Victorian Disability Workforce Environment Scan for 2022

Prepared by National Disability Services, Victoria, as part of the Safer and Stronger Project funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to support the Victorian disability sector through the COVID-19 pandemic

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# Purpose

The purpose of this disability workforce environmental scan is to review the key influences on providers’ ability to recruit, skill and manage the workforce requirements to provide quality disability services and meet their business objectives. This provides a guide for National Disability Services (NDS) to help address the workforce challenges and develop support priorities for 2022.

# Background

In late 2021 NDS commissioned consultants Purpose at Work to produce a workforce report to inform work on supporting providers to navigate the workforce needs and impacts of COVID-19. Most workforce issues identified in this paper [Workforce support to the disability sector in response to Covid-19](https://www.nds.org.au/images/workforce/workforce-project/NDS-COVID-19-Workforce-Paper_final-V-Public.pdf), are still impacting the sector. This report clarified the complexity around disability workforce. It identified new, exacerbated, hindering, and helping workforce impacts of COVID-19. This analysis underpinned recommended actions summarised in the following table.

## Framework for service providers to meet COVID-19 workforce challenges in 2021

**Supply**

* Mapping what other employers are doing and foster collaboration
* Redeployment of staff
* Rapid response teams
* Recruiting ahead of shortages if possible
* Staggering shifts

**Skilling**

* Train and coach staff in infection control
* Upskill the workforce

**Creating and enabling workplace**

* Embrace and speed up implementation of new technologies
* Build COVID-19 response plan into existing emergency plans
* Scenario planning with upfront teams
* Additional wellbeing support

The report provided recommendations about how NDS could support service providers to manage their workforce issues arising in the COVID-19 context. Subsequently relevant activities were delivered as part of the Safer and Stronger Project1 funded by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.  Activities included

* Regional coordinated sector planning
* Supervision/Rostering expert forum
* Maximise government support
* Plain English resources
* Offer training and good practice workshops

# Victorian Disability Workforce Data Snapshot entering 2022

The following information is taken from the [NDS State of the Sector Report 2021](https://www.nds.org.au/about/state-of-the-disability-sector-report) and the [NDS Disability Workforce Census Jan to June 2021](https://www.nds.org.au/images/news/2021-June-NDS_Workforce_Census_Key_Findings.pdf) released in December 2021. National data was collected for January to July 2021 from 305 organisations who participated in the census, covering 60,679 employees. This census period reflects the sector’s continued disruption from the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, particularly in the Eastern states. The following points are key facts

**Employment Status**

* 61 per cent of the workforce is employed permanently, with 33 per cent employed on a casual basis
* 79 per cent is employed part-time; 21 per cent full-time
* The rate of permanent employment decreased from 62.5 per cent last census, back to 61 per cent
* The rate of permanent part-time employment fell slightly to 79 per cent (from 82 per cent in December 2020)
* Looking at National data only, a decrease in permanent employment was reported, down from 62 per cent in December 2020 to 61 per cent in June 2021. Permanent part-time employment and the combined average hours worked per week also decreased, while the turnover rate for casual positions rose by four per cent

**Type of employment (per cent)**

**Source: NDS State of The Sector Report 2021 (National Data)**

**Permanent**

* June 2016 58 per cent
* December 2016 57 per cent
* June 2017 54 per cent
* December 2017 51 per cent
* June 2018 54 per cent
* December 2018 57 per cent
* June 2019 55 per cent
* December 2019 60 per cent
* June 2020 62 per cent
* December 2020 62 per cent
* June 2021 61 per cent

**Casual**

* June 2016 36 per cent
* December 2016 38 per cent
* June 2017 41 per cent
* December 2017 41 per cent
* June 2018 41 per cent
* December 2018 41 per cent
* June 2019 40 per cent
* December 2019 34 per cent
* June 2020 34 per cent
* December 2020 31 per cent
* June 2021 33 per cent

**Fixed**

* June 2016 6 per cent
* December 2016 5 percent
* June 2017 6 per cent
* December 2017 8 per cent
* June 2018 6 per cent
* December 2018 6 per cent
* June 2019 4 per cent
* December 2019 6 per cent
* June 2020 5 per cent
* December 2020 6 per cent
* June 2021 6 per cent

**Working Hours**

* The average working hours for the sector is 22.4 hours per week, down from 24.2 hours in the previous census period. This may be much higher where workers work for more than one employer.
* Average hours worked per week across the sector declined from 24.2 to 22.4, matching the equivalent figure in June 2020.
* Declines in weekly hours worked were seen in Victoria (24.1 to 18 hours) and Western Australia (24.4 to 19.6 hours), while NSW saw an increase from 24.3 to 26.5 hours.
* Data is from employers it does not show employees who were working more hours per week, but across two or more employers. We are aware that many workers work for more than one disability employer and some work in both disability and aged care roles.

**Turnover Rate**

* The turnover rate for casual employees remained volatile, increasing from 18 pe cent to 22 per cent, while the turnover rate for permanent employees declined marginally from 11per cent to 10per cent.

**Gender Balance**

* The workforce gender imbalance remains unchanged. Sixty-nine per cent of workers were female and 31 per cent male. This is in almost an inverse proportion to the NDIS participant gender profile, with 62 per cent of participants being male as of June 2021.

**Disability representation**

* Of the 285 responses to questions relating to disability employment within the sector and board representation, 30 per cent employed 3 or more people with disability. Half, however, said they did not employ people with disability or didn't know. Eleven per cent said they employed 3 or more people in management roles. On board composition, 9 per cent indicated there were two or more people with disability in those roles.

# Key disability workforce influences for 2022

Implementation of the NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021-2025 began in the second half of 2021 and continues in 2022. Other disability workforce influences include:

* Release of the NDIS Capability Framework content and tools to the sector
* Australian Government response to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, Interim Report
* Findings and recommendations of the Aged Care, Mental Health (Vic) and continuing Disability Royal Commissions
* Reviews of nationally accredited qualifications relevant to the disability workforce
* Changing impacts and responses to living with COVID-19 particularly as new variants arise.

## NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021 – 2025

Since the Workforce support to the disability sector in response to COVID-19 report the [NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021 – 2025](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/06_2021/ndis-national-workforce-plan-2021-2025.pdf) was released in July 2021 by the federal Department of Social Security.

In the plan, Minister Reynolds acknowledges that “The care and support sector is one of Australia’s largest and fastest growing sectors, with around 3,750 unfilled vacancies now and an additional 83,000 NDIS workers expected to be required by 2024.” In addition, the Plan highlights the high turnover rate in the sector with 213,000 workers needed to replace workers leaving the sector to 2024 in addition to the new workers required.

The Plan aims to:

* Support and retain existing workers
* Grow the workforce
* Maintain the quality of participant supports provided by workers
* Sector efficiency and innovation

It identifies sixteen initiatives to address three priorities:

Priority 1: Improve community understanding of the benefits of working in the care and support sector and strengthen entry pathways for suitable workers to enter the sector

Priority 2: Train and support the NDIS workforce

Priority 3: Reduce red tape, facilitate new service models and innovation, and provide more market information about business opportunities in the care and support sector

Whilst investment in the disability workforce is welcome there are gaps in the Plan with little to address the need for increased resources for training and supervision. These are key factors in service quality, worker wellbeing and retention. There is also little to address the critical shortages of allied health professionals, see below.

### NDIS Capability Framework

The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission released the NDIS Capability Framework in late 2020 to provide clarity to NDIS participants, workers and service providers about the attitudes, skills and knowledge expected of all workers funded by the NDIS. See the dedicated [website with information and resources for using the Framework](https://workforcecapability.ndiscommission.gov.au/).

Service providers have been considering how they can best use the Framework in their recruitment, training and supervision. Training providers have begun to look at how they integrate the Framework in training.

Australian Government response to Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS Interim Report recommendations

The Joint Standing Committee (JSC) on the NDIS released its [workforce interim report](https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-for-people-with-disability-national-disability-insurance-scheme/australian-government-response-to-the-national-disability-insurance-scheme-workforce-interim-report-of-the-joint-standing-committee-on-the-national) in October 2021. It contains recommendations that cover and seek improvements in:

* Funding arrangement
* Training and accreditation
* Employment opportunities for people with lived experience of disability
* The distribution of allied health professionals
* Investing in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and
* Securing reliable workforce data to support workforce planning policy development
* Marketing disability sector as an Employer of Choice

The recommendations subsequently supported by the Australian government seek to tackle: the gaps in the NDIS workforce data; improvements to skilling and training of NDIS workers; need for a focused approach to addressing the extreme shortage of allied health workers in part by redistributing the current allied health workforce; and improving the attractiveness of disability jobs to job seekers.

# Victorian Disability Workforce challenges entering 2022

Entering 2022 NDS has identified a range of disability workforce challenges, including:

* Increasing worker shortages exacerbated by national labour shortages across most sectors
* Acute Allied Health workforce shortages requiring targeted interventions
* Workforce management challenges from COVID-19
* Continued lengthy delays in processing mandatory NDIS worker checks leading to long times from recruitment to starting on the job and loss of new recruits
* Inadequate resources for supervision and training
* Retention, increased mobility of workers and concerns about the ‘Great Resignation’ phenomenon already seen overseas
* Widespread fatigue and mental health concerns for workers at all levels
* The evolving disability market

## **1. Increasing worker shortages**

Australian employers across most sectors are raising concerns about their inability to recruit sufficient workers. The Victorian unemployment rate in January 2022 is 4.2 per cent, matching the National rate.

NDS has been polling disability service providers on their most pressing issues at online meetings and webinars since September 2021. Workforce and access to rapid antigen testing have consistently been the top issues. Providers are reporting that it is now even harder to recruit enough disability workers than it was at the start of 2021.

The Victorian and Australian governments have instigated campaigns to promote job and career opportunities in the broader care and disability sectors, see the [A Life Changing Life](https://www.careandsupportjobs.gov.au/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAosmPBhCPARIsAHOen-Oi39W0HrEIrI2GgNvS3AswhhNvp4ht1zseNRdDiw_jjbiZ8ymxS4MaAslcEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds) and [Work That Matters](https://www.vic.gov.au/disability-careers-work-matters) campaigns.

There are major sector reforms driving competition for staff across the health and community services sector. These include the national Aged Care Royal Commission, the current Disability Royal Commission, and the Victorian Mental Health Royal Commission. Recommendations and interim recommendations from these reviews all include the need for substantially increased workforce numbers and skills.  This means competition for workers across the Health and Community Services sector has increased markedly.

At a federal level, the [Australian Government’s response](https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/177-billion-to-deliver-once-in-a-generation-change-to-aged-care-in-australia) to the [Aged Care Royal Commission recommendations](https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/final-report-recommendations.pdf) includes $652.1 million to increase and skill the aged care workforce. Of this $9.8 million is to extend the national recruitment campaign, to help increase the skilled and dedicated aged care workforce.

The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Mental Health Royal Commission. These require significantly increasing and diversifying the mental health and wellbeing workforce. This should aid access for people with disability to needed mental health and wellbeing support. However, new workers will come from the same pools as new disability and allied health workers.

The tables below adapted from the NDS State of the Sector Report 2021 show that providers are finding it exceedingly difficult to achieve and maintain the workforce they need in Victoria and nationally. Anecdotal information points to this getting harder over the past year. Allied Health professionals are amongst the most difficult to recruit and retain.

**How difficult to recruit or retain staff (Victoria)**

**Source: NDS State of The Sector Report 2021**

**Difficult to recruit**

* Occupational therapist 96 per cent
* Speech therapist 95 per cent
* Physiotherapist 88 per cent
* Psychologist 86 per cent
* Dietitians 85 per cent
* Volunteers 72 per cent
* LAC/Planner 67 per cent
* Managers/supervisors of disability support workers 64 per cent
* Disability support worker 64 per cent
* Support Coordinator 62 per cent
* Marketing/business development 46 per cent
* Information Technology 44 per cent
* HR/Workforce Development 43 per cent
* Finance/Accounting 39 per cent

**Difficult to retain**

* Occupational 64 per cent
* Speech therapist 59 percent
* Physiotherapist 69 percent
* Psychologist 71 percent
* Dietitians 40 percent
* Volunteers 32 percent
* LAC/Planner 33 percent
* Manager/supervisors of disability support workers 24 percent
* Disability support worker 41 percent
* Support coordinator 22 percent
* Marketing/business development 14 percent
* Information Technology 7 percent
* HR/Workforce Development 23 percent
* Finance 5 percent

**How difficult to recruit or retain staff (National)**

**Source: NDS State of The Sector Report 2021**

**Difficult to recruit**

* Speech therapist 93 per cent
* Occupational therapist 92 per cent
* Psychologist 89 per cent
* Physiotherapist 80 per cent
* Dietitians 72 per cent
* Disability support worker 70 per cent
* Managers/supervisors of disability support workers 68 per cent
* Support Coordinator 65 per cent
* Volunteers 56 per cent
* LAC/Planner 48 per cent
* HR/Workforce Development 45 per cent
* Marketing/business development 44 per cent
* Information Technology 40 per cent
* Finance/Accounting 38 per cent

**Difficult to retain**

* Speech therapist 61 per cent
* Occupational therapist 65 per cent
* Psychologist 63 per cent
* Physiotherapist 55 per cent
* Dietitians 55 per cent
* Disability support worker 44 per cent
* Managers/supervisors of disability support workers 31 per cent
* Support Coordinator 32 per cent
* Volunteers 36 per cent
* LAC/Planner 38 per cent
* HR/Workforce Development 26 per cent
* Marketing/business development 19 per cent
* Information Technology 22 per cent
* Finance/Accounting 12 per cent

## **2. Acute Allied Health workforce shortages requiring targeted interventions**

In Victoria and around Australia NDIS participants are finding it extremely hard to access allied health services, see above. Providers report that they are finding it impossible to recruit sufficient allied health professionals. This is driving typical wait times of 6 months to 2 years for allied health services. Some providers are closing waiting lists to avoid creating expectations of service provision that they cannot meet.

In the [NDS State of the Sector Report 2021](https://www.nds.org.au/about/state-of-the-disability-sector-report), ‘Working with adjacent sectors to respond to acute allied health shortages’ is included as one of eleven elements of The Way Forward.  This aligns with the direction of the NDS strategic goal focussing on supporting ‘High quality and sustainable services by the sector’.

At a national level, the [NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021 – 2024](https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-publications-articles/ndis-national-workforce-plan-2021-2025) has two main strategies to address allied health shortages.

**Explore options to support allied health professionals to work alongside allied health assistants and support workers to increase capacity to respond to participants needs**

The efficient delegation of appropriate tasks to allied health assistants or support workers can increase the capacity of allied health professionals by up to 17 per cent and enable allied health professionals to deliver more services to participants. Options will be explored through codesign to ensure appropriate models are developed and implemented. Future stages should explore additional training and regulatory requirements for Allied Health Assistants (AHAs) and support workers.

**Enable allied health professionals in rural and remote areas to access professional support via telehealth**

Allied health professionals can be isolated and require support to review practice decisions, and supervision to provide high quality services to rural and remote participants. Options to enable allied health professionals to access professional support and supervision remotely will be explored, including for multidisciplinary team interventions.

Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program (BLCW) has been allocated responsibility for this work by the Department of Social Services (DSS). NDS Victoria has established a working relationship with the BLCW Allied Health Specialist. However, there has not been significant progress towards solutions in 2021.

NDS Victoria has been supporting the State funded project lead by Monash Health to develop an [AHA (Allied Health Assistants) State-wide Workforce Plan](https://monashhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/4-Kath-Greer-AHA-Workforce-Plan.pdf). This is nearing completion and early research was used to inform review of [AHA Cert Three and Four training packages this year by the Skills IQ](https://www.skillsiq.com.au/CurrentProjectsandCaseStudies/AlliedHealthAssistanceTPD) that commenced in 2021.

In response to member concerns, NDS Victoria ran a workshopExploring Solutions to Allied Health workforce shorta*ges* in September 2021. Providers are trying a wide range of recruitment strategies but still struggling to fill their vacancies. Given the extent and impact of the allied health workforce shortages further work to support providers to find an implement solutions and additional systemic approaches are urgently required.

## **3. Workforce management challenges from COVID-19**

Risks and requirements to manage in a COVID-19 environment have increased the pressure on training and supervision. Infection control training has been a major focus along with adapting services to try and support NDIS participants throughout the pandemic. Infection control measures currently require regular testing of disability workers, and in early 2022 there has been an extreme shortage of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs).

There is variation but providers have had sometimes more than a quarter of their staff furloughed. They have tried to access surge workforce provisions through the NDIA and State and Federal government arrangements without success, leaving them to manage on reduced and already stretched staff. Some medium to large providers are using a Rapid Response Team model where they select, train, support and reward workers willing to work with COVID-19 positive clients. Efforts were made by providers to recruit ahead of the need for surge workforce. The long term and worsening shortages of workers has made this difficult.

The list below was compiled from polling of 54 disability service providers in January 2022. Workforce shortages are impacting 65 per cent of the providers polled. Access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) is directly related to workforce availability and well as client safety. This also shows that 39 per cent have concerns for the mental health and well-being of their workers.

**What are your key concerns over the coming weeks?**

* Economic viability; increased staff costs and lower incomes 44 per cent
* Restrictions and quarantine requirements not appropriate for disability settings 11 per cent
* Supporting participants who test positive for COVID 19 28 per cent
* Workforce shortages 65 per cent
* Access to RATs 70 per cent
* Priority to PCR testing 9 per cent
* Access and claiming for PPE 13 per cent
* Mental health and wellbeing of staff 39 per cent
* Mental health and wellbeing of participants 11 per cent
* Access to priority vaccinations 4 per cent

## **4. Lengthy delays in processing mandatory NDIS worker checks**

The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission introduced mandatory NDIS worker screening checks on 1 February 2021 for all workers working for registered providers who are key personnel, deliver services directly to NDIS participants or are likely to require more than incidental contact with NDIS participants. Each State and Territory set up their own processes for workers to obtain an NDIS Screening Check.

The process in Victoria, managed by Services Victoria, has been beset with teething issues, resulting in lengthy delays with both the online and manual systems. As workers cannot start working with registered providers without these checks the delays have been a source of great frustration for already stretched providers. Many workers and volunteers have had to wait weeks or months to obtain clearances. They also have other options in the current labour market and promising workers have been lost to the sector, unprepared to put up with the delays.

NDS, Services Victoria and DFFH have worked to solve the problems and the situation has significantly improved although delays are still occurring.

## **5. Inadequate resources for supervision and training**

Concerns about the inability to provide adequate training and supervision within the current NDIS pricing model have been raised for some time. Some of this goes to the assumptions in the pricing model such as a 1: 15 ratios of supervisors to workers. Given the highly casualised workforce this translates to around 1:30. Added to this are the one on one, off site, delivery for many services and the low level of leadership and management training employers can deliver. Providers have difficulty attracting and retaining Team Leaders. High levels of work complexity, sensitivity, and responsibilities teamed with low pay rates and development opportunities contribute to this issue.

COVID–19 has highlighted the importance of having trained staff who have the capacity to learn and apply necessary skills and procedures.  Training is linked to career development and retention. It is also important for service quality. It is noted that with current funding settings, there are real challenges in providing ample supervision and training within the sector.

## **6. Retention, increased mobility of workers and concerns about the ‘Great Resignation’ phenomenon**

The NDIS National Workforce Plan 2021 – 2025 notes that high workforce retention is crucial for service continuity and reducing the high cost of recruiting, onboarding, and training replacement workers. NDIS workforce turnover has been high relative to other sectors and if it remains at this level, the Plan predicts that the NDIS will lose around 213,000 workers to churn by 2024. This is in addition to the 83,000 new workers needed to meet growth in demand.

Providers are aware of the need for worker retention and the value of more stable workforces to quality services and organisational viability through cost savings. Supports have tended to focus on recruitment and attraction and now need to be balanced by building the knowledge, skills and resources to optimise worker retention.

The COVID-19 and labour market environment in 2021/2 has seen workers reconsider what is important to them in their life and work. This has seen increased mobility of workers and concerns about the ‘Great Resignation’ phenomenon already seen overseas being more apparent in Australia in the first half of 2022 and impacting our sector.

Creating an enabling work environment is an important part of retaining workers and maximising worker wellbeing and performance. This includes building positive work cultures characterised by psychological safety, wellbeing, engagement, connection, stimulation and support. Also embracing and speeding up implementation of new technology.

## **7. Widespread fatigue and mental health concerns for workers at all levels**

Workers at all levels working in disability service delivery have worked through and adapted to a sustained level of uncertainty since February 2020. The demands have been substantial as they struggled to learn and implement new infection control practices, supported, and strived to keep clients, co-workers, themselves, and their families safe from severe illness and death from COVID-19. The need to furlough workers who were infected, or close contacts meant the remaining workers had to cover the work. Complex decisions needed to be made about what they could and could not provide.

Providers were reporting fatigue and concerns about worker wellbeing and mental health in 2020. This concern has continued as has the demands on workers and managers. At an online seminar [Covid and stress](https://sacsconsult.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PRESENTATION-The-Stress-of-COVID-19-and-How-to-Manage-It-20-09-01.pdf)presented by SACs Consultingthe point was made that whilst humans can manage stress in bursts living with sustained stress depletes resilience. The problem is with us now and requires solutions now and likely for some time to come as workers struggle to survive and recover from the impacts on them of delivering disability services and managing in the pandemic

## **8. The evolving disability market**

The market for NDIS services is dynamic and evolving. There are three broad features of current disability market development. These are the rise of online platforms, evolving regulation and substantial investments by venture capital. Online platform-based provider have emerged. Models vary as does the associated risk for NDIS participants. For instance, HireUp employ the workers that can be engaged through their online platform, taking responsibility for employee relations entitlements and requirements. On other platforms workers are sole traders offering their services without having to meet the quality and safeguarding requirements enforced by the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission for Registered NDIS service providers. This complex regulatory environment leaves an imbalance of compliance requirements between registered and unregistered providers.

Disability service providers are reporting that they are experiencing the impact of some of their staff leaving them to become sole traders in the sector. Their concern is both the problem of losing workers when they already have shortages and concerns about the unregulated, sole trader environment

The following two charts, developed from NDIS quarterly reports, show that the average number of active providers per participant in Victoria has been steadily declining.  While the proportion of active providers who are companies or organisations has been increasing. The first table demonstrates that participants are seeking services from fewer providers.

**Average number of active providers per active participant (Victoria)**

**Source: Compiled from NDIS Quarterly Reports March 2019 to September 2021**

1.56 active providers per active participant in March 2019 down to 1.17 active providers per active participants in September 2021.

The list below shows that despite anecdotal information about the rise of sole traders in Victoria the proportion has declined since March 2019. It is difficult to determine whether this decline has been linked to the impact of the pandemic where both workers and NDIS consumers have had to be cautious about who they interact with due to the risk of COVID-19 infection.

**Proportion of Active Providers by Legal Entity Type**

**Source: Compiled from NDIS Quarterly Reports March 2019 to September 2021**

**Individual Sole Trader**

* March 2019 42 per cent
* June 2019 41 per cent
* September 2019 37 per cent
* December 2019 36 per cent
* March 2020 35 per cent
* June 2020 32 per cent
* September 2020 30 per cent
* December 2020 29 per cent
* March 2021 27 per cent
* June 2021 27 per cent
* September 2021 24 per cent

**Company/Organisation**

* March 2019 58 per cent
* June 2019 59 per cent
* September 2019 63 per cent
* December 2019 64 per cent
* March 2020 65 per cent
* June 2020 68 per cent
* September 2020 70 per cent
* December 2020 71 per cent
* March 2021 73 per cent
* June 2021 73 per cent
* September 2021 76 per cent

With the introduction of the NDIS disability sector quietly grew to become a major economic stimulus whilst focussing on delivering needed support services to people living with disability. The NDS Workforce Connectors identified that the disability sector was often the largest employer in regional areas and if not the largest then certainly in the top three. In total, funding for the NDIS is expected to grow to $122 billion over the next four years with contributions from the Commonwealth and states and territories.

Many providers are experiencing rapid growth in service delivery. Given this it is not surprising that over the past 12 to 18 months there has been large investments in online disability service and labour platforms. Just two examples of this in 2021 include [$40 million by SEEK Investments](https://www.startupdaily.net/2021/08/seek-backs-disability-services-venture-hireup-with-40-million-series-a/) in Hire Up and [$ 100 million by global fund General Atlantic](https://www.theweeklysource.com.au/mable-secures-100m-equity-investment-from-global-giant-general-atlantic-good-for-villages-and-caps/) in Mable.

The size and value of the NDIS Services market has seen a number of corporate investors attracted to the perceived opportunities in the sector.  The full impacts of this change are yet to unfold but will put further pressure on existing providers and have workforce implications.

**Next Steps for NDS**

This document identifies an array of factors impacting on the Victorian disability workforce. This will inform NDS efforts to support the sector in 2022. On the basis of the workforce data, consideration of current developments and trends, and input from disability service providers NDS will continue to focus on skilling, supply and helping providers create enabling work environments.

NDS will continue to leverage its extensive and close relationships with disability service providers, and relationships with relevant regulatory and government agencies. This will take the form of:

* Utilising our well-developed engagement infrastructure of communities of practice, online workshops, videos, podcasts, and other resources
* Partnering with key experts to inform our work and deliver webinars on workforce issues
* Seek further funding to enable us to continue to support the Victorian disability workforce
* Advocate and influence through the NDS industry advocacy and roles on steering committees and industry advisory groups.

# Framework for service providers to meet COVID-19 workforce challenges in 2022

**Supply**

* Identify good practice with attraction and recruitment, capture and promote
* Foster collaboration amongst providers through CoPs (Community of Practice) etc.
* Effective use of online disability service and labour platforms.
* Support provider efforts to develop surge workforce options
* Promoting ‘Jobs that Matter’ and other government campaigns

**Skilling**

* Continue to provide webinars on variety of workforce topics to inform sector of evidence-based practice and strategies.
* Train and coach staff in infection, prevention, and control
* Support the upskilling of staff and managers re emergency management planning and responses re workforce
* Contribute to the Vic Skills Plan and other relevant bodies to influence skills frameworks and opportunities.

**Creating and enabling workplace**

* Use the NDS engagement infrastructure to help embed good practice in disability services and enable providers to effectively manage workforce challenges.
* Targeted work to assist the sector address workforce wellbeing in the COVID-19 context.
* Development and promotion of practical resources to support the sector to better build enabling workplaces.