



Accessibility Tick

Committed to Accessibility

**Accessibility Tick Employers Network
(ATEN)**

**Draft Disability Employment Action Plan
Submission**

Version 1.1 | 18th February 2020

ATEN members, as part of this submission

The following Accessibility Tick Employers Network members are supporting this submission on the Draft Disability Employment Action Plan.



Image long description: Logos of each ATEN member supporting the submission, including Vector, ACC, Adecco, Ricoh, Sudima Hotels, Hind Management, Taikura Trust, Westpac, Air New Zealand, MATTR, Blind Low Vision NZ (formerly Blind Foundation), Fidelity Life, Counties Manukau Health, The Warehouse Group, Quentosity, ASB, Scentre Group, Sky City, Meridian Energy Limited, Jacobs and nib.

Background

The Accessibility Tick Employers Network (ATEN) consists of 25 leading organisations committed to improving their ability to serve and employ people who live with an accessibility need. Representing an estimated 3% of New Zealand's jobs, these organisations both large and small have committed to improve accessibility across all facets of their organisation by undertaking the processes involved in the Accessibility Tick. Each member reviews their organisational progress annually against 9 focus areas and then develops and is coached towards achieving their own action plan. The 9 focus areas are –

1. Commitment
2. Physical Environments
3. Recruitment and Selection
4. Employer Support / Workplace Adjustments
5. Communication and Marketing
6. Products and Services
7. Information Communication Technology
8. Career Development
9. Suppliers and Partners

For more information, please see the [Accessibility Tick website - https://accessibilitytick.nz](https://accessibilitytick.nz).

This submission is developed on the back of a meeting of the network held on the 22nd of January 2020 and subsequent engagement with network members all reviewing the Draft Disability Employment Action Plan.

This submission focuses on high level areas in need of attention in order to improve the employment outcomes for disabled people. This submission covers the consensus view of the member organisations of the network; however, we note that not all organisations may share all these views. Members of the network may also make a submission reflecting their individual organisations views.

Support for the plan's goals and objectives

ATEN members agreed that the stated goals and objectives as outlined in the plan are primarily fit for purpose. The Action Areas are where there is the greatest opportunity to improve this plan and get the best possible outcomes.

Concern was noted by several members about language used in Objective 3a "Give more employers knowledge and connections they need to benefit from recruiting, retaining and working with disabled people." The simple process of "giving" more information is unlikely to lead to the desired outcomes. The plan should instead use terms like "Empower employers to develop and share the business case for recruiting, retaining and working with disabled people."

As outlined in the next section, we believe that government can only be a part of this solution, changes for employers must ultimately be led by employers.

Employer actions need to be employer led

Nobody understands the needs of employers like employers themselves.

ATEN believes that for a meaningful and sustainable disability employment statistic change to be achieved, New Zealand employers must lead their part of the response.

The well-used phrase "Nothing About Us Without Us!" needs to be equally applied to employers and the role they have in a successful Disability Employment Action Plan. This is not evident in the current draft.

ATEN is currently proceeding with discovery process towards the development of a NZ employer's disability network which is aligned with our international counterparts in the United Nation's [ILO Global Business and Disability Network](#).

The action plan should provide provision for recognising an employer led body and proactively supporting them to achieve their goals.

What organisations need to improve

Large New Zealand organisations who are diversity leaders tend to have a voluntary diversity committee/committees and/or a small number of staff committed to the whole diversity agenda. For many reasons these amazing people lack the resourcing to develop a comprehensive accessibility action plan without additional support and expertise.

The supply of knowledge without a level of pragmatic support is unlikely to have the desired outcomes. Neither should any programme be developed not allowing the flexibility of an organisation to map out their own direction.

The Accessibility Tick programme supports organisations to identify their accessibility shortfalls and make sustainable plans to correct them and the next opportunity in their business cycle.

“The Accessibility Tick brings the Lead Toolkit to life” – Adele Thomas, Auckland District Health Board.

“I believe we have seen more progress in the last year after joining the Tick programme than we had in the previous 5 years...and that we wouldn’t have made a number of recent disability placements without it” – Russell Syme, Westpac.

The final Disability Employment Action Plan should empower and invest in programmes such as the Accessibility Tick and an employer’s network to proactively support employers to lead the change.

Showing the value of disabled people

A lack of New Zealand based evidence and an established national culture of low expectations for disabled people leads to an unconscious bias against them.

Our network identified that supporting disabled people who would like support through their entire career would likely have positive outcomes. The present system of only supporting them in to and sticking at entry level jobs leads to a lower perception of their capability and subsequent value to employers. Underemployment is a serious problem which also contributes to unconscious bias against disabled people. By supporting people to move forward in their careers this will help to move societal expectations and positively impact on the unconscious bias.

The action plan should look beyond just getting someone with a disability in to work, instead also enabling them to have a meaningful career that supports their aspirations. We expect that this will have broader positive outcomes for overall disability inclusion.

Disability job placement support

Having to maintain relationships with many different disability employment support providers in order to maximise access to candidates is not working for several ATEN members. Given the scale of some employers, and their associated recruitment volumes, it is currently challenging to incorporate a specific focus on disability job placements into their processes. Many ATEN members do not make use of recruitment agencies and find that the current support model can be onerous.

As people with disabilities can only engage with one supported employment provider, this means that to maximise the chance of finding candidates with a disability for a role employers must maintain relationships with several providers.

We recommend that the Disability Employment Action Plan include a review of current supported employment systems listening to employers as a key stakeholder, ensuring that any changes best complement employers' recruitment processes / approaches.

Government leading by example

Our network would be very supportive of working alongside government to demonstrate the success of employing people with a disability. Believing that government modelling inclusive employment is a very powerful message to all employers. As government is a significant employer, there is undoubtedly areas where information shared between government departments and our network will lead to significant learnings and positive outcomes.

The recent signing of the Accessibility Charter was a great beginning for government, but in our view does not establish a commitment from government departments to improve their own disability employment practices.

Government entities should expand the promotion of and engage practical implementation programmes regarding disability employment inclusion within their own organisations. Working alongside the newly established employer network previously indicated in this document.

Conclusion

As a network of employers focussed on improving the accessibility of our organisations and closing our own disability employment gaps we applaud the development of a national Disability Employment Action Plan.

However, the actions in this plan need to be more inclusive of employers ensuring that they are acknowledged as a key stakeholder and effectively consulting on everything that impacts on them. The plan should include provisions for –

- Recognising and proactively supporting an employer led body that is focussed on disability in the workplace from an employer's perspective.
- Expand from focussing on getting someone into work to also providing them with ongoing support that leads to a meaningful career aligned with their personal aspirations.
- Reviewing the supported employment model, heeding to employers' input as a key stakeholder, ensuring that any changes best complement employers' recruitment processes / approaches.
- Establish ways for government to lead the way in their own disability employment practices.

For further information please feel free to contact Phil Turner at the Accessibility Tick on info@accessibilitytick.nz or phone 09 242 0511.