

Busting myths on employing people with disability in manufacturing

Misconceptions about hiring people with disability can create unnecessary hesitation among employers, leading to missed opportunities to tap into a skilled and dedicated workforce. In manufacturing, where safety, productivity, and adaptability are key, these myths can be especially persistent.

This factsheet is designed to challenge those misconceptions and provide manufacturers with practical, industry-specific insights. By addressing common concerns and highlighting the benefits of inclusive employment, it aims to empower manufacturing employers to confidently hire and support people with disability—building stronger, more diverse workplaces in the process.

Myth 1: Employers aren't legally required to provide workplace adjustments, and doing so is too expensive

Reality: Under the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992*, employers are legally required to provide **workplace adjustments** for employees with disability. These adjustments ensure equal access and opportunity in the workplace and must be considered unless they impose an **unjustifiable hardship**—such as significant financial, technical, or heritage-related challenges.

Importantly, **most workplace adjustments are low-cost or free**, especially in manufacturing and industrial settings. Examples include:

- **Modified machinery controls** (e.g., large-button interfaces, voice-activated systems)
- **Visual and auditory alerts** for employees with sensory impairments
- **Accessible pathways and workstations**, including ramps, automatic doors, and reserved parking
- **Job carving** to align roles with individual strengths
- **Flexible work arrangements**, such as adjusted hours or remote work
- **Modified equipment**, like ergonomic furniture or screen readers
- **Assistive technology** for communication and productivity
- **Inclusive policies and training**, such as disability awareness programs

The [JobAccess website](#) has information and resources for employers, including potential funding support through the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF).

Myth 2: Employees with disability pose safety risks

Reality: Safety is a top priority in manufacturing, but evidence shows that employees with disability are no more likely to cause workplace accidents than others. In fact, they often have fewer compensation incidents due to their awareness of safety protocols and personal limitations.

Myth 3: Employees with disability have high turnover rates

Reality: People with disability tend to stay longer in jobs, reducing rehiring and retraining costs. This stability is especially valuable in manufacturing roles that require specialised training.

The [At Work Australia website](#) has more information on why you should employ someone living with disability.

Myth 4: Employees with disability require complex and specialised equipment

Reality: Many adjustments are simple and tailored to individual needs. For example, most computer systems already include accessibility features, and physical tools can be adapted with minimal cost.

Myth 5: People with disability are less competent or capable

Reality: Employees with disability bring diverse skills and qualifications. Many hold trade certifications and technical degrees. According to the Australian Public Service Commission, 15.2% of people with disability work as technicians and trade workers, and 11.6% run their own businesses, often in skilled trades.

[Statistic Source: Disability myths and stereotypes | Australian Public Service Commission](#)

As at 2018, 17% of people aged 20 and over with disability had a bachelor's degree or higher (35% without disability). Unfortunately, it can take a lot longer to find work in relevant fields. Graduates with disability take 61.5% longer to gain fulltime employment than other graduates.

[Statistic source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare People with Disability in Australia](#)
[Statistic source: Australian Disability Network Disability Statistics](#)

A diverse workforce can assist employers to better understand the needs of a diverse customer or participant base and potentially expand your customer base.

Conclusion

Manufacturers have a unique opportunity to lead in inclusive employment. By understanding and addressing these myths, they can unlock a skilled, loyal, and safety-conscious workforce. Inclusive hiring practices not only benefit individuals but also enhance productivity and workplace culture.