Greenacres submission to the DSS website as part of the consultation process regarding the DES Reform Discussion Paper (<https://engage.dss.gov.au/>)

* Consultation process ends on 16/12/16
* Submissions may be published on the <https://engage.dss.gov.au/> website
* Submissions come from an individual within the organisation

Greenacres Employment Solutions has been part of the DES-ESS program since 2010 and the Star Rating system has never captured or measured effectively what we do. The Star Rating system rewards employment and educational outcomes but does not take into account all of the other work that occurs with participants. Any future DES reforms should include a fair system of recognising those achievements with participants such as short courses achieved, licenses obtained and time spent helping with community issues such as housing, transport and health.

Any future DES program should also focus on increased open competition. New providers should be able to register with third party verification and audited to comply with the Disability Standards. In this way participants can have a greater choice of providers especially in regional areas and new providers would be able to specialise more to meet participants’ needs.

NDIS providers of the future should be able to provide vocational training and place participants in open employment while accessing the outcomes payments offered under DES. This should be available if a participant is part of an ADE or in the Transition to Work program to reward and encourage ADE’s to find opportunities in open employment. This would be a better option rather than the ADE or TTW program referring the participant to a different provider.

In conjunction with DES reform there should be the reform of policies surrounding the Disability Support Pension (DSP). Participants who do find open employment and move off the DSP but later lose work should be able to easily access their DSP again over any time period.

Difficulties of transport and access to employment should be considered as a major barrier for people with a disability. This needs to be addressed through greater financial assistance in a future DES program and within the NDIS.

Wage subsidies for employers should be increased to maximise support for participants starting in employment. Any DES program reform should allow providers to access wage subsidies for employers that are greater than accessible under the JobActive program. Barriers are greater to participants with a disability and this should be reflected in how wage subsidies are allocated and accessed.

Issues of compliance with a growth in numbers of participants on Newstart and the Compulsory under 35 DSP participants has changed the nature of the service provided under the DES-ESS contract since 2010. The majority of participants in 2010 were voluntary and this provided greater motivation from the participant and greater opportunities for the provider to secure employment. It also gave the provider more time to spend with the participants. From 2010 to 2016 caseloads have changed and providers have taken on a role usually assigned to Centrelink ensuring through compliance that participants engage in the DES program. Participants who are forced to attend appointments to job seek under threat of losing their money are significantly less motivated to comply and seek and gain employment. This leaves the provider continually dealing with compliance issues which redirects resources away from keen job seekers. Any future DES program should lessen the impact that compliance has on providers supporting people into employment.