



**BEACON**  
LAUNDRY.



**white box**  
ENTERPRISES

**A job can  
change  
everything.**

## THE CURRENT EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM \*

# OUR NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM WORKS FOR SOME, BUT NOT ALL.

**\$3.2B**

invested annually

**944K**

people supported

**154K**

people have been in the system for 5+ years

**11.7%**

rate of people still employed after 6 months

## 3 key programs

Transition to Work

Workforce Australia

Inclusive Employment Australia

### The ROI is not great.

We know it's not for a lack of trying. The Federal Government's 2023 White Paper – Working Future – recognises the pressing need to address the impact of entrenched disadvantage, mapping out a seven-step plan to full

employment. In this, jobs-focused social enterprise is recognised as part of the solution.

Rightly so. These businesses have a much greater success rate at getting people with complex barriers back to work, compared to existing

employment programs. Their role is key to effectively solving long-term unemployment in Australia.

*\*Data sourced from DEWR 24/25 Annual report; Working Future, Sept 2023; Workforce Australia Review, 2023.*

## THE SOLUTION

# JOBS-FOCUSED SOCIAL ENTERPRISES.

Jobs-focused social enterprises are like any other commercial business – they sell products and services. However they exist primarily to address the limitations of the national employment services system, by creating jobs for people with complex barriers to work.

They offer unique supports including onsite counsellors, increased training, as well as health and housing support. These result in higher running costs, but the impact is worth it. When people are employed in a social enterprise they stay in work longer, communities are stronger, and government saves money in the long run.

It's why we're on a mission to mainstream these businesses, and their best practices.



Australian Spatial Analytics

## PROOF IS IN THE NUMBERS

We engaged Taylor Fry to analyse data from a trial we're running with the Department of Social Services and 17 social enterprises. They compared the trial results with a similar cohort of individuals supported through Disability Employment Services. This is what they found.

### 1. Social enterprises are 2.5x more effective.

69% of people with complex barriers are still earning award wages after 12 months with a social enterprise, compared to just 26% of people employed through traditional Disability Employment Services (DES).

### 2. Life improves.

It's not just about the job. 98% of people in the trial who are working, said their life improved after getting a job in a social enterprise.

### 3. Government can save \$\$.

If this trial were to be scaled to 10K individuals, this could save government an estimated \$220M over five years.

## ABOUT WHITE BOX

# WE'RE EQUAL PARTS – BUILDER AND INNOVATOR.

We play a unique dual role in Australia's jobs-focused social enterprise sector.

We're a builder and a systems-change driver.

We don't just support jobs-focused social enterprises, we build and run them. In doing this, we see firsthand what's working on the ground, and what hurdles are holding jobs-focused social enterprises back.

This depth of knowledge and experience allows us to work closely with government, investors, philanthropists, peak bodies and other social enterprises to pilot potential solutions to these structural challenges.

This work helps drive the systems-change needed to unlock this incredible sector's potential - so that anyone who wants a job in Australia, can access one.



## What is a *jobs-focused* social enterprise?

These are businesses that primarily exist to create jobs for people who face barriers to employment.

## WHY WE EXIST

# EVERYONE WHO WANTS A JOB, SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO ONE.

Work is more than a paycheck – it provides a sense of purpose and dignity, as well as connection, confidence and routine.

Yet, getting a job isn't easy for everyone. There are many people who are locked out of work due to complex barriers based on their background or life experience.

*“The longer you've been unemployed, the harder it is to get a job. Around one-third of employers are less likely to employ a person if they have been unemployed for 4-6 months. This proportion increases to half for those unemployed for 7-12 months, and to two-thirds for those unemployed for 1-2 years.”*

– **Working Future:** The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities was released in September 2023.

Only **11.7%**

of Workforce Australia participants are employed after 6 months.

Less than **50%**

of working-age people with a disability are employed. → *This number hasn't changed for almost 30 years.*

Only **26%**

of people whose primary disability is mental health-related are employed.

Just **6%**

of refugees have a job six months after they arrive in Australia, and less than 25% of refugees have a job after two years.

**60%**

of people who re-offend are unemployed at the time of that offence. → *In Victoria, the reoffending rate drops to 12% if a person finds a job.*

**9.5%**

On average, the unemployment rate for young people (15-24 years) is 2x higher than the national unemployment rate.

# HOW WHITE BOX IS HELPING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.



## We build and strengthen jobs-focused social enterprises

We're a unique intermediary - we don't just advise and advocate, we build and run jobs-focused social enterprises ourselves. We use what we learn on the ground to support others through tailored programs, and advisory and property services that help more social enterprises succeed.

## We lead innovative projects to seed system-change

We lead innovation projects - building the evidence needed to inform the systems change required for social enterprise

to thrive in Australia. These include initiatives like the Payment By Outcomes (PBO) Trial, the Social Enterprise Loan Fund (SELF), and the Evolve Program.

## We collaborate, share and amplify what works

We don't work in a silo. We partner with other social enterprises, philanthropy and government, and evaluate every major project. We share what we learn and turn lessons into levers for change, so others can build on these, and the sector can grow faster, together.

## WHITE BOX KEY PROJECTS

### Building jobs-focused social enterprises

- We build and run jobs-focused social enterprises.
- We use what we learn on the ground to support others and advocate for the sector.
- Amongst these are Beacon Laundry and Civik People, who have created over 200 jobs for long-term unemployed individuals over the last 12 months.

### Payment By Outcomes Trial (PBO3)

- Delivered in partnership with the Department of Social Services.
- 17 social enterprises involved.
- Landmark trial proving social enterprise employment leads to stronger retention, improved wellbeing, and better long-term outcomes for people facing complex barriers to work.
- This is one of three outcomes-based trials launched in 2022 as a pre-cursor to the \$100M Outcomes Fund. PBO3 is the only trial granted a continuation into 2026.

### Social Enterprise Loan Fund (SELF)

- Australia's first loan fund designed for jobs-focused social enterprises.
- Provides flexible, low interest capital for jobs focused social enterprises.
- Key funders include Westpac Foundation, Macquarie Group Foundation, the Australian Government, the Victorian Government, the Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation, and English Family Foundation.

### Evolve - transitioning Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) to social enterprises

- A two-year fully funded program focused on transitioning three ADEs into jobs-focused social enterprises.
- Building on the findings of the Disability Royal Commission, this first-of-its-kind pilot could become the blueprint for the Federal Government in transforming the Australian Disability Enterprise sector.

## CASE STUDY



LIZ, Beacon Laundry

### More than her past.

"I'd been in prison for 17 years. As you can imagine, it was extremely hard for me to find a job."

After leaving prison, Liz was unemployed for 2.5+ years. She applied for countless jobs, but the stumbling block was always the police check.

Then she discovered Beacon Laundry - a social enterprise incubated by White Box that employs people with complex barriers to work.

More than one year on, Liz is still there, working as a laundry operator, thriving in a place that employs people based on their potential, not their past.

*"The best thing Beacon has given me is the ability to forgive myself. After prison, you carry shame. I couldn't look in the mirror. But after a couple of months here, I realised I liked myself again. When you feel that, you show up differently - for your family, for yourself."*



## CASE STUDY

# THE FRENCH HAVE NAILED IT, WE CAN TOO.

France has built a national model for inclusive employment through social enterprise – it's called Aide au Poste.

The White Box team is spending time with our counterparts in France to learn more about the model.

### Aide au Poste at a glance:

→ **Operating since:** the early 1990s, current model deployed since 2018

→ **Purpose:** Government payment for social enterprises employing people facing disadvantage

→ **Total public investment:** ~\$2.1 billion AUD in 2023

→ **Jobs-focused social enterprise-aligned category:** 7,500 enterprises employing 150,000 people each year

→ **Average payment:** ~\$20,000 AUD per full-time role per year (monthly payments)

→ **Duration:** Up to 2 years per person

→ **Award wages paid:** Individuals working in a social enterprise are paid a full award wage

→ Focuses exclusively on people experiencing long-term unemployment

→ After intervention, over 50% of participants find work or undertake further study

The Aide au Poste model demonstrates that when business and government share responsibility for inclusive, meaningful employment, benefits are far-reaching.



**“Social enterprises offer unique support – it’s effective, but it comes at a cost. To unlock the full potential of these businesses, government needs to consider the long-term role social enterprise can play in employment services.”**

**– Mark Daniels, White Box Enterprises**

## GET INVOLVED

The time is now. With system reform currently underway, there is an opportunity for social enterprise to play a more permanent role in our employment services system.

We’re asking government to further engage and invest in these businesses. Social enterprises already play a critical role in supporting individuals experiencing long-term unemployment back into work. With a system similar to France’s proven model, Australia could scale social enterprise at pace - transforming how we tackle long-term unemployment. We need to work together, so more people facing complex barriers to work, are supported in the right way – through social enterprise.

### What you can do:

- 1. Talk to your peers** – share this document and encourage your networks to connect with us and learn more about jobs-focused social enterprise.
- 2. Invite us to speak at an upcoming event.** The more people learn about social enterprise, the greater the opportunity to grow the sector.
- 3. Visit a social enterprise in your electorate.** These businesses exist across the country, if you don’t know any, get in touch and we’ll connect you.

## STAY IN TOUCH

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