



# afford news

September 2022



The Australia Foundation for Disability acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community.

The Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford) provides essential services in accommodation, lifestyle and recreation, and employment for people who have a disability.

Afford's mission is to provide innovative, flexible and high-quality support to enhance lifestyle, learning and vocational opportunities for people with disability, their families and carers. Our vision is to be the partner of choice, supporting people with disability to shape their own lives.

Everything we do is underpinned by the values of integrity, cooperation, empathy, respect and excellence.

This magazine is published to tell stories of interest to our community, to share news and information, and to celebrate our people – including our clients, our clients' families and friends, and our employees.

If you have any questions or want to suggest a story contact [b&e@afford.com.au](mailto:b&e@afford.com.au)

# Inside

**02 From the CEO**

**03 In depth with...**

**05 Highlights this month**

**07 Five things you need to know about...**

The National Jobs and Skills Summit

**09 Five things you need to know about...**

Rights based service

**11 News**





## From the CEO



Transformation is underway at Afford. We are excited to be introducing new people who are bringing best practice and expertise to our organisation, and new policies and procedures that will result in increased quality, safety, client and employee experiences. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Afford community.

For the past few months I have really enjoyed meeting our clients and our clients' families and carers. We have been holding family meetings across Australia and have held these in most of the locations in which Afford has centres and provides services and the conversations have been so valuable.

We have heard how important it is that we are focused on our clients' experiences, that we are listening to our clients and prioritise being rights-based in our approach to service. We've also heard that sharing the joy of being part of Afford is something we should celebrate (which is in part why we have started publishing this magazine) and how important it is that our clients feel connected and a part of a community.

We also know that our clients and our employees want and need valuable information. They want to be in the know about how policy and change is making a difference to disability service delivery, where there is progress and innovation.

For all of those reasons, we are publishing this monthly magazine. You can read it on our website and we will email our clients a link to view a copy on email. We will also share a link to view a copy on our social media channels. If you would like a printed copy, all you need to do is ask our local teams and they can print you a copy at your local Afford centre.

Thank you for reading the first edition of Afford News.

**Jo Toohey**

Chief Executive Officer





## In depth with **Aby**

Harbouring a passion for people since day dot, Aby Hutchinson West is Afford's new Principal Advisor for Safeguarding. Aby stepped into the role in a bid to make sure no stone is left unturned in achieving Afford's mission.

Joining the Afford team in search of a challenge after 15 years with another disability organisation, Aby is over the moon to be able to 'sink her teeth' into Afford's transformation process.

Originally from Scotland, Aby has worked in sectors servicing people with disabilities for over 30 years. Aby trained in psychology and education, which initially drew her to empower people with autism. After moving to Australia, she dove head-first into shifting the industry by setting up therapy services, family support services, behaviour support scaffolds and quality practice frameworks.


Aby confesses she loves 'building things', and that she's driven by ensuring that

people with disabilities aren't limited by the way society treats them. While she's seen a lot of change in the industry in her 30 years of service, Aby is adamant 'we're still on that journey'. She says the power of dialogue is vital, and believes that going forward, we need to be empowering the agency of those with disability and 'not using our new-found awareness for safety as an excuse to limit people again'.



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Read more about rights based care on page 8. 

## Work experience at Afford

For quite some time, Afford has been welcoming work experience students completing years 10, 11 and 12 in partnership with local high schools.

Recently, students from James Meehan High School worked at Afford's ADE for Term 3, preparing supermarket and hardware products for retail sale with our Supported Employees.

The students gained great experience working in a real-life production line, labelling and packaging the goods for market. The students gained great experience working as part of a team, and understanding work health and safety requirements.

At the conclusion of the term, the students celebrated their experience with a morning tea and were presented with Thank You certificates from Afford. 🐣



Students from James Meehan High School at Afford.

Australia's Jessica Gallagher (right) and pilot Caitlin Ward with their gold medals following the Women's Tandem B Sprint Finals on day one of the 2022 Commonwealth Games.



## A golden Commonwealth Games

There's been a score of memorable achievements at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games of 2022. Australia's 74 Para-athletes made waves and rose to the top of the scoreboard. Australia won 35 medals including 12 gold, 13 silver and 10 bronze.

Cycling superstars Jess Gallagher and Caitlin Ward took out gold on the track, and S9 swimmer Tom Hodge set a new record in the 100-metre backstroke.

The Australian men's and women's 3x3 wheelchair basketball teams also took out a suite of medals.

In one of the world's newest competitive sports, Australia also took out three medals in Para-table tennis. 🐣



5 things  
you need to  
know about...

## The National Jobs and Skills Summit

It was recently in the news that the ‘untapped talent pool’ of people living with a disability has not been seen as an opportunity.

The global pandemic has left many businesses struggling to stay afloat and employee shortages are one of the main challenges.

In response, the Prime Minister and Treasurer held a national Jobs and Skills Summit from 1 – 2 September 2022.

Here are five things you need to know about what was on the table for discussion and what it means for people living with disability.

## 1 More needs to be done

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are more than 220,000 people of working age with a disability who are not currently working and looking for a job. We see labour shortages and call-outs for staff everywhere – so why are people with disabilities still struggling to find employment? A key topic for discussion at the National Jobs Summit was focused on the fact that more needs to be done to encourage businesses and industries to shift to a more equitable model that includes people with disabilities in the future.

## 2 Hope for the hospitality industry

COVID-19 hit a number of industries hard, and hospitality was one of them. But experts say the answer to prosperity could be in reshaping the industry's mindset. Shifts in process and systematic changes could make a world of a difference in a bid to attract and retain employees with a disability to work in restaurants, hotels, travel, recreation and leisure – to name just a few possibilities.

## 3 The technology sector might be the perfect solution

The tech-sector currently boasts the second-highest employment rate of people living with a disability – around one per cent. But with three per cent of the working age population living with a disability, there's obviously room to do better. Leaders

at Australian tech giant, Atlassian, believe the sector is 'ripe for greater involvement of people with disability' – and it could make the perfect fit for the almost one-in-ten young Aussies who live with disability.

## 4 The untapped potential is touted as a solution to workforce shortages

The Council of Small Business Organisations Australia believes that there's a two-sided solution to the workforce shortage, and it all comes down to making sure those who want to work are getting the opportunities to do so. The National Jobs Summit will focus on the generation of hundreds of thousands of jobs, particularly across the tech-sector.

## 5 Every option on the table

Social Services Minister, the Hon. Amanda Rishworth hosted a disability employment roundtable in Canberra in advance of the Summit. Australian of the Year and disability advocate, Dylan Alcott, attended along with the Tech Council of Australia and the Council of Small Business Associations Australia. The group were set to tackle barriers to employment in every way possible.

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The Jobs and Skills Summit was held at Parliament House in Canberra and an Employment White Paper will be published as a result. For more information, visit [treasury.gov.au](https://www.treasury.gov.au). ➔



# 5 things you need to know about... **Rights Based Service**



When people say ‘rights-based’ approach to service, what do they mean? Afford’s Principal Advisor for Safeguarding, Aby Hutchison West explains that rights-based services fundamentally come down to those living with disabilities having the same rights as everyone else, and their disability should never be used as an excuse or reason to restrict those rights. This is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

For starters, there are five things Aby thinks we need to know about rights-based services.

## **1** The right to privacy

When you rely on the systems around you to ensure your wellbeing, it is vital that your support network respects your privacy. People with disabilities have the right that need-to-know information is only shared with those who actually need to know.

## **2** The right to make choices

The disability support industry is currently set up systematically, which often leaves people without freedom of choice or the ability to change their mind. For people who do not have a disability, it is mostly assumed that you have the freedom to change your mind. This is not something often considered when empowering and supporting people living with a disability.





### 3 The right to take risks

People living with disabilities have a right to learn through doing, to make mistakes and take risks. Anything else is the opposite to living freely and being cared for in a rights-based approach.

### 4 Rights-based services have a way to go

While the disability services industry is aware of the rights-based approach, we're still a little way off making our impact perfect. It comes down to all services needing to stem from a place of respect. We shouldn't be doing things to people with disability, we shouldn't be doing things for people with disability, we should be doing things with people with disability.

### 5 Efficiency isn't everything

When it comes to disability services: efficiency is great, but it's only the beginning. Organisations need to be careful with costs and to reach targets, however, it's often all too easy to simply focus on delivering an efficient service.

The focus needs to be on creating a service and an environment that each individual chooses and has the ability to thrive in. That's what we're building now at Afford.

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If you want to share your views with Afford on Rights-Based Services, email [b&e@afford.com.au](mailto:b&e@afford.com.au) with 'My View' in the subject line. ➤

## People with disability left out of policy

*The Australian* newspaper has published an article about Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Ben Gauntlett saying that ‘the NDIS has become synonymous with disability policy over the past 10 years, at a significant cost to all people living with disability now and in the future’.

The Commissioner said that disability strategy has been too focused on the NDIS, and the millions of people living with disability have too often been left out of broader policy development in the areas of health, housing, education, employment and transport.

“Only 10-15 per cent of people who live with disability were ever intended to be on the NDIS, but it has become the only potential source of support for too many. What has been missing for the past decade was a focus on building ‘Tier 2’ supports – all those community-based services for all people with disability,” he said. ➤



## New Service Delivery leadership

Afford has been transforming its service delivery team to ensure we provide the most effective care and support for our clients and their families. We have appointed new Service Delivery Directors and new Regional Lead roles, with a greater focus on local connection to clients, families and communities. The Directors are responsible for all Afford local service delivery and report to our Chief Operating Officer, Peter Orr. ➤



## New onboarding process

We have a newly appointed Director of Customer Care, Sulett van Wyck, who will oversee the referrals, intake and onboarding of our clients. Our Customer Care team are located across the country and will service Afford clients in person, by phone, email and at various sector events. The team is committed to ensuring our clients’ experience at Afford is one of high-quality care from our very first conversation. ➤



## Intersectionality in the deaf community

The SBS program *Our Deaf Ways* recently explored intersectionality within the Deaf community.

The SBS team sat down with First Nations Australian, Sue Frank, and wheelchair user, Petra Svab, to discuss how their attitudes have been shaped by their experiences, as well as the layered barriers they've faced.

For Sue Frank, she primarily identifies as an Indigenous woman and secondly, as a Deaf woman. Growing up, she used gestures to communicate with her community and beyond. Today, she says there are various signs for Aboriginal used depending on the location.

Petra identifies firstly as a strong Deaf woman – but she also became a wheelchair user at the age of 25. This had a major impact on her sense of identity, as well as the way she understood others' experiences.

To learn more, you can watch their full conversation on SBS on Demand. [▶](#)



## Solution to the hospitality labour shortage

Bianca Stern, the General Manager at All Things Equal, has written an article in *SmartCompany* highlighting that people with disabilities could be the solution to the labour shortage in the hospitality industry.


Ms Stern's article highlights that only 54% of Australians living with disability are engaged in the workforce, and people with disability are twice as likely to be unemployed as people without disability. Stern also highlights that job vacancies have increased and particularly in the hospitality industry. It is time to remove the stereotypes and stigma around people with disability — the outcomes could be just what the hospitality sector needed. Ms Stern recommended a change in recruitment processes, a focus on the individual and strengths as opposed to barriers, and maintaining an open mind. [▶](#)

## Afford's commitment to the National Standards for Disability Services

The Australian Foundation for Disability (Afford) is committed to upholding the National Standards for Disability Services, including:

- > being rights-led in everything we do;
- > ensuring participation and inclusion; Striving to achieve individual outcomes with our clients;
- > opening channels for feedback and complaints – and ensuring we listen and act; and
- > sustaining service access as well as transparent and responsible management and governance of our services.



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