

# Working in non-government specialist disability services

Working in the non-government specialist disability services sector can be an incredibly rewarding experience. In this factsheet we explore the types of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs); the benefits of working for a NGO; and legislative entitlements for FACS staff transitioning to the NGO sector in 2017/18.

There are two types of non-government specialist disability services:

- The biggest group are not-for-profit organisations – these organisations are mission-driven and in many cases, were originally set up by families of people with disability. Whilst it is prudent for them to generate a financial surplus, they can only use these surplus funds to reinvest in delivering their mission.
- The second smaller group, are for-profit organisations – these organisations are just like any other company in Australia, they exist to generate a profit for their owners or shareholders through the delivery quality services and products.

Regardless of whether the organisation is for-profit or not-for-profit, in NSW NGOs have to comply with the NSW Disability Service Standards and other safeguards to operate as a specialist disability service and to be a registered provider under the NDIS.

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**In addition to the enhancing the lives of people with disability, working for a NGO has its benefits.**



- **Wages are on the rise!** On 1 February 2012, Fair Work Australia handed down its decision on the Australian Service Union's application for an equal remuneration order in the social and community services industry. The decision grants pay increases to workers in the sector of between 18 and 41 per cent in nine equal instalments over the period 1 December 2012 to 1 December 2020 with an additional loading, totaling 4 per cent, to be introduced in nine equal instalments over the same period. These increases will be in addition to the modern award wages as varied from time in the annual wage reviews.
- **Salary sacrifice is often an option.** This means you only pay income tax on the reduced salary amount you receive and you can take the rest of your salary as benefits tax free to you e.g. mortgage repayments, rent, credit card expenses, school fees etc. Your employer may be liable to pay fringe benefits tax (FBT) on the fringe benefits paid for you, but not-for-profit organisations are generally exempt from paying FBT on amounts up to a grossed-up value of \$30,000 per year. It is worth checking if salary sacrifice is an option for you.

- **Staff satisfaction levels** in non-government specialist disability services are generally quite high. A 2014 survey of nearly 2000 staff working in 27 non-governments disability sector organisations in NSW indicated a general satisfaction level 14 percentage points above the all-industry benchmarks. The survey also showed that staff within the sector tend to be highly engaged and are particularly satisfied with their job and the nature of the work that they do. They believe strongly in the values and purpose of their organisation and feel emotionally attached to it and, for the most part, are planning to stay with their current employer. More so than in other industries, employees indicate that they have received training and development that has improved their performance.
- **There is a high level of staff involvement in change and decision making.** The survey previously cited also indicated that good leadership (particularly around communication and consultation with staff) was identified by staff as generally being done very well and the area that had the strongest impact across all outcome measures.



- **It's a growth area!** Not only are government specialist disability services transferring to the non-government sector, the NDIS also means that in NSW, a further 62,000 people with disability who have never received specialist disability services before, will enter the service system for the first time. It is estimated this requires an additional 20,000 staff in NSW alone. To thrive, non-government specialist disability services will be seeking not only to become a 'service of choice' but an 'employer of choice' too, complete with the staff that development, diversity, and career options that growth entails.

**For FaCS staff transitioning to the non-government sector** as a part of service transfers, there are a number of legislated entitlements contained within the NSW NDIS Enabling Act. In addition to these, the NSW Government has agreed to a:

- **A transfer payment** of up to eight (8) weeks' base rate of pay, based on completed years of service, paid by the Government to all ongoing employees who transfer to a new operator; and;
- **An employment guarantee** 'period of 2 years from the date of transfer for all ongoing employees so current award terms and conditions will continue to apply to them. The employment guarantee period is up to six 6 months for casual and temporary employees who transfer.

This factsheet has been prepared for NDP by Peregrinus Consulting,  
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