing, if panic is rising before shifts, or if you are thinking about quitting suddenly. Early problem solving is much easier than waiting until things break down.

Many jobs can be saved with a small change made early enough.

Warning sign	Possible early response
Always exhausted after one shift	Reduce hours at first, review breaks, look at travel burden
Confused about tasks	Ask for written steps or another demonstration
Avoiding supervisors out of fear	Plan one short check-in question each shift
Frequent mistakes late in the day	Reschedule detailed work earlier if possible
Thinking of quitting after a hard week	Review the fit and adjustments before making a rushed decision

Part 7 | Starting a Job Well

The first weeks of a job are often the hardest. There is new information, new people, new routines, and pressure to make a good impression. This is normal. A rough first week does not always mean the role is a bad fit.

What matters most in the first month is not speed. It is learning the system, building trust, and asking questions early enough to prevent repeated errors.

First day checklist

Before the shift	Tick
Know start time, location, and manager name	
Have uniform, shoes, ID, water, and food ready	
Leave early enough for unexpected delays	
Carry phone with important contacts saved	
Know how to clock in or sign in	
Have a short script ready to ask for help	

How to make a good early impression

- Arrive a little early rather than exactly on time
- Bring a notebook or phone notes if allowed
- Repeat back instructions to confirm understanding
- Ask what matters most when there are several tasks
- Keep personal issues separate from customer or team interactions where possible
- Let your supervisor know early if something will affect safety or attendance

The first 90 days

Time period	Main focus
Week 1	Learning names, routine, safety expectations, and basic task flow
Weeks 2 to 4	Reducing mistakes, getting faster, asking clearer questions, and building stamina
Month 2	Doing core tasks with less prompting and understanding team expectations
Month 3	Reviewing fit, discussing adjustments if needed, and setting next goals for reliability or growth

Questions that show maturity at work

What should I prioritise first today?

How do you want this task done here?

When I finish this, what should I move on to next?

Could you show me that one more time so I can get it right?

Is there a better way you want me to organise this?

Part 7 | Communication and Self-Advocacy at Work

Self-advocacy means speaking up about what you need in a respectful and practical way. It is not complaining for no reason. It is helping the workplace understand how you can do your best work safely and consistently.

Good self-advocacy is usually short, specific, and connected to the job. It does not need to be emotional or overly detailed.

Useful workplace scripts

Situation	Simple script
You do not understand a task	I want to make sure I do this the right way. Could you show me again or give me the steps in writing?
You need clarification on priorities	I have a few tasks to do. Which one would you like me to focus on first?
You are becoming overloaded	I can complete this better if I work through one task at a time. Can we confirm the priority order?
You need an adjustment discussion	I work best with a clear written task list and a quieter space for detailed work. Could we talk about whether that is possible here?
You made a mistake	I want to let you know I made an error with this task. I have corrected what I can, and I would like to check the right process for next time.

Boundaries matter too

Self-advocacy also includes knowing what is not okay. No employee should accept bullying, humiliation, unsafe tasks beyond their capacity, or pressure to hide a problem that affects safety.

A respectful workplace allows questions, corrections, and support without shame.

Feedback is a skill

Some people hear correction and immediately feel they are failing. Try to separate feedback from identity. Good feedback helps you improve faster.

A helpful response is: Thanks for letting me know. I want to do it the right way. Can you show me the standard you want?

Reframe

Feedback does not always mean you are bad at the job. It often means you are still learning the workplace's specific way of doing things.

Part 7 | Digital Skills and Modern Work

Many jobs now require at least basic digital ability, even in hands-on roles. Rosters may come by app. Training may be online. Payslips may be digital. Applications often happen through websites rather than paper forms.

Digital skill does not have to mean advanced technology. Start with the basics that improve day-to-day employability.

Digital basics checklist

Skill	Can I do this confidently?	Need practice?
Set up and check email		
Answer calls professionally		
Read and reply to simple messages		
Upload a resume to a job site		
Use maps and transport apps		
Open a payslip or roster app		
Use simple documents or spreadsheets		
Join an online meeting if needed		

Remote and hybrid work

For some people, remote or partly remote work can remove transport barriers and reduce sensory stress. For others, it can increase isolation and make routine harder. The same environment that helps one person may make another person less effective.

When considering remote work, ask whether the person can manage time, communication, internet access, home distractions, and basic digital systems with enough independence.

Part 8 | Role of Families, Carers, and Support Workers

Support people can make a major positive difference in employment outcomes. They can help with routines, transport practice, motivation, confidence, paperwork, and debriefing after setbacks. They can also accidentally make things harder if they over-speak, over-protect, or remove every challenge before the person has a chance to build independence.

The goal is supportive scaffolding. Give enough help for success, but not so much that the job seeker loses ownership of the process.

Helpful support behaviours

- Help the person prepare, but let them answer for themselves where possible
- Use questions instead of making every decision for them
- Practise routes, calls, or interviews without taking over
- Notice patterns in energy, stress, and performance
- Celebrate progress, not only final results
- Encourage review after setbacks instead of instant quitting

Unhelpful support behaviours

- Speaking over the person in meetings or interviews
- Applying for jobs without their input
- Pushing them into roles that match your preference rather than theirs
- Treating every discomfort as proof they cannot work
- Ignoring health limits in the name of toughness
- Using fear about payments or failure to stop all progress

Support worker employment checklist

Task	Complete?	Notes
Strengths discussion		
Resume updated		
ID and documents organised		
Transport trial completed		
Interview practice completed		
Work clothes prepared		
Employer contact plan made		
Review date booked		

A good support question

What help does this person need today, and what can they do for themselves with a little preparation?

Part 8 | Guidance for Employers

Inclusive hiring is not only a social good. It is also a practical workforce strategy. Employers can access a wider talent pool, improve team diversity, and often gain highly committed workers when recruitment is based on real ability rather than assumptions.

Inclusive workplaces do not need to be perfect from day one. They need to be willing, structured, and open to practical problem solving.

What employers can do better

Recruitment stage	Better inclusive practice
Job ads	Focus on real inherent requirements, use clear language, avoid unnecessary criteria
Applications	Offer accessible formats and realistic contact methods
Interviews	Use plain questions, share format details early, allow support or adjustments where appropriate
Induction	Provide written steps, clear expectations, and a named contact person
Daily management	Give regular feedback, confirm priorities, address issues early and respectfully
Retention	Review adjustments, growth opportunities, and team inclusion over time

Low-cost actions that help many workers

Some supports are useful far beyond disability-specific situations. Clear induction, written priorities, consistent supervision, realistic rostering, and respectful communication improve performance for many employees.

This is one reason inclusive design is powerful. What helps one worker often improves the whole system.

Inclusive supervision tips

- Be specific instead of vague
- Confirm what success looks like
- Do not assume silence means understanding
- Correct behaviour without attacking dignity
- Review support needs after changes in tasks or rosters
- Look for strengths to build on, not only problems to fix

Questions employers can ask

What helps you learn a task most effectively?

Are there any adjustments that would help you do your best work here?

Would written instructions or a demonstration be more useful?

Is there anything about the roster or environment that makes the job harder than it needs to be?

Employer reminder

Reasonable adjustments are not about lowering standards. They are about giving a worker fair access to meet the standard.

Part 9 | Self-Employment and Microbusiness

Self-employment can be a good option when a person has a clear skill, product, or niche service and needs more flexibility than standard employment allows. It can also suit people who work best independently or want to build around health needs and variable energy.

At the same time, self-employment is not a shortcut around ordinary work challenges. It still requires routine, customer communication, money tracking, planning, and persistence.

Examples of small business ideas

Idea	Why it may suit some people	Main risks or challenges
Online reselling	Flexible and home-based, good for detail and organisation	Income can be inconsistent; requires shipping and customer management
Lawn or garden support	Practical, visible work, local client base	Weather, physical demands, equipment costs
Pet sitting or dog walking	Clear service, local marketing possible	Need trust, insurance awareness, time reliability
Cleaning service	Repeat clients possible, task-based work	Travel, physical work, supplies, quality control
Basic admin or digital support	Can be remote, structured tasks	Needs computer confidence and client management
Creative products	Can build around art or design strengths	Marketing and pricing can be difficult

Microbusiness readiness checklist

Question	Yes / No / Needs work
Do I know exactly what I am selling?	
Do I know who my customer is?	
Can I explain my service simply?	
Can I keep basic records of money in and out?	
Can I deliver the work consistently?	
Do I understand transport, equipment, and time requirements?	
Do I have support for areas I am weak in?	
Have I thought about safety, privacy, and legal basics?	

Do not skip the numbers

A business idea only becomes useful when the numbers make sense. Ask how much each job or sale earns, how long it takes, what it costs, and whether the work can be repeated enough to be worthwhile.

A person can love the idea of a business and still need help to decide whether it is commercially realistic.

Part 9 | Career Growth After Getting the First Job

The first job is not the finish line. Once a person has basic stability, the next stage may be keeping the role, increasing hours, learning new tasks, seeking more independence, or moving into a better-fit role.

Growth should be deliberate. The person who survives a hard first year without reflection can easily stay stuck. The person who reviews what works and what does not can build a much stronger path over time.

Useful growth questions after three to six months

Which parts of this job suit me best?

What drains me the most?

Do I want more hours, the same hours, or fewer hours?

What skill would make me more valuable in this workplace?

What support can I now do without?

Is this role a destination or a stepping stone?

Growth options

Next step	Example
Increase hours carefully	Move from one short shift to two or three once stamina is proven
Add responsibility	Train on register, stock counts, scheduling, or key opening tasks
Take a short course	Build food handling, first aid, administration, or digital skills
Seek a role upgrade	Move from volunteer to paid work or from entry-level to a better fit
Strengthen independence	Reduce support prompts, manage transport alone, handle roster apps independently
Review long-term goals	Use work experience to refine a better career direction

Case Studies | Different Pathways, Different Success

The examples below are fictional but realistic. They show how employment planning changes depending on the person's strengths, barriers, and goals.

Case study 1 | School leaver moving toward open employment

Mia finished school and wanted to work in retail but had very little confidence speaking to new people. She also became overwhelmed in noisy environments and had never travelled independently to a workplace.

Instead of pushing straight into paid work, her first three months focused on travel practice, customer greeting scripts, and a volunteer role two mornings a week at a local community op shop. This gave her a routine, recent experience, and examples for her resume.

After that, Mia used employment support to update her resume and practise interviews. She disclosed only what was needed for adjustments and explained that written task lists and a calm induction helped her learn quickly. She later started a part-time retail role with shorter shifts and built up from there.

The important lesson is that success came from sequencing. Confidence was built before the pressure of paid work, not after a rushed start.

Case study 2 | Adult changing direction after health setbacks

Daniel had previous work experience in physically demanding jobs but could no longer manage long days of heavy manual work because of pain and fatigue. He feared that moving into lighter work meant starting from zero.

A review of transferable skills showed that he already had strong reliability, stock handling knowledge, safety awareness, and practical problem solving. He targeted part-time warehouse support and storeperson roles with lower lifting demands.

During interviews he focused on what he could do well, not on everything that had become harder. After starting work, he requested pacing strategies, clear lifting limits, and consistent early shifts. This helped him keep working safely.

The key lesson is that changing job type does not erase the value of past experience.

Case study 3 | High support needs and supported employment

Luca wanted the routine and pride of having a job but needed more structured support than a standard workplace could currently provide. His communication was stronger with visual instructions, and he needed repeated practice to learn new tasks.

His team compared open employment and supported employment carefully. They looked at travel, supervision, wages, task match, and long-term growth. He began in a supported employment setting with clear routines, regular coaching, and visual task systems.

Over time, his confidence and stamina improved. The team reviewed progress every few months and discussed whether parts of his work skills could later transfer into other environments. The supported role became a real base for growth instead of a dead end because his rights, preferences, and development were reviewed regularly.

The lesson here is that supported employment can be meaningful when it is matched well and reviewed honestly.

Case study 4 | Microbusiness as a flexible path

Sana found ordinary shift work difficult because of fluctuating health and inconsistent energy. However, she was highly organised, creative, and confident online. She started by reselling small items and learning basic product photography, packaging, and customer messaging.

Rather than pretending it was immediately a full business, she tracked every sale, cost, and hour spent. This showed what was actually working and what was not. Later she narrowed her focus to a niche product category and built a more repeatable process.

The main lesson is that self-employment works best when it is treated seriously, with records, boundaries, and realistic expectations.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I have never had a job before?

Start with work readiness, volunteering, school-based examples, responsibilities at home, and practical strengths. A first job rarely comes from a perfect history. It comes from showing readiness and fit.

Do I have to tell an employer about my disability?

Not always. Disclosure is a personal decision. What matters is whether you need adjustments, whether the information is relevant to safety or performance, and what timing feels appropriate.

What if I get overwhelmed and want to quit quickly?

Pause before making a fast decision. Ask what exactly is going wrong. Sometimes the issue is a fixable barrier such as training style, transport, or unclear expectations.

Is volunteering a waste of time?

Not if it is targeted and time-limited. It can build recent examples, confidence, references, and routine. The key is to review it and connect it to the next step.

What if my family thinks work is too risky for me?

Use evidence, not arguments. Trial routes, short placements, small hours, and written plans can reduce fear and show what is realistic.

What if the first job does not work out?

A failed job is still data. Review the fit, the environment, the support, the hours, and the barriers. Then adjust the plan instead of treating the outcome as proof you cannot work.

Appendix A | Personal Employment Workbook

Use the following pages as a printable workbook. They can be filled in by the job seeker alone or together with a support worker, family member, teacher, or employment provider.

1. My strengths profile

Prompt	My notes
Three things I do well	
Tasks that make me feel confident	
Personal qualities people often notice in me	
Achievements I am proud of	
What helps me do good work	
What gets in the way	

Notes:

2. My support needs plan

Area	What support helps me
Travel	
Learning new tasks	
Communication	
Managing anxiety or stress	
Managing fatigue or pain	
Organisation and reminders	
Workplace environment	

Notes:

3. My work preferences

Question	Answer
I would like to work in...	
I do not want to work in...	
Ideal days and times	
Hours I think I can manage now	
Indoor, outdoor, or mixed	
How much customer contact feels okay	
Maximum travel time each way	

Notes:

4. My top three job ideas

Job idea	Why it suits me	What I need to do next

Notes:

5. My learning and training plan

Skill or course	Why it matters	Who can help me get it	Target date

Notes:

6. Documents and admin checklist

Task	Done	Notes
Photo ID ready		
Tax file number organised		
Bank account details ready		
Resume updated		
Email account working		
Referees confirmed		
Suitable clothes and shoes ready		

Notes:

7. Resume evidence bank

Experience or example	What it shows about me

Notes:

8. Employer research sheet

Employer or industry	Why it interests me	Travel time	Next action

Notes:

9. Application tracker

Date	Employer	Role	Status	Follow-up

Notes:

10. Interview practice sheet

Question	My example	How I want to improve
Tell me about yourself		
Why do you want this job		
What are your strengths		
Describe a challenge		
Do you need any support at work		

Notes:

11. Disclosure decision worksheet

Question	My notes
Do I need adjustments during recruitment?	
Do I need adjustments after I start?	
What information is actually necessary to share?	
What wording feels comfortable and professional?	
Who can help me practise this conversation?	

Notes:

12. Workplace adjustments planner

Task or barrier	Adjustment that may help	Who to discuss it with

Notes:

13. Weekly work budget

Item	Amount
Wages	
Transport	
Food while out	
Phone / internet	
Uniform or equipment	
Support costs	
Other	
Net result	

Notes:

14. Travel planning page

Travel step	My plan
Leave home time	
Transport route	
Backup option	
Who I contact if delayed	
Cost	
Safety notes	

Notes:

15. First 90 days review

Review question	My notes
What is going well?	
What is still hard?	
What support helps the most?	
What do I want to improve next?	
Do my hours still suit me?	
Do I want to stay, grow, or change direction?	

Notes:

16. Independence growth plan

Area	Where I am now	Next step
Travel		
Communication		
Money management		
Time management		
Digital skills		
Problem solving		

Notes:

Appendix B | Quick Reference Tables

Job search action plan in 30 days

Week	Focus	Example actions
Week 1	Know yourself	Complete strengths worksheet, choose top three job ideas, review support needs
Week 2	Prepare documents	Update resume, create email, organise referees, gather ID
Week 3	Build confidence	Practise interviews, trial travel routes, visit workplaces, ask for advice
Week 4	Take action	Apply for suitable roles, follow up, review results, adjust target if needed

Adjustment ideas by common barrier

Barrier	Helpful response
Noise or sensory overload	Quieter workspace, headphones where safe, predictable routine, written instructions
Difficulty remembering steps	Checklists, visual prompts, repeated demonstration, task sequencing
Travel stress	Later start, route practice, role closer to home, backup transport plan
Fatigue or pain	Part-time hours, pacing, seated options, reduced lifting, shorter shifts
Social anxiety	Script practice, smaller team introduction, quieter training, predictable communication
Reading or writing difficulty	Plain language, visual supports, verbal explanation plus written summary

Signs a job may be a good fit

- The person understands what is expected each shift
- Travel is realistic and repeatable
- Fatigue is manageable most weeks
- The supervisor gives clear communication
- Support needs are respected rather than treated as a burden
- The person feels challenged, but not constantly overwhelmed
- There is some room to grow or stabilise over time

Signs the plan may need review

- Frequent lateness linked to transport or timing barriers
- Panic or shutdown before most shifts
- Repeated mistakes caused by unclear instruction rather than lack of effort
- Pain or exhaustion that does not settle with reasonable pacing
- Workplace disrespect, bullying, or refusal to discuss practical supports
- The person wants to quit suddenly every week without a clear debrief and review

Glossary

Adjustment: A change to the workplace, task, equipment, or communication method that helps a person do a job fairly and effectively.

Advocacy: Speaking up for your rights, needs, or preferences, either by yourself or with support.

Competitive or open employment: Ordinary work in the general labour market.

Customized employment: A job built around a person's strengths, support needs, and an employer's business needs.

Disclosure: Telling an employer about disability, health condition, or support needs.

DSP: Disability Support Pension.

EAF: Employment Assistance Fund.

Inclusive Employment Australia: Australian Government disability employment program that replaced Disability Employment Services from 1 November 2025.

Job coach: A worker who helps a person learn and keep job tasks in real work settings.

Reasonable adjustment: A practical change that gives equal access and allows a person to do the job.

Self-advocacy: Explaining your needs and rights respectfully and clearly.

Supported employment: Employment where people with high support needs can receive extra support while at work.

Supported Wage System: A scheme that can allow wages based on assessed productivity in eligible circumstances.

Transferable skills: Skills gained in one area of life that can also be useful in work.

National Resource Directory

The following organisations and websites are commonly useful starting points. Check the latest eligibility rules and contact details before relying on any service.

JobAccess | Disability employment information, rights, adjustments, and funding.

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Department of Social Services | Information on Inclusive Employment Australia and supported employment. <https://www.dss.gov.au/inclusive-employment-australia>

NDIS | Finding, keeping, and changing jobs, including school leaver employment resources.

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/finding-keeping-and-changing-jobs>

Services Australia | DSP rules, reporting obligations, and payment information.

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/working-while-you-get-disability-support-pension-dsp?context=22276>

Fair Work Ombudsman | Workplace rights, discrimination, and employee information.

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/employees-with-disability>

Australian Human Rights Commission | Disability rights and complaint information.

<https://humanrights.gov.au/know-your-rights/rights-of-individuals/disability-rights>

Australian Bureau of Statistics | Data on disability and labour force participation.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/disability-and-labour-force>

NSW and local planning note

Because transport, local services, and training options vary by area, people in New South Wales should also check local council services, TAFE support options, community transport, and nearby employers that are realistic for regular travel.

For Safe Hands Support, a local resource page can be even more useful if this national guide is later paired with a short suburb or region-specific handout listing nearby providers, transport options, shopping centres, industrial areas, and community organisations.

References and Source Notes

Australian Bureau of Statistics. Disability and the labour force. Australian Bureau of Statistics website. Accessed March 2026.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, March 2025. Australian Bureau of Statistics website. Accessed March 2026.

Australian Human Rights Commission. Disability rights. Australian Human Rights Commission website. Accessed March 2026.

Department of Social Services. Inclusive Employment Australia. Department of Social Services website. Accessed March 2026.

Department of Social Services. Supported employment. Department of Social Services website. Accessed March 2026.

Fair Work Ombudsman. Employees with disability. Fair Work Ombudsman website. Accessed March 2026.

JobAccess. Welcome to JobAccess. JobAccess website. Accessed March 2026.

JobAccess. Who is eligible for Inclusive Employment Australia. JobAccess website. Accessed March 2026.

JobAccess. Making changes in your workplace. JobAccess website. Accessed March 2026.

JobAccess. What is the Employment Assistance Fund and what it can cover. JobAccess website. Accessed March 2026.

JobAccess. How the Supported Wage System works. JobAccess website. Accessed March 2026.

NDIS. Building skills and getting a job. NDIS website. Accessed March 2026.

Services Australia. Working while you get Disability Support Pension. Services Australia website. Accessed March 2026.

Document note

This guide was prepared as a practical plain-English resource for Safe Hands Support. It combines general employment guidance with current Australian public information available at the time of preparation.