

A Good Practice

Guide

Ability at Work

Working better together



Australian Government

Australian Public Service Commission

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The material in this document is provided for guidance and should not be relied upon as a substitute for detailed advice concerning the employment of people with disability.

When using this guide, readers must note that it refers to the legislative provisions in place in December 2007. In addition, the framework for employing people in the Australian Public Service is often affected by evolving case law.

The Australian Public Service Commission has used its best endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the material at the time of writing, and will update the document as required. The Commission will also endeavour to notify readers of any significant changes through our website when they come to our attention. However, we are unable to guarantee that this guide is complete, correct and up-to-date at any particular point of time, or that it is relevant to the particular circumstances of any matter.

Foreword

In August 2006 the Management Advisory Committee (MAC), made up of the heads of the major Australian Public Service agencies, launched its report *Employment of People with Disability in the APS*,¹ confirming the Australian Public Service's strong commitment to providing a work environment that is more effective in attracting employees with disability.

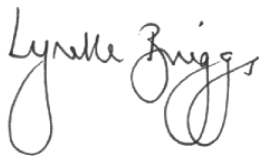
Attracting and retaining high quality people is very important for the Australian Public Service (APS). Tapping into the talent of people with disability helps us in the APS to improve the service we provide and also to reflect the community we represent.

People with disability are currently under-represented in the APS. This is an area of performance that I will be monitoring closely, and in which I expect to take further steps to improve outcomes in 2008. In the shorter term, addressing this situation will require APS employers to think carefully about how they recruit people but, crucially, we also need to establish stronger links with agencies in the community sector that support the employment of people with disability.

*Ability at Work—Tapping the talent of people with disability*² was recently published to assist APS managers. It provides good practice advice and a range of information and training resources on approaches to recruitment, retention and day-to-day management of employees with disability. The aim of this publication is to provide a similar level of assistance to disability support providers and others involved in supporting employment of people with disability.

This booklet is divided into four parts. The first part provides some specific strategies to develop relationships with APS agencies that may lead to employment opportunities for your clients. The second part provides detailed information on the selection processes used within the APS, and some strategies about how you can ensure that your clients with disability are able to present their case effectively. The third part provides information on alternative pathways to employment in the APS. The fourth part provides answers to some frequently asked questions.

I hope this publication helps demystify our processes and assists your clients to find employment in the APS.



Lynelle Briggs
Australian Public Service Commissioner

¹ www.apsc.gov.au/mac/disability.htm

² www.apsc.gov.au/abilityatwork

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The big picture—the APS is a great place to work

Different issues

The Australian Public Service (APS) supports the Australian Government, delivering an enormous variety of services to the Australian community. It includes about 100 separate organisations employing over 155,000 people, focussing on issues as broad ranging as communication, defence, finance, environment, education and training, health and community services, workplace relations, immigration, science, tourism, and transport. There are large agencies providing a broad range of services across the country through to small agencies working on specialised issues in one sector of society. Behind almost every facet of life in Australia is an APS job.

Working in the APS provides employment that is meaningful and challenging, but also allows people, including people with disability, to make a contribution to the Australian community at work.

Different jobs and developing skills

Within each APS agency you'll find a wide range of jobs corresponding to different roles and levels of responsibility. These include:

- service delivery and advice to the public
- policy advice and programme design
- administrative support positions
- corporate services such as information technology, human resources, records management and accounts processing
- technical and professional jobs such as lawyers, journalists, accountants, scientists, engineers, librarians, inspectors and economists.

The broad range of employment opportunities allows people to change career direction at any time. Employees can start in an administrative support or client service role and then develop their skills and qualifications for managerial, technical or professional careers.

The APS supports professional and personal development, further study, career and leadership development. It offers great working conditions including good salaries, excellent leave conditions, and flexible work practices (including the option of negotiating work hours) that are often particularly useful for people with disability.

The APS has jobs across the country—in Canberra, in the capital cities, in regional areas—and also overseas. Find out more at www.apsc.gov.au/apsinduction.

A real commitment

There are already *thousands* of people with disability working throughout the APS, but we want to do even better.

How we work and treat each other is governed by the APS Values³ and Code of Conduct⁴. The Values include a commitment to creating a diverse workplace including people with disability. We value and encourage supportive workplace environments based on fair and equitable treatment.

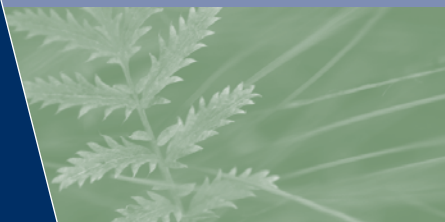
³ www.apsc.gov.au/values

⁴ www.apsc.gov.au/conduct

Working with APS agencies

Part 1

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The Australian Public Service (APS) comprises a diverse range of agencies delivering services to the Australian public. These agencies vary—some are big, some small; they are centralised or regionalised; and each with different responsibilities. The head of each agency is responsible for the management of their agency’s resources to achieve the best outcomes.

The MAC report reflects a commitment at the highest levels of the APS to tap into the talents of people with disability to help address current and future workforce needs. The recently released *Ability at Work—Tapping the talent of people with disability*⁵ publication aims to assist agencies and their managers by providing practical advice, and information about issues associated with employing people with disability.

One of the key links in improving employment outcomes for people with disability in the APS will be improving the relationships between APS agencies and disability employment support services. One of the goals of this guide is to help those support services as they build relationships to gain employment for their clients.

Where should I start?

Developing ongoing relationships can assist you to better prepare clients for positions in the APS.

Learning something about the organisations you want to work with is a critical step in this process. Agency websites are a valuable source of information, providing information on the functions of the agency and the kinds of work that it performs, as well as contact details for key staff. These websites can be accessed via www.australia.gov.au.

Before you talk to someone local about a local job, it will often be very useful to approach the person in the agency’s head office who has overall responsibility for human resources (HR) or workplace diversity policy. They can give you an idea of what policies exist within the agency to support the employment of people with disability, and who to talk to if you want to discuss how your client can apply for a specific vacancy, or setting up a work trial for a client, or something similar. They may also be able to work with you and the local manager to help explain processes and policies.

HR areas can be helpful when you want to

- find out about the support that the agency offers to people with disability
- find out about specific programmes, such as traineeships, that the agency is running that could benefit your clients
- explore possibilities for working with an agency to implement initiatives to support people with disability.

⁵ www.apsc.gov.au/abilityatwork

Establishing relationships with managers in APS agencies at a local level helps to keep you at the front of their mind. If local managers are aware that you have clients who may be interested in working with them, and capable of doing the job, they may contact you when a vacancy comes up.

Local managers in the APS are normally responsible for recruitment, are most likely to be involved in the management or supervision of the applicant, and are the best people to contact when you are trying to identify appropriate APS positions for your clients.

You should think about contacting local managers where

- you have found an advertised position or an area that you think your clients may be interested in
- you think you can assist in supporting the manager to make their area more supportive of people with disability.

You can also find information by searching the APSjobs website⁶ and identifying those areas which seem to have the kinds of work that will interest your clients.

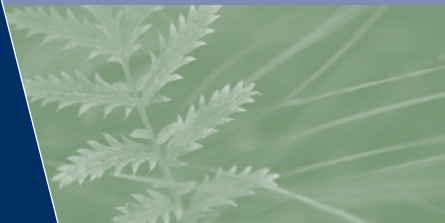
You are in the best position to promote the services your agency can offer to the APS to assist with employing people with disability. It helps to stay positive—focus on stories of the successes you have had with finding employment for your clients and the benefits to their employers. Think long-term, be resilient if you feel your audience is not as receptive as hoped, and stay in touch—the next time you make contact there could be a change in staff or attitudes.

⁶ www.apsjobs.gov.au

Selection in the APS

Part 2

Working better together



Selection processes in the APS are designed to ensure that APS agencies recruit the best person for the position and that all applicants are given a fair go i.e. allowed to present their case knowing that it will be considered fairly and without discrimination.

What do we mean by merit?

The APS selects employees based on merit. This means that we choose the best person for the job, weighing up the skills, experience and abilities of each candidate. We use different tools and techniques such as written applications, interviews and work-sample tests to collect the evidence we need to make a merit-based decision. These methods are intended to ensure that employment decisions are objective and avoid patronage, favouritism or unjustified discrimination.

While we often use standard processes, agencies can make special provisions for people with disability to allow them to present their case effectively. Both the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* require agencies to make sure that their selection processes do not directly or indirectly discriminate against people with disability. The principle of reasonable adjustment gives APS agencies the flexibility to tailor selection processes to meet the needs of the candidates, and allows agencies to assess fairly whether your clients can perform the inherent requirements of the job⁷.

You can assist agencies to ensure they make appropriate adjustments to the selection process for your clients by telling them what they might need.

What about people with intellectual disability?

Special provisions are available under the Public Service Act to assist in the employment of people with intellectual disability. Agencies can advertise particular vacancies as being open only to applicants with intellectual disability.

Where can I find out about vacancies in the APS?

APS agencies run their own recruitment. Agencies advertise ongoing jobs (as well as non-ongoing jobs which are expected to last for a period of greater than 12 months) on the APSjobs website. They can also advertise in newspapers, on their own websites, the website of the National Disability Recruitment Coordinator, employment websites such as Australian JobSearch (www.JobSearch.gov.au) and Seek (www.Seek.com.au), and through commercial recruitment agencies.

More senior jobs must be advertised externally as well as on the APSjobs website.

⁷ For a discussion of what 'inherent requirements' are, see page 8 of *Ability at Work* (www.apsc.gov.au/abilityatwork)

Opportunities to work in the APS can be advertised in different ways, including as:

- individual positions
- multiple positions within an agency
- anticipated positions (i.e. where an agency is advertising to fill expected vacancies)
- cadetships and graduate positions
- traineeships and school leaver programmes
- non-ongoing employment (temporary jobs).

Job advertisements usually list a contact officer. The contact officer is often a manager or supervisor who can tell you more about the job, the roles and responsibilities, and about the agency. The contact officer is there for the specific purpose of answering your questions. Do not hesitate to call them and ask them to explain anything about the job or recruitment process that is unclear.

If you want to find out more about whether a specific job is likely to be suitable for your client the contact officer is a good place to start. The contact officer will also be able to provide you with advice on the inherent requirements of the job, and assist you with getting copies of selection documentation in alternative formats.

What do APS job classifications mean?

APS jobs are classified and paid at different levels according to the complexity, responsibility and skills involved. The most common classifications are APS 1 through to APS 6 (these cover entry level positions and general administrative and technical jobs up to more senior positions which may include supervisory responsibilities), Executive Levels 1 and 2 (middle management positions), and Senior Executive Service Bands 1, 2 and 3 (senior leadership and management positions). Sometimes agencies will group classifications together into 'broadbands' (e.g. APS 1–3). Agencies also sometimes use particular titles to describe their jobs, such as 'Assistant Director' or 'Manager'.

What are duty statements and selection criteria?

Duty statements and selection criteria are basic foundations of most APS selection processes. They can help you understand whether your client may have the skills and experience needed for a particular job.

The duty statement (or role description) describes the work done in the role, including the key tasks and responsibilities of the job. Selection criteria describe the personal qualities, skills, abilities, knowledge and qualifications (where relevant) a person needs to perform those duties effectively. These criteria provide a common basis to compare candidates' abilities to do the job.

You and your client will need a good understanding of both the duty statement and the selection criteria to decide if the job will suit their skills and experiences. Knowing the duties will also help you to identify early in the process any reasonable adjustments that might be required.

Who do I go to for advice and information?

You may come across situations where you believe that your client can perform the job but may find it difficult to address the selection criteria. Speaking to the contact officer can help you to understand how you can help your client draw from their experience and skills to address the selection criteria in a way that demonstrates that they can do the job.

The contact officer may also be able to give some tips as to how to best highlight the experiences and contribution that your client can make to their agency.

Does the position fit the experiences and aspirations of my client?

Most agencies publish a lot of information on the work they do and the career opportunities that might suit your client. Most agency websites, for example, provide information about the broader work of the agency, and include documents such as collective agreements, annual reports and corporate planning documents (such as Workplace Diversity and Disability Action Plans). This material can give you a better idea of whether this is the type of agency where your client wants to work.

You can also speak to the contact officer about what that agency does to develop its own staff, which may give you some idea of what the specific job does and also how their practices match the longer-term aspirations of your client.

Helping my client to submit an application

APS applications

When applying for a position it is likely that your client will be asked to address selection criteria.

Usually your client will need to submit a written application by a specified closing date. However, if the nature of your client's disability makes it difficult for them to complete a written application and/or to meet the deadlines, you can talk to the contact officer about an extension of time or submitting the application in another form.

Some common examples of selection criteria include:

- demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively

- good organisational and administrative skills
- proven ability to work as part of a team
- well developed customer service skills
- proven ability to manage projects.

It is essential that your client responds to each criterion, explaining how they have demonstrated the particular skill or quality. Your client should provide relevant examples from work, study or community roles and be clear and to the point.

It is important for your client to provide evidence to back up their claims. Use actual examples of what they have done, how well they did it, what they achieved, and how it relates to the requirements of the job. The **STAR** model can help them form their answer:

1. **Situation**—Outline a specific circumstance where you developed the particular experience or used the required skills or qualities. Set the context of the situation.
2. **Task**—What was your role? What did you have to do?
3. **Actions**—What did you do and how did you do it?
4. **Results**—What did you achieve? What were the results of what you did?

Example of addressing selection criteria

Here is an example using the STAR approach to address selection criteria:

Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively

*My ability to communicate effectively with a range of people was demonstrated in my position as receptionist with the XYZ community organisation (**Situation**). I dealt with members of the general public, officers from the local council and government departments, and representatives from private businesses on a daily basis (**Task**).*

*I communicated with these people face to face, over the phone and through use of email. As I was the first point of contact for the organisation it was very important that I was professional, courteous and helpful in my interactions (**Actions**). In recognition of my positive interpersonal skills my temporary position was extended for nine months beyond my initial contract (**Result**).*

Most interview questions are structured around the STAR model, so it is a good idea to become familiar with using this method. Further information on addressing selection criteria and the STAR model can be found at www.apsc.gov.au/publications07/crackingthecode.htm.

Sometimes people with disability have the capability to meet the selection criteria but do not have demonstrated work experience that's relevant. In those cases they may be able to draw on their experience and skills demonstrated in other parts of their life.

If you are concerned that the nature of your client's disability will make it difficult to respond to the criteria, get in touch with the contact officer and discuss your concerns with them.

What needs to be submitted?

APS positions usually have an application kit. This will provide details of the information your client will need to submit. It is important to ensure that all the information specified in the application kit is provided. This may include some or all of the following:

- a cover letter advising which job your client is applying for, including a short summary of their skills and abilities
- a copy of your client's CV (or résumé)
- a statement addressing the selection criteria, and
- contact details for your client's referees.

The *Privacy Act 1988* may limit the ability of APS agencies to talk to you about your client. It may be useful when they submit their application to include a signed statement giving their consent for you to speak on their behalf.

People with disability can sometimes have gaps in their employment history due to their disability. Your client's application will be considered on its merits, but your client should be prepared at interview to discuss why they were absent from the workforce in case they are asked.

Similarly if your client does not have current work-based referees they may wish to nominate referees from voluntary, academic or community activities where they've demonstrated their ability.

The agency's selection team will assess the responses of all applicants and may select successful candidates on the basis of these papers alone. More commonly, though, this process creates a shortlist of applicants suitable to move to the next stage—usually an interview.

My client has been shortlisted, what next?

If your client's application is assessed as being competitive they may be shortlisted. This usually means that the selection team wants to find out more about their abilities and skills and how they stack up against other applicants. It is another opportunity for your client to demonstrate that they can perform the inherent requirements of the job more effectively than any other applicant.

The selection exercise could consist of an interview, or written tests, or work-based tests, or group discussions, or a combination of these.

Find out about the selection process

Once you have been advised that your client has been shortlisted you can begin to help them prepare for the exercise. The first thing to do is to find out what activities your client will be asked to complete to further assess their claims to the job.

It is reasonable for you to ask for information about the nature of the activities that your client will be asked to undertake and if there is any information that would be helpful to your client in preparing for the process. It is not reasonable to ask for any information that would provide your client with an unfair advantage over other candidates. Asking for detail about what questions will be asked, for example, would not be appropriate.

Is reasonable adjustment required for the selection process?

With the information that you collect you will be able to assess what reasonable adjustments your client might need and discuss with the selection team how these can be provided. In some instances a reasonable adjustment may mean that the nature of the selection activity is changed.

If your client requires any physical adjustments to be made to the selection activity, it is a good idea to let the selection team know what sort of equipment your client needs, and what they already have that they are able to bring along with them.

A reasonable adjustment could also include having a support person present to assist your client during the selection process. The support person can support the candidate but can't assist them to respond to questions.

Gather information about the agency

In preparing for the interview it is useful to gather some information on what the agency does. The research that you and your client carried out to determine if the role was appropriate is a good basis for this. However, this time your client should be trying to identify the key issues facing the agency and how their role might fit into this.

It can also be useful to talk to the chair of the selection team (this may not always be the contact officer, but the contact officer is a good place to start) to alleviate any anxieties for your client or for the team. This is a useful informal process that will enable your client to ask for further information and clarification of the role. Some of the questions you might want to ask include what the role will be doing, what the priorities of the team are, and whether there is any public information that would assist you and your client to prepare in advance. It is also a good opportunity for you to explain any assistance your organisation is able to provide.

Assist your client to prepare

Remember that the selection criteria will be the basis of any selection process, and you will need to use them to help your client to prepare. Think particularly about how they will respond to questions about how they will manage the duties. It is useful, particularly, to practice the selection tests that the candidate is likely to experience. For example, you might wish to conduct a mock interview with your client so that they can practice presenting their claims against each of the selection criteria.

If your client is successful

If your client is successful in winning an APS job, their employment may be subject to some engagement conditions. These conditions may include, for example:

- being an Australian citizen
- passing a security clearance or a health clearance, or
- meeting all of the requirements of the employing agency's entry level training programme.

Your client will also be engaged subject to a probationary period, during which their performance and suitability for the job is monitored. It is also an opportunity for your client to further demonstrate their capabilities.

If you don't know what is happening

If you haven't heard anything for a couple of weeks and you're wondering what's happening, the first step you should take is to speak to the contact officer or the chair of the selection team. They will be able to let you know whether your client has been shortlisted for interview or, if the process has been delayed for any reason, when you can expect to hear from them.

If your client was unsuccessful

If your client was not shortlisted for interview, it might be a good idea to contact the chair of the selection team to seek feedback on their application. This feedback could provide you and your client with some useful tips on improving their application for the next time and applying for future positions in the APS.

If your client was shortlisted for interview but was not the successful candidate, there will usually be a written report on your client's individual assessment. This can also provide you with some pointers about areas to improve or focus on. You can request a copy of this for future reference.

Before you get feedback spend some time with your client thinking about each of the elements of the selection process—the application and all the components of the selection process. What did you think were your client's particular strengths and weaknesses? This will help you to direct your questions for the selection team.

Questions to ask

The most important question to ask at this stage is how your client can improve for next time. Ask for specific information on why they were rated less suitable than other candidates. You might also want to ask if your client has been placed on an order of merit, which ranks applicants rated as suitable for engagement to a position.

Remember! If your client has been placed on an order of merit, 'No' can sometimes mean 'Not Yet'. An order of merit is current for 12 months from the date the position is advertised, and your client could be offered a similar position at a later date.

What are the other options
for getting employment in
the APS?

Part 3

Working better together



Since the release of the report *Employment of People with Disability in the APS*, the members of the Management Advisory Committee have committed themselves and their agencies to improving the representation of people with disability in the Australian Public Service (APS). This commitment provides a golden opportunity to market your agency, your clients, and your services to the APS.

There's more than one way into the APS, and this section sets out in brief some of the options you can explore with APS employers. Short term placements can raise the profile of your client, familiarise the agency with their needs, and build your relationship with the agency. You can make a sound case for employing your clients through alternative pathways into the APS—'testing the waters' for both parties. Market it as a 'win-win' situation: the agency gets the opportunity to employ the best staff regardless of disability and demonstrate its commitment to diversity, and your client gets the opportunity to demonstrate their skills while gaining valuable employment experience.

Non-ongoing employment

The APS has a range of employment opportunities to help us to meet our varied business needs. Most jobs are ongoing, while some are non-ongoing (these are temporary or for a fixed term). Non-ongoing work can be a useful way to get known in an organisation and to assess whether that agency is where your client wants to work. Many ongoing employees in the APS started with non-ongoing work.

Non-ongoing employment is a useful avenue for your clients to gain valuable experience in the APS workforce. This type of employment can include any type of work in the APS, simple or complex, but is usually used where there is a demand for a discrete task for a limited time.

APS agencies are able to employ suitably qualified staff for periods of up to 12 months without advertising or conducting a competitive selection process. Your client may be required, however, to be registered on the agency's temporary employment register. This usually involves the provision of contact information and a résumé.

In some circumstances an agency may decide that a non-ongoing position should be filled on an ongoing basis and then start a merit-based selection process as described in Part 2. Where this happens, if you have a client who has already been undertaking that role then the experience they have gained will be very valuable to them in competing for the position.

Building relationships, promoting your services and the capabilities of your clients with HR areas and local managers in APS agencies, increases your awareness of employment opportunities—and your client's prospects of gaining non-ongoing employment.

Ready Now—the temporary employment register for former APS staff

Do you have a client with disability who was previously employed in the APS, or was employed in the APS prior to acquiring a disability and would like to register to return for periods of temporary employment? **Ready Now** is a temporary employment register specifically for former employees of the APS or similar Commonwealth bodies.

Ready Now is only for non-ongoing opportunities of less than 12 months.

Further information on **Ready Now** can be found at www.apsjobs.gov.au.

Work experience

Some agencies offer work experience programmes that provide school leavers and others with the opportunity to get a taste of the workplace. They provide a valuable opportunity for your client to be exposed to a particular field of work and assess how well it suits them and vice versa.

Employers will generally require your client to be covered by work related insurance to participate in a work experience placement. The Australian Government's *Work Experience Placement Programme* will meet the cost of work related insurance (personal accident and combined public and products liability insurance) for eligible job seekers throughout the work experience placement. For further information, go to www.jobaccess.gov.au.

If you believe that your client might benefit from such exposure, contact the HR area of the agency your client is interested in to find out if they have a work experience policy that would enable you to set up an arrangement with the agency—as discussed earlier, establishing ongoing relationships with HR areas and managers is a good way of positioning you and your client to identify opportunities and present a case for placement.

Traineeships

A traineeship will allow your client to gain a qualification at the same time as getting valuable work experience. The traineeship and qualifications being offered will depend on the skills that a particular agency needs.

Agencies usually advertise traineeships in the press as they arise. Some agencies may also advertise these opportunities in the 'campaigns' section of the APSjobs website. A selection process is usually conducted to ensure that participants have the skills and abilities to undertake the traineeship.

Cadetships and graduate programmes

Cadetships recruit university students to start working while they finish their degree. They generally involve full-time study, with work placements during study breaks (but can also involve a combination of part-time study and work), allowing your client to begin developing their professional skills. In most cases agencies provide some form of financial assistance towards their study. Ongoing employment in the APS is usually subject to certain conditions, such as successful completion of study and satisfactory work performance.

If your client has already graduated, they may wish to consider entry through a graduate recruitment programme. Graduate programmes are advertised by individual agencies, involve a competitive selection process, and are usually ongoing positions. Over the course of a year the agency will give your client on-the-job training and professional development opportunities.

Cadetships and graduate programmes provide excellent opportunities to start putting your client's existing skills into practice, learn new skills, undertake professional development and begin building their future career.

If you have a client who is undertaking study towards a tertiary qualification, talk to the APS agency where you would like to make a placement about how your client can access these programmes, and the initiatives they have in place to provide support for their disability in the workplace.

School leaver programmes

These programmes are for people who have recently completed Year 12. They may include work placements within various areas of an agency, and provide good learning and development opportunities to begin your client's career. In some cases, the agency may also support your client through tertiary study if it relates to their work.

Frequently asked questions

Part 4

Working better together



If my client is applying for a job that they know they can do, should they disclose their disability when they submit their application?

The APS encourages and values diversity in its workplaces, and employment decisions are based on merit.

It is your client's decision whether they wish to disclose that they have a disability when they submit their application and, except in those rare cases that involve safety considerations, they are under no obligation to do so at any time during the recruitment process.

However, if your client's application proceeds to the interview stage and they don't disclose their disability they may compromise their chances of presenting their best case. If they need some adjustment to be made to the process because of their disability, we'd really encourage you to discuss that with the agency early in the process so that they can make the arrangements they need to make in time.

If my client doesn't reveal their disability and is shortlisted, should they identify their disability to the selection team up front or wait and see what happens at the interview?

Once again, it's largely up to your client but, following on from the previous question, the principle of reasonable adjustment gives APS agencies the flexibility to tailor selection processes to meet the needs of candidates with disability. That lets them assess fairly whether your client can perform the inherent requirements of the job, but *only* if they know that they have the disability in the first place.

If your client requires any adjustments to be made to the selection process in order for them to be assessed fairly and without discrimination, then clearly it's in their interests to advise the agency well ahead of the interview, so that the agency can do what it needs to do to ensure the process runs smoothly.

If during the interview my client finds a method used is difficult because of their disability, what should they say?

If they have already disclosed their disability prior to interview, that gives the selection team the chance to discuss alternative approaches, do the research, and develop an approach that ensures that they do not unfairly discriminate against your client or reduce their chances of performing at their best.

If your client experiences difficulty with a method used during the interview because of their disability they should let the selection team know as soon as possible, regardless of whether they have previously disclosed that disability. It may be that an alternative approach can be worked out there and then. For example, perhaps the selection team could rephrase a question or re-jig an activity, to assist your client to demonstrate how well they can perform the duties of a position.

In more difficult cases, they may need to discuss with the team whether the process can be suspended temporarily so that reasonable adjustment can be made to the method of assessment. This should probably happen only rarely—and remember that the selection team is required to ensure that this does not give your client an unfair advantage over other applicants taking part in the exercise, and that they still need to be able to compare your client's claims to those of the other parties.

If my client needs to have time off work due to their disability will it compromise their tenure?

APS agencies have leave provisions and other flexible arrangements that can assist your client to manage their disability, and will also provide them with assistance to return to work if they require extended time off.

Will my client only be employed in lower level jobs because of their disability?

The APS employs people based on their skills and abilities to perform the job requirements. The job description, duty statement, selection criteria and speaking with the contact officer will help you decide whether it is the right job for your client to apply for. There are people with disability at the most senior levels of the APS.

If my client has gaps in their work history due to their disability will they hold it against them at interview?

The APS recruits employees for their skills and work related qualities. Your client's ability to demonstrate these will be the most important factor in winning the job. If your client has any concerns, you may wish to talk to the contact officer.

Can a potential employer ask my client questions about their disability?

An APS agency can ask questions that will help it to assess your client's capacity to perform a job's inherent requirements. This can include, for example

- how they will perform the main tasks in the job
- whether they need any changes made at the workplace and whether they have suggestions for better ways to do the job.

Where can I get further information?

- Management Advisory Committee Report No 6—*Employment of people with disability in the APS* (www.apsc.gov.au/mac/disability.htm)
- *Ability at Work—tapping the talent of people with disability* (www.apsc.gov.au/abilityatwork)
- APSjobs website (www.apsjobs.gov.au)
- APS Values (www.apsc.gov.au/values) and APS Code of Conduct (www.apsc.gov.au/conduct)

- Australian Public Service Commission—State of the Service reports (www.apsc.gov.au/stateoftheservice)
- Ready Now—the temporary employment register for former APS staff (www.apsjobs.gov.au)
- JobAccess—help and workplace solutions for the employment of people with disability (www.jobaccess.gov.au)
- Streamlining recruitment (www.apsc.gov.au/publications07/betterfaster.htm)
- Cracking the Code (www.apsc.gov.au/publications07/crackingthecode.htm)
- Australian Government agency websites (www.australia.gov.au)