



# ANZ Leadership Roundtable Summary

SUMMARY OF SESSION 11 FEBRUARY 2026  
HOSTED BY:



## INTRODUCTION

On 11th of February 2026, PurpleSpace reconvened the Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) disability ERG/Network community for a second hybrid Leadership Roundtable, hosted by LinkedIn in Sydney and supported by a series of online leadership lesson conversations.

This session was designed as a deliberate follow-up to our first hybrid ANZ Leadership Roundtable held in August 2025 ([ANZ Leadership Roundtable Summary Report, August 2025](#)).

Together, these two moments reflect a clear evolution in the ANZ disability ERG/Network movement from building connection to strengthening capability and using networks as a strategic lever for influence and impact.

The February conversations marked a shift from focusing primarily on confidence and storytelling towards understanding how networks themselves enable access, opportunity and change.





## **CONTEXT: RESEARCH-LED INSIGHT AND PRACTICAL LEARNING**

A central pillar of the February leadership lesson was the [LinkedIn research on disability and professional networks, authored by Matthew Baird](#), Senior Staff Economist at LinkedIn.

This research provided a strong evidence base, demonstrating that professionals with disabilities consistently have weaker professional networks than their non-disabled peers, not due to lack of engagement or capability, but because of structural barriers that limit access to influential roles, senior leaders and high-information-value connections.

The [recorded interview with Matthew Baird](#), shared during the leadership lesson, added practical depth by exploring:

- What network strength really means beyond connection volume
- Why gaps are driven by access and opportunity rather than individual effort
- How intentional actions, when supported by systems, can help bridge these gaps over time

This combination of research and reflection grounded the ANZ discussions in evidence while remaining closely aligned to lived experience.



## **SUMMARY OF SESSION: FROM STORYTELLING TO NETWORK STRATEGY**

Building on the August 2025 focus on confidence-building, storytelling and grassroots leadership, the February 2026 conversations explored how networks function as infrastructure for change.

### **Building strength in the network**

Participants identified that strong and sustainable networks require more than goodwill. Key enablers included:

- Executive support that legitimises disability ERG/Network work and positions networks as value-creating
- Agreed and approved time for disability ERG/Network leaders and members to contribute
- Alignment to organisational goals, enabling disability ERG/Networks to influence decision-making
- Disability ERG/Network membership that includes people with the ability to influence outcomes
- These insights sharpened earlier discussions by explicitly naming power, access and influence as essential to impact.

### **Networks as living, adaptive systems**

Guided by the LinkedIn research, participants explored the importance of network intelligence:

- Building capability to analyse personal and organisational networks
- Understanding information value, including who holds insight and access
- Taking proactive steps to strengthen networks over time

There was strong agreement that one-size-fits-all approaches do not work. Networks must be designed in response to organisational culture, maturity, geography and purpose.



## **Using communication to extend reach and momentum**

Online discussions highlighted practical ways networks grow through visibility:

- Creating content that others can easily share
- Tagging others to extend reach and engagement
- Using research and insight to sustain momentum over time

This marked a clear evolution from storytelling as confidence-building to storytelling as a strategic network-building tool.

## **MENTORING AS A BRIDGE TO OPPORTUNITY**

Mentoring emerged as a powerful mechanism for strengthening networks and access to opportunity.

Participants discussed:

- Technology-enabled mentoring, including Microsoft tools and initiatives such as Australia Post's Mentor Up
- Building confidence to reach out, particularly during early-career or career transitions
- Understanding the accessibility of systems, not just relationships
- Designing mentoring around mutual benefit rather than deficit
- The value of individuals who actively connect others across organisations

These reflections reinforced a key message from the research: networks grow when access barriers are reduced and connections are intentionally facilitated.

## OUR EVOLVING SHARED VISION FOR ANZ (TOWARDS 2028)



Taken together, the August 2025 and February 2026 Roundtables articulate a maturing vision for the ANZ disability ERG/Network movement:

- Connected and collaborative across organisations and borders
- Research-informed and data-aware
- Strategically embedded within organisational priorities
- Trust-based and human, recognising confidence and accessibility
- Regionally strong and globally connected

This vision directly aligns with PurpleSpace's 2028 intention to launch a **global network of networks**, supported by regional and local hubs that convene in inclusive, accessible and timezone-friendly ways.

### LOOKING AHEAD: ANZ AS A LOCAL HUB WITHIN THE GLOBAL NETWORK

The February 2026 Leadership Lesson signalled a shift from networking as an activity to network leadership as a capability.

As PurpleSpace moves towards its 2028 vision, the ANZ community is well positioned to play a distinct role by:

- Building a knowledge sharing community of ERG/DEN leaders via the regular hybrid ANZ Peer Leadership Roundtable.
- Playing a leading role in PurpleSpace's Global Disability ERG Summit in October 2026.
- Contributing to the Summit's 'Purple Planet' output report to ensure it includes a strong focus on the growth, maturity and impact of the ANZ ERG/DEN community.
- Contributing to the development of the Networkology Self-Assessment Tool (first iteration launched in March 2026) to ensure it meets the needs of ANZ ERG/DEN community and that it can be used to build and measure leadership capacity in our location.
- Ensuring representation on the 2026/27 FutureMaker programme for new and aspiring disability ERG/Network leaders (application open in June).

The work underway in ANZ is not separate from the global movement. It is an integral part of building the Network of Networks that PurpleSpace will launch in 2028



### **NEXT STEPS:**

Thank you to those of you who expressed a desire to support the growth of the ANZ ERG/DEN leadership community via sponsorship and hosting.

We will follow up directly to take those conversations forward.

Please note that the next ANZ Roundtable will be online only, taking place on 20 May.

This approach allows us to focus our in-person efforts on an important hybrid event in Sydney in October, which will serve as our second Global Disability ERG Summit.

If you would like to discuss supporting our next steps, please contact [seb@purplespace](mailto:seb@purplespace) directly.

### **THANK YOU TO OUR ANZ HOSTS:**



### **THANK YOU TO OUR ANZ ATTENDEES FROM:**

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## ABOUT PURPLESPACE

PurpleSpace is a unique leadership development membership hub for disability ERG/Network leaders, champions, and allies around the world. Our 5,000+ members across 160+ employer brands employ over 1.5 million employees with disability between them.

Members join to increase the effectiveness of their disability ERG/Networks, develop their leadership skills, and learn how to help their organisations to become disability confident from the inside out. We call it Networkology and it is having a powerful worldwide impact on driving the next phase of cultural change within many different types of organisations.

The introduction of rights-based legislation is what we call the first phase of change. In some parts of the world that is still on the move. The second phase is the process where employers tap into the enabling products and services that help them to create better policy, practice, and procedure. That phase continues.

Meanwhile, the third phase of change has begun.

Where employees with disability build inner confidence, lean into their careers, and create meaningful conversation about how to get ahead at work. High performing disability ERGs and Networks are at the vanguard of this change. This is the new modern approach to sustaining culture change. It's what we do. Find the space to think Networkology.

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