

EVOLVE PROGRAM

Summary of the Interim Findings (2025)



Original report produced by



Evolve is a two-year, philanthropically funded program supporting genU, Intelife and Waverley Social Enterprises to transition from Disability Enterprises to jobs-focused social enterprises. Delivered by White Box Enterprises, it combines

targeted grant funding with hands-on consulting across social, commercial and organisational workstreams.

As at September 2025, 274 consulting days had been delivered by 20+ industry experts, at approximately 150% of originally planned levels.

About the evaluation

CSI Swinburne is independently evaluating the Evolve program across its two-year duration. The Evolve program represents some of the only Australian evidence on disability enterprise transformation of this kind, described by the evaluators as “unique and important” in the context of very limited existing literature.

This interim report draws on a literature review, 29 interviews, workshops with each of the three disability enterprises and program data to September 2025. A final report will follow at program end in 2027.

Key numbers

66 people

earning >50% of supported wage



12 transitions

achieved to date



2 out of 3

enterprises meet the integration target

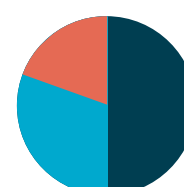


TARGET >65% OF EMPLOYEES IN 0-80% SUPPORTED SETTINGS

Where support was delivered

20% organisational

30% social purpose



50% commercial transformation

Key findings

→ What transformation means is still being defined and Evolve is helping to define it

There is no single agreed definition of disability enterprise transformation. It took around 12 months to clarify what this looks like in practice for each organisation. Internal transitions, including capability building, career development and wage uplift within the enterprise, are emerging as legitimate outcomes in their own right, not just as a fallback when external transitions do not occur.

→ The right mix and volume of support matters

The “hands-on implementation partnership” model, where White Box runs ahead, alongside and behind each enterprise as needed, is a key enabler. Without this level of support, enterprises are unlikely to transform at this pace.

“We’re recognising that commercial success is not a byproduct but an essential to supported employment... from May through to now, we recorded profit every month and that had never been achieved in the past.”

— Participating disability enterprise leader

→ Transformation requires simultaneous change across three dimensions, while running a business

Social, commercial and organisational change need to happen at the same time. Addressing any one area in isolation leads to incremental, short-lived results. Managing transformation alongside business-as-usual creates real strain.

→ Early results are positive, but transformation is systemic as well as organisational

Early targets are being met or exceeded, particularly on wages with some enterprises achieving profitability for the first time. But sustaining this will require long-term support, with transformation expected to take at least five years to embed. The report notes that outcomes are also shaped by systemic barriers including NDIS funding constraints, employer attitudes and Disability Support Pension settings, not just by what happens inside the organisation.

“What the White Box Enterprise crew have done is [force] the strategic thinking to come [out] in exactly the right way. It forced the organisation to stop and be strategic... [and] forced [us] to do the work.”

— Participating disability enterprise leader

What supported employees said

Eleven supported employees contributed to the evaluation. Positive sentiments about work, learning, support and career pathways significantly outweighed negative ones, with 122 positive expressions recorded against 18 negative ones across these topics. Most want to continue working at their disability enterprise, with support, flexibility and in some cases negative past experiences in open employment shaping that view.

“When I wanted to learn new skills, I chose to choose till - learn to do the till... I put my hand up. I can learn - that’s what my new skill wanted to be.”

— Supported employee, Evolve program

A distinctive feature of the Evolve model

The community of practice, bringing the three enterprises together across six meetings, three site tours and sector events, is a valuable part of the model. It has helped speed up outcomes and built trust across organisations navigating the same journey.

To learn more about the Evolve Program visit:

www.whiteboxenterprises.com.au