

National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper

CHES Response

CHES is a not for profit limited by guarantee organisation founded in 1995 to service the local community in the Coffs Harbour, Clarence and Kempsey NSW region. CHES, a member of JobFutures is funded through the Department of Social Services to provide Disability Employment Services, Personal Helpers and Mentors Services and through the NSW government to provide Vocational Intervention Services to people with Brain Injury. CHES is a member of the Mission Australia led consortium delivering Partners in Recovery across the North Coast NSW.

The Benefits of Employing People with Disability

Questions

What can improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

What can help reduce barriers for people with disability seeking employment?

What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people with disability?

How can we promote the benefits of employing people with disability?

Response

A key factor to success is management of the entry point and provision of a robust assessment tool that includes a 'ready to work' indicator'. The assessment should be conducted via a panel that includes an allied health professional, Centrelink and a provider representative.

Once assessed there should be 2 options – Ready to work directly referred to a Disability Employment Service. This could be through a fee for service model that relates to the jobseekers individual requirements identified through this assessment. A jobseeker could have an 'Employment funding package' similar to NDIS funding that could be taken to a provider of choice. Employment service providers would need to be accredited and licenced, something similar to aged care accreditation.

Where significant barriers to employment are identified a referral would be made into a PHaMs type specialist employment service model. This could also be used to test people's eligibility for DSP. The period in this service would have a 6 month and 12 month milestone with service fees attached, with exit at either point. The model would be holistic and aimed at addressing identified barriers. Service provision would include mentoring, advocacy, support, career planning, specific job training, personal counselling, vocational assessment, vocational counselling, vocational training, case management and co-ordination of services, disability management, and independent living planning.

Exit at 6 or 12 months would be after an assessment which would measure progress against barriers to employment. Ongoing referral would be made to the employment service or to DSP.

Employers would benefit from only being referred people who are ready and able to work.

The current wage subsidy model that allows the employer flexibility with payment timing should be retained as a useful incentive. Employer subsidies to be extended to include training subsidies relevant to the job.

Employment service providers could be funded to provide accredited in work training to employers and their staff – mental health first aid – conflict resolution.

The place and train model should be strengthened and properly funded as a distinct fee for service. This would allow the employer the confidence to know that proper and consistent job support will take place for as long as is necessary ensuring a more positive outcome for both employer and employee.

The 26 and 52 week outcome period should take into account episodic illnesses and impact of disability and be cumulative over a maximum 2 year period.

Compliance and payment penalties should be managed by the Department, freeing the provider to build trust and to be the safe environment necessary to engage, develop and build employability skills.

Current Services Overview

There are several Australian Government programmes available to assist people with disability find and keep jobs. These services are broadly targeted to groups based on their capacity to work and the level of support they need to find and retain employment. The programmes we will discuss in this paper are:

- Australians Disability Enterprises;
- Disability Employment Services (Employment support services and Disability Management Services);
- Job Services Australia; and
- Support for employers.
- NDIS

Questions

How effective are the pathways into these services?

How well do these programmes work together to support people with disability throughout their life-course, including for conditions episodic in nature?

Are there other services which could assist people with disability to find a job?

What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?

Response

Pathways to services would be improved with a holistic assessment that included reports from an approved list of reporters that could include service providers, carers, school principals etc to provide a broad overview and more than a point in time assessment of a person's capability to participate in a programme.

The PIR model should be retained as a vehicle to care coordinate and facilitate effective navigation between services.

Concurrency of time limited participation in programmes is beneficial.

Sections of users of employment services could move to the NDIS. PHaMs employment service pathway and volunteer participants on DSP.

More work needs to be done on NDIS pathways and supports for people with mental illness to reflect the episodic nature. The increased prominence of people with mental health problems within the DES program highlights this issue. This cohort presents significant challenges in terms of identifying their needs and in achieving sustainable employment outcomes. Assessment of the appropriate employment program pathway for this cohort is particularly challenging. This cohort would be better served by a more personalised support model—based on an assessment that focuses on needs, goals and work capacity rather than disability — and which allows providers scope to tailor services more directly to their needs.

Outcome payments for shorter periods would assist - 2 - 4 and 8 month milestones, to recognise the significant work providers undertake in the early stages , accumulative milestone payments and casual and seasonal work recognised in the outcome payment schedule.

Employment Service Providers focusing on specific areas of industry with appropriate staffing to support jobseekers and select ES providers with a Mental Health focus would support better outcomes for PWD.

Employment services for people with disability could be closely aligned to the NDIS model with properly costed packages that relate to the individuals employment requirements and personal development requirements.

Suggested model based on current NDIS support cluster definitions for NSW

Holistic assessment decides which service people enter

Assessment conducted by Allied health professions with input from carers –support agencies – school principals

Pre Employment Service (PHaMs)	Support Item ref No NDIS	Employment service for people with disability	Support Item ref No NDIS
Mentoring – assistance with decision making , daily planning, budgeting	08 001	Assessment to identify suitable vocational potential and suitability	03 001
Coordination of supports – assistance to participate in the community	08 002	On the job training and support including employer advice	03 007
Life/transition planning\support to develop a vision for a	08 004	Open employments specialised job search assistance	03008

meaningful plan for changing needs and circumstances			
Assistance with accommodation and tenancy obligations	01 001	Post school employment assistance	03 009
Short term transitional support for accommodation	01 003	Post school employment support - group	03010
Mentoring and peer support	08 005	Support in employment	03 017
Transition to school and other education programs, program design, planning and implementation	05005	Workplace assessment	02005
Transition from school to further education – skills training, advice orientation	05 004	Supported employment start-up fee (engage with ADE)	03 012
Personalised assistance to support educational activities	05 002	Numeracy literacy money, financial skills development	15 006
Individual life and personal skills development	15 004		
Group based life and personal skills development	15 002		
Training in planning and plan management	15 009		

Employment Services in Context

Questions

How can elements of the disability support system better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

Are there other contextual factors of the jobseeker that should be considered?

Response

The provision of services within a centre encompassing traditional disability with employment and support services akin to the NSW Govt Likeminds pilot model would assist seamless service delivery.

An employment model with providers focusing on a specific industry allied to regional employment needs. For instance Coffs Harbour, huge growth in the Blueberry sector with significant employment opportunities. A provider with relevant skills in a particular industry could be funded to provide a holistic service delivery model incorporating vocational training, living skills, work experience and

significant employer engagement. The jobseeker could have discretionary funding that would allow participation and training modules could align to NDIS cluster definitions.

CHES Blueberry Initiative

Background

A major new facility for the Coffs region blueberry growers with Oz group taking over the old Bunnings building to develop into a processing and distribution facility. It is expected to be fully operational for the 2016 harvesting season. Production growth is expected to increase by 20% with an additional 120 full time and part time positions to be created.

The local industry is currently worth \$120 million to the region. The local blueberry industry employs 3000 workers involved with picking, packing and farm maintenance in the region.

CHES Experience

CHES has a sound and well established reputation as a provider of choice in delivery of training, mentoring and real support to people to gain employment in this sort of industry. CHES Wells Crossing Farm provided work experience in farming, labouring, and packing of crops for market as well as horticultural training and on the job mentoring and support. DEEWR Innovation funding provided the means for CHES to set up the Coffs Coast Community Farm Project - Innovation Farm in Bonville from 2009 – 2012 (see attached evaluation conducted by Dr Charlie Brennan and Dr Grant Kinross of the southern Cross University Business School).

The Farm provided a safe environment for disadvantaged people and people with disability within the community to engage in society gaining valuable vocational skills to increase their employability, while building confidence through a range of living skills programmes supported by an onsite rehabilitation counsellor. The working farm produced a variety of organic crops that were packaged at the farm and sold at the Coffs Harbour Growers Market. Farm participants were engaged in all aspects of the project. Participant referral sources included DES providers, JSA, the Mental Health Rehab Unit, Youth and Aboriginal services. CHES engaged TAFE to provide onsite Certificate II in Production Horticulture, a Farm Manager further developed practical working skills and an employment consultant worked with the Rehab counsellor and participants to enable industry related employment.

Proposal

This could be used as a model to fund regional industry related initiatives nationally, perhaps through a tender process or EOI.

Initially run as a pilot to test feasibility and to measure outcomes.

CHES is provided establishment funding to set up a facility that builds on the services previously provided but is tailored specifically to working in the Blueberry industry. The establishment funding could be provided as a long term no interest loan. The funding would support the leasing of a smallholding and sheds to set out an area to grow blueberries to provide a practical learning experience to people with disability and disadvantage. Employers from the Blueberry growers sector would be involved from the start-up phase to ensure that all training and development reflects

industry requirements. Appropriate certificate level training would be provided on site with participants supported to develop life and vocational skills by a team of peer workers, mentors, psychological supports and employment professionals. The facility would be open to members of the community on a fee for service basis, DES participants and would provide opportunity for NDIS participants to utilise their funding to undertake training and personal development. Elements of the project would be tailored to match NDIS support clusters.

For instance

- The Assistance to integrate into School or other educational programs cluster
- Assistance to access and maintain employment
- Assistance in coordinating or managing life stages, transitions and supports
- Career development

Disability Employment Services (DES)

Questions

How can DES providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?

How can DES providers better support people with disability in the workplace?

How can DES providers better support employers?

How can the employment service model be improved to help providers deliver better support?

Does DES need to be redesigned to operate in an NDIS environment?

Response

Proper CPI indexed funding to providers

More discretionary funding to support the jobseeker – the jobseeker could be provided with funding specifically for career development and training to enhance their job prospects. This need could be identified at an NDIS type assessment.

Flexible employment milestones to reflect the nature of a person's disability.

A mandated and funded place and train staff position in each DES team.

Bringing the PHaMs specialist employment service into DES

Funding providers to provide regionally specific projects (Innovation fund) that are wholly focused on employment and write employers into the service delivery plan.

DES should be redesigned to fit into the NDIS. Voluntary jobseekers provided with discretionary funds. Place and train services should be integral to the model. Providers need appropriate accreditation and would need to continue to be measured against compliance with the DSS

Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)

Questions

Can we improve support for people moving out of ADEs into open employment?

How can ADEs operate as viable businesses?

Response

Concurrency with employment services will support movement into open employment. Utilising NDIS pricing structure for fee for service will support viability. Employment service providers operating across the ADE and Open employment structure with no barrier to which service they offer, fee for service would support this structure. A peer workforce would support people with profound disability in moving to open employment.

Support for Employers

Questions

Are employers aware of these supports?

How can supports help achieve long-term employment for people with disability?

Are the support needs of large employers different to the support needs of small employers?

How can we encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability?

What other supports or approaches could increase employment participation of people with disability?

Response

Employers could be more aware of available supports, suggest we make better use of technology providing visual presentations of supports available that they can view in their own time.

Supports need to be properly funded, flexible, staged and employment related.

Small employers are assisted with long term wage subsidies, professional place and train support and being provided with a worker who is ready to take on the role. They have fewer propensities to train on the job and would benefit from industry related providers with the capacity to provide already skilled workers to a particular industry.

Service providers employing Peer Workers who can work alongside people with disability, have insight into the triggers and stresses faced with the ability to support the persons wellbeing would increase workforce participation.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Questions

- In what way do you think the NDIS can support employment outcomes for people with disability?
- What do you think we can learn from the NDIS to improve job services for people with disability?

Response

By providing a flexible person centred employment support model with the individuals needs being properly assessed and funded.

The NDIS pricing structure is a helpful indicator of a fee for service model for employment services for people with disability.

Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs)

Questions

What more can be done to assist people with mental illness to find a job?

What more can be done to support people with mental illness in the workplace?

Response

Incorporating the successful PHaMs specialist employment model into service delivery. Individual funding packages that relate to a person's mental illness and provides flexibility. Milestone employment periods that reflect the episodic nature of mental illness with the ability to accumulate the hours and weeks towards a milestone incorporating break periods rather than rigid phases currently prescribed. The PHaMs peer worker role, a person with lived experience walking alongside on the journey to employment has proven particularly helpful in the CHES PHaMs specialist employment service.

Life-course and Diversity

Questions

Are there particular milestones which have a positive impact on employment prospects for people with disability?

What issues need to be considered in relation to specific groups of people with disability?

What approaches work with the different groups and these different issues?

Response

Overall more flexibility in service delivery with consideration of the provider's expertise in supporting people with disability. A more person centred approach.

A model that reflects the episodic nature of some disability, particularly mental illness.

More use of work experience with the ability to put this time towards the first employment milestone and a fee for service for work experience to the employer.

Utilising properly supported innovative pilot employment models relating to industry – CHES Blueberry initiative.

Contact details

You are invited to contribute to this discussion. Please visit our website for further details and to make submissions at www.engage.dss.gov.au

Alternately, hard copy submissions can be sent to:

Disability Employment Taskforce

PO Box 7576

Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

If you have questions about this process you can email the Taskforce at:

disabilityemploymenttaskforce@dss.gov.au