Just Good Business...

Champion Employers in Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services

OCTEC LIMITED

Introducing Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services (DES) is an Australian Government program administered by the Department of Social Services that assists people with disability, injury or health condition to search for, find and keep a job. As well as assisting people with disability to prepare for, secure and maintain sustainable employment in the open labour market, DES providers partner with employers, assisting them to meet their labour requirements while also experiencing the value of inclusion – employing a diverse and dynamic workforce.

OCTEC is a Disability Employment Service Specialist and the largest not-for-profit DES provider in Australia, with 33,000 members of our National Employer Network.

Introducing OCTEC

OCTEC Limited is a not-for-profit community organisation providing high quality specialist employment, training, advocacy and youth services from more than 270 service locations. We provide services to all people regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status or disability. We actively seek to work productively with all our clients and understand their needs. Along with our employer partners, our clients include people with disability, long-term unemployed jobseekers, disengaged youth, single parents, training participants, other disadvantaged or isolated community members, community organisations and government agencies. We are inclusive and goal-focused, flexible in the delivery of our services, allowing us to meet the changing needs of all we serve.

Just Good Business

Champion Employers in Disability Employment Services

OCTEC delivers Disability Employment Services in 54 Employment Service Areas (ESAs) across eastern Australia, covering much of NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. We have a current DES caseload of more than 13,000 participants, each with barriers to employment relating to disability, injury or illness. We also work alongside 33,000 employers, representing all sectors and business sizes from sole traders to multi-nationals. We work in partnership with these employers, assisting them on a journey to inclusion, while providing services which add value and allow them to grow their operations.

In this booklet you will read the stories of a number of these inspiring employers. You will discover how, in partnership with OCTEC, they were able to not only provide employment opportunities for people with disability, but also make a sound decision to improve their business operations.

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OCTEC CEO

It is my pleasure to present to you, *Just Good Business – Champion Employers in Disability Employment Services*.

OCTEC has always been about possibilities . . . investing in communities and their people to be everything they can be, no matter the barriers they have to overcome. That's why partnering with the Australian Government to deliver specialist disability employment services has been so important to our organisation.

Since 1989, OCTEC has provided government-funded employment programs and services for people with disability. And today, as well as being an NDIS registered provider and operator of the celebrated Australian Disability Enterprise, Huntley Berry Farm, we are Australia's largest not-for-profit provider of the DES program.

In 2014, OCTEC published a book called Just Good Business. It told the story of an Australian Government-funded specialist disability employment initiative, run by OCTEC in partnership with hospitality employers across western Sydney. As a direct result of the initiative, more than 30 people with disability received industry-recognised hospitality qualifications, and some of Sydney's leading hospitality providers had the chance to pursue more inclusive work practices, while recruiting qualified, skilled and motivated new employees.

In the decade since Just Good Business, OCTEC has continued to develop partnerships with tens of thousands of employers, across all industry sectors, assisting them to improve their workplace inclusion, while also growing their operations in a cost-effective manner. This work has truly been about "just good business." In this publication, you will discover some of their stories.

I would like to thank our Employment Service National Managers, Chris Clark and Adam Swist, our employer services team led by Tammy Alexander, and our professional managers and staff for their hard work and achievement. It is their efforts, partnering with wonderful inclusive employers, that make possible the stories you are about to read. I trust you will be inspired by them as much as I have been.

Andrew McDougall OAM
CEO OCTEC Limited

OCTEC National Employer Services Manager

With a five-decade history of assisting disadvantaged Australians to develop pathways to careers, OCTEC understands how important it is to involve employers in our processes. Without great employers, willing to embrace inclusion and diversity in their workforce, programs like Disability Employment Services could not exist.

But working with OCTEC's DES isn't about charity. We know employing a motivated, skilled and enthusiastic job seeker with disability can be an outstanding business decision. Today we have a national employer network of more than 33,000 employers, from multinationals to sole traders, operating across all industry sectors, in locations from central and south east Queensland, down the Australian east coast across much of NSW, ACT and Victoria, through to the border with South Australia.

The development of OCTEC's National Employer Services Team came about as a direct result of feedback from our employers. Too often in the past, businesses found it frustrating when contacted by multiple people from the same organisation about the same employment service. Employers want a coordinated and professional approach to their recruitment, and through our workforce development professionals, this is what OCTEC offers. In partnership with our amazing DES managers and consultants, they offer employers access to skilled, qualified, motivated and job-ready candidates. This, after all, is what good business is all about.

The stories you will read in this booklet are a sample of the wonderful employers that OCTEC works with every day. They are stories of partnership, creating new opportunities for employers while changing the lives of people with disability. Truly a win-win!

Please read and enjoy these stories of just good business.

Tammy Alexander
National Employer Services Manager

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Giving Back Kikai Distribution

OCTEC has always been about giving back to the communities in which we operate. Many of our employer partners share this vision, giving job seekers with significant barriers and complex needs an opportunity to achieve their career goals.

Operating in Melbourne's south east, Kikai Distribution packs and distributes a wide range of organic health foods and wellbeing products to major retailers across Greater Melbourne. The business employs around 15 staff and, as of August 2024, ***more than half of those staff were employed through OCTEC.***

Kikai Director, Jayson Rodda, has lived experience of disability, facing many barriers in his own life. He uses his successful business as an opportunity to give back. His is an inclusive, generous and productive workplace, offering staff above award wages and on-the-job training, as well as access to any support services they require to overcome barriers and maintain employment. ***Jayson believes in hiring people no matter their background or experience*** to give them a chance. All he asks for in return is reliability and transparency.

Jayson and his business have been a natural fit for OCTEC. His approach to career development matches our own. Together, through the use of our tailored Biz Support packages, OCTEC and Kikai give job seekers with disability a chance at a career. We provide wage subsidies, access to training, post-placement support, and funds for work equipment, safety gear and clothing. This partnership allows us to offer DES participants pathways into careers in administration, transport and logistics, as well as access to the retail and wholesale sectors.

Over the past five years, OCTEC has become an important part of Kikai's inclusive and successful business approach. "There are many examples where we have been willing to give candidates a go based on recommendations from OCTEC," says Jayson. "Often, these candidates would otherwise not get to the first round of an interview process. We support giving vulnerable, disadvantaged, and unlucky people a chance, or a second chance in life. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive employer. ***Working with OCTEC allows us to help change someone's life with every new hire. We won't recruit any other way."***

Inclusion Champion Dooleys Catholic Club

Operating since 1947, Dooleys Catholic Club is known not just for their welcoming atmosphere and excellent facilities, but also for their commitment to inclusion and support for all members of the community. They employ a staff of more than 200 people in two locations in Western Sydney. And OCTEC DES has been an important part of the Dooleys' story.

After contact with our Western Sydney sales team, ***Dooleys were determined to create opportunities for participants with different barriers – including people with disability – recognising the untapped potential represented by these job seekers.*** The club held a meet-and-greet session, inviting DES participants from various OCTEC sites across Sydney's west. After the info sessions, the participants had the opportunity for an in-person meeting with Jason White, Community Relations and Grant Coordinator at Dooleys. These meetings not only provided pathways to a career in the hospitality sector, they gave our participants the confidence to approach future interviews through discussing their individual career goals with an important local employer. As a direct result of the meet-and-greet sessions, a number of OCTEC participants were offered formal interviews, and ***four participants were offered Customer Service Attendant positions.***

Dooleys' proactive approach to creating employment opportunities and fostering relationships with participants not only allows them to meet particular staffing needs, it's also given them an opportunity to enrich the communities where they operate. Dooleys Lidcombe was nominated in the Clubs 2024 Awards as an "Inclusion Champion" for the meet-and-greet initiative, and for creating career opportunities for people with disability.

Working with OCTEC, Dooleys is proving that inclusion and forward thinking can lead to extraordinary outcomes. In the words of Jason White, ***"OCTEC has allowed us the opportunity to expand our recruitment strategy to include more people with a disability and provide a more comprehensive and diverse workforce".***

Creating Freshly-baked Opportunities Gold Coast Bakeries

There's something undeniably special about homestyle baking – the irresistible aroma and inviting warmth of freshly-baked bread. For more than six decades, the Marrable family on the Gold Coast produced quality baked produce for the region. Now owned by another Queensland family-owned business, Homestyle Bake, ***Gold Coast Bakeries in Molendinar is working with OCTEC to create opportunities for people with disability, while allowing their successful local business to grow and thrive.***

The partnership between this employer and OCTEC is creating career opportunities for people with disability, and is part of this employer's ethos and growth strategy. Gold Coast Bakeries strives to look after people they serve as an active community member.

"Our employees are considered valued assets, and we provide opportunities, encouraging our people to develop talents, building confident and skilled individuals. ***We believe that a diverse team of well-trained people inspires a highly engaged workforce."***

Several OCTEC job seekers have joined the staff at Gold Coast Bakeries – people like Blake and Roger, both of whom had significant barriers in their lives, but are now focused on developing careers. However, their employment was no act of charity. Motivated, skilled and qualified job applicants – including Blake who OCTEC assisted to secure a forklift licence – are described by the employer as "rare as hen's teeth".

While still in its early days, OCTEC looks forward to expanding our partnership with the team at Gold Coast Bakeries, allowing this successful local business to grow, while offering more OCTEC DES participants a chance to transform their lives.

Care and Careers yourtown

OCTEC works with a national partner network of specialist community support services that includes providers of services for people with specific disabilities, services for participants from culturally diverse backgrounds, and services for First Nations participants, mature age participants and disengaged young people. These partnerships are not only about care and overcoming barriers, they also provide opportunities for career pathways.

Founded in the 1960s, yourtown operates services for young people, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. The yourtown team works to overcome long-term unemployment, prevent youth suicide, protect children and provide support for those experiencing domestic and family violence. OCTEC has been partnering with yourtown in western Sydney since 2022.

OCTEC refers disadvantaged participants, aged 16 to 24, to a number of yourtown services – such as the WOW (Women in Work) and the Youth Employment Social Impact Program (YESIP). Through these programs, ***young people with disability gain skills and qualifications, including skills relevant to their job search, such as interview coaching, finance and budgeting, and workplace communication.*** They receive referrals to specialist support services, such as headspace youth mental health, to ensure they receive appropriate care while on their career journey.

At the completion of the programs, participants are offered traineeships or other positions with yourtown, as well as pathways to work with yourtown's partner employers. A number of OCTEC DES participants have used the skills and work experience they received from yourtown to forge a pathway to a career with another employer. ***As labour demand in the care sector continues to grow, the career pathways offered by OCTEC and yourtown will prove vital for the industry and for many young people with disability.***

yourtown
POWERING kids helpline

Acknowledging Champion Employers OCTEC Employer Awards

OCTEC knows just how important it is to work with employers that are passionate about diversity and inclusion, as well as exploring ways to improve their recruitment practices and overall operations. We seek out and work with these employers, finding solutions to their current and future labour needs, while offering disadvantaged job seekers – including those with disability – the opportunity to find pathways to great careers.

An important part of our employer engagement strategy is to acknowledge and celebrate champions of inclusive employment. OCTEC's National Employer Awards recognise the special partnerships we've formed with employers across our areas of operation. ***Winners represent progressive and inclusive organisations, focused on ability,*** while at the same time receiving no-cost, high quality recruitment solutions. Previous award recipients include multi-nationals as well as medium and small businesses, in a range of sectors such as hospitality, health, retail, childcare and manufacturing.

Winners of the 2024 OCTEC National Employer Awards include many of the organisations featured in this booklet. OCTEC's Employment Service National Manager, Chris Clark, is full of praise for the amazing organisations that OCTEC works with.

"As Australia's largest not-for-profit provider of DES, we know how important it is to partner with great employers, assisting them to provide career pathways for people with disability. At the same time, these champions of inclusion are able to enjoy the economic and social benefits of employing a diverse and inclusive workforce."

Agrotarn

A Quality Regional Partner

Biloela Mechanical and Agricultural Services

Too often, people with disability living in regional and rural areas do not receive the same access to quality employment services as those living in major metropolitan areas. This is not the case with OCTEC DES participants. For almost 50 years, we have been offering quality vocational services across rural and regional areas. We understand the needs of regional and rural communities, and we work with like-minded employer partners across non-metropolitan Australia.

One example is Biloela Mechanical and Agricultural Services (BMAS). Specialising in mechanical and agricultural servicing and repairs, BMAS is a trusted partner for local farmers and agricultural businesses. They also have a strong commitment to community engagement, and have become an important employer partner of OCTEC in Central Queensland. Working with OCTEC's DES team, ***BMAS Business Manager Shari Hancock has demonstrated understanding and support for job seekers with disability.*** With the tailored Biz Support packages that OCTEC offers, Shari and BMAS have been able to upskill and qualify numerous DES participants for roles such as mechanical technicians and workshop assistants. BMAS offers care and encouragement to newly placed DES participants, ensuring they truly feel like members of the team.

The partnership between OCTEC and BMAS is about community support and inclusion. It's also about sound business practices. Shari sees a range of benefits for BMAS from the partnership.

"Our collaboration with OCTEC has allowed us to tap into a broader talent pool and foster a more supportive and dynamic work environment. Employees from diverse backgrounds bring unique perspectives and skills, contributing to innovative problem-solving and improved service delivery. Furthermore, our commitment to inclusivity has enhanced our reputation in the community, attracting like-minded customers and partners who value corporate social responsibility. Overall, ***working with OCTEC has been a mutually beneficial partnership that aligns with our core values of community support and sustainable business practices.*** It has helped us build a more resilient and inclusive team, ultimately leading to improved business outcomes and stronger community ties."

OCTEC Regional Manager, Louise Simpson agrees, noting that "nothing is ever a bother for BMAS, they will do whatever it takes to support the participant, promising a positive and confident future".

Powering Inclusion Battery Services Australia

As Australia transitions to clean energy solutions, the management of battery storage facilities is more important than ever. Commencing operations in 2018, Battery Services Australia manage end-to-end battery room management, installing and overseeing industry-leading battery room set-ups as well as other battery services for major clients such as Coles and Woolworths.

OCTEC has been an important part of this employer's success. Since 2022, ***Battery Services Australia has employed 38 OCTEC DES participants into a variety of roles,*** and in a range of locations, across the business. A truly inclusive employer, they provide opportunities for up-skilling and re-training when required, allowing extra time for new recruits to get up to speed with the work expectations. They also provide genuine and honest feedback to both our participants and staff.

Nauval Moelyono, National HR Manager at Battery Services Australia, says that OCTEC has been a great support to the recruitment process at BSA.

"OCTEC has been able to provide BSA with suitable candidates to assist our recruitment process. Hiring through the DES program has helped assist the diversity of our business and the mentor assistance they provide to their participants has led to long-term employment at BSA. ***The partnership with OCTEC DES has helped make BSA a more inclusive employer. And being an inclusive employer has helped to create a strong workplace environment,*** increasing our talent pool, while helping BSA to maintain our strong operations."

Receiving Quality Recruitment T's Tennis Resort

Ever since the sixteenth century, when French people first started referring to a racket and ball game as "tenez" – meaning to receive – tennis has grown to become a true international sport, loved by billions across the globe.

More than 35 years ago, a tennis school and court hire business began in Port Macquarie, on the Mid North Coast of NSW. It has since grown into a hospitality resort for tennis enthusiasts now known as T's Tennis Resort. It provides a range of accommodation options, with a lap pool, mini-golf and of course, plenty of opportunities for a game of tennis.

OCTEC's DES team in the Hastings region has a long-term relationship with T's Tennis. In 2023-2024 alone, they have employed six people with disability into a variety of roles. An inclusive workplace, ***T's offers flexible hours and work roles, additional on-the-job training for those who require it, as well as time off to attend specialist appointments and services.*** They provide career pathways to job seekers like Scott* who was initially employed as a gardener and landscaper, but now performs a variety of customer service roles. Despite ongoing barriers, which led to an extended period off work, T's Tennis stuck by Scott, and he continues to proudly work as part of the resort team.

However, ***the partnership between T's Tennis and OCTEC is not only about helping people with disability explore career pathways. It's also about good business.*** OCTEC's proven approach has streamlined the recruitment process for the company, saving time and money previously wasted through other avenues. OCTEC Biz Support wage subsidies have allowed the business to invest in and develop their people, while not incurring the usual costs associated with recruitment and the early stages of employment. And now, ***OCTEC is their "first point of contact", for any vacancies at the resort.***

*name changed

Finding Value Sungent Packaging

Based in Fairfield, in south western Sydney, Sungent Packaging is an eco-friendly, food-grade packaging manufacturer and wholesaler. As well as striving to reduce the environmental impact of packaging, ***Sungent is an employer that believes in focusing on each person's abilities, not their disability.*** Above all else, the primary attribute this employer seeks is a willingness to work.

OCTEC has a long and successful relationship with this disability-confident employer. Over recent years, ***OCTEC has placed 37 participants into roles at Sungent.*** They include people with disability from culturally diverse backgrounds, with many having been long-term unemployed before being referred to vacancies with Sungent.

The relationship between OCTEC and Sungent is open and transparent, and focuses on positivity. The variety of people that OCTEC has referred to Sungent, and whom are now building careers with this successful employer, is truly amazing. ***Sungent is an employer that finds value in inclusion,*** allowing people with disability to find value as paid employees in a friendly team environment, while our OCTEC team find value in helping to make a real difference.

Reaching Goals Home Caring and Co Group

The Care Sector has been growing at a rapid rate for more than a decade. With an ageing population, the implementation of the NDIS, and government reforms to the sector, there has never been a better time for those interested in pathways to a care career.

Home Caring has been providing home-based aged and disability care services since 2015. Together with the Co Group, ***OCTEC has been working with Home Caring since 2020 and our Macarthur and Liverpool teams have placed 17 people with disability into roles*** ranging from individual support workers to support worker drivers, as well as other support roles. Where an OCTEC participant has a goal to work in the care sector, our team provides access to accredited training and mentorship, working with Co Group to place these participants into roles with Home Caring. The Co Group also assist OCTEC DES participants to secure other employment opportunities within the community service sector.

A true partnership, Co Group, Home Caring and OCTEC work together in instances where newly placed job seekers require assistance to perform their duties. Together, representatives of the three organisations design and implement reasonable adjustments in the workplace and ensure that duties are suitable and within each participant's capacity to perform. OCTEC also assists participants to secure relevant certificates or checks, such as First Aid Certificates, Working with Children and/or Police Checks, and NDIS Clearances.

Reilene Ria, Life Choices Service Coordinator at Home Caring has been a wonderful advocate for her clients and a strong proponent of the benefits of the partnership with OCTEC.

"OCTEC have helped us by providing fundamental resources to support our growth, client health and wellbeing through helping us employ those with physical or mental disabilities. ***We uphold inclusivity which is something we strive for daily*** with our own service users. Beyond merely staff, the OCTEC team always advocate and offer support to each of their participant referrals to develop and achieve goals that they may not have otherwise believed were within their reach. The OCTEC team are always pleasant to deal with and because of them, ***we have an amazing team of staff who have developed and grown in their roles providing amazing care and support to our service users,*** no matter their different abilities."

Exhaustipated
CHAMPION

HomeCare

Appreciating a Diverse Workforce Serco

Serco is a multinational company servicing the needs of Governments across the world.

In the Asia Pacific region, their work covers areas such as defence, maritime, healthcare, justice and immigration, transport and community services.

At OCTEC we have been fortunate to have a long association with the Serco Group which has resulted in many placements across all of the regions in which we operate.

Serco strives to have a workforce that reflects the communities in which they work. They continue to foster a diverse and inclusive culture which goes hand in hand with the cohorts that we work with at OCTEC.

Serco has provided a dedicated Culture, Engagement and DEI Lead in their Talent Acquisition team for us in Shannon Easter. Her role involves supporting candidates that identify with a disability into the right role and ensuring they feel safe and supported and have all they need to be successful. All referrals that we provide are seen by Shannon so that she can liaise with the participants and can ensure they get the very best opportunity for success with their applications and their ongoing employment.

Shannon says: "Through OCTEC's support and resources, we have been able to implement inclusive hiring practices and workplace accommodations that cater to a broader range of employees. ***OCTEC have been able to provide us with expert guidance, customised training and support services.*** This collaboration has enabled us to break down barriers and create a workplace where everyone feels welcome and empowered to contribute their best."

Serco has long recognised that diversity enhances their company purpose. ***Allowing individuals to be themselves lets employees bring their unique voices to the table,*** allows them to undertake their roles from different angles and different perspectives, and provides a place they can make a difference and create a better future.

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