

Nepean Jobs for All

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Executive Summary

During 2017, Penrith City Council, in collaboration with Blue Mountains City Council and Hawkesbury City Council, formed the Nepean Jobs for All project. The purpose of the project was to build awareness and capacity with large employers and small business in the Nepean area to employ people with a disability. One element of the project involved holding Business Breakfast Forums aiming to bring together local business leaders and employers to promote the employment of people with a disability.

Penrith City Council contracted the Centre for Business and Social Innovation (CBSI) at UTS to conduct research to independently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Business Breakfast Forums. This was done by attending and contributing to scheduled breakfast information sessions, designing and administering a survey on employer perceptions around disability and carrying out interviews and case studies.

This report summarises the findings from that evaluation. It provides recommendations on the key steps the Council could undertake to increase awareness among businesses regarding employment of people with disabilities. It also discusses the key blockages businesses currently face when they wish to employ a person with a disability.

The key barrier for businesses is lack of knowledge about available resources for businesses when employing a person with a disability. This includes:

1. Financial incentives and funding information available to businesses, without which they may not be able to employ additional staff.
2. Time commitment needed to modify a workplace to make it suitable for a person with a disability.
3. The process a business needs to follow to employ a person with a disability.

While the Business Breakfast Forums were of benefit in starting a conversation about the benefits of employing people with a disability, offering one-on-one information sessions and follow-up could be more effective for increasing the number of businesses offering employment to a person with a disability.

The key recommendations from this research are:

1. Produce and distribute detailed information fact-sheets or booklets for businesses on employing a person with a disability.

The information provided should focus on:

- a. available financial support and how to obtain it;

- b. other forms of support and advice; including fact sheets about support available when employing people with common types of disability, and typical workplace adjustments required;
 - c. the time commitment needed for the business to successfully employ people with a disability;
 - d. process map with steps to be followed when employing a person with a disability;
 - e. case studies on businesses that have successfully employed people with a disability, and on the Council's own experience.
2. Working with Disability Employment Services (DES) to improve advice and follow up with businesses.
3. Widely disseminate fact sheets and case studies on website/social media.
4. Employ a consultant on a casual basis who could be booked for short sessions to assist businesses with specific questions or concerns about the employment process. The Council could trial this role to see if it supports increased employment of people with a disability in the Council area.
5. Provide one-on-one meetings for interested businesses with the Disability Inclusion Officer to answer any questions and encourage businesses to take next steps.
6. If future forums to promote the employment of people with disability take place, these need to focus on providing the detailed information set out in Recommendation 1.
7. Include information about support available to businesses willing to employ a person with a disability at all Council business events. These events could also be used to distribute factsheets or book a meeting with a consultant or the Disability Inclusion Officer.

Overview

This report summarises the findings from an evaluation, conducted by researchers from the Centre for Business and Social Innovation (CBSI) at UTS, on Business Breakfast Forums held in Penrith, Windsor and Katoomba in October 2017, as part of the *Nepean Jobs for All* project. These breakfast forums aimed to build awareness and capacity with large employers and small business in the Nepean area to employ people with a disability. The report starts with an overview of key issues and a description of the project. It then goes on to outline the nature and effectiveness of the Business Breakfast Forums, and summarise key issues raised by employers both at the forums and in subsequent interviews.

Background

Disability and Employment in Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability and Carers (ABS, 2015), the labour force participation rate for people with a disability has remained steady at 53%, which is considerably lower than for people without disability (83%). In 2015, the unemployment rate for people with disability was 10%, compared to 5.3% for people without a disability. This suggests that people with a disability face many barriers when seeking work. This is a particular problem in Australia. In 2010, the OECD ranked Australia 21st out of 29 member countries for employment rates of people with disability (OECD, 2010), and over the past decade, disability discrimination has accounted for the largest group of complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). A third of these related to discrimination in employment. This suggests that more attention is needed to drive equality in employment for people with disability.

A particular barrier is employer ignorance. In its report *Willing to Work*, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2016) found that employers often hold negative attitudes and perceptions about people with a disability. In addition, employers may lack knowledge, awareness and skills to develop inclusive workplaces, and to implement recruitment and retention strategies that support people with a disability. All these factors contribute to the employment barriers faced by people with a disability.

The Nepean Jobs for All Project

With the aim of increasing employment for people with a disability in the Nepean area, Penrith City Council initiated the *Nepean Jobs for All* (NJFA) initiative. With the involvement of the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith Councils, NJFA held business networking events in October 2017. These included a series of three Business Breakfast Forums. Held in Penrith, Windsor and Katoomba, these aimed to raise awareness, advertise the project and recruit

businesses to participate in connecting with further information and support avenues, potentially leading to employing a person with a disability.

The intent of the Business Breakfast Forums was outlined by Claire Galvin, Disability Inclusion Officer – Penrith City Council, as follows:

"There were three main messages that we wanted to get through in our awareness raising.

The first one was that disability is not just what you think; it's not only wheelchairs and Down Syndrome.

And also, it's not as hard as you think! You don't initially have to treat people any different, and often if you just ask a person, they'll tell you what they can and can't do and what adjustments they may need.

The third message was that there is support available, and letting businesses know that there are DES providers who are happy to do recruiting for you. Well, they're meant to be happy to do recruiting for you! There are equipment modification funds to help with making any needed adjustments, and there are wage subsidy schemes for certain eligible participants and so on.

These were the three main messages: that disability is not just a stereotype, that this is not as hard as they may think, and that help is available."

Methodology

To assess the effectiveness of the Business Breakfast Forums the research was conducted primarily through four interviews with small businesses in the Nepean area who had attended the Business Breakfast Forums, and ten interviews with experts either working in Council or in roles related to facilitating or supporting employment for people with a disability. In addition, the researcher observed one of the Business Breakfast Forums. Participants in the Business Breakfast Forums were also invited to complete a short online survey after the forums. The survey aimed to determine the interviewees' awareness concerning the breakfasts, their interest in employing a person with a disability and if there was a shift in their viewpoint as a result of the Business Breakfast Forums. There were 40 people at the first forum, about 35 at the second, and about 45 at the third. Across all 3 forums, 29 attendees answered the survey.

Interviews were semi-structured and focused on: a) perceived barriers to employing a person with a disability, from the perspective of the employer b) perceived effectiveness of the NJFA Business Breakfast Forums on influencing employment outcomes c) discerning if the Business Breakfast Forums were effective in changing perceptions. Interviews lasted for approximately 30-60 minutes and were recorded with the consent of the participant. Interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 11 adopting content analysis methodology. In the text of this report, interviewees are identified here as Expert 1-6 or Business 1-4.

Interviewees who were business owners were connected with the researcher through a Penrith Council representative, the Disability Inclusion Officer. They were selected because they attended one of the Business Breakfast Forums and had expressed their willingness to employ a person with a disability, or were undertaking this process, and were willing to participate in the research. Expert interviewees were affiliated with Penrith Council or government or were business experts working specifically with disability and employment.

Key insights

The forums met the Council's aim of creating a greater awareness among the businesses who attended and led to the employment of three people with a disability (one of the businesses employed 2 people with disability). However, the overall effectiveness of the forums was restricted as a result of the following factors:

1. Only a small number of businesses attended.
2. The business representatives who attended all knew each other from other Council events so the networking opportunities were limited.
3. Lack of detailed information provided at the forums on the benefits of employing a person with a disability, and how the recruitment process might need to be varied.

While 22 of the 29 attendees who answered the post-breakfast survey said they would utilise the support services discussed at the forums to employ a person with a disability, only two businesses had done so by the time the survey was conducted in October 2017.

How the Business Breakfast Forums worked

The following themes emerged from the analysis of survey and interview data.

Business Breakfast Forums provided information about the options for employing a person with a disability for small businesses

Attendees who worked in small business and who went ahead and employed a person with a disability after attending the Business Breakfast Forums, indicated that the information received at the forums shifted and expanded their understanding about different types of disability and suitable jobs. This prompted them to be more flexible with regard to who they employed and to consider how roles could be adjusted.

There are a lot of administration sides I think for somebody - answering phones - that's in a wheelchair could do without a doubt. All of that was in my mind. (*Business 2*)

I thought that was good because I hadn't thought about, does this job necessarily have to be done in the office, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week? When I went back to work, I said, we would actually be better off if we could find someone who could do three days a week in the office and two days from home. (*Business 3*)

I would've been slightly aware prior to that but not, not super, super aware. I was aware there's schemes available because in my previous job we generally have 1 or 2 people come to us through an agency, a job placement agency specialising in, not necessary disabilities. But that was about the extent of my knowledge. (*Business 1*)

The survey completed by attendees after the forums indicated that many of those present believed they already had a reasonable/average understanding of disability and employment. Without being able to generalise, the interviews with the two businesses who employed a person with a disability after attending the forums showed that these businesses found the forums beneficial in that the forums:

1. Provided information on the diversity of disability and ability of employees with specific disabilities;
2. Informed businesses about contacts and supports available for helping them find candidates;
3. Informed businesses that there was funding available

Business Breakfast Forums were a starting point in the process of employing a person with a disability and encouraging attendees to seek further information

Businesses who went ahead with the employment process valued the information they received about key contacts they could reach out to, to learn more about the opportunities

associated with employing a person with a disability. Having access to further information and additional resources is crucial for small businesses to be willing and confident to employ a person with a disability and filled an important information gap.

[What was helpful] from the breakfast was the brochure and the contact and being able to pick up the phone and talk to somebody and say we're thinking of this, we don't know. Because we didn't know.... we knew nothing about what subsidies were, we knew nothing about how it went and how it occurred. The breakfast was the catalyst to pick up the phone and say, we think there may be a situation, a possibility here, we don't know how it operates, we don't know if it attracts subsidies and that sort of thing, so going through that process. (*Business 2*)

I think just having more information. We're keen to grow as a business and I think having someone that we could talk to, that will be able to answer our questions and explain what's available, what services are available. (*Business 1*)

Business Breakfast Forums offered a networking opportunity within established, rather than new networks

While the forum offered a networking opportunity for businesses, most people attending knew each other from previous events. This suggests that if the Council is seeking to increase the number of businesses it reaches through such events, there is a need to create awareness within alternative groups or networks.

I probably have a slightly different perspective to some people about the benefit of those networks and the breakfasts; when you run those sorts of things you start to notice that a lot of times it's the same people that turn up. You know it's the same people at the next breakfast or – like one minute they're at a breakfast for employment on disability the next minute, like literally the week after I saw three or four of the same people at a tourism thing that I was doing. Are we actually getting the right people in the room through this format? (*Expert 1*)

The businesses that attended the breakfasts appreciated the opportunity to connect with others to discuss the process of employing someone with a disability in person.

I think the best enablers are people – of people that are just willing to explore. People that are willing to have a conversation. There's so much power in a conversation. When you don't know the right answer you have a conversation, or you don't know the finer details, you have that conversation, somebody will be able to... Somebody will add something to it. (*Expert 6*)

I think there's lots of information available, but I think, and I guess this happens a lot in the community services sector and the social sector, that you can have all the information in the world but until its personal people don't take an action. (*Expert 2*)

I think that's always been my experience in everything; I'll meet somebody and the initial meeting is kind of just the tiniest snapshot and it's all of the stuff that you follow up with later

and doing the one on one and getting back in front of them and having those conversations that's where you sort of get the outcome. *(Expert 1)*

The importance of personal relationships

A key theme in supporting businesses interested in employing people with disability, and going through the process for the first time, was the importance of personal relationships.

The role of the Disability Inclusion Officer is central for connecting with businesses and sharing information

A key person for creating greater connection with both established and new networks and local businesses is the Council Disability Inclusion Officer. One-to-one contact through personal visits to businesses is key to both generating interest from the businesses and to achieving successful employment outcomes. This is demonstrated by the current Disability Inclusion Officer, who networks in the community, having conversations with people face-to-face rather than through other channels (such as online or advertising). These connections were solidified at the Business Breakfast Forums.

People like to be connected.... I think that what was more effective probably was Claire's just one on one visits to businesses to just talk them through... What has been good is at a couple of the breakfasts and a couple of other events, Claire made a connection with somebody that she could then go and follow up and have a meeting with back in their own business. *(Expert 1)*

And Robin went along to the breakfast and then she handed that program over to me to follow up. I followed up with Claire. *(Business 2)*

We met before then and ... she [Claire] was just at a networking function and we just got talking. She told me what she did and I told her what I did and she said, "that's interesting. I'm doing this and breakfast coming up" etc., etc. And I said, "I'm happy to help you promote it" and – because I work with a lot of local businesses and I just think it's a good thing to try and find opportunities for employing ... people with a disability. *(Business 4)*

And look I think like most of these things the idea of having committees and whatever are great, but typically in my experience success comes down to one or two people who are really instrumental in driving the projects. *(Expert 1)*

The interviews indicate that small businesses were more likely to act and follow-through with the employment process if there is a personal follow-up. The role of the Disability Inclusion Officer is therefore essential as a catalyst for generating positive outcomes that otherwise would not have occurred. These individual connections may be more important as a driver for change than forums.

Personal relationships and individual meetings could also provide access to businesses who would not otherwise attend an information/networking forum because of competing pressures on their availability.

Quite often those small businesses that do have capacity to take on one or two employees but who are incredibly busy, they're not people who have a couple of hours at a morning to go and stand at a breakfast. One of the obstacles is whether this format is actually getting you the cut through that you need. *(Expert 1)*

More generally, connecting businesses with people who have an in-depth understanding of the support available for employing someone with a disability and the process to do so, is critical.

You just do need those people, those right people, who have that mix of getting the big picture. Understanding governance, understanding process and the framework and the technical side, but have the human face and empathy and who can talk with all different stakeholders; that's the key. Having the doers. *(Expert 1)*

Disseminating information

Getting the right type of information across to businesses considering employing a person with a disability is critical.

Information events need to provide clear and detailed information on the financial incentives for motivating businesses to explore opportunities to employ people with disabilities.

Businesses have a perception that they lack the financial resources to employ a person with a disability and are not aware of available funding/financial support available. Information about available funding support is crucial to a business's ability to go ahead with recruitment decisions that favour people with a disability. The businesses interviewed each emphasised the importance of clear, specific and detailed information on the financial support available, and often mentioned they would have benefited from more of this sort of information at the Business Breakfast Forums.

The people promoting the disability employment can be more upfront about the incentives because I think what was communicated in the role was the value of the employees and the soft benefits to the business; the loyalty. ... They feel a bit over cautious about talking about money, but to attract the small business market it's got to be viable, and the money's it's just a fact of life. If a small business can see the value, and see okay we've got some support, financial support to make this happen, and if they can be more specific upfront, it may help businesses

to ...[gain] their interest more quickly because businesses my size just don't have the spare cash to invest all the time. (*Business 1*)

It's a not for profit organisation and in the process of my investigating it, I have to be very conscious of not placing the organisation into a financial commitment that they couldn't continue or couldn't meet. I would have to say better knowledge of the financial situation and the criteria and the responsibilities around that would help to make a quicker decision. (*Business 2*)

Information on financial aspects was considered as crucial for businesses to make smart decisions what was needed to employ someone with a disability. Interviews with businesses suggested that greater information was needed on financial implications that they would need to work through their decision-making process.

No, definitely there's not enough information. From personal experience, I haven't really known too much about it until candidates have come across my desk and someone's gone, "do you know you can get Job Access?", and I'm like "cool, I'll just google Job Access and actually look at all this extra funding I can get." But I think it's getting out there. (*Expert 3*)

In terms of small businesses particularly, their time, their money, and their information ... they don't have the time to think through all the issues, they don't have a lot of money to splash around so they're very cautious about how they spend their money and the information's not readily available. (*Business 4*)

The businesses interviewed were generally small, with small teams. Small businesses frequently express their need to be cautious about how they spend funds. This is an important point that was raised often. The data collected shows that a small business is very reliant on the availability of financial incentives to make employment of a person with a disability possible.

Small businesses that employed people with disabilities following the Business Breakfast Forums noted that they had not previously been aware of the financial incentives available. Learning about the availability of these incentives had been instrumental in their decision to employ someone with a disability.

The interviews conducted show that providing financial incentives to businesses is an important incentive to take the next step and make the decision to employ someone with a disability.

We had altogether about \$2,500... \$7,000 spread over a year... for a business of my size, that's a big incentive ... because the investment required to bring someone on board, the productivity's going to be significantly lower than someone that could come in fully trained into a position like that. (*Business 1*)

Our experience has been very good but it has been critical getting that subsidy for us to be able to continue working. (*Business 2*)

In all honesty, it was because it was the capability of attracting a subsidy through that process that would allow us to have someone in a type of role like [name omitted] for example, who's a lovely little girl who gets really nervous and she'd probably get really nervous...it had been spoken about that maybe we could get somebody to do this and if it attracted a subsidy then... It was a big help because if your overheads are going up and up you can't deliver the services that we're here for. Everything is subsidized. (*Business 2*)

I think most employees and companies are willing to employ people with disabilities. The problem is that they don't, as a company, know how to go about it. They don't know what support they would get. They don't know what funding and support because they will want some form of funding from the government and they will want that for a few reasons because they are all profit They won't get into the bottom line to employ someone; possibly government departments will – that's a different thing, but private employers won't. (*Expert 4*)

Providing small business with specific information regarding estimated time commitments of various aspects of the employment process supports the decision process

In addition to the perception that employing a person with a disability is costly, interview responses suggested that businesses believed that accommodating a person with a disability would be time intensive.

A lot of my work is with small businesses now. They're very time poor so I think it's just the time effort involved in making it work... That's one barrier and it's just the time and energy involved. (*Business 4*)

Business expected that additional time would be needed in order to:

- train new staff members;
- make accommodations or physical adjustments to the business environment;
- find and recruit the candidate and to adapt to any additional candidate needs.

When there is a financial incentive the issue of time becomes less significant to the business. As all businesses interviewed were small, this was particularly related to the functions of small business.

Because at my size it's a factor ... if we were a larger company and able to absorb a 6 months training period it's a little bit different. But we haven't got the funds to absorb that. We need that incentive to be able to make it work. (*Business 1*)

Information on time commitment and a step-by-step approach to employing someone with a disability could be provided in the form of a process map including the key steps a business needs to follow and how they can link with further information.

I don't know myself how streamlined that process is. Whether it's easy for a business or it's difficult. We could do better in giving businesses more information about actually what's involved and breaking it down into a process that's really easy for them to understand. Even telling them upfront what sort of time commitment and stuff because some people think, "oh that's great but I don't have time to step out of my small business and do all of that." If you can create a process that articulates what time commitment is required for you to do this, and what you'll get out of it at the end, and what somebody else will get out of it, and how it contributes to community. *(Expert 1)*

Linking with candidates and contacts who could advise on necessary workplace adjustments would provide important incentives to businesses to employ people with a disability

While it was clear that businesses wanted more specific information concerning funding incentives for employment, it was also evident they were not entirely sure of other avenues for further advice, or how to take the next step in connecting with these. This included being able to link with potential candidates and getting advice on potential adjustments to the physical business environment needed to support the employment of a person with a disability.

I'm on the skilling and employment committee for (name withheld) so I've had a few contacts with people that have ... worked for those sorts of places. But it still wasn't a clear path as to who to contact and whether or not there would be a cost involved. Because obviously ... if you put a job out to an employment agency to deal with for you whereas they're obviously doing it free of charge. I don't know how you'd get that out to employers. *(Business 3)*

That's another thing that can be quite important as well. Somebody figuratively holding their hand and helping the business owner think through the issues and manage everything that might come with that. There's an adjustment for everybody. Obviously it's an impact on the person ... immediate work area, but potentially its customers ... now that's vision impaired or in a wheelchair or something and is there anything there that we have to manage a bit differently or how do we do that? Just having somebody that's able to help a business owner and the person – the individual themselves work through those. *(Business 1)*

Most businesses expressed their willingness to modify their way of doing business or their physical work environment to employ a person with a disability, with the caveat that they might need some financial support to make these changes possible and would need to understand the benefit of doing so.

Some more information about how they could help employers place a staff member. It was mentioned ... about being able to get funding for modifications, that could maybe help because a lot of trades businesses have factories with offices upstairs, that's just a given, so maybe people feel a bit restricted with that. I suppose the impact in terms of potential workers compensation scenarios or extensive sick leave. People need to be reassured that there is a bit of a buy off for that. If you can be a bit more flexible, then maybe you get a bit more out of these people. (*Business 3*)

Working with DES providers

There was an awareness amongst businesses attending the breakfast forums of the necessity of working with DES providers to be able to improve support for business.

There were difficulties in linking businesses to candidates and DES providers

Across Australia, concerns have been expressed about the performance of the Australian Government Disability Employment Services (DES). According to the Department of Social Services (2018) the system is not performing strongly enough for job seekers or employers. Only 31 per cent of participants are in employment three months after completing a period of assistance in DES. This figure is down from a high of 38 per cent in 2013 and the current equivalent figures for job active of around 40 per cent (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2018).

This concern was reflected in comments received in interviews for this project. In most cases, those who attended the Business Breakfast Forums appeared to already have some awareness of DES – but lacked knowledge about how to access and benefit from these services. Businesses indicated that there is little available information on the exact function of DES and how to connect with employees via their services.

It's more just about how do we let businesses know that these services are there? Maybe we've got to talk to the people in those services and find out what they want employers to do to engage with them as well and I don't know what their process is. Do people just go in and register with them and then they look in the papers and online and whatever? Maybe it's that two-way connection. (*Business 3*)

One problem seems to be there is no coherence between agencies and other groups who are working in this area – no consistent or methodical approach. Interviewees indicated that DES were repeatedly seen to lack follow-through after an initial connection had been made. This has negative impact on follow-through by businesses who did attend the Business Breakfast Forums and were willing to employ a person with a disability.

And then another DES provider, this was for (name withheld) in the dress shop in (location withheld), she was looking for a candidate. I'd rang a different DES service wanting to share it around between them to say, "have you got any candidates"? And they said "yes, we've got some candidates in the area that would be suitable, I'll get John to email you them now". Didn't get an email, so the next day I went back to the manager - "didn't hear from John" whatever and he says, "oh okay, well I'll get him to call you now". Didn't call and I'm thinking, "I am actually handing you a job, you haven't actually had to go out and find it and people didn't follow up".
(Expert 2)

I spoke to two of them and I spoke to (Provider) and I spoke to (Provider). They said, "send the ad over and we'll see what, we'll go through our database and see what we can find." And then nothing. ... I thought from their perspective they might have been a bit more proactive in terms of ringing me and saying, "we haven't really got anyone on our database. Is there something we could advertise more or could we change the ad? Could we direct the ad through us or something like that?" (Business 3)

Some businesses were not aware of DES providers prior to attending the breakfast forums.

The only names I'm really aware of prior to that was Nova. Now I'm aware of Ability Options, I'm aware of other employment agencies, but I don't know if they're specifically disability ones or not. So, there was probably a low awareness of agencies. (Business 1)

Unless you know someone ... my friend that works in marketing for Ability Options, I know how much work they do in marketing but I would not have been aware of, unless I was looking. I wouldn't have even been aware of the organisation if it wasn't for that personal contact, even they're doing a whole lot of marketing and stuff. Unless the agencies are being proactive in letting businesses know, although I did hear an ad on the radio for Ability Options the other day. So just recently but not prior to that. (Business 1)

The prevailing view is that DES need to communicate more internally, to pool knowledge, and to follow-through for more effective outcomes.

Information sharing for businesses

Producing fact sheets can be an effective means to provide the necessary information to businesses considering employing a person with a disability

The Council can further support this initiative by formalising the knowledge and experiences gained in the form of fact/information sheets to be shared widely

A key area of change that has occurred through the NJFP project is within the Council itself. There is a recognition in Council positions that for real change to occur in employment and disability, there must be a genuine and sustained commitment for Councils to lead and support an investment in that change. As with the progress and awareness raised by Council actions,

such as the Business Breakfast Forums, there is a recognition that Council setting an example and engaging with community and business leaders, backed by legislation, can potentially have a greater impact.

There is a lot of tacit knowledge and information available through the Council. Formalising and distributing Council's experience with employing people with a disability can provide valuable case study information that can be used to support other businesses in this process. We suggest that this can be done via a case study approach that captures how the Council employed people with disabilities and the outcomes.

It really has challenged the way I look at things, and it's probably opened my eyes a little bit to being more aware. Maybe from the sense of just people without a disability, maybe the people with a disability and the problems and the barriers they face, tend to only sit in our peripheral vision a little bit. *(Expert 3)*

[The project] is only small, so it was only one region and this was a trial project for a year to see if we could raise some awareness and get some outcomes. Obviously we did; we got some outcomes and we raised some awareness, but to make an actual dent in the issue it would need to be longer than a year. And there are ongoing benefits to it...particularly for the people employed and also while we're doing this project we are trying to create some legacy objects/things there is lots of information out there but it's all in different places. *(Expert 2)*

Businesses are not aware of the kind of supports available to them, partly because the information is provided in many different places:

As noted earlier, one of the key obstacles to the employment of people with a disability is lack of information about the supports available. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that there is no single portal or point of contact for employers to access the information that they need.

Until you stumble across it, you don't know. Like around the job access, and actually being able to claim funding for if you need to buy new equipment, or funding for wages. *(Expert 3)*

My experience is that there's a lot of support out there for employing people with disabilities be it subsidies, purchasing of equipment that's necessary, having a coach type person that can help. There's a lot of that assistance out there but my perception is ... there's a bit over here, there's a bit over there, there's a bit over there – if it was all, sort of, coming through one channel and also packaged with positive stories that would be better than what we've got now. *(Business 4)*

Concluding comments

The key aim of the NJFA project was to create awareness and build capacity among local employers for employing people with a disability, by hosting a series of Business Breakfast Forums, to achieve an increase in employment of people with a disability in the Nepean area.

The key findings of the research indicate that to employ a person with a disability, businesses need to be provided with detailed and easy to follow information that can help them to determine the financial viability of employing a person with a disability and reduce the time commitment to do so. This, along with information on connecting with support services and employees/avenues for employment were the key concerns for businesses.

The Business Breakfast Forums did not lead to a significant number of people with a disability employed. However, their key outcome to raise awareness was partly achieved with 28 stating that they would be more willing to employ someone with a disability in the future.

There were only a small number of businesses that employed people with disabilities after the Business Breakfast Forums. There are several potential explanations for this. One is that the individual connections made by the Disability Inclusion Officer could have been effective in enabling the same (or greater) results without the need for the Business Breakfast Forums. Another possible explanation is that the research was undertaken too soon after the forums hence not capturing businesses who would decide to employ a person with a disability at a later stage. This could be captured by following up with the participants at a later stage

Limitations of the research

While the data does highlight some of the key issues, particularly in relation to lack of information on financial supports and other support services, the limited size of the study limits the generalisability of the insights provided. In addition, a follow up study over a longer time frame has the potential to uncover positive results that have occurred over time. Further research with a larger number of businesses, and over a longer time frame would provide richer and more valid and reliable insights. A focus on local larger businesses would also be particularly pertinent as all businesses in our sample were small. To gain a greater understanding of the issues faced by businesses it would be beneficial to learn what prevents some of the larger employers in the area from being more active in employing people with a disability.

A note on the importance of organisation culture/personal attitudes towards disability

As part of our concluding comments we note that the types of business that went ahead with employment processes all had an inclusive business culture. It is not possible to generalise from the sample of businesses who attended the breakfast forums whether having an inclusive culture or a personal conviction was key in employing a person with a disability; and this was not something that we explicitly measured as part of the project. Based on the conducted interviews, however, businesses who employed a person with a disability or said they would consider doing so, appeared to have some cultural similarities, with a pre-existing compassionate and inclusive environment.

This organization is one that obviously fits into that sort of environment because from the start it's a caring environment. (*Business 2*)

I'm not aware of any other businesses that do this kind of thing, particularly focus on it. I suppose in a way, we want it to be the norm, not something different and that's a good thing. We don't want it to be, "oh, well, we've employed a disabled person. We just employed that person". (*Business 3*)

The relevance of organisational culture and personal attitudes towards disability for employment of people with a disability needs to be investigated further to be able to comment on how it impacts on outcomes.

References:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015). Disability, ageing and carers, Australia (No. 4430.0). Canberra: ABS.

Australian Government Department of Social Services, (2018) New Disability Employment Services, Discussion Paper, 2/11/16, NSW Government Employment Enablement Strategy, NSW.

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2017). Annual report 2016-17, AHRC: Sydney.

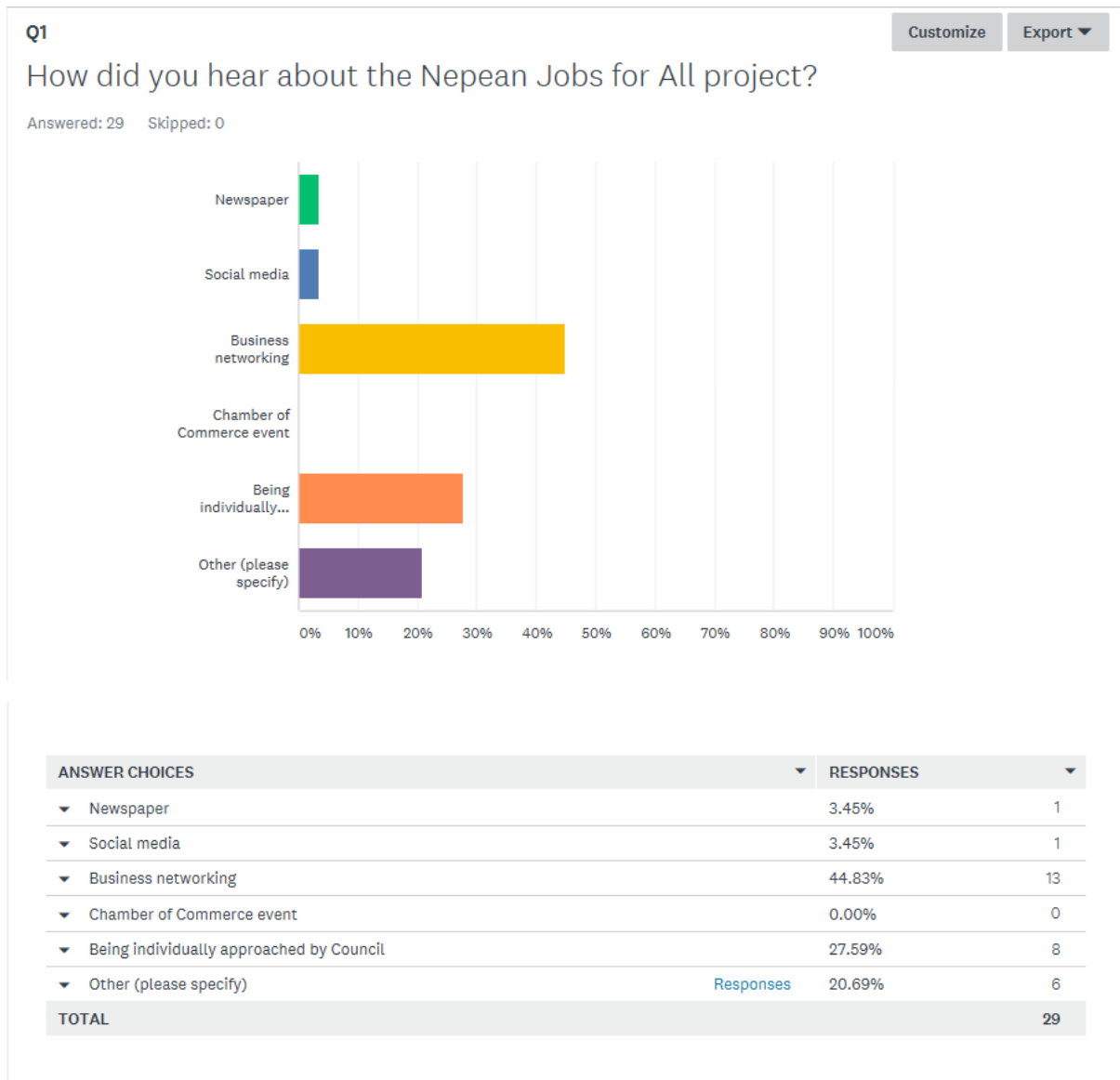
Australian Human Rights Commission (2016) Willing to Work. Available at: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/WTW_2016_Full_Report_AHRC_ac.pdf

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2010), *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers: A Synthesis of Findings across OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

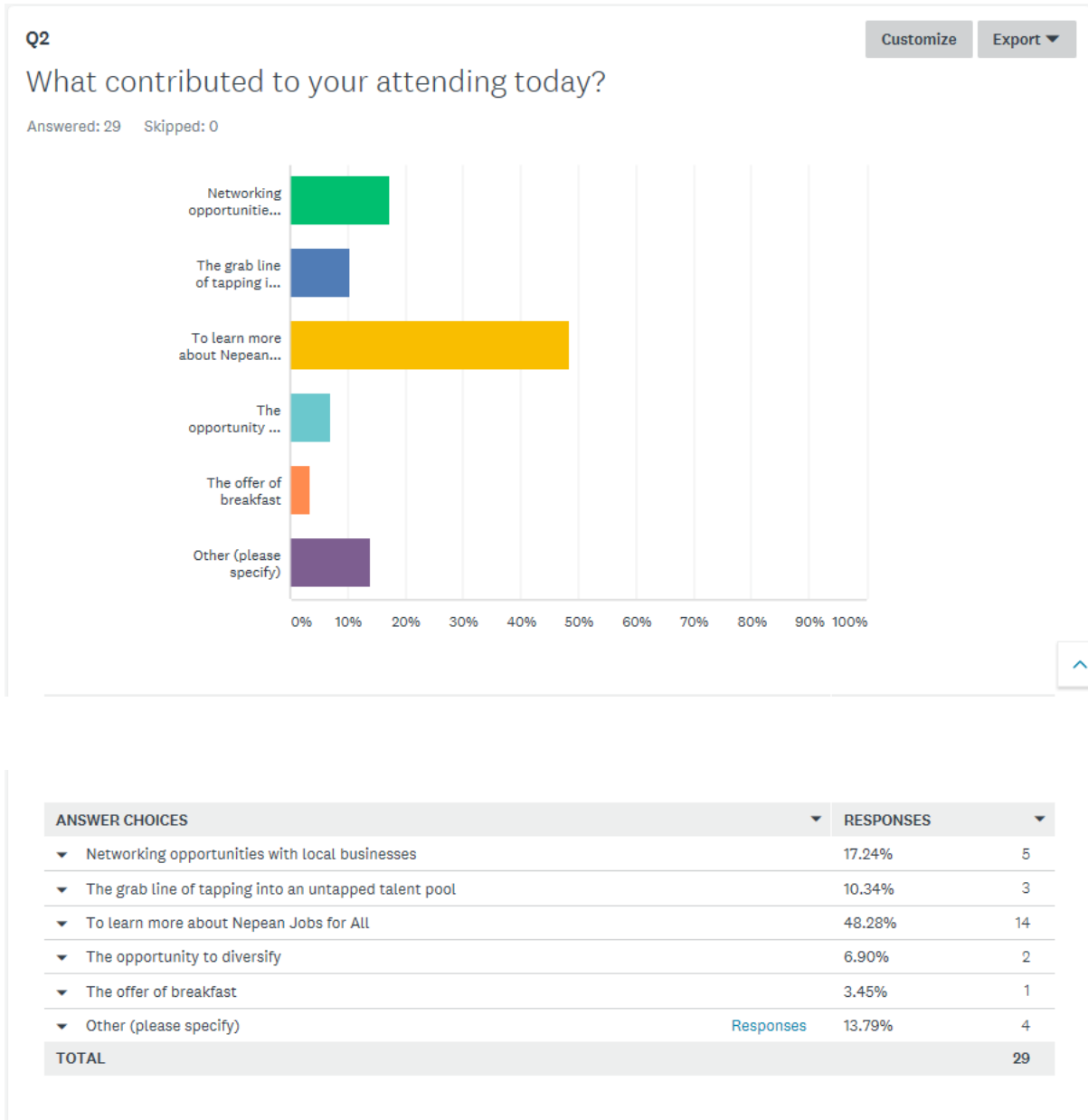
Appendix

Appendix A: Survey Results

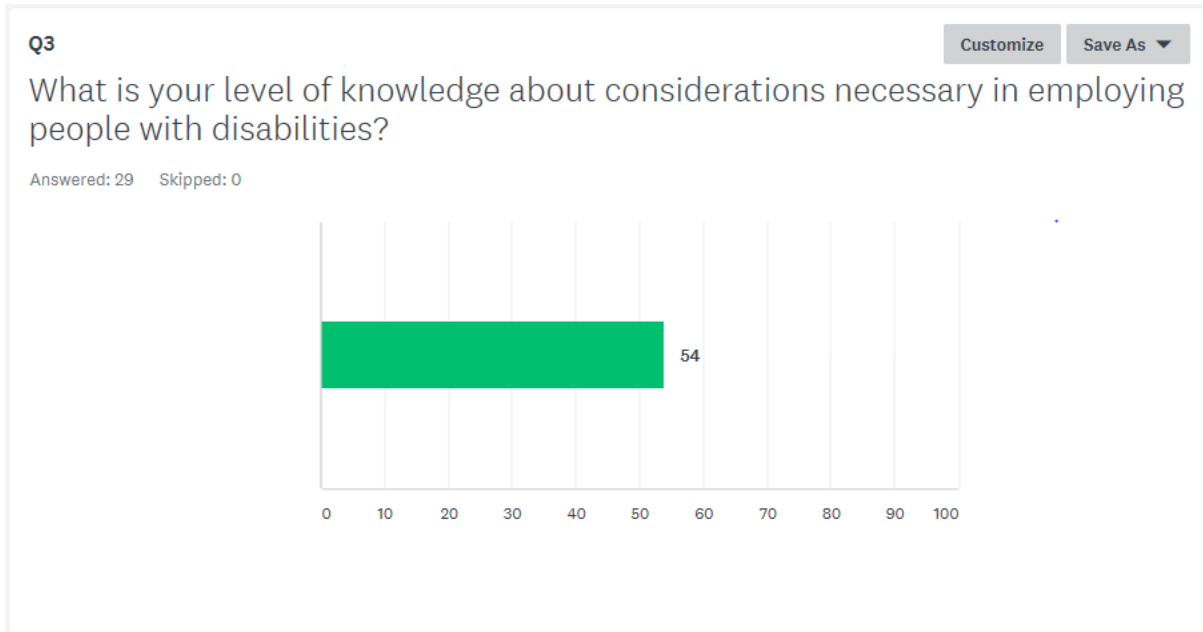
At the conclusion of each Business Breakfast Forums, attendees were asked to complete a short survey. Following are the survey results, completed by all 29 businesses who attended the forums, and a summary of comparative trends across the three forums.



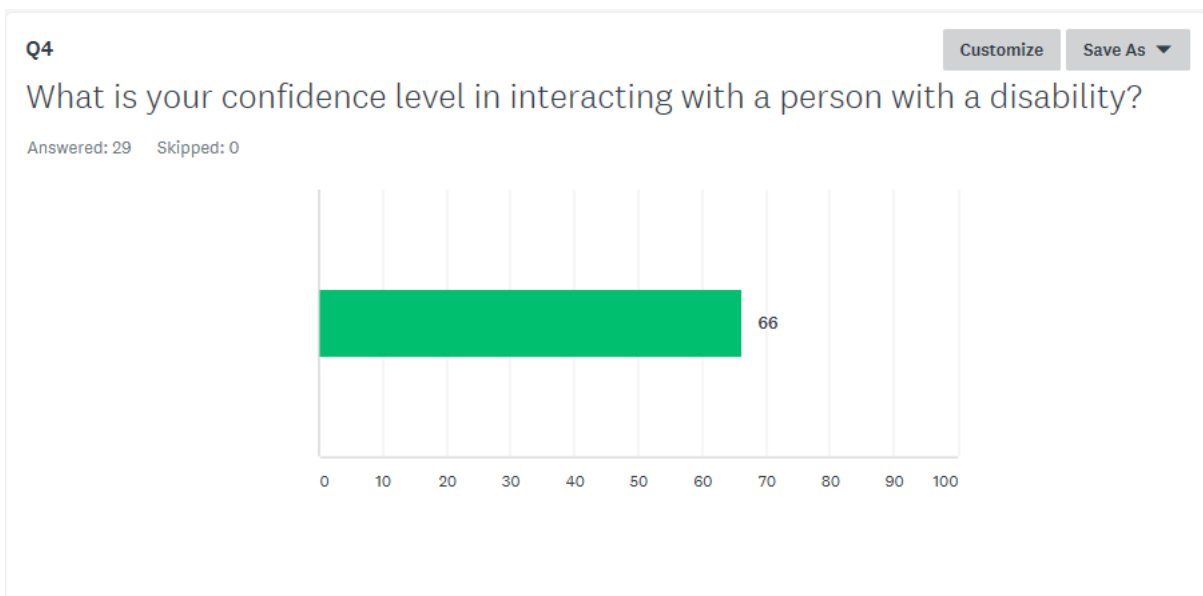
Question 1 indicates that business networking was the most effective way to promote the Nepean Jobs for All project, with almost half of attendees (44.83% - or 13 people) becoming aware of the project this way. Being individually approached was also effective, with only one person learning about the project via social media or newspaper.



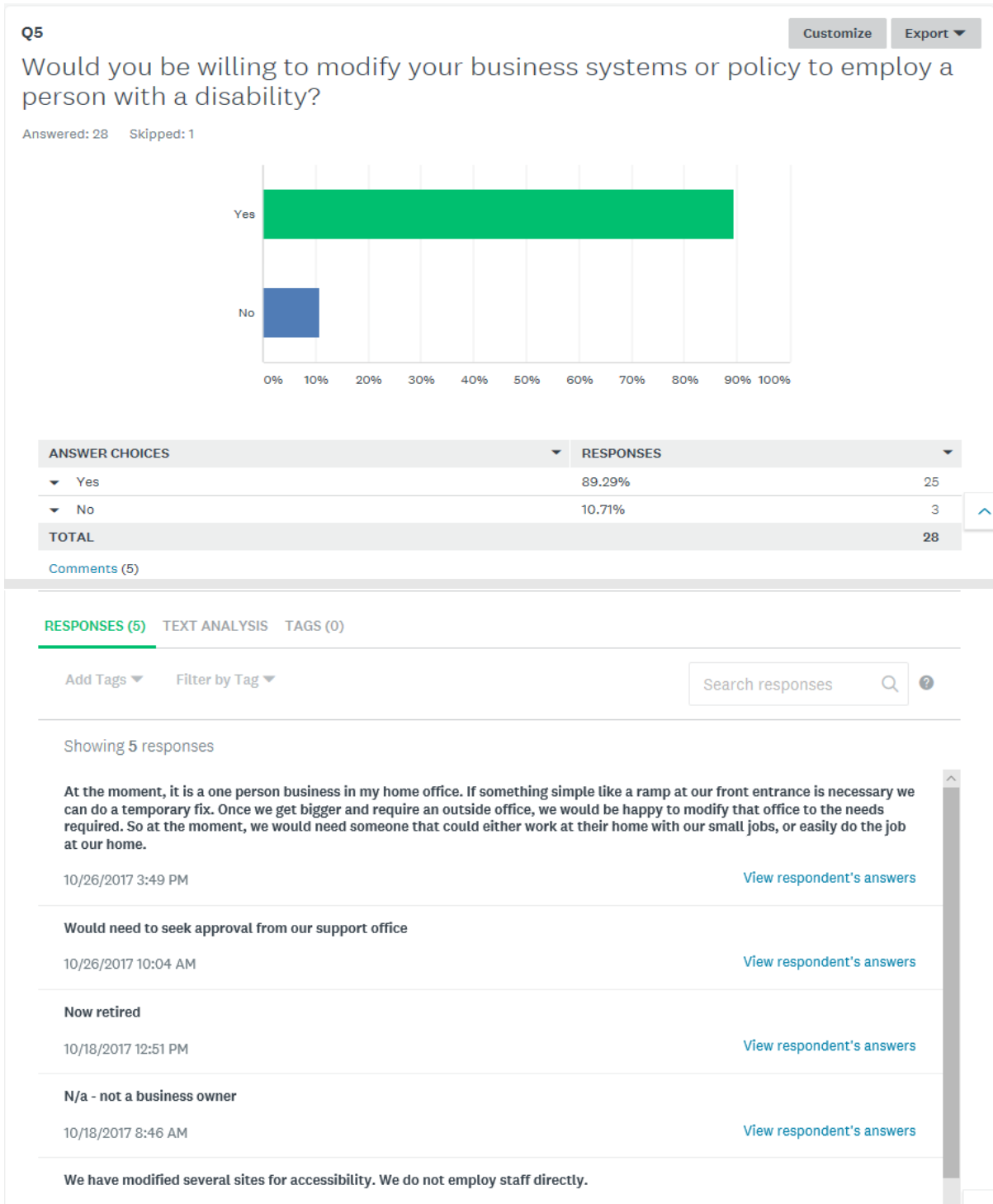
Question 2 answers indicate that the majority of attendees (48.28 – or 14 people) attended the Business Breakfast Forums to learn more about Nepean Jobs for All. Networking was the second highest motivator for attending, with diversifying in business and the offer of breakfast being the lesser of the suggested incentives.



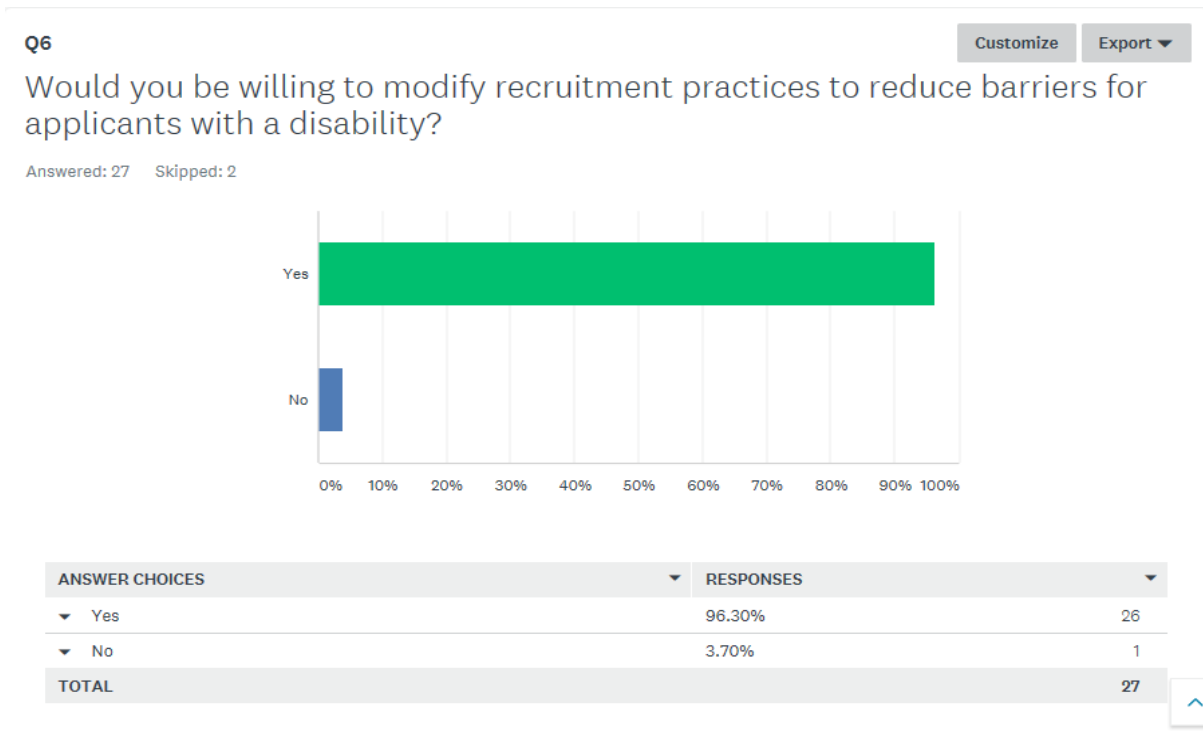
Question 3 answers indicate that the forums' attendees did not think that their knowledge about employing a person with a disability was high, with most indicating a moderate level of knowledge (on a scale from 1 to 100, the average level of knowledge about employing people with disabilities was 54).



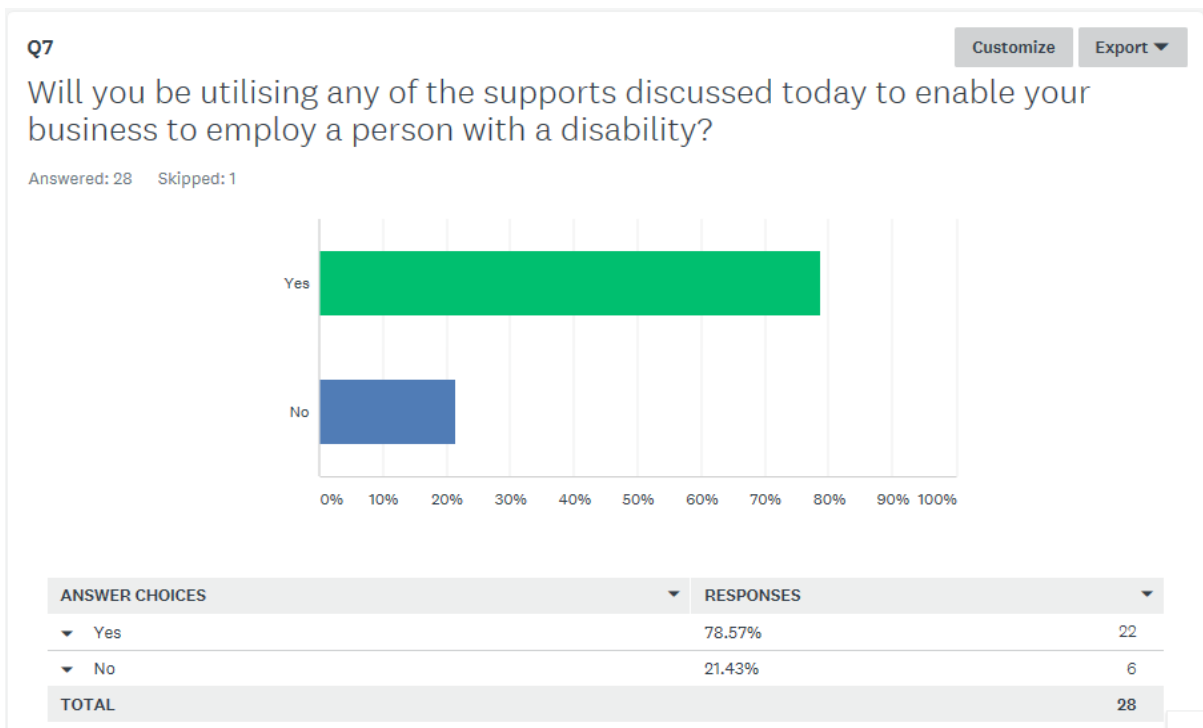
Regardless of having only an average knowledge of employing a person with a disability, there was a slightly higher average level of confidence when interacting with a person with a disability (on a scale from 1 to 100, the average level of confidence was 66).



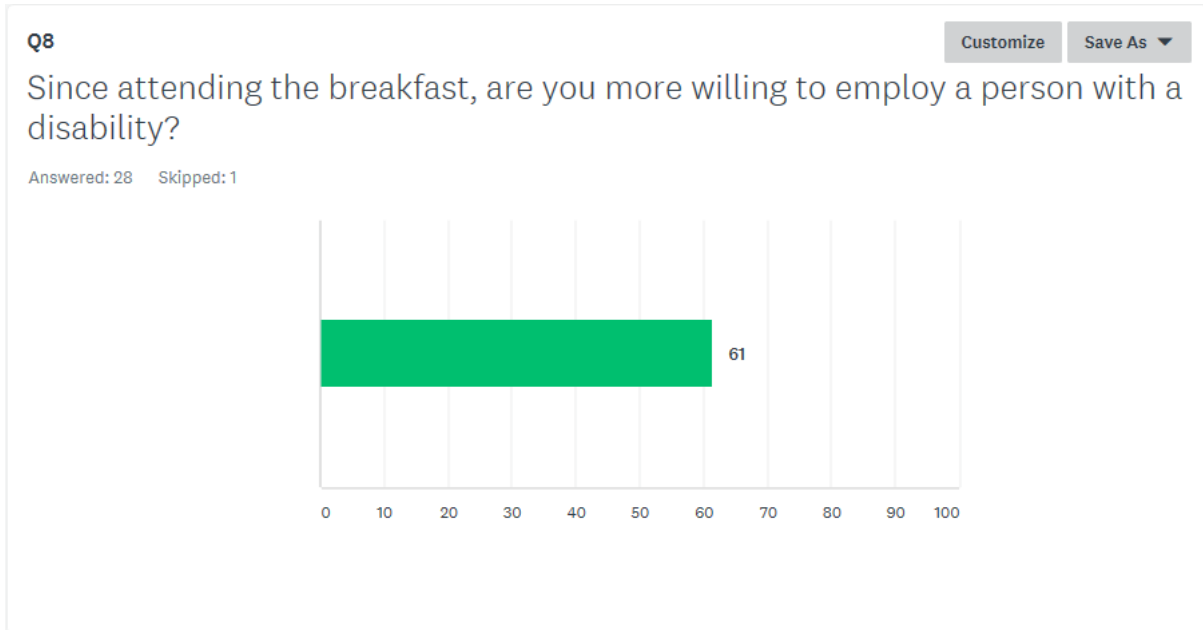
The results here show 89% of attendees (25 of the 28 responders) state a willingness to modify their business systems or business policy to employ a person with a disability. However, comments indicate that there is a general perception that modifications would be to a physical space, rather than to other ways of working, such as interacting or modifying work hours/place, perhaps indicating that disability is still considered to be predominantly physical.



Recruitment practices were considered to be an area where businesses could easily adapt to more readily include a person with a disability, with only 1 of the 27 people who answered indicating a lack of willingness to modify recruitment practices.



Many attendees indicated they would be utilising the supports discussed at the Business Breakfast Forums to employ a person with a disability. However, over a fifth (21.43% - or 6 attendees) did not think the support offerings discussed would be viable for them, regardless of an apparently high willingness to employ, perhaps indicating missing relevant information at the forums.



The willingness of people to employ a person with a disability could only be considered to be slightly improved as a result of the Business Breakfast Forums, with the majority of responses indicating neither a very high or very low willingness to employ a person with a disability as a result of the forums (on a scale of 1 to 100, the average willingness to employ a person with a disability was 61).

Q9 Export ▾

If you were to consider employing a person with a disability, what would be your key motivation to do so?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (29) TEXT ANALYSIS TAGS (0)

Add Tags ▾ Filter by Tag ▾ 🔍 ⓘ

Showing 29 responses

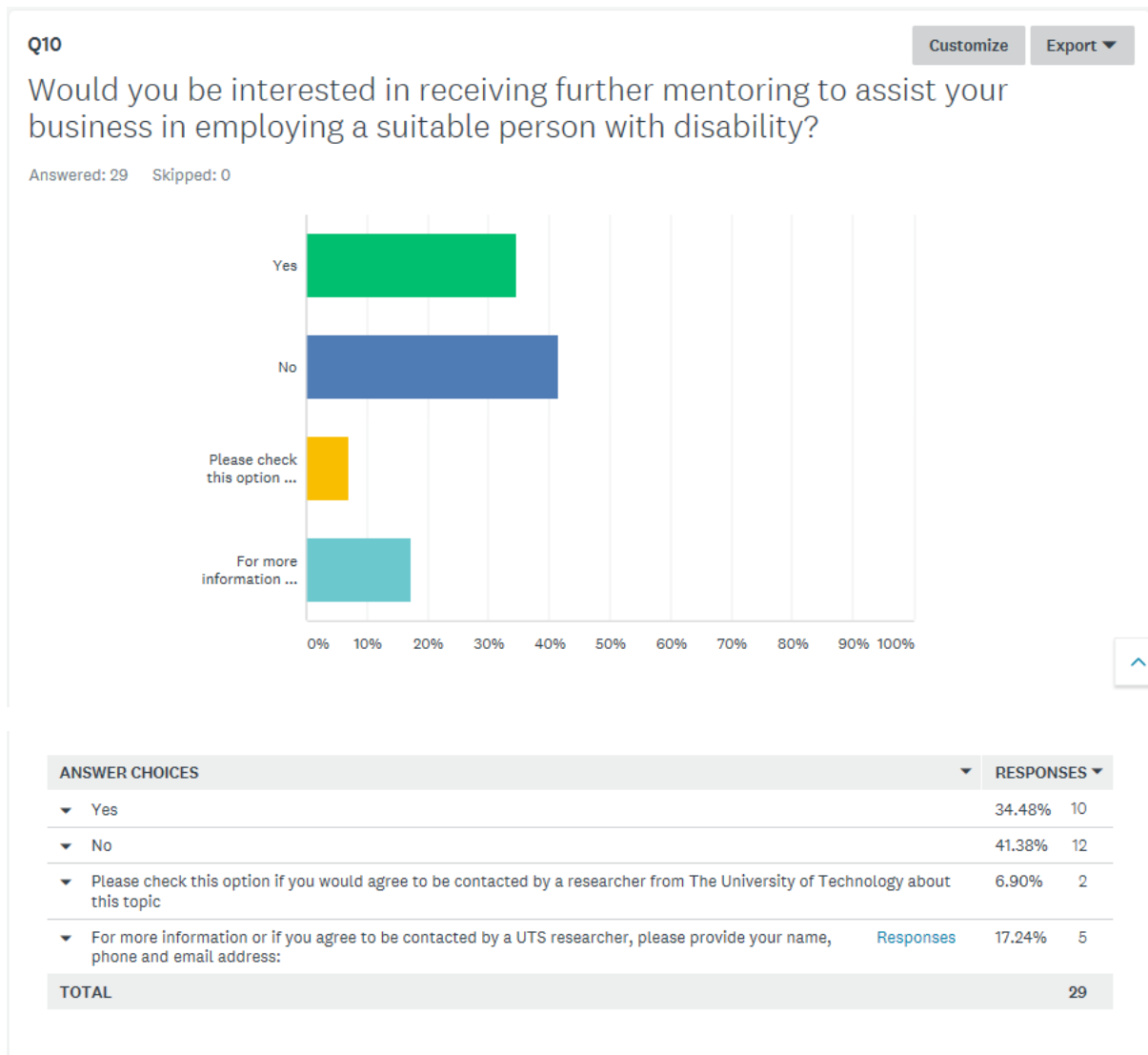
For inclusion and to aid in a varied work environment	10/27/2017 12:16 PM	View respondent's answers
inclusion	10/27/2017 9:23 AM	View respondent's answers
Being able to employ someone that may not have had a 'job' otherwise. Giving a young person who is transitioning into the work force some experience. The jobs we need completed would possibly be quite boring for some people but I know that some people with certain ability levels really excel and appreciate small jobs that require repetition and consistency.	10/26/2017 3:49 PM	View respondent's answers
We have a job vacancy for an Electrician who no longer wants to be "On the tools" but can do admin work based on their knowledge and quals but we cant seem to fill the job		

Diversity in our store in line with company values 10/26/2017 10:04 AM	View respondent's answers
Diverse workplace 10/26/2017 9:30 AM	View respondent's answers
inclusion 10/26/2017 9:22 AM	View respondent's answers
They have the required skills to do then job then access if required 10/26/2017 9:04 AM	View respondent's answers
Inclusion 10/26/2017 8:52 AM	View respondent's answers
We Use Nova who have given me support though out her employment here.	
10/24/2017 2:28 PM	View respondent's answers
Their appreciation for the job , for the support, for the interest in them which is always returned by the Milenials 10/20/2017 3:23 PM	View respondent's answers
Equal opportunity Wage subsidy 10/18/2017 3:14 PM	View respondent's answers
Ethically correct and fair 10/18/2017 1:54 PM	View respondent's answers
I know that after many years of employment and a person with a disability, the greatest way to enhance people with a disability is give them a 'job' 10/18/2017 12:51 PM	View respondent's answers
It is the right thing to do. They will diversify the business and provide a new perspective. Whilst still meeting the needs of the business. 10/18/2017 8:44 AM	View respondent's answers
To be inclusive and access a talent pool 10/18/2017 8:29 AM	View respondent's answers
Not applicable. We do not employ staff. Never have. 10/16/2017 4:18 PM	View respondent's answers
Opportunity and Rights 10/16/2017 12:56 PM	View respondent's answers
Need experience in sales & merchandising honest and reliable part time work mature lady 10/11/2017 8:57 AM	View respondent's answers

Access to government funding to create the proper work environment 10/10/2017 1:55 PM	View respondent's answers
ability, reliability and commitment 10/10/2017 1:53 PM	View respondent's answers
Hire great staff 10/10/2017 1:18 PM	View respondent's answers
to provide employment and opportunity to a person who deserves the exact same rights and access to their counterparts. 10/10/2017 11:21 AM	View respondent's answers
Inclusion 10/10/2017 10:58 AM	View respondent's answers
TO give someone a fair go. 10/10/2017 9:58 AM	View respondent's answers
I am very keen to give anyone a chance no matter what their circumstance 10/10/2017 9:52 AM	View respondent's answers
Everyone is able to contribute within their community. Always looking to provide opportunities for others. 10/10/2017 9:50 AM	View respondent's answers
Contributing to community inclusion objectives 10/10/2017 9:01 AM	View respondent's answers

Inclusion, diversity in the work place and equality among candidates are stated to be the primary motivators for businesses in the Nepean area to employ a person with a disability.

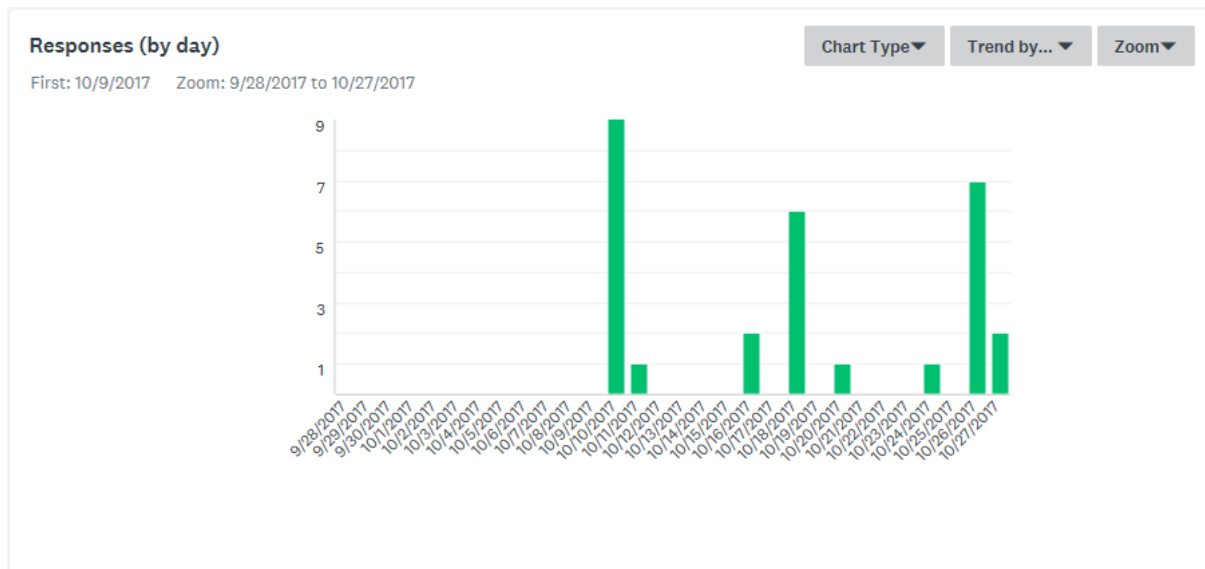
This seems to be in contrast with insights from our interviews which revealed that financial incentives are a key motivator to decide to employ a person with a disability. What seems to be probable is that while most businesses are generally motivated to consider employing a person with a disability for diversity/inclusion reasons, they would only proceed with doing so if there are appropriate financial incentives to do so.



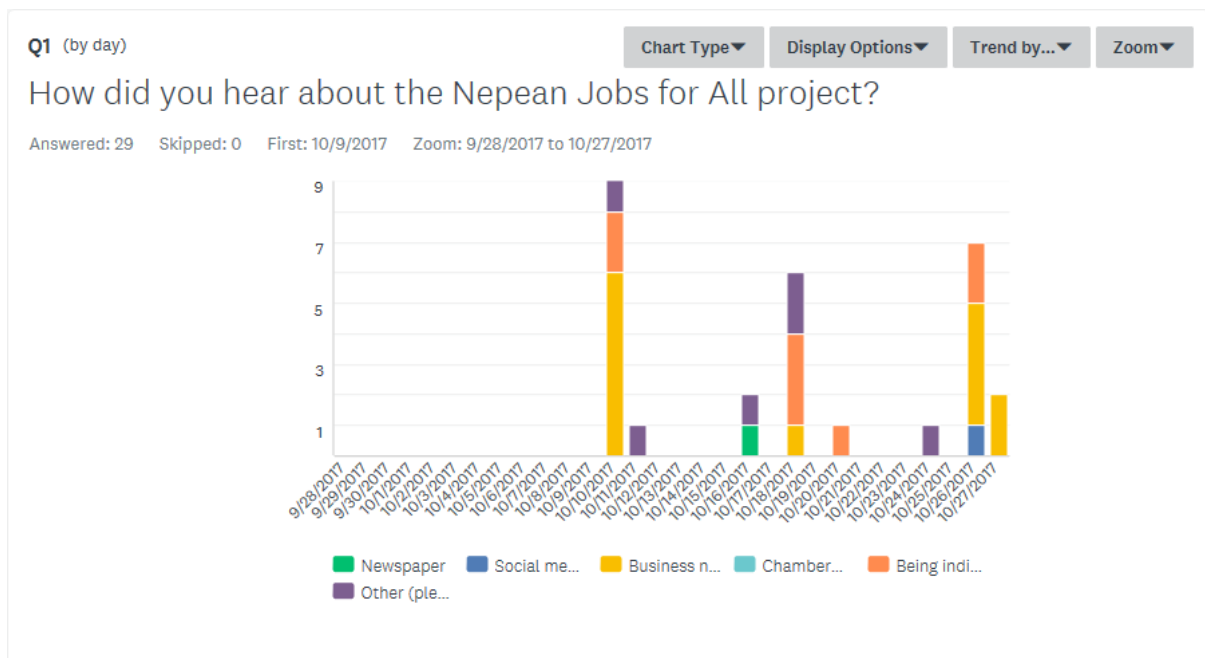
Attendees showed fairly equal willingness to discuss employing a person with a disability further, although only 5 of those who indicated willingness provided contact details, indicating that this may still be an area people are reluctant to explore.

Appendix B: Data Trends

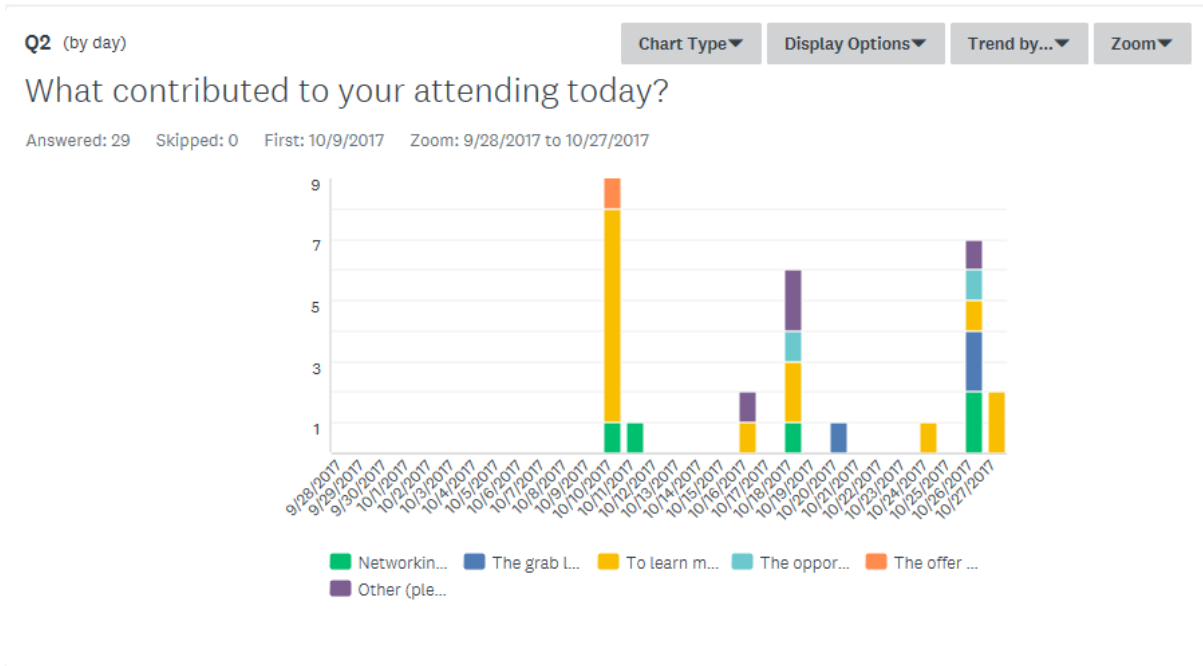
Analysis of trends/differences in the data between the three forums does not apply to all questions. Below we provide insights from the analysis of those questions where differences were detected.



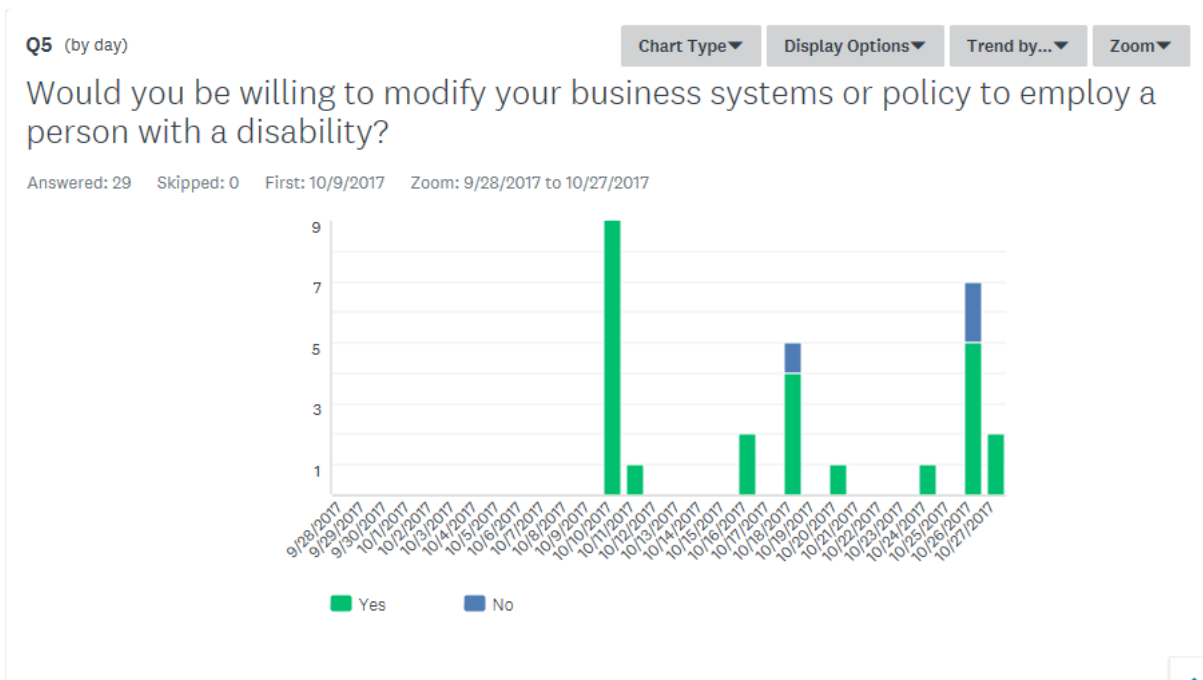
While responses to the survey were similar across each forum, the highest participation was seen at the first forum.



While business networks were the most significant way of creating awareness about the Nepean Jobs for All project, for the second Business Breakfast Forum, being individually approached was more effective.



Learning more about the Nepean Jobs for All project was the main motivator for those attending each of the forums. However, for those attending the second and third forums, the ‘the grab of tapping into an untapped talent pool’ also very important.



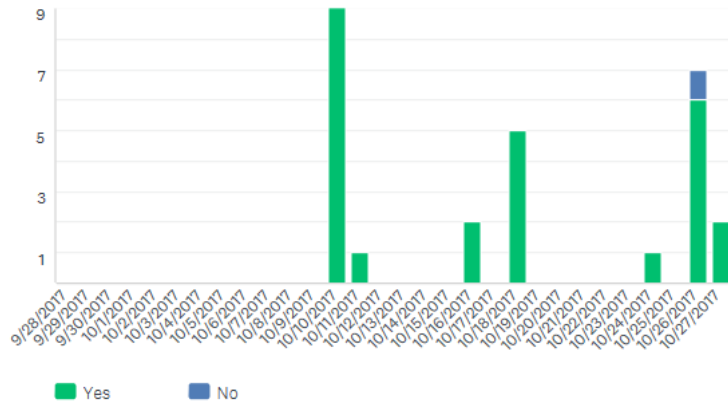
While 100% of attendees from the first Business Breakfast Forum indicated a willingness to modify their business systems and policy to employ a person with a disability, this figure dropped slightly for the latter two forums.

Q6 (by day)

Chart Type Display Options Trend by... Zoom

Would you be willing to modify recruitment practices to reduce barriers for applicants with a disability?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 2 First: 10/9/2017 Zoom: 9/28/2017 to 10/27/2017



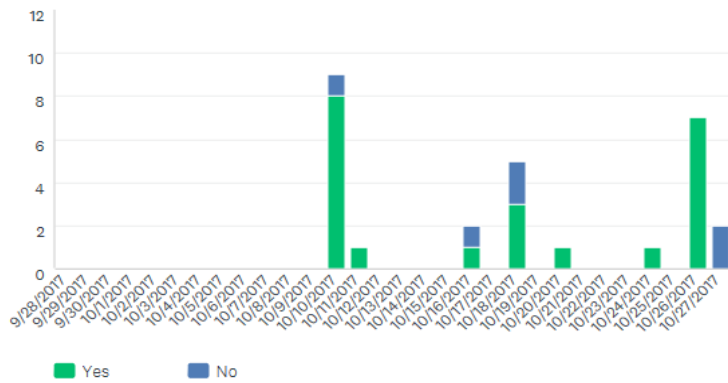
Almost all attendees stated a willingness to reduce barriers during the application process.

Q7 (by day)

Chart Type Display Options Trend by... Zoom

Will you be utilising any of the supports discussed today to enable your business to employ a person with a disability?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 0 First: 10/9/2017 Zoom: 9/28/2017 to 10/27/2017



Across all three Business Breakfast Forums, a high willingness to utilise the support offerings discussed at the Business Breakfast Forums was stated, with only a few participants across the forums indicating otherwise.



As previously suggested, the stated willingness to seek/receive further support about the opportunity to employ a person with a disability was mixed. The data for this question was reasonably consistent across the three forums.

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