



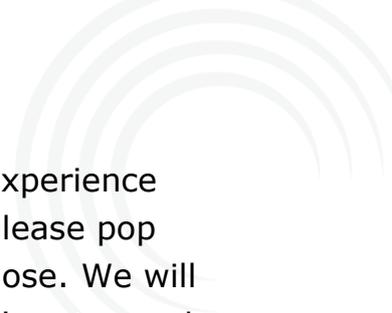
Centre for Inclusive Employment & Disability Employment Australia Lunch & Learn Session | Wednesday, 4 March 2026

Towards inclusive practice for people with intellectual disability

Speakers: Luke Nelson & Brooke Canham, Policy Officers at Inclusion Australia

Facilitators: Sally Karandrews (Disability Employment Australia) & Kirsten Rider (Inclusion Australia)

SALLY KARANDREWS: Hi everyone and welcome to this week's Lunch and Learn. My name is Sally and I am the policy manager here at Disability Employment Australia. It is lovely to have you all here with us today. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which each of us are joining from today. For me that's the Darkinjung people. I pay my respects to Elders, past, present and those of the future. Welcome to today's Lunch and Learn. These sessions are a partnership between Disability Employment Australia and the Centre for Inclusive Employment. They exist to provide practical tools, resources, information and advice to all of us involved in the delivery of employment services with the aim of providing the highest possible quality employment services that we can. DEA is a National peak body for employment service providers and the Centre for Inclusive Employment is a nationwide consortium that is led by the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University and the consortium consists of, as well as Inclusion Australia, National Disability Services, family advocacy and the University of Melbourne. Today expressions will be providing captioning and Liv is about to pop some instructions into the chat on how you can access that captioning. The session is going to be recorded and it will be made available to you in the coming days if you do want to rewatch it or share it with anyone else in your team. Today I am joined by representatives from Inclusion Australia, the National representative organisation for people with an intellectual disability. They will be providing practical and lived experience tips and advice. Those tips will be provided by the policy officers, Luke Nelson and Brooke Canham. Both Luke and Brooke are policy officers at Inclusion Australia and together they have worked across a



number of different projects and come with over two decades of experience between them. So, during the session if you have any questions please pop them in the Q&A box or into the chat and we will be monitoring those. We will attempt to get to as many as we can, however, if any that we can't get to today we will endeavour to follow-up with you after the session. So I will now hand over to Luke and Brooke to present the session. Thank you.

LUKE NELSON: Today we will be talking about why Inclusive Practice is important when you are supporting or working with someone who has an intellectual disability.

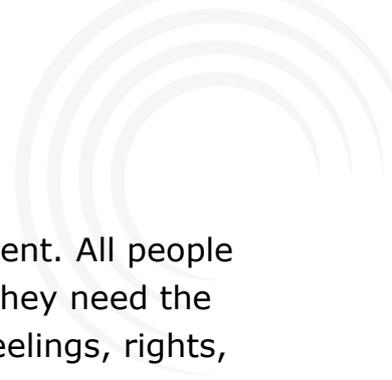
BROOKE CANHAM: I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the Traditional Owners of the land that I am speaking from. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners on the lands where each of you are living and working. We pay our respects to any First Nations people joining us today.

LUKE NELSON: We recognise self-advocates who have worked very hard over the years for equal and human rights for all.

BROOKE CANHAM: Luke and I are policy officers at Inclusion Australia. Inclusion Australia is the National disability representative organisation for people with an intellectual disability, and their families. We bring people together through our members to support and advocate for people with an intellectual disability.

LUKE NELSON: Today we are going to talk about what intellectual disability is, why having a job is important, what Inclusive Practice is, why is Inclusive Practice important, what we hope you will do when you are supporting someone who has an intellectual disability.

BROOKE CANHAM: We think it is important to start today's session by explaining what intellectual disability is. Intellectual disability is a life long condition that affects a person's intellectual skills and their behaviour in different situations. Some of the most common causes of intellectual disability include: Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, premature birth and childhood brain injury.



LUKE NELSON: Every person with an intellectual disability is different. All people with intellectual disabilities can learn and develop new skills, but they need the right support. People with intellectual disabilities have the same feelings, rights, hopes as everyone else.

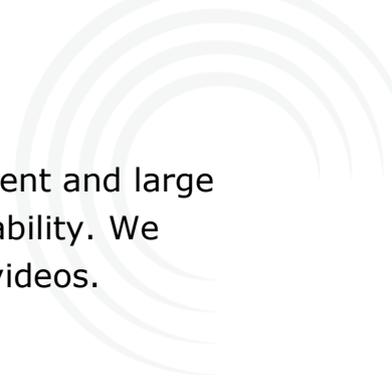
BROOKE CANHAM: Many people with an intellectual disability do not work. Some people think if you have an intellectual disability it means you cannot work. This is not true. People with an intellectual disability can work if they have the right support.

LUKE NELSON: Why is having a job important? Having a job helps someone learn new skills, meet new people and have financial independence. The pathway to work looks very different for people with an intellectual disability. It is not easy. There are lots of barriers. This is why Inclusive Practice is important.

BROOKE CANHAM: So this is a diagram that shows how hard it can be for people with an intellectual disability to gain open employment. We call this the polished pathway. There are different pathways that you can take from school to employment, but most of them have barriers in the way. The barriers are shown by traffic cones. Some examples of barriers are no opportunities for meaningful work experience; no accessible information; no good information to understand how the DSP works. The DSP employment system being inaccessible, in fact, most people have to get a lot of support to report every fortnight. Some of the barriers have changed since we first made this diagram, but there are still more changes needed.

LUKE NELSON: Inclusive Practice is a way of working so that everyone is valued, respected and able to contribute equally. It means identifying and removing barriers. It is not a checklist. It is a mindset built into everyday ways of working. It is a long-term commitment that takes ongoing learning, action and reflection.

BROOKE CANHAM: Inclusion Australia did a project about Inclusive Practice. We



called it Towards Inclusive Practice. We made advice for Government and large organisations about how to include people with an intellectual disability. We made lots of resources such as guides, factsheets, tipsheets and videos.

LUKE NELSON: You can visit our website to find out more, the resources and learn more. Today we want to talk to you about two big topics about the project.

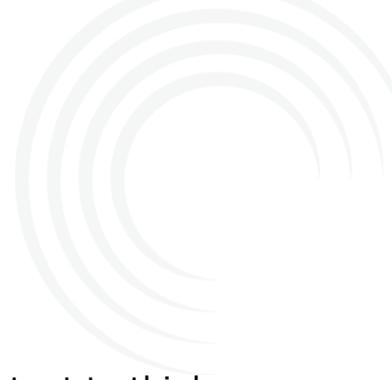
BROOKE CANHAM: The first topic is accessible information. We all have the right to information that we can understand. This can be Easy Read, Plain English. You should ask the person you are supporting how they would like to receive information. Check if they need the information in Easy Read. It is important that you are sending them information in a way that is accessible for them.

LUKE NELSON: It is important that you are aware of the power you have. Think about how you would feel if the roles were switched.

Before we finish today we want to share some things that we would like employment consultants to do if they were supporting us. I want you to know that no-one with an intellectual disability is the same. This means workplans should be different. Everyone should be given a chance to learn and grow. People should be able to try new things and experiences.

BROOKE CANHAM: I would want you to work with me, not against me. I'm an adult, so I want to be treated like one. Give me a fair chance. Don't judge me or make assumptions.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Hey, Brooke, it is Kirsten here from Inclusion Australia. I just thought we might go back a little bit to a section that we were touching on before we kind of wrap-up a little bit, which is the slide before here. We heard Luke say a little bit about the importance of this power and trust, and he said it is important that people are aware of the power that they have and think about how they would feel if the roles were swapped. Is there anything else you wanted to say on that section, or did you want me to help out there?



BROOKE CANHAM: Yeah, help out.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Yeah, absolutely. We were saying that it is important to think about what might make you seem powerful to other people. So some of these dot points on here, we kind of went through the first two ones here, so be aware of the power you have; think about how you'd feel if the roles were swapped, and then here, think about what might make you seem powerful to others and make changes if you need to. So do you want to carry on these three dot points here on the screen?

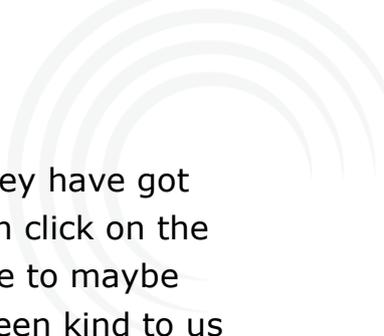
BROOKE CANHAM: Yeah, for example if you were land wards or job titles. Think about the way you speak. Are you using every day words? Make sure there is extra time and breaks when needed.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Perfect. Thank you, so we might move forward to the slide we just spoke about. Luke gave his tips or the important things that people should know about when they are working with people with intellectual disability from his perspective and Brooke, you gave your kind of hot tips or most important things to you. So the next slide here, which is around useful resources I might pass back to you Brooke if you are wanting to share about that?

BROOKE CANHAM: We also wanted to share that along with towards Inclusive Practice website Inclusion Australia and some of our members also have other useful resources which I will explain on the screen now.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Thank you Brooke. We are running nice and ahead of schedule. So I just thought we might mention what some of these are. So we've got three - sorry, go ahead.

BROOKE CANHAM: Brooke sorry, CID is Council for Intellectual Disability. VALID is the Victoria Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability, and Inclusion Australia.



KIRSTEN RIDER: Wonderful. We'll share these slides as well, so they have got some links there so if people are wanting to find out more they can click on the links to find out some more there. I am just giving people a chance to maybe pop their questions into the chance if they do have some. It has been kind to us technology today so far so we are running ahead of schedule. However, Luke, I will pass over to you, because I know you are going to ask if there is any questions.

LUKE NELSON: Thank you very much, thank you for attending the session today. Does anyone have any questions?

BROOKE CANHAM: We would ask if we could get a copy of the slides?

LUKE NELSON: I would imagine so.

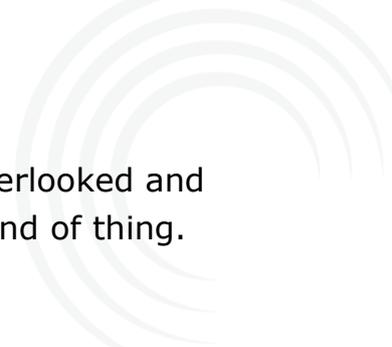
SALLY KARANDREWS: Absolutely. We will send out a copy of the recording and the slides and they'll also be available on the APO, the Australian Policy Observatory website which is where the Centre For Inclusive Employment is hosting all of their resources and on the centre's own website today, so everyone will get a copy of the slides and the recording as well.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Wonderful. Luke and Brooke while we are waiting for people to maybe pop in some questions.

BROOKE CANHAM: What is the biggest barrier you think of people with intellectual disability to open employment and how can employment support services help overcome that barrier?

LUKE NELSON: Good question.

BROOKE CANHAM: I feel like people get overlooked sometimes through a barrier and not in a nice ways, and for someone to overcome that barrier I feel like a support person might come to the workplace just to kind of observe what



is happening so people can understand why people are getting overlooked and then they can have the insight and explain to don't be that way kind of thing.

LUKE NELSON: Yeah. I think one of the things that we are going to do with open employment is I think the organisation has to set up, if they are going to employ people with disabilities that's fantastic, but I think what we also need to look at is putting things in place before we go down that path so that it doesn't get to the point where the person wants to leave because the organisation doesn't have things in place for that. I am all for open employment because that's where I come from, but I think the organisation needs to be set up, but we also need to include people with disabilities in the discussion about open employment.

BROOKE CANHAM: Next question here, Luke. What is something that makes you feel confident or supported when learning something new or starting something new? For me it will be having a person coming with me to make me feel confident and someone that I can trust and be able to have good banter between me and the other person so I can feel confident while working in the environment. You've got to have obviously that trust and that respectfulness so you can feel confident and then you are supported in the right way.

LUKE NELSON: Yep. I think for me it is about preparation also, but also it is around building trust, having people around you to help you.

BROOKE CANHAM: While we are getting on to questions, Kirsten, can you help?

KIRSTEN RIDER: That's great. You are both doing really well there. We've answered that question there, which is from Sharm, what is something that makes you feel confident or supported when learning something new or starting something new? So you both have a bit of a different response there. Wendy asked what sort of skills do open employees need to have to include people with intellectual disability better? So is there some things we can think about for that one?

BROOKE CANHAM: Better attitudes towards people with intellectual disability.



KIRSTEN RIDER: Better attitudes.

BROOKE CANHAM: And communication, because a lot of them speak - for me from experience in a baby manner and that shouldn't be it, it should be speaking in one whole tone to everybody, not just break it down for people with disability. They need to have better attitudes and no discrimination against people with disability. Make sure it is inclusive as we mentioned.

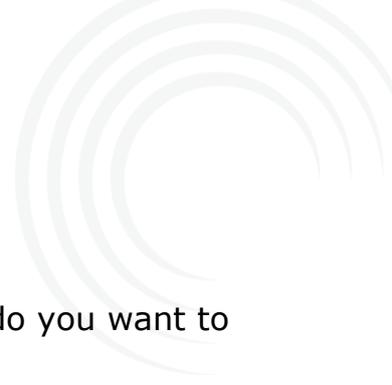
KIRSTEN RIDER: Yeah. What about you Luke? Do you want immediate to repeat the question?

LUKE NELSON: I think a lot of it is that if we set the organisation up right, and I am all for people being employed and I am all for people having open employment, but we've got to have a discussion with the employer around what the person needs before we go down the path of employment. So I'm thinking of giving it a go, so sort of work experience and sort of seeing what people can do, how we can best support them to do what the company has expected them to do.

KIRSTEN RIDER: You mentioned work experience there and I think that Brooke mentioned on the polished pathway often people with intellectual disability are not given opportunities for work experience, so they might not have a chance to do those kinds of things as well.

LUKE NELSON: Exactly.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Alright. Let's have a look. We do have some questions coming through. Some of these, if there is any that we read out and we think it will be better to answer offline we'll do that. What can employers do, especially small businesses that can reduce barriers for people with intellectual disability to open employment and to know how to advertise a job opportunity well for people with intellectual disability? So there are a few questions there.



LUKE NELSON: Good questions.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Luke, do you want to start us off there, or how do you want to approach it?

LUKE NELSON: I think with this one, I think it is also about adapting the interview style for people with disabilities. So if having a conversation with the person with disability first before having the actual interview about what they need. But also with employers employing more people, I think it is important for - and this is one thing I want to get across is - we need to make sure that employers are aware that there are Government programs out there for them to get access to things so that the employers can see the investment of people with disabilities, but also we can set it up before it goes down that path if that makes sense?

KIRSTEN RIDER: It does. I am sure if they have any more questions they can ask on there. Alright. Either Brooke or Luke, do either of you, Melinda has got a question, why do you think employees are not hiring people with disability?

BROOKE CANHAM: Because there is lots of discrimination in this world and people overlook people with disability and not what they can do on the inside. Like, I have had that happen to me a few times, I have gotten feedback from a few jobs and it hurts to see I am capable to do something and I have shown that I can fly different States with my job, I show them that I can look at big words and all that kind of stuff and they still knock you back because of your disability. I said, "Well, I know somebody who works here with disability", like, why are you knocking me back for, or is it because it doesn't look good because of my disability. That breaks people down. People don't want to go back out there or be out there to look for a job. That's why not many people are getting hired.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Okay. The employers maybe are making some assumptions about people with disability and we are talking about people with intellectual disability right now. So they assume things about people with intellectual disability. Luke, what about yourself?



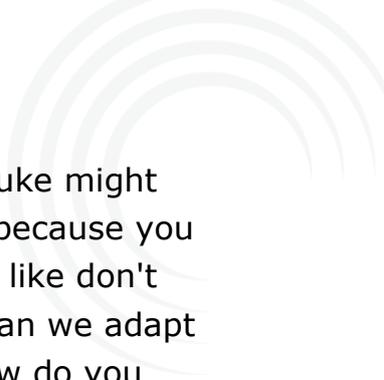
LUKE NELSON: For me this is going to be a very awkward - not awkward question, I know how to answer it. Because my background has primarily been open employment - this one is hard. I think employers are, they are willing - some employers are willing to give it a go and some employers are cautious - this is just my view - because all of the employers that I have had have been nothing but supportive and mine has just been in the open market. I have got to declare that. So I think- - -

KIRSTEN RIDER: Sorry to interrupt. You've had a really good experience. What are some of those things that have made that a good experience?

LUKE NELSON: I think having bosses or CEOs or managers that believe in you, you know. I think having allies that can actually see the potential, but also work with you around how to get access to those things and encouragement is the best thing.

BROOKE CANHAM: But I feel like when - because I also had one good experience where a food organisation reached out to me and said, we really want someone with Down Syndrome and so obviously all parents were kind of like, oh, there is food involved, but he wanted somebody with Down Syndrome to work in his business. Like he actually reached out and said, "We want somebody" and obviously I put my hand up and I worked there for 6 months, but it was a good experience because he actually said he wanted somebody, but I have never ever beforehand, never seen somebody put their hand up and say, "We want someone with a disability to work here. We want someone" and it kind of breaks your heart now. Not many people are doing that. A lot of people now are trying to - what's the word - they carve out jobs where they have a person with a disability to work there, but it is the carving it out, making it easy, not making it challenging. When I work everyday with Inclusion Australia, I need tasks every day, not the same thing every time. There is no point going to work then if you are just doing the same thing every time; it is repetitive and it is not fun sometimes. It seems ongoing with the same thing.

KIRSTEN RIDER: It is good to get out of your comfort zone sometimes and try new things, hey? I was just wondering before I - we've got lots of questions in



here, but there is a question in here that I think Brooke you and Luke might have answers to. Some advice was given to treat you as an adult because you are and to have suitable appropriate communication, and you said like don't speak like a baby to you kind of thing. Someone has asked, how can we adapt our communication for different levels of intellectual disability? How do you think someone should approach that with someone?

BROOKE CANHAM: Well if somebody comes in already and says, "I use a communication pad", or speak to them in that term. If they have like an interview beforehand - not saying the normal word, but speak properly. I would want the person to speak to me like I am speaking to them.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Is it helpful - and tell us if it is not - is it helpful to ask that person how they are wanting to be communicated with?

BROOKE CANHAM: Well yeah it is, but I feel like the other person should actually show them, you know, how we can, like how I am speaking now, if they just think, oh, okay, that's the way she is best to communicate with and that's the way I'd like to be communicated with.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Okay, thank you Brooke. What about Luke? Do you have any thoughts on this how we can maybe adapt our communication for different levels of intellectual disabilities? That's the question.

LUKE NELSON: I think, like say, alright, say Easy Read, I think we need to encourage businesses to look at Easy Read ways of communication, but also Easy Read styles, but also giving people on-the-job training and giving people a go. One thing I learnt in my career is people are always giving me a shot. Also it is about, sort of taking that plunge into the unknown for the employer. I know, look, I understand it is risky, I understand it is completely risky, but in my experience people with disabilities stay at their employers a long time. Like I have been with another employer for 17 years, and that's for volunteer free from pay work and that's all that time. I like what I do every day. So it is about investment. You invest in the person, but also it is a long-term look at.



KIRSTEN RIDER: Thank you. We still do have some questions coming back. I thought I'd better see if Sally wants to take back over, so I will pass back to Sally, otherwise we can continue on. I am happy to be guided by Sally.

SALLY KARANDREWS: I think we should absolutely keep going through the questions. There was one earlier that I was really interested in hearing your thoughts on Brooke and Luke, and it was, what do people do that they think is helpful, but is actually really not helpful?

BROOKE CANHAM: When people are in the way too much and just hovering over your shoulder, and like yes, okay, some people might need support, but not all the time to watch you do something. Like I have got a best friend who works where she puts a lolly in a bag each time and just passes it on to the next person. The support person is over her shoulder telling her and she has to say to leave her alone because she knows how to put a lolly into a bag. So it is frustrating.

LUKE NELSON: I think for me it is the assumption that people can't do things, or whatever like that, but it is also about learning. It is also about we, as a community, as people with disabilities need to teach people as well, so it is more of a give and take situation.

KIRSTEN RIDER: Thank you for both of those. I was just thinking when we were preparing for this presentation, I think it was a conversation I was having with Luke is some people with intellectual disabilities or disabilities more broadly, they might not know, if we go back to their work experience they might not have had opportunities to kind of do things or been given opportunities. Do you see that as - if we think of the polished pathways some people, like their future is already stepped out for them and they are maybe not aware of all the different opportunities that could be for them.

BROOKE CANHAM: Since Inclusion Australia has done this polished pathway I don't think anyone understands the polished pathways that well. That's why we have to show people, like the barriers on stopping, so I think it is important that we speak everywhere so people can understand like how to navigate that system.



KIRSTEN RIDER: Absolutely. What about you Luke?

LUKE NELSON: I think I agree with you, I think that the opportunities, if you are not told they are out there, but it is hard to get involved. But it is also about having allies, it is also about having the allies for people as well and like having a conversation with the person around what they want to do.

KIRSTEN RIDER: I think that's a really good point there that you just made, Luke, have the conversation with the person to see what it is that they are wanting to do because again it comes back to a point Brooke made earlier about assumptions, otherwise you are just assuming, if you are not having the conversation you are assuming. Alright. I am just wondering, there are a few questions in here that probably will take us a little bit longer to answer, or might include some links to different resources, so we might take them offline but just wanted to check in anyone else has any questions that Brooke and Luke can chat to live here. Otherwise Brooke or Luke is there anything that you've been thinking about that you'd love to say that you haven't said yet?

BROOKE CANHAM: No.

LUKE NELSON: I guess what I would say to employers or to service providers on the Webinar is look at the abilities of the person and have a conversation, but also have the capability to have a conversation and don't be afraid to say, "Look, I might need some help or more understanding", because we are all here to have a conversation with you.

BROOKE CANHAM: We are always trying to have it though.

SALLY KARANDREWS: Thank you so much Brooke and Luke for sharing your presentation and responding to those questions. That has been incredibly helpful. Look, I really liked what you said about wanting a challenge, not wanting to go to work every day and do the same thing day in, day out, how boring that would be. You don't want it to be easy, you want to be learning and

doing new things every day and I think that's something that we can all identify with. So thank you for going through those and like we said if there is any that we weren't able to respond to today, we'll endeavour to get back in touch with you. Also please reach out to Inclusion Australia and the team there and they can also provide you with answers and links to references and resources as well. So as we mentioned today's session has been recorded, so that will be made available to you in the very near future. Next week we are going to be joined by a very good friend of mine Ben Moxey who is the merging technology team advisor at Guide Dogs, we are going to be talking more about blindness and vision impaired in the workplace, so I hope you can join us for that. Until then, once again, thank you Brooke, thank you Luke, thank you Kirsten and also thanks to Liv in the background who has made sure that we can deliver today's session smoothly and thank you to everyone for coming along and joining in. It has been great to have you here and have a lovely day.

BROOKE CANHAM: Thanks everyone.

LUKE NELSON: Thanks guys.

(End)