

- **Accessible employment opportunities for people with mental illness**

Social Firms Australia (SoFA) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving the mental health outcomes of Australians living with a disability, particularly people with a mental illness. This will be achieved by increasing the social and economic integration of people with a disability through the development of a social firm sector. Advice, support and tools are being provided to SoFA by Social Ventures Australia and Social Firms UK.

- **What is a social firm?**

The social firm model originated in Italy in the 1960s and is now widespread throughout Europe. A social firm is a not-for-profit business enterprise whose purpose is to create accessible employment for people with a disability. Any modifications required for the employee in need of support are built into the design of the workplace.

A social firm has a supportive work environment that:

- employs between 25% and 50% of employees with a disability.
- pays all workers at Award/ productivity-based rates.
- provides the same work opportunities, rights and obligations to all employees.
- generates the majority of its income through the commercial activity of the business.

- **SoFA partnerships**

SoFA operates in partnership with a range of groups to pursue its mission. Our primary partners include:

**Social Ventures Australia (SVA)** . Business expertise, mentoring and funding networks

**Westgate Community Initiatives Group (WCIG)** . Specialist disability employment expertise

**Social Firms UK (SFUK)** . Support, advice, knowledge and resources

The partnership is committed to the development of the Australian social firm sector through:

- identifying opportunities to create successful social firms
- partnering with a range of organisations and individuals who share SoFA's vision and values, and who bring specific skills, experience and networks
- researching and evaluating the model
- documenting the processes involved in establishing and operating social firms
- developing networks of social firms
- initiating and developing new effective approaches to employment support
- developing an accreditation process

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