

# The Disability Skills Portfolio Scoping Project Final Report

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is a project implemented  
with the assistance of  
funding provided by the  
NSW Government,  
Department of Family and  
Community Services.

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the National Disability Services (NDS) commissioned study into the possibility of adopting a Skills Passport for its workers. 'Skills passport' approaches have been adopted in other industries across a range of countries with the aim of improving occupational mobility and career progression for workers and assisting employers in workforce recruitment efficiencies, skills recognition, workforce planning and skills gap analysis. Since there is no single agreed definition or model of what constitutes a 'skills passport', this study adopts the following all-encompassing definition to capture this diversity:

*Skills passports constitute a variety of mechanisms and instruments used by workers or learners and employers to profile, assess, build, document and track the development of worker skills in the workplace, formal educational settings and other places of learning, as well as those acquired through volunteer and extracurricular activities.*

This definition allows for the inclusion of a variety of skills passport devices, ranging from an employee's curriculum vitae to industry-wide mandated registration and accreditation schemes.

This NDS-funded project considers if a 'skills passport' or 'skills portfolio' approach could benefit the disability sector and, if so, what particular approach would be most appropriate and desirable to meet the needs of all interested disability sector stakeholders. It considers in particular whether a Disability Skills Passport would address the specific challenges facing the industry following implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which has led to a rapid expansion of jobs in disability services. The industry is further characterized by an increasingly casualised and flexible workforce, resulting in a pressing need to improve training, skills recognition and recruitment outcomes for employers and employees.

The research underpinning the Disability Skills Portfolio Scoping Project was developed in two integrated stages, which are presented in the final report as follows:

### Part One:

- Provides an examination of various skills passports already in use in the market, across different sectors and industries, in order to develop a better understanding of what is possible and the different ways in which a Disability Skills Passport may be developed and implemented.
- Categorises the various passports examined into six broad categories based on where and how they are hosted and managed. These categories include: employee-led, commercially established and managed, company-led, employer association-led, industry-led and state-led skills passports.
- Examines and discusses the different models of skills passports and skills portfolios available under these broad categories, including summarising their strengths and weakness.

## Part Two:

- Presents findings from facilitated workshop discussions and one-on-one interviews with 71 disability services sector stakeholders in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia.
- Discusses the views of disability services sector stakeholders, providing an overview of their views on skills passport and the possibility of success in adopting such a passport sector-wide.
- Identifies and discusses the challenges involved in introducing a skills passport for the disability services sector.
- Presents suggested options available to the disability services sector as it pursues a skills passport and suggests certain characteristics which should guide the development and implementation of the Disability Skills Passport.

As documented in Part Two of the report, stakeholders were in general agreement that a skills passport model would benefit the disability services sector in a number of important ways. These included: improving record keeping and understanding of an employee's knowledge, skills, workplace experiences and competencies; reducing recruitment costs and ongoing costs in capturing and maintaining employee records; enhancing convergence of industry training practices and programs; increasing employer confidence in the quality of training provided by other providers; and improving professionalism within the sector.

However, the following six issues and potential challenges to adopting a Disability Skills Passport were also identified:

1. **Informal versus Formal Training:** The commitment of the disability services sector to formal qualifications is declining, with the sector now characterised by an expansion of non-accredited in-house training. While this leads to duplication of training and sector inefficiencies, particularly given the casualised nature of the workforce, employers are hesitant to recognise skills obtained in other workplaces due to perceived variation in the quality of non-accredited training.
2. **Verification:** Employers noted that they often struggled to determine if the credentials and experience that a new recruit claimed on their resume was credible and that verification can take up valuable time and resources. While a Skills Passport approach could help to resolve this challenge, a key concern was determining who would be responsible for verifying the details on an individual's skills passport and what standards would be used to assess the information.
3. **Transferability:** Stakeholders acknowledged that much of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by disability sector employees are highly valuable and transferable across many sections of this and other sectors. However, transferability remained a challenge due to the inability and/or unwillingness of a provider to appreciate and trust the level of skills acquired by a new recruit who may have worked within the sector for some duration. A skills passport model would need to be based upon a trusted registration and skills verification process in order to alleviate employer concerns and better facilitate skills transferability in those areas

of importance to disability services sector stakeholders, particularly employers and employees.

4. **Access, Equity and Privacy:** Stakeholders stated a preference for a digital skills passport in order to make it easily accessible to employees and employers. However, if access depends on access to a computer, ability to use a computer or ability to pay for skills passport services, equity concerns will emerge which will need to be addressed. In addition, stakeholders raised issues of privacy, noting that the personal details of an employee should not be compromised.
5. **Cost to the Sector:** The cost of developing and maintaining a disability services industry skills passport model is of particular concern to stakeholders, given the relatively low profit margins and cost saving measures that providers must already contend with. Many participants thought partial or full government funding might be needed in the early stages of the development and implementation of the skills passport model until it became more widely accepted and financially supported by providers.
6. **Scale of the Skills Passport:** While stakeholders expressed a desire to see a national skills passport approach, it was acknowledged that different practices and levels of commitment within and between states may make this challenging. In light of the potential challenges to establishing a national scheme in the short to medium term, a pilot scheme at the state level was suggested.

The report's final considerations and recommendations are informed by the two research stages outlined above. We suggest that the development of a Disability Skills Passport model should include the following five dimensions:

1. **Employee ownership:** Employees should own and control access to their Disability Skills Passport. Employees should be responsible for entering evidence of their qualifications, training, professional development, skills acquisition and relevant workplace experience.
2. **Digitally-based:** The Disability Skills Passport should be maintained through an on-line platform for easy access and storage. Given issues of access and equity, the Disability Skills Passport should be designed in such a way that it only requires basic computer and keyboard skills, internet access and a personal email address.
3. **Registration fee:** Financial costs for the maintenance of the Disability Skills Passport should be covered through a negotiated employee-employers cost sharing arrangement. While a registration fee should be required when employees apply for their Disability Skills Passport, employers should be encouraged to cover the cost of registration fees.
4. **Verification of skills:** Verification of all evidence uploaded by an employee into their skills passport is critical to the success of the Disability Skills Passport. Given the extent of informal in-house training and perceived variation in its quality, one possibility is to appoint industry accredited verifiers who have been trained to assess and approve employee evidence of skills, qualifications and experience. Accredited verifiers should operate under clear industry guidelines and codes of conduct and be independently monitored.

5. Micro-credentials: The development of industry recognised micro-credentials would be one avenue to overcome the challenges associated with skills verification and recognition of non-accredited training. Oversight of the delivery of these micro-credentials would need to occur in order to ensure confidence in the training quality.

We suggest further that the disability services sector will need to consider if the Disability Skills Passport model should be a national industry-wide scheme or a state or even locally-based scheme. Three options were identified for consideration. First, a Disability Skills Passport Pilot Project could be a practical first step in developing and trialling a skills passport model for the sector. This could involve existing providers who have strong working relationships with one another. A pilot project would be relatively inexpensive to support and would assist in understanding the costs, opportunities and challenges of developing a more comprehensive Disability Skills Passport scheme for the sector.

A second and more ambitious approach would be to develop a national Disability Skills Passport scheme, developed and hosted by NDS and potentially expanding NDP's CPD program so that it becomes a full-fledged Disability Skills Passport. The criteria and process to verify information submitted by CPD members would need significant improvement before an effective and reliable NDP-led Disability Skills Passport model could be considered.

Third, an industry-led approach would be the most ambitious and include not only NDS and disability services providers, but also union and employee representatives, SkillsIQ, registered training providers, NDIS and other relevant state government representatives. The involvement of all major industry stakeholders would provide opportunities and expertise to develop micro-credentials, protocols and guidelines for skills and training verification and the criteria and training programs required to support the accreditation of verifiers. It is also likely to have the added benefit of delivering the greatest buy-in and support for the scheme.

Overall, this report supports the development of a skills passport model for the disability services sector. Depending upon its depth and breadth, this research establishes that a skills passport model should provide a number of benefits to both employees and employers within the sector. Delivering on these potential benefits, however, requires the adoption of a comprehensive skills passport scheme that is accepted and widely embraced by employers, employees and other key stakeholders.

# Introduction

It is widely acknowledged by National Disability Services (NDS) and other disability services sector stakeholders that the disability sector and its workforce confront significant challenges. Employment in the sector is growing and the workforce requirements are changing with the introduction of organisational and technological innovations and a rapidly changing policy and regulatory environment. Employers within the sector often struggle to recruit appropriately skilled staff and verify worker credentials. Many employees, on the other hand, either struggle with not receiving sufficient training and professional development due to the increasingly flexible and casualised nature of employment in the industry, or are expected to repeat training as they move from one employer to another. Both situations contribute to inefficiencies and costs to the sector. Improving training, skills recognition and recruitment outcomes for employers and employees is a pressing need. In other industries, 'skills passport' approaches have been adopted to improve occupational mobility and career progression for workers and assist employers in workforce recruitment efficiencies, skills recognition, workforce planning and skills gap analysis. This NDS-funded project considers if 'skills passport' or 'skills portfolio' approaches could provide similar benefits to the disability sector and, if so, what particular approach would be most appropriate and desirable to meet the needs of all interested disability sector stakeholders.

This report presents the findings of the Disability Skills Portfolio Scoping Project in two distinct but related parts. Part One outlines the adoption of skills passport models that have already been developed in the disability services sector and other industries. It considers a variety of skills passport models including those led by employees, companies, industries and government. Empirical case studies are used to illustrate each of these models. In Part Two of the report, the findings of the disability services sector stakeholder interviews and workshop discussions are presented and evaluated in relation to the different skills passport models outlined in Part One. These two stages inform the report's final considerations and recommendations.

## Approach and Method

The study employs a mixed method approach involving an extensive literature review and qualitative research involving facilitated workshop group discussions and semi-structured one-on-one interviews with disability sector stakeholders, including disability providers, government representatives and State Training Authorities, registered training providers and trade union representatives. The research was developed in two integrated stages:

Stage One:

The approach taken for this stage of the research consisted primarily of desktop research supplemented with selected interviews aimed at acquiring clarity and greater understanding of specific skills passport models. Included in this examination of each skills

passport model are considerations about who led the development and implementation of the model; what are the features and functions of the model; the depth and breadth of the model; how the model is managed, maintained and paid for; and the level of adoption by employees and/or employers in the sector in which it operates. The characteristics and strengths and limitations of employee-led, employer-led, industry-led and government-led skills passport models are presented, with regards to which model is most suitable for Australia’s disability services sector.

Stage Two:

In the second stage of the research, facilitated workshop discussions and one-on-one interviews were conducted with disability services sector stakeholders in three States: New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. The research team worked with NDS to identify appropriate stakeholders and organise the workshops and interviews. The data collected from the workshop discussions and interviews assisted the research team to better understand workforce challenges within the industry, stakeholder perceptions of skills, training, accreditation and recruitment within the sector and their understanding of ‘skills portfolio’ approaches and their applicability for the sector. As illustrated in Table 1, 71 stakeholder participants were involved in either workshop group discussions or one-on-one interviews.

**Table 1: Research participants by organisation**

Type of organisation	Number of participants		Total participants
	Workshop	Interviews	
<b>Adelaide field research</b>			
Disability services provider	21	4	25
NDS	2	1	3
Government	2	0	2
<b>Perth field research</b>			
Disability services provider	6	10	16
NDS	2	1	3
Government		3	3
Registered training organisation	2		2
<b>Sydney field research</b>			
Disability services provider	8		8
NDS	3		3
NDP	1	2	3
Trade union		3	3
	<b>Total: 47</b>	<b>Total: 24</b>	<b>Total: 71</b>

## The Changing Disability Services Sector Context

Workforce growth and changing workforce requirements, largely arising from the establishment and implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), are presenting significant challenges for Australian disability services employers. The NDIS has expanded funding and introduced a personalised support model based on



individualised funding to enable consumer choice in a competitive services market. This has led to a rapid expansion of jobs in disability services and changes in the nature of jobs and skills requirements, as well as driving changes in service provider business and practice models.

Over the NDIS implementation period, from 2013 to 2020, about one in five new jobs in Australia is expected to be in disability services, with this growth representing a more than doubling of the size of the disability services workforce (Productivity Commission 2017, p. 319). These estimates refer to effective full-time jobs which means the actual number of workers required is likely to be much higher as a large proportion of disability services jobs are part-time.

In addition to the vast increase in overall demand, the NDIS personalised service model entails increased diversity in the type of assistance and supports provided. A key principle of personalisation is that people with disability should have greater choice and control over their lives. Service providers need to be able to engage with people with disability in the planning of services, having the capacity to provide a greater diversity of services and being able to respond to changing demands. This means service providers need to recruit for a greater diversity of skills and also personal characteristics of workers, with the latter requirement arising from expectations that the diversity of the workforce should more closely match the diversity of the client base. Personalisation of services also entails greater diversity and variability in the timing and location of services with increased service provision in individuals' homes and in the community rather than in specialist group settings. Workers may be required to work in isolation from colleagues and supervisors and to be more reliant on computers and mobile phones for communications and for administrative aspects of their roles. For these workers, training can be a challenge as they are no longer operating out of a common workplace or geographical location. As a consequence, online delivery of training is likely to increase.

The NDIS individualised pricing model and the evolving competitive services market present additional challenges for service providers. Provider income for service provision is now on the basis of a fee for each hour of service provided to each individual NDIS participant. Under this model providers must ensure every hour of a frontline service worker's time is billed to a period of individual service provision to an individual and, while providers need to be responsive to consumer requirements for flexibility in services, they have reduced flexibility to enable this. In addition, there is considerable evidence to suggest the base hourly price underpinning NDIS prices for core supports, such as assistance with self-care, daily living and accessing the community, is too low to enable service providers to provide good quality support via workers who have enough time to perform their jobs properly, are adequately trained and have some security of working time (Cortis et al., 2017; Parliament of Australia, 2018; see also McKinsey and Company, 2018).

The disability services workforce

The bulk of employees in the disability services workforce are employed in the occupation 'disability support worker'. These workers are the frontline providers of care, personal assistance and support to people with disability to assist them with daily living and social

and community participation. Until recently, available data on this workforce was poor as neither industry nor occupation classifications used by the ABS are disaggregated to the sector or relevant occupations. The Australian and New Zealand Classification of Occupations (ANZCO) combines aged care and disability support workers under a category called 'Aged or Disabled Carer' (ABS, 2013). Some estimates draw on this broader category while a 2010 workforce survey (Martin and Healy, 2010) also provides an indication of some workforce characteristics. The published reports from the NDS workforce data collection from member organisations also provide a picture of the changing workforce over the last few years.

Within the broad category of disability support worker, the main basis for distinctions within the occupation are in regard to work performed, skills requirements and qualifications held, which provide the bases for separation between different groups of support worker roles or levels of responsibility as contained in the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHCDS Award). The SCHCDS Award sets out the characteristics of work of Social and Community Services (SACS) employees from levels 1 to 8, with levels 1 to 4 most relevant to frontline support workers and support supervisors, and levels 5 to 8 relevant to management roles as well as other functions including finance, marketing or human resources.

Disability support workers providing direct support (the bulk of employees in the sector and the main group of employees for whom a skills passport may be relevant) are likely to be recruited to positions at levels 2 and 3 of the SCHDS Award, with level 1 roles likely to be limited to 'initial recruit(s) who may have limited relevant experience' and/or employees who will be engaging in significant on-the-job training. The NDIS price for the provision of personal supports is at level 2.2 of the SCHDS Award with more complex supports priced at level 3. The classification descriptors are very general, detailing the general scope of a wide range of SCACS roles including disability services roles. In relation to specific prerequisites at level 2.1, employees may have an appropriate certificate or diploma. Level 2.3 is the entry point for a diploma-qualified worker. SCHDS level 3 provides an entry point for degree-qualified workers and workers with certificates or diplomas and relevant experience. In the main, workers employed at level 4 or higher under the SCHDS Award are likely to be in jobs that would have at least a substantial component of supervision and require a sound knowledge of program, activity, operational or services aspects of the work in functional area. Prior to the NDIS, most mental health workers were engaged at levels 3 or 4. However, this practice has been disrupted by NDIS funding, which does not accommodate engagement of support workers at level 4 and has also restricted support priced to pay workers at level 3. To a lesser extent, this is also a problem in some other disability services. As a result, the profile of workers may be shifting downward on the SCHDS classification structure (see Appendix for details of SACS classifications 1 to 4).

A much smaller workforce of allied health professionals are also frontline service providers to people with disability. While the category of allied health worker itself is not tightly defined, some types of allied health workers are subject to occupational regulation through the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRA) for health professions established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008 and now

comprising 14 national boards regulating different health professions (COAG Health Council, 2018). Allied health professions covered by the regulation are chiropractic care, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners and occupational therapists. Other allied health professions not covered by NRAs, but who may be employed in the disability services sector, include audiologists, counsellors, dietitians, exercise physiologists, music therapists, nutritionists, pathologists, social workers and speech pathologists (Department of Health and Ageing, 2013, p. 300; Productivity Commission, 2017, p. 320).

## Part One: An Overview of Skills Passport Models

In recent years, educationalists, careers counsellors, employers, industry, and governments across a range of countries have become increasingly interested in skills passports (see Cedefop, 2018; NSAN, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018; Williams, 2009). However, there is no single agreed definition or model of what constitutes a 'skills passport'. The following all-encompassing definition was developed to capture this diversity:

*Skills passports constitute a variety of mechanisms and instruments used by workers or learners and employers to profile, assess, build, document and track the development of worker skills in the workplace, formal educational settings and other places of learning, as well as those acquired through volunteer and extracurricular activities.*

This definition allows for the inclusion of a variety of skills passport devices from an employee's curriculum vitae to industry-wide mandated registration and accreditation schemes whereby passports serve as entry requirements. Skills passports serve multiple purposes, including: improving labour market and occupational mobility for employees; assisting employees and employers to monitor and verify employee competence, develop skills and identify workforce training needs; and provide employers with a repository for credible workforce information such as employment checks (e.g. qualifications, driver's licences, police checks) and compliance licenses required to perform the job (e.g. professional licenses and tickets). Who initiates the development of the skills passport platform often influences the design and ownership of the passport and the purposes it serves for end-users. Therefore, the findings are arranged according to the major initiators of skills passports, beginning with employee-led skills passports and concluding with government-led skills passports.

Employee-led Skills Passports: Career e-portfolios

Individuals typically rely on resumes to profile their qualifications and work experiences in the labour market. These documents describe where individuals have worked, what they have accomplished and what skills they have acquired in addition to other personal attributes and qualifications. A resume serves as a very rudimentary 'passport' to assist

employees in job-hunting and in explaining to prospective employers how their skills, experiences and acquired competencies align with a particular job. Today, the resume is being supplemented and in some cases replaced with career e-portfolios.

The concept of an e-portfolio is ambiguous, and there is a lack of consensus as to what it means (Lievens, 2014). Definitions range from a collection of digital artefacts representing an individual, group, organisation or institution, to describing it as an administrative tool for meaningful learning or a personalised web-based collection of work, ideas and reflections demonstrating various skills and accomplishments (Lievens, 2015; Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005). Research on the topic tends to focus on the use of e-portfolios for learning and teaching purposes in higher education (Hallam and Creagh, 2010; Kimball, 2005; Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005; Sweat-Guy and Buzzetto-More, 2007). While less work has been done in the areas of employment and workplace learning, recent research suggests that e-portfolios are also increasingly useful for work-related purposes, such as job searches, career planning and development, and increasing work skills and employability (Harrison-Dening et al., 2018; JISC, 2012; Jwaifell, 2013; Lievens, 2014).

E-portfolios are typically categorised according to their intended users and purposes. Given the abundance of studies done on e-portfolios and higher learning, most literature highlights the types of e-portfolios used in educational settings. For instance, Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005, p. 2) define three broad types of e-portfolio: student e-portfolio, teaching e-portfolio, and institutional e-portfolio. These e-portfolios, according to them, are used for: planning educational programs; documenting learning, skills, knowledge and abilities; monitoring and evaluating performance; and finding a job. Kimball (cited in Weber, 2018) identifies four categories of e-portfolio, also set within an educational context. The first is a working portfolio used as a staging site by students to collect, develop and reflect upon their work. The second is an academic e-portfolio, used by teachers as an assessment tool. The third is a presentation e-portfolio, used to display competencies and assignments for a course or certification. The fourth is the professional portfolio, a 'Career portfolio' created by students to demonstrate specific job-related proficiencies and qualities to potential employers.

#### *A Career e-portfolio*

The professional or Career e-portfolio (Lievens, 2015; Weber, 2018), derived from the typologies of e-portfolio in higher learning, represents the greatest potential for an employee-led skills passport. For the purposes of this report, a Career e-portfolio can be defined broadly as "a collection of resources held in an electronic format that provides evidence of an individual's academic or professional achievements" (Harrison-Dening et al., 2018, p. 48). Ease of access and the advent of Web 2.0 which enabled individuals to create and share information online are key factors informing why a Career e-portfolio is a suitable form of employee-led skills passport. The wide availability of free or commercial online tools and platforms (see Table 1) that allow people to build their own Career e-portfolios provides crucial infrastructure. Online e-portfolio tools allow employees to choose a tool that makes sense; one that is easy for them to learn to use and gives them the ability to create a unique look (Rogers, 2014).

As an employee-led skills passport, a Career e-portfolio consists of a resume, as well as other types of artefacts and information that may not be displayed in a traditional resume. These artefacts include letters of recognition/commendation, awards, certificates and reports on teamwork, projects or internship (Jwaifell, 2013; Lievens, 2015). Further information about one’s skills and work competencies can also be added to the Career e-portfolio via electronic links to an introductory video, YouTube, and other social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Rogers (2014) provides a list of items that a Career e-portfolio may potentially contain:

- A link to a traditional resume or online resume such as a LinkedIn page
- Artefacts demonstrating expanded work experience/skills, awards, certificates
- A write-up on one’s career goals and objectives
- Reflections on one’s professional philosophy and ongoing learning
- A list of training, seminars or conferences attended
- A video introduction of oneself
- Links to online social media to demonstrate professional networks

**Table 2: List of common e-portfolio platforms**

NAME OF PLATFORMS	TYPE	DEVELOPER
LinkedIn	Free to use	LinkedIn Corporation
WordPress	Free to use (optional services)	Automattic Inc.
Tumblr	Free to use (optional services)	Oath Inc.
Weebly	Free to use (optional services)	Weebly, Inc.
Google sites	Free to use	Google
Mahara	Free to use	Catalyst
PebblePad	Commercial	Pebble Learning Ltd.
Passport	Commercial	Purdue University

Source: Online research

Two common platforms for e-portfolios

While e-portfolios exist in numerous forms and on various platforms, this report focuses on two common platforms that are often mentioned by authors/users of e-portfolios on the internet. These platforms also serve as examples of employee-led skills passports.

The first is the social networking site LinkedIn. LinkedIn, established in 2003, is the world’s largest professional networking site with over 575 million users worldwide (LinkedIn, 2018). In 2013, LinkedIn added a “Professional Portfolio” that transformed its traditional word-

oriented resume format to an e-portfolio platform (Chang, 2013). The professional portfolio feature allows its users to link or upload any number of external documents, sites, and visual content such as photos, presentations and videos into the summary, work experience and education sections on their profiles. LinkedIn also has a publishing feature for its users to write, reflect and share articles or blogs on any theme they choose (Szumanski, 2017). Unlike commercial e-portfolio platforms, LinkedIn offers these features for free. By allowing its users to compile and catalogue their own skill set, LinkedIn is an important example of an employee-led skills passport.

There are some key considerations when it comes to choosing LinkedIn as an e-portfolio/skills passport platform. Most of LinkedIn’s revenue is earned by on-selling its users’ information to professional recruiters and employers (Sankey, 2018). This is a problem for people who are reluctant to give too much information away or do not want to receive ‘spam’ approaches. LinkedIn also does not allow users to create and customise their own unique e-portfolios. All LinkedIn sites look the same, and it is difficult for a person to stand out from the rest of the users.

WordPress, another common platform, allows for the personal customisations that are restricted in LinkedIn. WordPress is an online open-source software that was developed by Automattic Inc. in 2005 (WordPress.com, 2018). WordPress has over 60 million users, but it is unclear how many use it to create a Career e-portfolio. Users have the ability to build a blog, a full website or an e-portfolio for free from the ground up. No prior technical knowledge of website building is required, as WordPress has a simple step-by-step process for beginners. Different types of audio and visual media can also be uploaded and embedded into one’s e-portfolio without cost. Like LinkedIn, WordPress is an example of an employee-led skills passport that offers people the ability to construct their own e-portfolio and to curate their own skill sets.

However, WordPress is not an entirely free platform. Users have to pay monthly fees for upgraded features such as customised domain names, storage space, advanced web design and editing tools, and removal of advertisements. That said, users could technically choose to construct their e-portfolios at WordPress for free without these added features.

**Table 2: Pros and Cons of Employee-led Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Free resource for employees	Verification of information is difficult
Open access	Digital skill requirements can be a barrier
Ability to profile a wide-range of qualifications, competencies, skills and interests	Not fit-for-purpose for end-users
Possibility of reaching a wide range of potential employers	Concerns regarding sharing too much personal information in open space

A second category of Career e-portfolio platforms is designed more specifically for workforce management. Unlike e-portfolio platforms like LinkedIn or WordPress made available for individuals to upload their resumes and profile their skills, interests and personal attributes, Career e-portfolios designed with workforce management in mind focus more on verification and validation of employee skills and qualifications by employers and employment agencies. Most medium and large-scale organisations have dedicated procedures and dedicated systems to capture workforce data. These systems are commonly embedded within wider and more comprehensive HR management systems within the organisation such as (Enterprise Resource Planning) ERP systems or Workforce Asset Management Systems, and serve a range of purposes including:

- Verification, analysis and monitoring of workforces
- Workforce forecasting and planning
- Performance management
- Managing working times and scheduling
- Recruitment and training needs and requirements

In some cases, organisations may utilise an external organisation or a contracted firm to assist with some of these HR tasks (Cooke, Shen and McBride, 2005). The outsourcing of HR practices has contributed to the emergence of specialised HR service organisations (Kock et al., 2012) with some occupying workforce management niches. Australia's TikForce Limited is one such organisation.

TikForce is an Australian Publicly listed ASX Company that was established in 2014 (formally known as Palace Resources Ltd.). Based in Western Australia, TikForce is a small company originally established to provide specific workforce management solutions for the mining industry. Tikforce worked to assist the mining industry meet its workforce needs by developing a platform for managing workforce compliance, which mining companies could use for onboarding of new staff and ongoing auditing and compliance monitoring of existing staff. As TikForce notes in its Annual Report (2017, p. 5), the company was 'developed in response to getting workers compliant and ready for mine site and construction activity'. The increasing number of casual workers meant that the industry was having difficulties confirming the identities of workers and efficiently managing the scale of screening required for all of the new recruits. TikForce developed the platforms and procedures for delivering this service to the industry and its supply chain. The platform acts as a mechanism to demonstrate employee compliances and provides certainty to employers needing to verify employee identities, qualifications and credentials. The Tikforce platform is based on individual workers uploading identity and credentials to the Tik.me worker document vault. Service providers can then access the 'verified' data (a process undertaken by Tikforce) via an 'organisation portal'.

TikForce developed the platform in consultation and collaboration with industry insiders and supply chain workforce experts with the view that 'technology should be disruptive but not destructive' (Tikforce Annual Report, 2017, p. ?). The components that make up the

TikForce Platform are designed to be simple to use and to provide clarity to the user. One of TikForce’s selling points is that its platform is online and cloud-based and provides a central point for the delivery of identity and credential verification of employees and potential employees. They claim that a low-cost platform helps organisations and individuals to achieve compliance faster, smarter and more efficiently than before by providing and supporting identity and credential verification. This benefits employers, recruiters, workers and job applicants to become more competitive in today's economy. For employees, the system operates as a ‘skills passport’ assisting their occupational mobility and ensuring a better fit between their skills, work experiences, qualifications and available jobs.

TikForce is working to expand beyond providing HR services to the mining industry, including by providing workforce management solutions for the disability services sector. NDS, for example, has engaged in a partnership with TikForce to consider ways to assist disability service providers with workforce compliance and verification monitoring. As noted by former NDS Chief Executive, Dr. Ken Baker:

*“The partnership between NDS and TikForce will allow the disability services sector to better assess their risks and in turn know they are doing all they can to safeguard the rights of people they support” (TikForce, 2018).*

It is estimated that with the roll-out of the NDIS, 40 000 new workers will be required to meet emerging demand in the next 2-5 years (ARTD Consultants, 2015). It is expected that much of this workforce demand will be filled with casual workers (NDS, 2018) requiring considerable screening, identification validation and validation of qualifications (both initially and with ongoing yearly registration requirements) of employees. TikForce provides service providers a commercial platform for outsourcing these HR functions and disability services sector employees a ‘skills passport’ containing verifiable evidence expected by employers in the sector. TikForce, however, operates as a commercial enterprise and disability service providers would have to see value for money in paying for their HR services.

**Table 3: Pros and Cons of Commercial Workforce Management Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Verification of skills and training information	Lack of end-user (e.g. employer and employee) participation can limit its capabilities and utility for end users
Better fit-for-purpose for end-users	Digital skill requirements can be a barrier
Ability to profile a wide-range of qualifications, competencies, skills and interests	User-pay
	Not open access
	Controlled by a third-party



Companies often support their employees to acquire the skills and the capabilities to perform their job roles through a range of formal and informal training initiatives. Typically this training is delivered in-house by the company's trainers or contracted training providers, or in some cases the company may send some employees for external training at dedicated training institutions. In some cases this training may result in nationally-recognised qualifications, but growing evidence shows that more often employees are only trained to perform particular tasks aligned with job and company requirements through unaccredited training for which formal qualifications are not provided. It is not uncommon, for example, for firms to develop their internal training materials rather than make use of formally approved industry training packages or associated units of competency. This presents challenges for employees when wanting to acquire recognition for their skills outside the company and to transport them across employers or even occupations. Some companies provide employees company-issued training certificates when an employee completes their internal training, which provides them with a record of their training achievements. However, how well these certificates are understood and granted merit by other companies often depends on whether those companies are aware of the training practices internal to the specific organisation. Nonetheless, these training certificates can be quite important for employees once they depart the organisation and are looking for alternative employment. Employees, for example, can use these non-accredited training certificates as part of their Career e-portfolios.

Holden Motor Company provides a useful example of how companies can help their workforce to develop skills passports. In October of 2017, Holden closed its auto assemble facilities in Australia resulting in job loss for around 1,500 direct employees. The announcement of this closure came four years earlier providing Holden sufficient time to prepare its workforce for life after Holden. Over this four year period, Holden worked with government, unions, career advisors and other labour market intermediaries to develop a comprehensive 'worker in transition' program (see Snell, Gekara and Schermuly, 2017). One of the initiatives was to provide all Holden employees with a "Transition Passport" so each worker had a record of the skills and training they had acquired during their time at Holden. While a highly skilled workforce, the skills acquired by Holden employees were almost exclusively non-accredited and un-recognised outside the industry. In acknowledging this fact and in recognising that many of its employees would struggle to find work outside the disappearing auto industry, Holden established a Transition Centre staffed by career counsellors who could work with Holden employees one-on-one to assess their skills and training and complete the Transition Passport. A key component of the Transition Passport was the identification of transferable skills acquired by the employees which would better assist them in finding work in alternative occupations. In this regard, the Transition Passport served as a skills education tool whereby employees were better educated about the diversity of their skills (e.g. soft, generic, technical hard skills) and where these skills could be applied in other employment areas. The Transition Passport also helped workers to understand and track their progress through the stages of the Holden Transition Program and their work with the Transition Centre. In addition,

the Transition Passport, which was endorsed by Holden, gave employees something to take away from Holden that provided verification of their informal skills and could be used to facilitate re-employment. Like all company-based skills passports, the Holden Transition Passport was developed for a very specific need of the company which limits its wider applicability. However, it does illustrate how companies can assist employees to develop skills passports and better understand the training, skills and capabilities that they have developed over time with one organisation. The difference in this Holden Transition Passport from others, however, is that the company was closing down and therefore had a duty to assist its retrenched employees find work elsewhere but also had no concerns regarding losing employees once they are well trained and provided with industry verifiable and recognisable testimonials. As we see later in this analysis, this tends to be a major obstacle in debates regarding providing employees with comprehensively portable passports.

**Table 4: Pros and Cons of Company-led Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Provides employees 'proof' of their training and non-accredited training	Difficult for an employee to extend the Passport beyond the single firm
Typically free of charge to a firm's employees	May not be fit-for-purpose for end-users
Ability to profile a wide-range of qualifications, competencies, skills and interests	Limited to employees of a single firm
Assists employees to better understand and document the skills they have acquired in a particular workplace	
Assists employers to better understand the skills developed within a specific firm	

#### Employer Association-led Skills Passport: National Disability Practitioners

The breadth of an employer-led Skills Passport can be extended when multiple employers develop mechanisms to recognise the training records and work experiences of employees from each other's organisations. This may occur through informal arrangements and understandings or through more formalised memorandums of understanding between employers. Employer associations may also play an important role in facilitating the development of Skills Passport initiatives for their members with the aim of wider applicability. National Disability Services' (NDS) work with National Disability Practitioners (NDP) and their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program is a useful illustration in this regard.

NDS is Australia's peak body for non-government disability service organisations, representing more than 1100 non-government service providers. Collectively, NDS members operate several thousand services for Australians with all types of disability. NDP is a professional association within the NDS dedicated to informing, developing, recognising and connecting individuals working in the disability sector in Australia. With a

current membership of around 14,000, they support capacity building within the sector in terms of providing information, online learning modules and resources related to practitioner service delivery (see <https://www.ndp.org.au>). NDP aims to take a holistic approach to the 'personal and professional growth' of the disability sector workforce including direct frontline disability support worker staff and therapists/specialists in the allied health service provision area. They provide members access to a range of resources catering for varying content interests that are pitched at varying literacy and learning levels. It is noted that these range from 'disability-specific training and topics, to NDIS readiness, change management and personal growth' resources. The NDP formats include factsheets, webinars, NDPTV (their on-demand TV channel), online learning and referrals to workshops through their website.

In early 2018 NDP initiated a 'pilot' CDP program. Like other professional and practitioner CDP initiatives, the NDP's CDP program aims to assist disability sector employees to maintain, improve and advance upon their competencies, knowledge and expertise, and further develop their personal and professional qualities and attributes. As their website notes, the 'CPD program is designed to improve the knowledge and skills you need to excel in your jobs and improve your future employability'. The CPD program works to achieve these outcomes for disability sector employees through an online certification platform whereby paying members (the CPD online certification is relatively low cost at only \$20 for NDP members) are able to receive recognition for their professional development activities. Currently, there are just under 1,000 CPD members.

The CPD certification operates as a point system whereby a disability services worker or associated allied health worker is able to collect specific points per year to maintain CPD certification. Twelve CPD points are required each calendar year for an individual to obtain and maintain their certificate. CPD points are divided into three categories: professional activities, independent learning activities and formal learning activities. Depending on the type of activity and its delivery, the professional development points may be achieved from activities within the organisation they are working, gained through external activities (e.g. attending professional conferences or training sessions) or from NDP's wide range of online resources. These activities must be verifiable and cover at least two of the three categories for members to qualify for their points and CPD certification. Generally, one hour of learning equates to one CPD point. The validation process requires DSW or practitioners to log in to the NDP website and fill out the Activity Validation form to have their points verified and tallied. The CPD certification, therefore, becomes a mechanism for formally recognising non-accredited training and knowledge acquisition by sector employees, which is verified through NDP. NDP encourages CDP participants to make use of TikForce (and other online platforms) to upload the details of their professional development activities which can be made available to their employers or potential employers. As part of the CPD certification process, NDP also maintains this information but is not currently set up as an online Skills Passport Platform.

**Table 5: Pros and Cons of Employer-Association-led Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Provides employees ‘proof’ of their training, non-accredited training and professional development	Verification of quality of training and professional development activities may be difficult
Ability to profile a wide-range of qualifications, competencies, skills and interests	Often a financial cost to the employee
Assists employees to better understand and document the skills they have acquired in an industry	Employee engagement may be low without perceived benefits or incentives
Assists employers to better understand the skills developed by an employee through a range of professional activities and workplace experiences	May not be fit-for-purpose for end-users outside the industry
	Limited to employees of a single industry
	Financial cost to maintain the skills platform

Industry-led Skills Passports: The Australian Construction Industry White Card & Australian Electricity Supply Skills Passport

A fifth approach to developing a skills passport is to adopt of an industry-wide approach. Industry approaches typically involve a range of industry stakeholders including employers and their associations, unions, contractors and government. The aim of an industry approach is to acquire industry-wide agreement on the types of skills required for entry into a particular industry or occupation within the industry and a formal mechanism for recognising and documenting those entry-level skills. Two examples are used to illustrate industry-led Skills Passports: The Australian Construction Industry White Card and Australian Electricity Supply Skills Passport.

*The Construction Industry White Card*

The construction industry in Australia is characterised by a rapidly expanding mobile workforce and work that is considered high-risk in nature. These two factors have prompted the industry and its Federal regulators to standardize the delivery of mandatory occupational health and safety training for new workers across Australia’s states and territories. Since 2011, workers who complete the mandated Construction Induction Training can apply for what is known in the industry as a White Card, without which they cannot enter their work site. Since this nationally recognised entry-level training system

mandates minimum standards of knowledge and skills, particularly in relation to workplace safety, they serve as a form of skills passport in Australia's construction industry.

The White Card system came into effect in 2012 following Federal adoption of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and associated *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*. These Regulations mandate the completion of General Construction Induction training, with the intention of equipping new workers with basic knowledge of construction work, including occupational health and safety laws, common hazards in the construction industry and steps for risk reduction (Comcare, 2014; 2015). The core of the training is a nationally recognised unit of competency called *Work Safely in the Construction Industry* (CPCCOHS1001A). In addition to delivering minimum health and safety knowledge, the unit is intended to develop workers' communication skills, and particularly the ability to report hazards and risks, ask questions effectively and provide information to co-workers (ASQA, 2013, p. 7).

General Construction Induction training is delivered by registered training organisations (RTOs), who are in turn regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the national regulator for Australia's Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector since 2011. In Victoria and Western Australia, authorised RTOs are registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council (WA TAC) respectively. Administration of the White Card varies state-by-state. In some states, the White Card may be issued directly by the RTO that delivered the training, whereas in others, it must be issued by the state regulator. Modes of training delivery also vary state-by-state. For example, not all states allow online delivery and assessment of the relevant units. However, new construction workers in Australia are increasingly obtaining their White Cards online. In 2012, 70% of the 490,000 White Cards issued across the country were in Queensland and Western Australia where online training delivery for the purposes of the White Card is allowed (ASQA, 2013, p.10).

The ASQA and other stakeholders have expressed concern about the quality of training and assessment for White Cards issued online, with fears that it may, in turn, compromise the safety of workers on Australian construction sites. A 2013 study commissioned by the ASQA recommended tighter standardization and control of the assessment tasks and the number of training hours associated with obtaining the White Card (see ASQA, 2013). Specifically, the report called for the unit of competency to be revised to ensure greater emphasis on skill development in addition to knowledge acquisition, and to mandate minimum hours of training across states and RTOs.

#### *The Australian Electricity Supply Skills Passport*

The Australian Electricity Supply Industry (ESI) Skills Passport was an industry response to a range of concerns that includes workforce health and safety in a high safety-critical industry, inadequate workforce qualifications, workforce portability challenges between organisations, states and jurisdictions. The initiation of the ESI Skills Passport began in 2006 by the Victoria Electricity Supply Industry (VESI). VESI is a partnership of Victoria's five major electricity companies (CitiPower, PowerCor, AusNet Services, Jemena and United Energy), which aims to improve "consistency, compliance and transportability

across the companies” (VESI, 2018). VESI facilitated the initial discussion about a ‘skills passport’ among the electricity companies and then involved other industry stakeholders including E-Oz Energy Skills Australia (the industry’s Skills Council), Energy Networks Association and industry unions (e.g. the Electrical Trades Union, Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union’s Mining and Energy Division). These consultations were rapidly expanded to include Electricity Supply Industry counterparts and respective industry stakeholders in other states and territories. These industry stakeholders aimed to address concerns about different training standards between states and firms which were contributing to occupational mobility and skills recognition difficulties. Prior to this, firms within the industry tended to focus on internal labour markets with non-accredited training being fairly common, making it difficult for employees to demonstrate competency when pursuing job opportunities with other firms. In 2006, the industry stakeholders agreed on Energy Network Guidelines with a commitment to formalising the Australian ESI Skills Passport by 2008.

The ESI Passport aimed to achieve two key objectives:

1. Implement nationally consistent training practices and standards that were not necessarily covered by Training Packages
2. Improve workforce portability and bridge the gap between the internal training practices and labour markets of firms and the industry’s broader labour market

The ESI Passport therefore acts as an industry recognised portable record of an employee’s training (both internally and externally acquired), authorisations and inductions. Each eligible person is provided only one ESI Passport with a unique identifying number. The unique number is kept in the national passport database. Employees can view their records by accessing the national database; employers may also request access to an employee’s records through this database. The ESI Passports are issued to individuals who have been provided written authority by an electrical network operator to access a network or are required by a network operator to undertake tasks requiring training specified in Australian ESI Passport. Without the ESI Passport, employees are not able to access electricity network sites. The ESI Passports are designed to hold at least seven years of data.

Other features associated with the ESI Passport include:

- A dedicated National ESI Passport Website
- A National Database in which each qualified individual is provided with a unique Passport number
- Administrative rules governing the passport and the protection of an individual’s confidential information
- Standardised refresher training units aimed at ensuring mutual recognition of skills across the multitude of electricity operators

The ESI Passport is underpinned by a nation-wide industry commitment to competency standard units (CSUs) which are mutually recognised by ESI network operators. These

CSUs cover a wide range of competencies including ESI safety rules, codes of practice and procedures needed to work in the electricity industry, first aid and CPR training, procedures for working at heights and rescue procedures in industry-specific contexts. The number of CSUs required by a network operator is largely dependent on the type of work being performed by an employee. These Nationally-recognised CSUs are delivered by RTOs which have the CSUs in their scope of registration. Industry confidence in the ESI Passport, as an instrument to measure the baseline skills among employees, is therefore highly dependent on the quality of training being delivered by these RTOs. Concerns about the quality of training delivered by RTOs in relation to the ESI Passport, however, do not seem to be as significant as those raised in relation to the White Card in the construction industry. The ESI Passport is currently being replaced by the ESI Worker Program with the major changes being that registered ESI workers will receive an e-card that can be accessed via a mobile device and a wallet-sized plastic card that can be scanned to check compliance and qualifications of the worker. The ESI Worker Program will also enable employers, RTOs or network operators to update a worker’s profile at any time (ESI Worker, 2018).

**Table 6: Pros and Cons of Industry-led Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Verifiability of information	Limited by specific role it performs
Fit-for-industry purpose	Often closed access
Industry-wide buy-in	Inability for employees to profile qualifications, competencies, skills and interests beyond those specific to industry requirements.

State-led Skills Passports: The Victorian Government’s Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the Victorian Disability Workforce

The final approaches to skills passport development and implementation are those led by state agencies or departments. Although state-led approaches typically involve industry stakeholders resulting in a degree of ambiguity between industry-led and state-led skills passport schemes, for the purposes of this discussion state-led skills passport schemes are considered to be those in which governments drive the skills passport process and outcome. Occupational licensing is one version of a state-led skills passport. Governments often use occupational licensing schemes where there is a particular public interest or risk to the public. An occupational licensing scheme is designed to control entry to an occupation. Through such schemes, a regulatory body sets down the skills and knowledge requirements for entry and continuing engagement in the occupational activities. In Australia, occupational licensing schemes are in place for many occupations ranging from trades, including plumbers and electricians to professions such as teaching and a wide range of healthcare occupations. In health – and in human services more generally – registration and licensing of workers is often designed to protect the public and consumers from harm. For example, medicine may be considered as requiring licencing as a high risk occupation for all consumers due to the nature of the service provided. By

contrast, registration schemes for people working with children or vulnerable people are designed to apply to all occupations due to the perceived vulnerability of the population or client group using services. As most occupational licensing schemes have been developed by different states and territories, there can be considerable variation across jurisdictions in regard to licensing requirements for a single occupation. For example, there are variations in the range of work regulated, eligibility criteria, insurance requirements, fees, and schemes' conduct and disciplinary arrangements. Nonetheless, where occupational licensing is in place, the worker's licence to practice is a mandatory 'skills passport'.

There are extensive debates about the pros and cons of occupational licensing and the circumstances in which it is the appropriate regulatory tool. In relation to work in disability services in the NDIS context, the benefits and limitations of a licensing scheme for the disability services sector were widely canvassed in public consultations undertaken by the Victorian Government, following its decision in late 2016 to establish a state-based registration and accreditation scheme for Victoria's disability services workforce (see Government of Victoria 2017). The Commonwealth Government had taken a similar approach to consultation on a national safeguarding and quality framework for the NDIS (see ARTD Consultants, 2015; NDIS Senior Officials Working Group, 2015).

On the one hand, arguments for mandatory registration and training have emphasised the risks and vulnerability of some groups of people with disability. These arguments draw on evidence and recommendations of recent parliamentary inquiries into abuse and neglect in institutional and residential settings. On the other hand, concerns about restrictions on people with disability exercising choice and control in relation to their services, as well as concerns that qualifications requirements would inhibit workforce growth, underpin arguments against such mandatory qualification requirements. Significantly, there is considerable disagreement about how to identify requirements that would apply to all roles in the sector, and about the suitability of existing training qualifications for disability workers.

At the national level, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is to have national worker screening arrangements in place throughout the country from 1 July 2019. All employees of registered service providers who are 'key personnel', and workers who directly deliver specified (NDIS) support or services as part of their normal duties, will have to apply for a NDIS worker screening check. The content and process for screening checks are still to be determined. Initial reports suggest that it will comprise 'risk-based' screening that includes criminal convictions, referee checks, record of charges and allegations, and involvement in formal workplace proceedings. There will also be processes for monitoring worker conduct and an appeals process for employees who have been excluded (DSS, 2016; NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, 2018).

The Victorian Government is in the process of establishing its own registration scheme for disability workers and disability students by mid-2020. A new Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria and a Victorian Disability Worker Commission will be established to register workers and to deal with notifications and complaints (Parliament of Victoria, 2018). The basis for worker registration will be occupation oriented (e.g.



Disability Support Worker), with the scheme setting and monitoring minimum registration standards for this ‘protected’ occupational title (Government of Victoria, 2017). The regulator would have the power to accredit qualifications for the purpose of registration requirements, place conditions on workers’ registration and limit or ban workers from practising if they breached codes of conduct. As the scheme will apply to all disability workers using the protected or registered title, it will potentially have much broader scope than the NDIS scheme as its application is not restricted to workers employed by NDIS registered service providers. Workers providing services to people who are self-managing their NDIS funding and workers providing disability services that are not funded by the NDIS (such as Transport Accident Commission and WorkSafe-funded services) can be registered under the scheme. However, as the scheme is targeted at specific occupation titles only, workers using other titles will not be required to be registered. People with NDIS funding can choose to engage registered workers using a registered title or non-registered workers using other titles.

Under the Victorian scheme, information about registered workers will be made available through an online service. Registration will include checks such as those under the NDIS scheme but will also include qualifications, training and experience checks and assessments. Along with the authority to accredit qualifications for registration, the regulator has the power to determine an individual’s registration, for example, the status of a worker with the relevant experience but no formal qualifications. It is planned for the Victorian regulator to work closely with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to share information and avoid duplication.

As an occupational licensing scheme that is concerned with the requirements of disability support work, the Victorian approach is focused on skills and should be able to be responsive to changes in skills requirements and to developing registration around areas of specialisation. The provision in the Victorian scheme for individual registration based on skills assessment is important for workers and consumers as it is focused on capability. In the NDIS context, the risk focus of the national scheme is necessary, but a skills focus is likely equally important in a new market where there are many information gaps.

**Table 7: Pros and Cons of Government-led Skills Passports**

<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Verification of information	Digital skill requirements can be a barrier
Costs for maintaining the skills passport platform underwritten by Government funding	Not easily accessible to primary users, i.e., employers and employees
	May not reflect industry needs
	Information tends to be limited to qualifications

## Part Two: Towards a Skills Passport for the Disability Services Sector

This section of the report presents the findings of this study into the possibilities of a skills passport for the NDS and consists of three components. First, it discusses the views of disability services sector stakeholders that participated in workshops and one-on-one interviews across the three states. It provides an overview of their views on skills passport and the possibility of success in adopting such a passport sector-wide.

Second, it identifies and discusses the challenges involved in introducing a skills passport for the disability services sector. Thirdly, it presents suggested options available to the disability services sector as it pursues a skills passport and suggests certain characteristics which should guide the development and implementation of the Disability Skills Passport. These suggested characteristics and options are based upon the data collected through workshop and interview data and lessons learned from the analysis of skills passport models.

### Disability Services Sector Views on Skills Passport

#### *General Support for a Skills Passport*

Workshop and interview participants across the three states expressed general support for the introduction of a skills passport model for the disability services sector. It was commonly noted by participants that skills passports had been discussed 'for years' (Workshop participant, Western Australia) within the sector. It was also noted that the origins of this NDS funded *Disability Skills Portfolio Scoping Project* was based on broad sectorial support for the idea. The perceived benefits of a skills passport model included:

- Improved record keeping
- A better understanding of an employee's knowledge, skills, workplace experiences and competencies
- A reduction in training costs and redundant employee training
- A reduction in recruitment costs and ongoing costs in capturing and maintaining employee records
- Greater mobility for employees to move between multiple providers
- Enhanced convergence of industry training practices and programs
- Increased employer confidence in the quality of training provided by other providers
- Improved professionalism within the sector

The major concern to adopting a Skills Passport was therefore not lack of interest or commitment on the part of sector stakeholders but a range of other factors and concerns such as what should be included in the skills passport, who would lead its development, implementation and ongoing service provision, what type of model would be introduced, how it would be paid for and supported and how would employee privacy be protected?

### Contents of Skills Passport

Across the three states, project participants were in general agreement about what should be included in a skills passport. Some of the common features identified include:

- A driver's license
- Police clearance and working with children check
- Residency status
- First aid training
- Certified copies of qualifications and reference checks

Participants presented these as minimum recruitment requirements for most workers and expected to be included in employee records in their HR databases. Many also wanted some evidence of any specific training they had successfully completed related to disability services work such as mealtime management, administration of medicine, manual handling, wheelchair strapping, etc.

**Figure 1: Identified Components for Inclusion in a Skills Passport**



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Many noted that, while they would like to see this information included in an employee's skills passport, they also acknowledged that they would continue to collect and file this type of employee information within their own company systems for compliance purposes. For one, they would have a better understanding of when licenses expired and needed to be renewed. This perhaps suggests an initial lack of understanding or confidence in how the passport would be implemented and, importantly, how the currency of employee's certificates and licences would be monitored and maintained.

When it came to particular skills for including within a Skills Passport, participants repeatedly highlighted three skill levels: core skills, clinical skills and specialist clinical skills, which are presented in the following diagram:



#### *Models of Skills Passport*

Despite the wide consensus on the need and possibility for a sector Skills Passport, participants in both workshops and interviews expressed divergent views about the most appropriate skills passport model for the disability services sector. Some took the view that it should only focus on the ‘nuts and bolts things’ (Disability services provider, South Australia) and core skills as outlined in Figure 1, including the expiry date of mandatory clearances, licences and credentials, while others wanted much more comprehensive information, including details about qualifications and training (e.g. who delivered their training, content of training program, training delivery mode, etc.) and employee performance appraisals. Participants also disagreed on who should develop and control the Skills Passport. Some suggested an employer association-led Skills Passport developed by NDS and/or NDP’s CDP would be an appropriate model, while others suggested a state-led Skills Passport model would offer greater benefits, particularly in areas related to skills verification. However, there was also a general view expressed that it was important for employees to have ‘ownership’ over their individual Skills Passports in ways that rewarded ongoing personal initiative and professional development while also ensuring the privacy of their confidential information. One disability services provider expressed this view when they stated: ‘...it is the workers responsibility to update things, and keep their first aid up-to-date instead of four different employees chasing them’ (Disability services provider, South Australia). A disability services provider from New South Wales expressed a similar view but emphasised how employee ownership of the skills passport also opened up the possibility of greater professionalisation of the workforce: ‘We need to have it all consolidated digitally so that our employees take charge

of their career, and treat it as a career, and treat themselves as a professional working in a professional space and have something to show for it.’

### *Issues and Potential Challenges*

Discussions with key stakeholders within the industry workshops and one-on-one interviews revealed a number of issues and challenges that are likely to slow, if not, hinder the establishment and implementation of a skills passport for the sector. These include:

- Lack of agreement on common training standards across all providers, which would ensure that all providers were providing the same level and standard of training in their in-house training programs. So far, there seems to be little trust among providers for the in-house training provided by the majority of the employers.
- Lack of agreement on how the cost of establishing and maintaining the Skills Passport platform would be met. Furthermore, many of the employers appear unwilling to contribute to the cost because of small profit margins.
- Agreeing on the appropriate body/organisation to host and manage the platform. There was a view that the credibility and universal acceptability of the scheme would depend, to a large extent, on the body identified as the host and manager of the platform. Such a body would need to have the confidence of all stakeholders, including, employers, employees and unions for the ability to represent the best interests of both employers and employees.
- Although there was broad expression of interest in the idea, many providers seem to question the substantial value. Many of the providers were of the view that some of their practices differed so significantly that they would have to provide in-house training irrespective of the skills passport.
- How to align different state approaches to training and certification.

These issues and potential challenges will be explained and expanded further in the remaining sections of the report drawing upon the interview and workshop interview data.

## Informal versus Formal Training

Most successful skilled passport models, as highlighted in Part One, are underpinned by a commitment to industry recognised formal qualifications. These formal qualifications serve as the foundation for skills recognition and validation of competencies seen as necessary to perform a particular occupation. In the disability services sector the commitment to formal qualifications appears to be declining. There is a range of reasons provided by participants for this situation:

1. Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate IV in Disability are increasingly seen as not meeting the needs of the industry and are in urgent need of revitalisation: ‘We don’t have a lot of confidence in what they’re gaining in the Cert III and Cert IV’ (Workshop participant, Western Australia).

2. There is declining confidence in the quality of disability qualifications with employers noting that that it was not uncommon for a new recruit to have a relevant qualification but still lack the expected knowledge and competencies. This particular problem raised questions about the quality of training being delivered by training providers. As one Western Australia workshop participant expressed: 'Certificates are not always worth the paper that they're written on'.
3. Whether full qualifications were still desirable or necessary is also questionable among many providers. Some provider representatives, for example, highlighted the importance of 'skill sets' or targeted training specific to an individual's job requirements over full qualifications: 'You've got to be able to train to the skill set rather than the qualification' (Disability services provider, Western Australia).
4. The funding available for training under the NDIS was insufficient making it difficult for providers to commit to full qualifications. It is important to note, however, that the level of commitment to formal qualifications varied significantly between providers and between the three states. These differences appear to be partially related to differences in union and government influences over workforce development and provider training behaviour.

While commitment to formal qualifications by providers may be declining, training and skills development continues through non-accredited in-house training. Many organisations indicated that in addition to their induction training they trained their workforce in a range of foundation and clinical skills such as diabetes management, vital signs, seizure management, mental health and palliative care. Providers indicated this training was delivered through a mix of online and face-to-face modes and often involved the contracting of an external training provider. The aim of this training was to ensure providers met compliance obligations and their workforce had the specific skills required to support disability clients and their variant needs. Employee records, maintained in HR management systems, document and track the progression of an employee's in-house training and identify training gaps and dates when refresher training is needed.

Given the casualised nature of the workforce, this employee record keeping can be time consuming and complex but necessary, as noted by several provider representatives. In effect, the trend towards non-accredited and in-house training has led to the development of provider specific internal labour markets, while the sector's highly casualised workforce often depends upon multiple employers to secure enough working hours to make ends meet. Generally, providers acknowledged and accepted that many of their workers were working for other providers because they could not provide stable part-time or full-time work for them. They also acknowledged that workers they had recruited had often received non-accredited in-house training from other providers, which resulted in duplication of training and sector inefficiencies. Unions and government representatives also identified this as a concern. Some providers had sought to address these issues through formal memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and informal arrangements, which recognised the training delivered by each other's organisations in cases where employees were working for both of them or transferring between them. A Western Australia disability services provider, for example, described how they had put in place a MoU with other

providers in areas related to first aid and manual handling training so that 'if we get staff from their agencies, they don't have to repeat them in training and assessment'. Other providers expressed concerns about such arrangements as it was perceived as potentially resulting in further 'poaching' of their workforce. These different perspectives also appear to influence the decision of a provider to issue a training record or certificate to an employee for completing in-house training. For some providers it was relatively common to award company endorsed training certificates to employees completing a training session, but this does not appear to be common practice. As one Western Australia disability services provider stated: 'The workers' profile stays with us...We don't share anything'. As a result, disability services sector workers have little way to demonstrate their non-accredited training experience outside their immediate workplace. Employers acknowledged that this has become a problem for a number of workers: 'There is certain space where it does become difficult, particularly around non-accredited training, and how you convince another employer that you have acquired these skills but I don't have a piece of paper for them' (Disability services provider, South Australia). An additional concern raised by providers, as well as unions and training provider representatives, was the quality of in-house non-accredited training. Similar to the concerns raised about the quality of some accredited training, there was unanimous agreement among participants that the quality of non-accredited training varied widely. Providers spoke about the training they could trust being delivered from another provider and how they questioned the training of other organisations. In the later circumstance, providers were not prepared to recognise training certificates (if issued) from those organisations and they would expect new recruits to complete their in-house training. One South Australia disability services provider presented the problem in these terms: 'If it is unaccredited training and they say that I did this with another provider, I have no idea what the quality of it was or what was in it'. A Western Australia disability services provider identified the lack of trust in training delivery as a major problem for the successful development of skills passport for the sector: 'Well, this becomes the challenge you know, the providers, each of them, have to have a level of trust in the other provider and the training that's being delivered and so on, for that passport to work'. This lack of trust in the quality of in-house training being delivered by providers and training providers, and general proliferation of non-accredited training without company-endorsed certificates, will need to be addressed if the aim is to develop a comprehensive skills passport.

## Verification

Central to concerns about informal training and the quality of formal training were issues related to verification and how verification could be achieved. It was widely accepted by participants that verification was an important consideration and would add value to the Skills Passport and its usage by providers. It was noted by a number of employers that they often struggled to determine if the credentials and experience that a new recruit claimed on their resume was credible. They also noted that verification can also take up valuable time and resources. One Western Australia disability services provider noted that

'it would be very cost-effective for me if they came across competency assessed'. Other providers saw opportunities in extending verification procedures to also include accreditation of non-accredited skills and competencies through recognition of prior learning. A New South Wales workshop participant described the following: '...cause you may have got that experience around restrictive work practices. You may have learned that in the workplace and not ever actually gone to a course...so you could have some sort of accreditation'. Questions, however, were raised about how verification could be implemented in a Skills Passport and who would be involved in confirming the details on an individual's skills passport and what standards they would use to assess the information. As one New South Wales workshop participant stated: 'Because different providers are providing different levels and kinds of training. As a sector, how can you centralise it and verify the training and how do you develop confidence in that kind of passport?' A Western Australia workshop participant expressed the need to develop national standards but was unsure how that could be achieved: 'Benchmarked to the national standards. At the moment we can't even find the national standards for a lot of things we train for so we don't know what standard other organisations are training to. So when they say they've received like wheelchair training with another organisation it doesn't mean anything'. Finding a solution to this dilemma, however, is paramount if the skills passport is to have any broad based utility and instrumental value for the sector.

## Transferability

Skills passports typically aim to improve skills transferability and facilitate employee mobility between employers and/or different occupations. The disability services sector relies upon a highly mobile workforce due to the highly casualised and insecure work found within the sector. There is no doubt that knowledge, skills and competencies acquired by employees from working in the sector for a range of providers are highly valuable and transferable across many sections of the disability sector but also others (e.g. aged care). Within the sector, workers are performing similar tasks in not dissimilar workplace settings utilising similar technologies and drawing upon the same core body of knowledge, skills and experience. The needs of disability clients may vary, and providers may have different expectations of their staff, but the core skills and competencies and specialised clinical skills required to perform their role will therefore be very similar. Providers agreed this was generally the case and also acknowledged that the content covered in their respective in-house training, to develop these specific skills, was likely to be quite similar. Transferability, however, remained a challenge due to the inability and/or unwillingness of a provider to appreciate and trust the level of skills acquired by a new recruit who may have worked within the sector for some duration. This is not a problem specific to the disability services sector as all employers confront these recruitment challenges to some degree. A skills passport, therefore, is not going to resolve all provider concerns about the extent of knowledge and skills acquired by a potential recruit who has a Certificate IV in Disability or a company endorsed certificate in manual handling. However, a skills passport model based upon a trusted registration and skills verification process can alleviate employer



concerns and better facilitate skills transferability in those areas of importance to disability services sector stakeholders, particularly employers and employees. As discussed in Part One, skills passport models premised on registration and verification have improved skills transferability within many industries and are in the process of being introduced in the disability services sector in Victoria. If introduced appropriately, the skills and training subject to registration and verification, be it through industry or government regulation, are more likely to be perceived by stakeholders as better reflecting the expected requisite knowledge and skills and the 'industry standard'. At the moment, the disability services sector appears to be struggling to identify what is the common expected 'industry standard' nationally for performing specific roles within the sector. If national standards could be agreed upon by sector stakeholders, these industry standards could be used to help shape the purpose and overall aim of introducing a disability skills portfolio passport in similar ways as has occurred in other industries (e.g. the Australian construction industry 'white card', the Australian electricity supply skills passport).

## Access, Equity and Privacy

A number of access, equity and privacy concerns were raised by workshop participants. The success of any skills passport model depends upon how widely it is embraced by employers, employees and other industry stakeholders. Making the skills passport easily accessible to employees and employers is therefore critical. It was widely felt that in order to achieve these aims it would need to be a digital skills passport: 'I think firstly it's a digital CV. We're moving beyond paper'. If access depends on access to a computer, ability to use a computer or ability to pay for skills passport services, equity concerns will emerge which will need to be addressed. As one provider noted '...about 50 per cent of the workforce is about 55 years and over...what that means then is our workers tend to a little less tech savvy...our administrator spends a maddening amount of time getting people to come in and do things with them on the computer' (Disability services provider, South Australia). In addition, workshop participants raised important privacy concerns and how to ensure confidential employee information was protected. If participation in the skills passport scheme is voluntary, employees can choose to include only the information they are comfortable in others accessing. Effectively, this is the practice which occurs in employee-led skills passport schemes. Employees, however, are not provided such choices under skills passport schemes that require them to participate if they want to work in an industry, e.g. Australian Electricity Supply Skills Passport. In these particular schemes it is therefore important that the personal details of an employee are not compromised. Typically, this is done through unique identifiers known only to the employee and whomever they choose to share it with. One provider participant suggested employee privacy could be protected through the provision of a QR code to each employee that could then be scanned by an employer to view an employee's skills passport profile.

## Cost to the Sector

The design, scale, extent of uptake by employers and employees and who else is involved in the development, delivery and oversight of the skills passport model all influence the financial costs associated with maintaining an industry-based skills passport. Workshop and interview participants noted that the costs for developing and maintaining a disability services industry skills passport model could be a challenge due to the relatively low profit margins and cost saving measures that providers must already contend with. Only a handful of workshop participants expressed familiarity with the skills passport products on offer for the sector from Tikforce and all suggested that they had not purchased these products due to cost barriers and little perceived benefits. Provider participants, however, did note that they were prepared to pay for a skills passport scheme if the 'business case' could be demonstrated.

Union, government and provider participants also noted that employees could not be asked to make major contributions to the maintenance of a skills passport platform due to the low rate of pay for many of the sector's workers. NDP representatives highlighted that their annual membership fee was modest in acknowledgement of the low rate of pay within the sector and their desire to attract disability support workers. A government-supported skills passport scheme was considered one option to alleviate some of the financial barriers for developing the skills passport scheme. NDP representatives highlighted the importance of NSW Government funding to get the CDP program off the ground. Many participants thought partial or full government funding might be needed in the early stages of the development and implementation of the skills passport model until it became more widely accepted and financially supported by providers.

## Scale of the Skills Passport

As highlighted previously, workshop and interview participants were strongly supportive of the development and implementation of a skills passport portfolio for the disability services sector. However, there were different views expressed as to how that was to be achieved and the scale of the initiative. There was a desire to see a national approach, but it was acknowledged that different practices and levels of commitment within and between states may make this challenging. Participants representing NDS advocated that NDS would be best placed to develop a national skills passport scheme. Union representatives, however, expressed support for either a national government-led scheme or a more industry inclusive skills passport model that involved NDS, unions and other industry and training actors. This was based on the fear that a fully employer controlled platform might not adequately promote the interests of the workers. Adelaide participants, reflecting on the challenges of getting a national scheme up in the short to medium term, suggested starting out small through a pilot scheme. South Australia was presented as the most appropriate location for a pilot skills passport program due to the comparatively high level of stakeholder commitment to developing and implementing a skills passport model and the overall smaller size of the state. Similar views were expressed by Perth participants with

some providers noting that a small skills passport pilot program could be developed around those providers who already had established MoUs with one another on issues related to informal skills recognition.

## Considerations and Recommendations

This report supports the development of a skills passport model for the disability services sector, particularly for disability support workers who make up the majority of the workforce. Consultations with disability services sector stakeholders suggest that discussions about a skills passport have occurred over a number of years and there continues to be strong support across the sector for the development and implementation of a Disability Sector Skills Passport. As presented in Part One, there are a variety of skills passport models with variant strengths and limitations. The common purpose of these different models, however, is to provide a record of an employee's knowledge, education and training typically through an on-line platform. Depending upon the depth and breadth of the skills passport model, it should provide a number of benefits to employees and employers within the sector. For employees, the skills passport would enable them to identify and demonstrate what skills they have acquired, their formal qualifications and competencies, and their relevant work experiences. For various reasons, employees often struggle to demonstrate the skills they have acquired and often lose important information about their largely informal training and development. The skills passport will assist them in keeping these records. The skills passport will provide them benefits when entering the sector for the first time and when exploring new employment opportunities. As a large majority of the disability support workers are dependent on part-time or casual employment, working for multiple providers is becoming increasingly the norm. The skills passport should therefore further assist them in job search and overall occupational mobility. In addition, the skills passport will enable them to monitor and identify their current and future training needs. For employers, the skills passport will assist them in better understanding the knowledge, training and acquired skills of a potential new recruit. Skills passport information will enable employers to reduce the amount of unnecessary training and identify skill and knowledge gaps. Information contained in skills passports can be used in conjunction with their human resource databases to track and identify where workforce skill gaps are emerging and targeted workforce development is needed.

Delivering on these potential employee and employer benefits, however, requires the adoption of a comprehensive skills passport that is accepted and widely embraced by employers, employees and other key stakeholders. In consideration of these aims and the lessons learned from the review of skills passport models, it is suggested that the development of a Disability Skills Passport model should include the following dimensions:

1. Employee ownership

Similar to employee-led Skills Passports, employees should own and control access to their Disability Skills Passport. It should be the employees' responsibility to enter evidence of qualifications, training, professional development, skills acquisition and

relevant workplace experience into their skills passport. Whilst maintained by a central body agreed upon by stakeholders, employees should control who is granted access to their skills passport. This will ensure employee privacy is protected. Employees can grant approved access via a protected URL link or QR code that can be scanned by an employer to view the employee's Disability Skills Passport.

## 2. Digitally-based

The Disability Skills Passport should be maintained through an on-line platform for easy access and storage. Considering that one of the most highlighted impediments to the use of on-line skills passports is employee computer skills and access to computers and other internet devices, access and equity concerns should be addressed through the provision of digital literacy training for disadvantaged employees and computer access. The Disability Skills Passport should be designed in such a way that it only requires basic computer and keyboard skills, internet access and a personal email address.

## 3. Registration fee

Financial costs for the maintenance of the Disability Skills Passport should be covered through a negotiated employee-employers cost sharing arrangement. A registration fee should be required when employees apply for their Disability Skills Passport. The registration fee, however, must be moderate given the relatively low rate of pay among disability services workers. Employers should be encouraged to cover the cost of employee registration fees through the sponsoring of their employees.

## 4. Verification of skills

Verification of all evidence uploaded by an employee into their skills passport is critical to the success of the Disability Skills Passport. How best to conduct verification, however, is one of the greatest challenges for the sector. Employers are not always in agreement about what constitutes quality training or a skilled employee. Some employers are even questioning the requisite skills associated with qualifications. In a sector where informal in-house training proliferates, the verification of skills becomes even more challenging. Without an agreed and formal process of verification, however, the Disability Skills Passport will suffer in credibility and utility for both employees and employers. The need for skills verification is likely to vary between states, as some states like Victoria and Western Australia introduce their own verification and registration models for disability support workers. In these contexts, verification of certain skills may be less of a challenge but there is still likely to be informal and professional training that will need to be verified. One potential solution to improving the sector's verification capabilities would be to appoint industry accredited verifiers who have been trained to assess and approve employee evidence of skills, qualifications and experience before publishing in an employee's Disability Skills Passport. Accredited verifiers should operate under clear industry guidelines and codes of conduct and be independently monitored. Accredited verifiers could include NDS, registered training providers and Skills Service Organisations who have successfully applied to become disability skills 'assessors' for the sector. Financial support for the

verification component of The Disability Skills Passport would need to be provided by the disability services sector with perhaps some initial Federal government funding to cover start-up costs.

## 5. Micro-credentials

The development of industry recognised micro-credentials would be one avenue to overcome the challenges associated with skills verification and recognition of non-accredited training. Participants acknowledged that the proliferation of non-accredited training presented barriers for developing a comprehensive skills passport model. It was acknowledged that much of the training was conducted in-house by providers and often they did not provide employees certificates for completing this training. Second, in situations where providers did provide employees certificates related to specific but transferable training such as manual handling, other providers and potential employers often questioned the quality of that training in terms of whether it met the standards of their own organisation or type of work they were going to be expected to perform. A way around these two challenges would be to develop micro-credentials, which are recognised and trusted within the sector to develop requisite skills (see also VCOSS, 2018). Oversight of the delivery of these micro-credentials would need to occur in order to ensure confidence in the training quality. It may be possible for NDS to be the lead organisation in developing and overseeing the delivery on these micro-credentials, but it may also be more desirable in terms of broader sector stakeholder collaboration and ownership if these tasks were carried out by the Skills Service Organisation - SkillsIQ. Furthermore, in the spirit of facilitating ease of skill transferability for the benefit of both employers and employees, it should be standard practice for employers delivering in-house training to provide their employees with company-endorsed certificates so they have a personal record of their training that can be uploaded into their Disability Skills Passport for ease of verification.

## Options for the Development of the Disability Skills Passport

As highlighted in Part One of this report, Skills Passports vary in their purpose and employee and industry coverage. The Disability services sector will need to consider if the Disability Skills Passport model should be a national industry-wide scheme or a state or perhaps even a locally-based scheme. The following options have been identified:

### 1. A Disability Skills Passport Pilot Project

In practical terms, the development of a Disability Skills Passport Pilot Project could be a first step in developing and trialling a Disability Skills Passport for the sector. A number of workshop participants indicated that this would be a sensible approach and could involve existing providers who have strong working relationships with one another, such as those who had developed MoUs that formally recognised skills development and training occurring within different organisations. A pilot project would be relatively inexpensive to support and would assist in understanding the

costs, opportunities and challenges of developing a more comprehensive Disability Skills Passport scheme for the sector.

## 2. A National NDS-led Disability Skills Passport

A more ambitious approach would be to develop a national Disability Skills Passport scheme. Some workshop participants expressed support for NDS developing and hosting the Disability Skills Passport model. One suggestion was to extend the work of NDP's CPD program so that it became a full-fledged Disability Skills Passport. NDP representatives also noted that information provided by CPD members included much of the skills and professional development documentation desired by Skills Passport advocates within the sector. Workshop participants, however, felt the criteria and process to verify information submitted by CPD members needed significant improvement before an effective and reliable NDP-led Disability Skills Passport model could be considered. Establishing industry-accredited verifiers, of which NDP might be included, would be one way to achieve this outcome. In addition, NDP could continue to work with a commercial provider, such as TikForce, to conduct the verification process and maintain the Skills Passport on-line platform, but this may be more expensive and less desirable in the longer term. An alternative would be for NDP to build its own capacity to improve verification along the lines suggested earlier and for NDS to further develop CareCareers or some other NDS web-based host to support the Disability Skills Passport and employee registration.

## 3. A National Industry-led Disability Skills Passport

A third option, which is more ambitious, would be to adopt an industry-led approach for developing the Disability Skills Passport. An industry-led approach would include not only NDS and disability services providers but also union and employee representatives, SkillsIQ, registered training providers, NDIS and other relevant state government representatives. The involvement of government would also open up the opportunity to discuss ways to possibly integrate emerging state-led disability support worker registration schemes with an industry-led and more comprehensive Disability Skills Passport model in order to share resources and avoid needless duplication and confusion for employees and employers. The involvement of SkillsIQ and registered training organisations provides opportunities and expertise to develop micro-credentials, protocols and guidelines for skills and training verification and the criteria and training programs required to support the accreditation of verifiers. The involvement of all major industry stakeholders in the development of an industry-led Disability Skills Passport is also likely to have the added benefit of delivering the greatest buy-in and support for the scheme.

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## Appendix:

### **Excerpts from the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010**

#### **Schedule B—Classification Definitions—Social and Community Services Employees**

##### **B.1 Social and community services employee level 1**

###### *B.1.1 Characteristics of the level*

(a) A person employed as a Social and community services employee level 1 works under close direction and undertakes routine activities which require the practical application of basic skills and techniques. They may include the initial recruit who may have limited relevant experience.

(b) General features of work in this level consist of performing clearly defined activities with outcomes being readily attainable. Employees' duties at this level will be closely monitored with instruction and assistance being readily available.

(c) Freedom to act is limited by standards and procedures. However, with experience, employees at this level may have sufficient freedom to exercise judgment in the planning of their own work within those confines.

(d) Positions at this level will involve employees in extensive on-the-job training including familiarisation with the goals and objectives of the workplace.

(e) Employees will be responsible for the time management of their work and required to use basic numeracy, written and verbal communication skills, and where relevant, skills required to assist with personal care and lifestyle support.

(f) Supervision of other staff or volunteers is not a feature at this level. However, an experienced employee may have technical oversight of a minor work activity.

(g) At this level, employers are expected to offer substantial internal and/or external training.

###### *B.1.2 Responsibilities*

A position at this level may include some of the following inputs or those of a similar value:

(a) undertake routine activities of a clerical and/or support nature;

(b) undertake straightforward operation of keyboard equipment including data input and word processing at a basic level;

(c) provide routine information including general reception and telephonist duties;

(d) provide general stenographic duties;

(e) apply established practices and procedures;

(f) undertake routine office duties involving filing, recording, checking and batching of accounts, invoices, orders, stores requisitions and maintenance of an existing records system;

(g) resident contact and interaction including attending to their personal care or undertaking generic domestic duties under direct or routine supervision and either individually or as part of a team as part of the delivery of disability services;

(h) preparation of the full range of domestic duties including cleaning and food service, assistance to residents in carrying out personal care tasks under general supervision either individually or as part of a team as part of the delivery of disability services.

The minimum rate of pay for employees engaged in responsibilities which are prescribed by B.1.2(h) is pay point 2.

### *B.1.3 Requirements of the position*

Some or all of the following are needed to perform work at this level:

(a) Skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and/or training

(i) developing knowledge of the workplace function and operation;

(ii) basic knowledge of administrative practices and procedures relevant to the workplace;

(iii) a developing knowledge of work practices and policies of the relevant work area;

(iv) basic numeracy, written and verbal communication skills relevant to the work area;

(v) at this level employers are required to offer substantial on-the-job training.

(b) Organisational relationships

Work under direct supervision.

(c) Extent of authority

(i) Work outcomes are clearly monitored.

(ii) Freedom to act is limited by standards and procedures.

(iii) Solutions to problems are found in established procedures and instructions with assistance readily available.

(iv) Project completion according to instructions and established procedures.

(v) No scope for interpretation.

#### (d) Progression

An employee primarily engaged in responsibilities which are prescribed by B.1.2(g) will, if full-time, progress to pay point 2 on completion of 12 months' industry experience, or if part-time, on completion of 1976 hours of industry experience. Industry experience means 12 months of relevant experience gained over the previous 3 years.

## **B.2 Social and community services employee level 2**

### *B.2.1 Characteristics of the level*

(a) A person employed as a Social and community services employee level 2 will work under general guidance within clearly defined guidelines and undertake a range of activities requiring the application of acquired skills and knowledge.

(b) General features at this level consist of performing functions which are defined by established routines, methods, standards and procedures with limited scope to exercise initiative in applying work practices and procedures. Assistance will be readily available. Employees may be responsible for a minor function and/or may contribute specific knowledge and/or specific skills to the work of the organisation. In addition, employees may be required to assist senior workers with specific projects.

(c) Employees will be expected to have an understanding of work procedures relevant to their work area and may provide assistance to lower classified employees or volunteers concerning established procedures to meet the objectives of a minor function.

(d) Employees will be responsible for managing time, planning and organising their own work and may be required to oversee and/or guide the work of a limited number of lower classified employees or volunteers. Employees at this level could be required to resolve minor work procedural issues in the relevant work area within established constraints.

(e) Employees who have completed an appropriate certificate and are required to undertake work related to that certificate will be appointed to this level. Where the appropriate certificate is a level 4 certificate the minimum rate of pay will be pay point 2.

(f) Employees who have completed an appropriate diploma and are required to undertake work related to the diploma will commence at the second pay point of this level and will advance after 12 full-time equivalent months' satisfactory service.

### *B.2.2 Responsibilities*

A position at this level may include some of the following:

(a) undertake a range of activities requiring the application of established work procedures and may exercise limited initiative and/or judgment within clearly established procedures and/or guidelines;

- (b) achieve outcomes which are clearly defined;
- (c) respond to enquiries;
- (d) assist senior employees with special projects;
- (e) prepare cash payment summaries, banking reports and bank statements, post journals to ledger etc. and apply purchasing and inventory control requirements;
- (f) perform elementary tasks within a community service program requiring knowledge of established work practices and procedures relevant to the work area;
- (g) provide secretarial support requiring the exercise of sound judgment, initiative, confidentiality and sensitivity in the performance of work;
- (h) perform tasks of a sensitive nature including the provision of more than routine information, the receiving and accounting for moneys and assistance to clients;
- (i) assist in calculating and maintaining wage and salary records;
- (j) assist with administrative functions;
- (k) implementing client skills and activities programmes under limited supervision either individually or as part of a team as part of the delivery of disability services;
- (l) supervising or providing a wide range of personal care services to residents under limited supervision either individually or as part of a team as part of the delivery of disability services;
- (m) assisting in the development or implementation of resident care plans or the planning, cooking or preparation of the full range of meals under limited supervision either individually or as part of a team as part of the delivery of disability services;
- (n) possessing an appropriate qualification (as identified by the employer) at the level of certificate 4 or above and supervising the work of others (including work allocation, rostering and providing guidance) as part of the delivery of disability services as described above or in subclause B.1.2.

### *B.2.3 Requirements of the position*

Some or all of the following are needed to perform work at this level:

- (a) Skills, knowledge, experience, qualification and/or training
  - (i) basic skills in oral and written communication with clients and other members of the public;
  - (ii) knowledge of established work practices and procedures relevant to the workplace;
  - (iii) knowledge of policies relating to the workplace;

(iv) application of techniques relevant to the workplace;

(v) developing knowledge of statutory requirements relevant to the workplace;

(vi) understanding of basic computing concepts.

(b) Prerequisites

(i) an appropriate certificate relevant to the work required to be performed;

(ii) will have attained previous experience in a relevant industry, service or an equivalent level of expertise and experience to undertake the range of activities required;

(iii) appropriate on-the-job training and relevant experience; or

(iv) entry point for a diploma without experience.

(c) Organisational relationships

(i) work under regular supervision except where this level of supervision is not required by the nature of responsibilities under B.2.2 being undertaken;

(ii) provide limited guidance to a limited number of lower classified employees.

(d) Extent of authority

(i) work outcomes are monitored;

(ii) have freedom to act within established guidelines;

(iii) solutions to problems may require the exercise of limited judgment, with guidance to be found in procedures, precedents and guidelines. Assistance will be available when problems occur.

### **B.3 Social and community services employee level 3**

#### *B.3.1 Characteristics of this level*

(a) A person employed as a Social and community services employee level 3 will work under general direction in the application of procedures, methods and guidelines which are well established.

(b) General features of this level involve solving problems of limited difficulty using knowledge, judgment and work organisational skills acquired through qualifications and/or previous work experience. Assistance is available from senior employees. Employees may receive instruction on the broader aspects of the work. In addition, employees may provide assistance to lower classified employees.

(c) Positions at this level allow employees the scope for exercising initiative in the application of established work procedures and may require the employee to establish goals/objectives and outcomes for their own particular work program or project.

(d) At this level, employees may be required to supervise lower classified staff or volunteers in their day-to-day work. Employees with supervisory responsibilities may undertake some complex operational work and may undertake planning and co-ordination of activities within a clearly defined area of the organisation including managing the day-to-day operations of a group of residential facility for persons with a disability.

(e) Employees will be responsible for managing and planning their own work and that of subordinate staff or volunteers and may be required to deal with formal disciplinary issues within the work area.

(f) Those with supervisory responsibilities should have a basic knowledge of the principles of human resource management and be able to assist subordinate staff or volunteers with on-the-job training. They may be required to supervise more than one component of the work program of the organisation.

(g) Graduates with a three year degree that undertake work related to the responsibilities under this level will commence at no lower than pay point 3. Graduates with a four year degree that undertake work related to the responsibilities under this level will commence at no lower than pay point 4.

### *B.3.2 Responsibilities*

To contribute to the operational objectives of the work area, a position at this level may include some of the following:

(a) undertake responsibility for various activities in a specialised area;

(b) exercise responsibility for a function within the organisation;

(c) allow the scope for exercising initiative in the application of established work procedures;

(d) assist in a range of functions and/or contribute to interpretation of matters for which there are no clearly established practices and procedures although such activity would not be the sole responsibility of such an employee within the workplace;

(e) provide secretarial and/or administrative support requiring a high degree of judgment, initiative, confidentiality and sensitivity in the performance of work;

(f) assist with or provide a range of records management services, however the responsibility for the records management service would not rest with the employee;

(g) proficient in the operation of the computer to enable modification and/or correction of computer software systems or packages and/or identification problems. This level could

include systems administrators in small to medium sized organisations whose responsibility includes the security/integrity of the system;

(h) apply computing programming knowledge and skills in systems development, maintenance and implementation under direction of a senior employee;

(i) supervise a limited number of lower classified employees or volunteers;

(j) allow the scope for exercising initiative in the application of established work procedures;

(k) deliver single stream training programs;

(l) co-ordinate elementary service programs;

(m) provide assistance to senior employees;

(n) where prime responsibility lies in a specialised field, employees at this level would undertake at least some of the following:

(i) undertake some minor phase of a broad or more complex assignment;

(ii) perform duties of a specialised nature;

(iii) provide a range of information services;

(iv) plan and co-ordinate elementary community-based projects or programs;

(v) perform moderately complex functions including social planning, demographic analysis, survey design and analysis.

(o) in the delivery of disability services as described in subclauses B.1.2 or B.2.2, taking overall responsibility for the personal care of residents; training, co-ordinating and supervising other employees and scheduling work programmes; and assisting in liaison and co-ordination with other services and programmes.

### *B.3.3 Requirements of the job*

Some or all of the following are needed to perform work at this level:

(a) Skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications and/or training

(i) thorough knowledge of work activities performed within the workplace;

(ii) sound knowledge of procedural/operational methods of the workplace;

(iii) may utilise limited professional or specialised knowledge;

(iv) working knowledge of statutory requirements relevant to the workplace;

(v) ability to apply computing concepts.

(b) Prerequisites



(i) entry level for graduates with a relevant three year degree that undertake work related to the responsibilities under this level—pay point 3;

(ii) entry level for graduates with a relevant four year degree that undertake work related to the responsibilities under this level—pay point 4;

(iii) associate diploma with relevant experience; or

(iv) relevant certificate with relevant experience, or experience attained through previous appointments, services and/or study of an equivalent level of expertise and/or experience to undertake the range of activities required.

(c) Organisational relationships

(i) graduates work under direct supervision;

(ii) works under general supervision except where this level of supervision is not required by the nature of the responsibilities under B.3.2 being undertaken;

(iii) operate as member of a team;

(iv) supervision of other employees.

(d) Extent of authority

(i) graduates receive instructions on the broader aspects of the work;

(ii) freedom to act within defined established practices;

(iii) problems can usually be solved by reference to procedures, documented methods and instructions. Assistance is available when problems occur.

## **B.4 Social and community services employee level 4**

### *B.4.1 Characteristics of this level*

(a) A person employed as a Social and community services employee level 4 will work under general direction in functions that require the application of skills and knowledge appropriate to the work. Generally guidelines and work procedures are established.

(b) General features at this level require the application of knowledge and skills which are gained through qualifications and/or previous experience in a discipline. Employees will be expected to contribute knowledge in establishing procedures in the appropriate work-related field. In addition, employees at this level may be required to supervise various functions within a work area or activities of a complex nature.

# The Disability Skills Portfolio Project

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