



Preparing young people with disability for work

Learning from lived experience to set young people with disability up for success



The Impact of Meaningful Employment



It feels so much more welcoming and that you're not the big elephant in the room

it made a huge difference— I could take part fully and felt included

I was able to participate fully, work more effectively and also educate others in my workplace about disability inclusion. The benefits extended beyond myself, and it had a positive impact on the culture of my workplace

[CYDA, 2025. Submission on Strengthening the Disability Discrimination Act for children and young people with disability.](#)



Understanding employment for young people with disability

Employment rates for young people with disability have only grown 5% over the past 20 years, fewer than half of all disabled young people are employed (46.6%)

Young people with disability are 25% less likely to participate in the labour force (58.3% v 72.8%).

The unemployment rate for young people with disability is more than double the rate for young people without disability (19.3% vs 7.7%)

[CYDA, 2026, Key Statistics Report](#)

Preparing for Opportunity

Preparing young people with disability for employment: Are young people being set up for success?

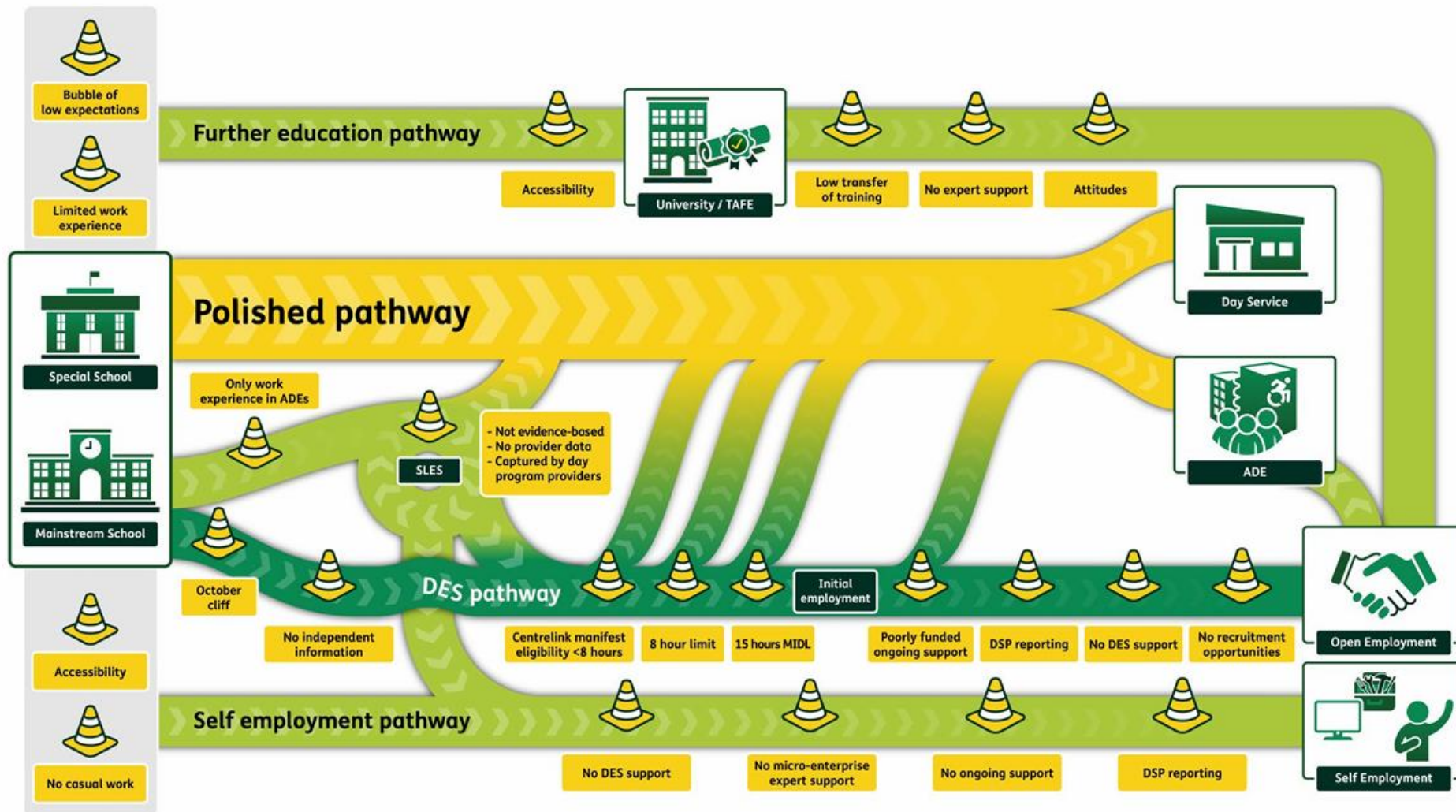
7 in every 10 young people with disability face exclusion (72%) and bullying (73%) in school.

Less than half (39%) of young people with disability with individual education plans are involved in developing these plans.

Only one third (36%) of young people with disability feel their school has a supportive and inclusive culture.

[CYDA, 2025, Disillusion and Delay](#)

The Polished Pathway – Inclusion Australia



**When
supports
are not in
place...**

I didn't feel like I could be open and honest about the entirety of who I was, including my disabilities, in fear of not being accepted, accommodated, and heard

The whole thing went really well. And then at the very end, I'm like, 'I know I didn't really mention this in my resume, but I am in a wheelchair. I hope this doesn't change much'. And then they're like, 'Oh, I'm really sorry....'

[CYDA, 2025. Submission on Strengthening the Disability Discrimination Act for children and young people with disability.](#)

Creating Genuine Pathways



Supporting organisations to create genuine pathways – the Employer Innovation Lab with Social Ventures Australia

A 9-month program with 8 organisations across public and private sector, 8 young people with disability employed at time of evaluation

understanding what a youth with a disability feels and goes through in the workforce and the labour market, because it's not easy... we've learned that we've got that opportunity to create those avenues

it's a lot more than just "oh hey, we've advertised, we've created a job, somebody has come onboard" to actually "it's a lot more holistic, we've got to think this through, we've got to champion this"

[Lee, Ingold & Knox, 2025, Evaluation Report: Employer Innovation Lab - Young People with Disability](#)

What do young people with disability want from work?

1. The work culture is respectful and supportive
2. Employees are remunerated fairly
3. Workplace training offered
4. Employees have opportunities to learn and develop
5. The business is well run
6. Employees feel they belong
7. Access needs are met / reasonable adjustments made / continually checked in on if needed

Putting it into Practice



For Employment Providers

- Don't assume, don't fall back on stereotypes, ask questions
- Help them find their purpose/passion and understand how work enables that
- Look for real opportunities not just menial tasks or "young people jobs" like social media
- Respectful engagement
- Turn best practice into business as usual





For Employers

- Open communication and clarity throughout the recruitment process
- Contacting unsuccessful applicants
- Access information on their website
- Diversity and inclusion statement/Disability Action Plan online
- Communicating what the job and job interview(s) involve, how to prepare
- Willingness to learn and respond to feedback





For Educators and Advocates

- Be person centred & strengths based
 - Use the social model & human rights models of disability to guide
 - Ask questions, and ask "what if...?"
- Create environments where we can learn from mistakes
- Avoid the trap of low expectations





Thank you

Contact us: YouthActionTeam@CYDA.org.au