CAROLINE: I would now like to introduce you to our next presenters. For the presentation removing barriers to opportunity: how to set graduates with disability on the path to employment success. Our presenter is Daniel Valiente-Riedl from WorkFocus Australia. Daniel, I will hand over to you. I will just give you a little hands up five minutes prior to the end of your presentation and then again at 30 seconds.

DANIEL: No problem.

CAROLINE: Thanks, Daniel.

DANIEL: Thank you so much, Caroline, and thank you for mispronouncing my surname.

CAROLINE: Sorry. And I know – I know –

DANIEL: Every single time that I go to do a presentation I make the same silly joke. And let me just see if I can share my screen now and if it's working, and it all seemed to be working quite nicely now. So, again, hello everybody. And thank you to the organisers of the Pathways15 Online conference for inviting me today. First, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country where I'm located today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. A name that means here from this place. As we are attending from multiple regions throughout Australia I would like to also acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, connection to land, waters and culture. I would also like to pay my respect to Elders past, present and emerging. So as Caroline said, my name is Daniel. And I want to disclose that I don't have an experience of living with a disability but for those who haven't heard me speak probably know my motivation to work in this field. I was brought up by somebody that lived with chronic schizophrenia and continuously heard voices. It was amazing that I grew up in a small village where it wasn't a disability. It was just somebody who heard voices. It was part of the human experience, part of the human diversity experience. And that brings me to my second point. I know that Debbie like this one, I do know that I sound like puss in boots. In these times in Zoom, we're all exhausted with Zoom. It becomes even harder to hear somebody with an accent, so I really appreciate your patience. As we know, currently more than 1 million Australians live with a disability and are ready to enter the workforce. But why is this important? It is because to be honest this number highlights under utilised potential across our communities including our workplaces. But a striking gap in success rate achieved by people with disabilities and those without a disability when it comes to accomplishing typical education and employment milestones. Research obviously shows that people with disabilities are less likely to pursue university or TAFE courses, and highly likely to stay under employed or unemployed for longer than their peers without a disability. National data also highlights the overall employment rates for graduates with a disability as much lower. For students, university and TAFE care practitioners are one of the top sources to secure graduate roles, in many cases career practitioners are at the front line adviser and guidance counsellor. As such they play a vital role in bridging employment gap and influence success rates for graduates with a disability. Today we will be discussing the rate of service that career advisers can tap into to support graduates with disability gaining employment. I forgot my clicker for a second there. So let's take a look at today's agenda. We will start by reviewing the current scenario for graduates with a disability, next we will discuss the range of free support available through job access. We will explore how people with disabilities can access funding for workplace adjustments, we will also share some specific tips and resources for career advisers to better support graduates with a disability, and we will talk about sharing information about disability, as this is an area of concern amongst many graduates and in the workforce. Then we will open up the floor hopefully for some questions. So obviously many of you will be very familiar with these statistics. For employers but this also signals for employers disability inclusion is not just good to have but essential in the context of the labour market. When we recognise that one in five Australians live with one or more disability. And this number is only increasing with the ageing population. Some people are born with disability while others may have acquired disability with age or accident. So nobody is immune to disability. Over 2 million Australians of working age between the ages of 15 to 64 have a disability. In most cases you may not even know that somebody has a disability. 90 per cent of conditions are absolutely invisible. This includes physical and mental health conditions. It's always important to remember that not two people will experience the same condition in the same way. For example, for two people with hearing impairment will experience a condition very differently. And as such may require very different levels of support in the workplace. 31 per cent of the population have an accessibility need and not all of them may - not all of them will consider themselves having a disability. And as you know, obviously disability is merely one aspect of the person, like being short or like being tall. So gaining higher education is generally associated with better employment outcomes and higher income. Both which are key to achieving economic security and independence. Studies have shown that people with disabilities are less likely to pursue a non-school qualification, such as university or TAFE, than those without a disability. People with disability are also less likely to - are more likely to leave school earlier and have lower levels of education. This is further evidenced by the low enrolment rate of students with disability in tertiary education. And the disparity becomes more profound when it comes to getting a job after completing tertiary education. The 2018 graduate outcome survey tracked the overall employment rates for graduates by demographic groups including disability. The survey found the overall employment rate, and this is full-time and part-time for graduates with a disability, were seven per cent points lower than for those without a disability. And the gap in full-time employment rates between graduates with and without a disability was more than 10 percentage points. The survey also highlighted that undergraduates with a disability were more likely to report that they were not fully using their skills or education. The main reason for this was that there was no suitable jobs in the area of expertise. Employment rates for graduates or vocational and education training courses are similar. The 2018 data in this graph reflects the responses of all the graduates including students from dual sector university, TAFEs and private RTOs, where they were asked are you employed after training, yes or no? Employment rates for graduates with a disability of VETs is 25 percentage points lower than those without a disability and that is a really striking statistic. The National Disability coordinator and officer program surveyed 220 disability service consultants across Australia about working with universities and graduates with disability. The survey really highlighted some barriers that DES providers considered as primary reason for low unemployment of graduates with a disability. Some of this include employer attitudes, ie the lack of knowledge and skills to hire people with disability. Lack of early assistance, students unable to register with DES providers until after they finished full-time study, and also societal expectations, ie lower expectations that people with disabilities will get into employment after completing their education. So let me talk about the great service that I head and I'm honoured to spear head. Job access is a national hub for disability employment. It is designed to support people with disabilities, employers and service providers. It's a free service that exists to help remove any of the barriers to disability employment. And it's a five-pronged free service. We have an advice service via phone and website, we operate a national call centre. The number is 1800 464 800 and I will have a slide at the very end with all our details. And it is delivered by a team of frontline professionals who can provide free confidential and expert advice. Our advisers are available to answer your questions related to disability employment or can direct you to other support services. Job access has also a website with information and advice on disability employment. We also coordinate workplace adjustments and modifications to the employment assistantance fund which I will discuss in greater detail later in the presentation. We also have the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator or the NDRC, which is an employer engagement service of job access who works with larger employers with generally more than 100 employees to increase their disability confidence. We also have the complaint resolution and referral service which aims to improve employment government funded disability service, support services, through a fair and impartial complaint resolution process and lastly the National Disability abuse and neglect hot line, or the hotline which is a vital information and reporting service available for anyone who suspects abuse and neglect of people with disability. The Australian Government launched the employer toolkit on the Job Access website in February 2019. The toolkit is a free resource to help employers who are keen to employ people with disabilities in their organisations. It is designed to support all levels of disability confidence in employers no matter whether they are hiring a person with a disability for the first time or looking to take the next steps. There is appropriate information available there. The toolkit is also extremely versatile as a resource for career practitioners. It includes a wide range of videos, tips and downloadable resources they can use when working with employers and students with a disability. So I really encourage you to go and have a look at that toolkit. And I think it's always important to mention disability employment service because over the years they have supported tens of thousands of people with disabilities to join the workforce. The primary function of a DES is, of course, provide a good fit, a good job fit. They're also there to ensure that both employee and employer receives any assistance necessary to address any disability related issues. The DES providers directly support people with disabilities at all the stages of employment process, right from getting ready for the job search, the job search itself and to start - and the system to start a new job. While not all people with disability may require support it is actually good and important for you to know this service exists. Job access can help employers to develop a relationship with a local DES if they are unsure where to start or how to start. Employers can also use the job access vacancy service to share their vacancies with local DES’s and this is a free service delivered by job access and it’s available to all employers big or small. So you may have heard obviously the word workplace adjustments or reasonable adjustments. So workplace adjustments for us are any changes to the work environment that allows employees with a disability to work safely and productively. The majority of adjustments are actually really low cost. While some changes such as provide a flexible work hours comes at no cost at all and that is something we've all seen with COVID. The Australian Government provides funding through the employment assistance fund to cover costs of making workplace adjustments as well. It can assist people with disabilities if they're about to start a job, are already working, or if they're self-employed. And it can help to buy work-related modifications and services. Some examples of these services may be adjustments, special equipment for physical workplaces, modifications to work equipment, Auslan interpreting, specialist service for employers with a specific learning disorder, some mental health conditions. We can also utilise it for disability deafness and mental health awareness training. As a side note our internal job access research shows that around 90 per cent of the modifications made through the employment assistance fund costs less than $10,000 and about 50 per cent less than $1000. So it is something that is viewed as a saving mechanism for the Australian Government as well. So the application process. Employers, employees, all these providers can make an application for workplace modifications. So they can start by submitting an online application through the job access website, job access will assess the application for eligibility of the worker and will also advise if a workplace assessment is required. If a workplace assessment is not required job access will send a formal approval so an organisation can purchase any modifications or adjustments and have the cost reimbursed by job access. If a workplace assessment is needed, job access arranges a specialist to visit the workplace at no cost at all to the employer or to the employee. The assessor will look at the individual workplace, identify any barriers that may exist, and find solutions to make the workplace more accessible and flexible. The organisation can then purchase the approved modifications and the cost is reimbursed fairly quickly by job access. But remember also that we're here to help. A job access adviser will manage the process and answer any of your queries at any time. So give us a call if you need any support. And you can find the guidelines of the EAF on the job access work site as well, but like I said happy for you guys to give us a call at any time and ask any questions. There is some criteria that each applicant needs to meet to be eligible for funding or workplace modifications or adjustments they need to work at least eight hours per week. If they’re self-employed they need to work at least 20 hours per week and earn an hourly income equivalent to the national minimum wage. They need to be in a job that is expected to continue for at least 13 weeks or more. They need to be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident. They also need to have an ongoing disability that has lasted at least two years and the disability must limit, restrict or impair their ability to work. Again, give us a call. Our professional advisers are available to assist with any queries regarding eligibility or - for the employment assistance fund or any other questions you may have. So university and TAFE career practitioners are one of the top sources for the students to secure graduate roles. Let's look at some tips and resources that may help you support students and graduates with disabilities transition into employment better. An easy way to identify if an employer is disability confident is to visit the website and see the diversity statement, generally included within the careers or about us page. You can also visit the job access website to view an alumni partner which is a list of organisations who have completed the job access employer partnership and remain committed to workplace diversity. The job access website also has a wide range of tools, templates, free resources to support job seekers with a disability. You can guide the students to review tips and advise on the website in preparation for a job search process. Another service which may help employers with disability confidence is the Australian network on disability, AND. So the AND managers and a stepping into program which is a paid internship scheme matching talented university students with disability roles in leading Australian businesses and they also have the PACE mentoring program, which is positive action to work career engagement program, which is also delivered by AND and connects students and job seekers with disabilities with mentors from Australian businesses. We also encourage you to join our mailing list to receive the latest news from job access. Our E-newsletter is published once every two months and it includes a list of our current employer partners, as well as a regular update and expert advice on supporting people with disabilities into the workforce. Here is all the dedicated programs designed to support graduates and students with a disability. So the National Disability Coordination Officer, which is a program especially designed to help students and graduates with disabilities succeed in choosing their studies and move into suitable employment. The University specialist employment partnership or USEP is designed to prepare and connect university students with disability to graduate jobs. It is a pilot program developed to deliver an on campus employment service and to meet the specific needs of graduating students with disability who are seeking employment. There is also the TAFE specialist employment partnership offered by USEP as well providing specialist career support by TAFE students as well. The big meet is a career fair organised by the AAGE which is promoted to students from all universities each host cities across Australia and has been created as a result of feedback received from employers from both the private and the public sector, and it's aimed at connecting employers and students at one major career event rather than attending several ones. And to get a truly inclusive workplace we believe employers need to feel comfortable and supported to share information about the disabilities should they wish to do or need to do so. You may have heard the term disclosure which is generally used to describe the process of sharing information about disability and we encourage all employers to move away from that term and start using the term of sharing of access requirements. And this in keeping with personal first language and putting the focus on the person rather than the disability. Also the term disclosure in many ways means you are hiding something that you don't want others to see. We are talking more about sharing access of requirement. So in 2015 UK based consultants surveyed about a thousand graduates with disability to help increase the number of graduates to successfully apply for graduate roles. The aim was to understand why graduates with a disability are not keen to share access information with employers during the recruitment process and highlight what employers need to do to encourage openness. The survey found that about 57 per cent of the students believed it will be beneficial to be open during the recruitment process. Over 70 per cent of the students said the most important factor in encouraging them to share will be to know what the benefits are. And 80 per cent of the students said they were more likely to share if they were told that the employer is disability confident by the career adviser and career services. A survey of the Australian Association of Graduate Employers, the AAGE - and I think that I mentioned that organisation before as well - found that nearly 50 per cent of the students with disability did not intend to share their disability with their employer. Nearly 17 per cent said they will not share and nearly three out of 10 students weren't sure what to do. This is an area where the students required the right guidance and advice before beginning their job search. Obviously, as you all know there is no legal obligation to share information about disability, until and unless it affects their ability to do the job or impacts their safety or the safety of their co-workers. In some cases the disability may only become evident once a person is employed. And some employees may choose not to share information and we need to respect that choice if it's not impacting to the workplace. Some of the reasons that they highlight - reasons to share information that were highlight were the disability perhaps is a core part of the personal identity, adjustments required during the interview or assessment process, a company actively promoting diversity, they need to ask for workplace adjustments or flexibility, more common - it's a lot more common once a person is settled in their jobs, if there is problems with the form of the dynamics, it may be involuntary, or application a remeasure to - in case the issue of disability arises in the workforce, and some of the reasons why they are not disclosing was because of fear of discrimination or a stigma. Internalised stigma, privacy, disability not relevant to the workplace or no need for work-related adjustment, short-term, casual or contract position, and may not consider the diagnosis as being a disability. That is my presentation for today. And I will love to answer any questions that you may have about employment assistance fund. I know that every time I do a presentation and I talk about it, there is a lot of questions. I can aim to answer as many as possible. If you don't feel comfortable to raise any questions around this forum, again, give us a call. We're happy to have a conversation with anybody one to one. And, you know, any audience questions, please pop them into the chat. Happy to respond.

CAROLINE: Okay. There doesn't seem to be any questions going in, Daniel, but I would like to thank you for your presentation. I believe it is so important to remember that disability is only one aspect of the person.

DANIEL: Absolutely.

CAROLINE: And I know that job access provides a range of solutions to help to minimise that overwhelming gap between people with disability and people without.

DANIEL: And it is very important for students to be aware that this service exists because there has to be also a sense of self-advocacy.

CAROLINE: Absolutely.

DANIEL: You know, and we are truly a plan-centred service. What we deliver is specific for the individual, specific for the workplace, and it's specific for the job as well. We've been doing this - I think that we've processed about 400,000 information and advice with people with disabilities and we've done, you know, a hundred thousand modifications over the years. So we really have a real know-how. And sometimes there is more changes that you can do that have got a real impact. As I said before, you know, about 50 per cent of all the modifications that we do, it's less than a $1000. And that ensures that a person with a disability remains in their jobs long term.

CAROLINE: Yeah. We have had one question come through now about how many NDRC officers are employed nationally now?

DANIEL: How many NDRC sorry?

CAROLINE: NDRC officers.

DANIEL: We've got a team of six plus the marketing team that goes around the country. So we've got - we are partnering with 35 large organisations per year. And running them through the program that the NDRC runs in terms of developing policies, attraction strategies for people we work for, all employers and people with disabilities. So it's all about incrementing the confidence of those employers in terms of the recruitment of people with disabilities. We really see in some of the research that has been coming out as of late that one of the big issues is that because people with disabilities are under represented in the workforce, we have a lack of exposure to the employment of people with disabilities. And I always use the example I live in Erskineville in Sydney, and we moved in there years ago with my wife. And I always thought it was a nice place because, you know…lives from my local pub. Right. So it was a really gay and lesbian friendly pub and area. So there used to be a lot of gay and lesbian pubs around there. I thought it was wonderful that we had that diversity. 20 years down the track, now I see that very differently because it is not gay and lesbian pubs any more, they're just pubs because people don't need to segregate themselves any longer to feel safe. So that is the kind of exposure that we need to have in terms of disability and employment.

CAROLINE: I agree. I might just pass on to Ben, my co-chair, to see if there's any other questions in the chat box. We've got a couple more minutes left.

BEN: Sorry. You go.

DANIEL: And as I said, if there is not any questions, again I encourage you guys to give us a call on the number that is up on the screen now. And to go to our website as well and have a look at it. Yeah.

BEN: Yeah, sure. Thank you. There was one earlier from Beth that was answered by Pam but I will just see if you've got anything to add to that. “I'm curious to know if the trend is going up for employers for employing persons with a disability. So if that trend is going up”. So Pam indicated from what her data shows that it has - that it has changed between four and five per cent. What's your opinion there?

DANIEL: I think that the needle is not moving. The government has formed a working group to understand why even though so much money is being invested in trying to raise the rates of people with disabilities in employment, that it still hasn't moved significantly. Now there is two things that are problematic with that. One is that there are actually more people disclosing disability and also I think there is a problem also with the word "disability" in itself because it is a judgment call. When does somebody have a disability and when does somebody have access requirements? So one really interesting exercise that Health New South Wales did, they tried to - they tried to account for employers with a disability within their organisations. So they put out a survey and only 1.2 per cent of the employees came back as having a disability which is statistically insignificant, really. Once they changed the wording and they changed it to disability requirements and they changed their vocabulary completely within Health New South Wales, they got about 7 per cent, 8 per cent. So it is difficult to establish whether the needle is moving because we don't know. But what we do know is that the people that are enrolled, for example, with DES, that needle is not moving from the ones that are participating in programs like the EAF, for example.

CAROLINE: Excellent. We might have to wrap it up there, Daniel. But, again, thank you very, very much. I would also like to again thank our sponsors. Please make sure that you visit their virtual booths during the conference and their links are in the chat box. If you are just joining us now you can access captioning for our next presentation. You just need to click the captioning button in the ribbon - the Zoom ribbon below or you can also access the captioning details in the chat box. And we also encourage you to please be engaged on social media and hashtag - with the hashtag Pathways15.