

# Submission to New Disability Employment Services from 2018 Discussion Paper by the Disability Employment Taskforce

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## Purpose and scope of this submission

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This submission will provide a summary of an effective alternative model to the current Disability Employment Services framework which will complement the proposed changes for the New Disability Employment Services as outlined by the Disability Employment Taskforce.

The basis for this submission is the work that Neami National has done in the area of employment for people experiencing severe and persistent mental illness. However, there is applications for numerous target populations as outlined in the research and recommendations.

## Principal Recommendation

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Employment services should be integrated and co-located in disability and specialist support organisations.

# Neami National's interest in employment outcomes for people with disability

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## Neami National Overview

Neami National is a national community based mental health service supporting people with severe and enduring mental illness and psychosocial disability to live independently in the community. Neami National was established in 1987 and now has over fifty service sites across Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. Approximately 8,000 individuals are supported by Neami National each year through a broad range of mental health services including home based outreach, group rehabilitation programs, housing support, Personal Helpers and Mentors Programs, Day to Day Living Programs, Complex Care Services, Arts based practice and recently as a NDIS provider. At the core of Neami National's service is its capacity to effectively engage and work with consumers experiencing a range of support needs.

Neami National's mission is "improving health and wellbeing in local communities". Neami National takes a holistic view of an individual's mental health and ensures that the services it provides are done so in partnership with local community services, area mental health services and local government. Neami National believes that its partnerships must deliver pathways to participation in community life for consumers.

## Employment and Wellbeing

Employment which meets the needs and preferences of the individual, contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes in the general population (Waddell et al., 2006). Luciano et al. (2014), identified three domains, in multiple studies, with which employment made a positive impact: self-esteem – 100% (3/3 studies), symptoms of mental illness – 57% (4/7 studies), and life satisfaction – 33% (3/9 studies). Conversely, unemployment has been regarded as having negative effects on the general population such as; increased substance abuse, increased physical problems, increased psychiatric disorders, reduced self-esteem, loss of social contacts and alienation and apathy (Warr, 1987). A longitudinal study of 130,000 people looking at the impact of major life events such as; marriage, divorce, birth of a child, or death of a spouse, on life satisfaction, found that unemployment may be the only major life event that people do not fully recover within five years (Clark et al., 2008). Moreover, the quality of the work should be taken into account. In a narrative review of work interventions in mental health care, Schnieder et al. (1998) reported that "there is a possibility that for people with mental health problems work itself might be psychologically detrimental". However, "such reservations serve, not to rule out work, but to direct attention to the quality of employment opportunities available to people with mental health problems, to matching jobs to abilities, and to taking into account the conditions in which a person works".

## Individual Placement and Support

"Evidence-based supported employment assists people to obtain competitive jobs based on their preferences and to maintain employment by providing individualized and on-going supports" (Bond et al. 2008). Individual Placement and Support or (IPS) is a supported employment model developed in the US by Dartmouth College in the 1980's. It was designed to support people experiencing severe mental health conditions with competitive employment goals and was founded on the belief that paid employment is a human right (Bond et al., 2012). There is strong evidence that IPS is the most effective method of supporting mental health consumers to achieve sustainable competitive employment. IPS observes to eight core principles; competitive employment, integration of mental

health and employment services, zero exclusion, individual preferences, benefits counselling, rapid job search, job development and time-unlimited and follow support.

In August 2015, Neami launched our first employment program, which is embedded into our Hurstville NSW mental health outreach service. By adhering to the IPS model, Neami offers a holistic employment program to jobseekers. Referrals were accepted from a wide-range of jobseekers experiencing mental health conditions throughout the South Eastern Sydney LGA. Neami block-funds the employment program with only service fees provided. It features a full time employment specialist who carries out all six phases of the employment program (intake, engagement, assessment, job matching/placement, job coaching, and follow-along support); works closely with the mental health team to ensure jobseekers are provided with wrap-around support; supports no more than 20 active jobseekers at one time; spends 66% of the work week in the community; and meets with at least 6 employers face-to-face per week.

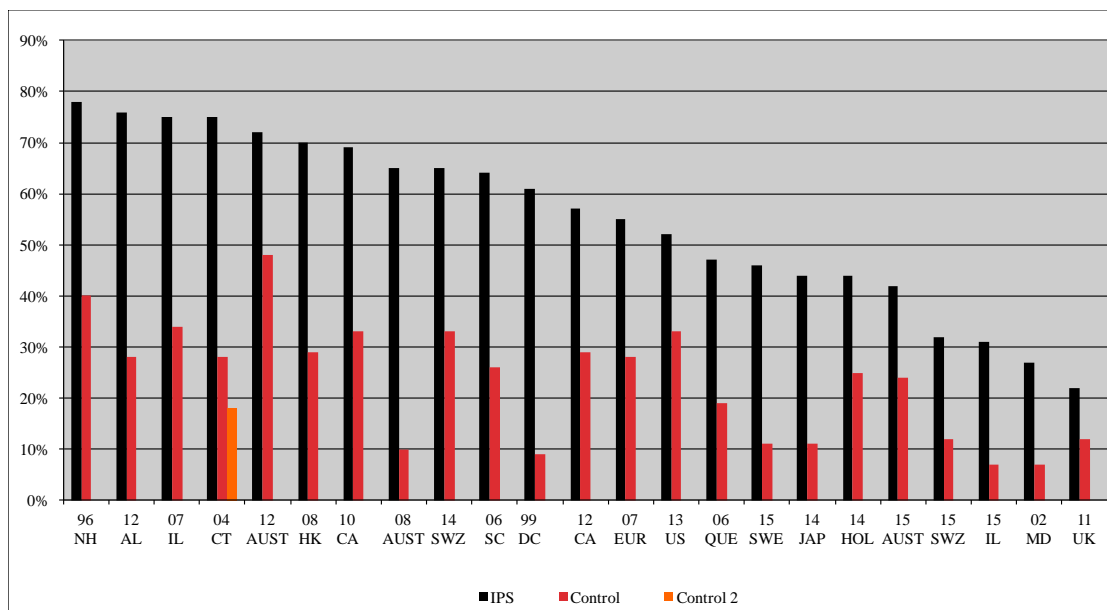
Neami subsequently funded two more employment programs implemented at our Ashfield and Pagewood services in March 2016 and February 2016 respectively. As well as two additional employment programs, currently in the implementation phase, located in Western Sydney.

The IPS Supported Employment Fidelity Scale is used to improve upon and monitor the fidelity of IPS programs to the model. The fidelity scale defines the critical components of IPS in order to differentiate between programs that have fully implemented the model and those that have not. It is recommended that IPS programs undergo a fidelity review, preferably by an external reviewer, six months following implementation, and annually if the program is rated with 'good fidelity'. In July 2015, Neami contracted IPS Works, a subsidiary of the Western Australian Association of Mental Health, to train the employment and mental health teams, provide technical support and carry-out a fidelity review after six months of service delivery. The fidelity review took place in April 2016 over three days and involved interviewing jobseekers, mental health team members and executive leadership, shadowing the employment specialist and supervisor during various duties, including employer contacts and jobseeker appointments. IPS Works also evaluated the program data we had collected over the service delivery period. The pilot program received a score of 104 out of 125 and a rating of 'good fidelity'.

## Evidence of IPS Efficacy

There have been 23 studies carried out in which IPS significantly outperformed the comparison employment service in every trial, with 55 per cent or more of the jobseekers receiving IPS obtaining competitive jobs, compared with about 23 per cent of those receiving other vocational assistance (Bond et al., 2012):

Competitive Employment Rates in 23 Randomized Controlled Trials of IPS:



“The number, consistency, and effect sizes of studies of evidence-based supported employment establish it as one of the most robust interventions available for persons with severe mental illness (Bond et al. 2008).”

The outcomes of Neami’s three active employment programs are as follows:

Service	Months in operation	# of participants Commenced	% Competitive job starts	% in education or training	% in voluntary work	Total % of outcomes
Hurstville	15	40	62	15	5	78
Pagewood	9	28	32	11	14	57
Ashfield	8	29	41	14	3	58

Total number of participants achieving a vocational outcome: Hurstville, 26; Pagewood, 16; Ashfield, 14.

## Cost-effectiveness of IPS programs

Three studies have been conducted on the cost-effectiveness of IPS programs. Estimates of per-participant annual costs (in USD) were as follows:

- \$2500 (Latimer et al., 2004)
- \$4300 (HMC, 2006)
- \$6400 (Cimera, 2007)

## Utility of IPS for other target populations

IPS has been piloted and deemed effective for a variety of target populations, such as; PTSD, mental illness + substance use, older adults, young persons, first episode psychosis, homeless, criminal justice history, and disability beneficiaries. Furthermore, IPS trials are being expanded into populations, such as; veterans, people with spinal cord injury and people with traumatic brain injury.

## The IPS model is a good fit for the proposed changes to Disability Employment Services by the Disability Employment Taskforce

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Proposed change: Increasing participant choice and control in the services they need

**Recommendation: Invest in specialised training for employment consultants working with jobseekers with disability.**

In an investigation into what makes more and less successful employment specialists, Glover et al., (2011) find that “more successful specialists approached their interactions with consumers with attitudes and verbal communication characterized by optimism, hope, and enthusiasm”. The Department for Work & Pensions and Department of Health in the United Kingdom produced the ‘Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper’ in October 2016. The Green Paper illustrates the relationship between a person and their job coach as being “at the heart of each person’s journey in the welfare system”. It further pledges that the British Government will “continue to build and develop the capability of our work coaches.” For example, they have introduced an accredited learning program which includes additional mandatory training for work coaches that support job seekers with mental and physical health conditions. Furthermore, in 2017, they are introducing enhanced training to better enable work coaches to engage with employers around mental health issues. To supplement this initiative, the British Government will employ 500 Disability Employment Advisors which will provide further professional expertise and local knowledge on health issues to work coaches. Moreover, they will trial an initiative which will consist of a “3-way conversation between a work coach, healthcare professional and a person who has been placed in the *Work-Related Activity Group*, following a *Work Capability Assessment*.” The work coach will have access to specialist advice and support, so they can understand how complex health conditions may affect participants’ ability to work, and so they can better manage their health in the workplace.

Proposed change: Driving greater competition and contestability in DES

**Recommendation: Utilise the expertise and experience of community and specialist organisations to develop initiatives and implement employment programs that are flexible to the needs and preferences of the individual jobseeker.**

Community and specialist organisations have the expertise and experience to work with people with disability in their communities. Many organisations and specialists work with individuals towards living full and meaningful lives and advocate for flexible and individualised employment support. In the United Kingdom, the British Government is including the voluntary and community sector in their re-visioning of their disability employment system. They “recognise that the voluntary and community sectors play a crucial role in helping more people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, and that there are many organisations from these sectors, with broad reach and diversity, working to support and involve disabled people and people with long-term health conditions” (Department for Work and Pensions & Department of Health, 2016). They also recognise that voluntary and community organisations have the expertise and experience to support people with disability to participate as full citizens in their communities (*Ibid*).



## Proposed change: Aligning incentives to support better outcomes

### **Recommendation: Introduce outcome-based payments only for job matches that meet jobseeker preferences and needs.**

As the Discussion Paper pointed out, there has been mixed rates of success for outcome-based payments for employment services. Gates et al. (2005) found that outcome payments measured by sustained employment milestones, for example, nine months of employment, encouraged providers to support participants into employment more quickly and in work that matched their preferences. However, Dias et al. (2006) found that outcome-only payments reduced the time providers spent with participants to address barriers to employment and were less likely to take into account their preferences when job matching. Furthermore, they found that staff were less willing to be innovative and flexible with the services they provided to participants.

Instead of categorising outcome payments based on the vocational and non-vocational barriers of the individual jobseeker; job matching should be considered. This approach can be successfully implemented, by imposing outcomes-based payments that are focused on the job stability and satisfaction of the individual (Novak et al., 2008). Matching participants to jobs which meet their preferences is associated with greater job satisfaction and job tenure (Huff, 2005; Kukla et al., 2012). Jobseekers should not be excluded or categorised because they are not 'ready' or because of prior, work history, hospitalisation history, substance use, symptoms, or other characteristics. Most factors used to screen job seekers don't do very well in predicting who can work (Anthony & Jansen, 1984). A study by Gowdy et al. (2003), examined the practices differentiating high-performing from low-performing supported employment programs; in interviews with employment specialists from successful employment programs, staff focussed on participant success stories in working. Conversely, staff from unsuccessful programs were found to be preoccupied with participant deficits, how they were too symptomatic, had poor skills, and were lower functioning. The core measure of a successful supported employment program is employment which is responsive to the interests, values and needs of the jobseeker.

## Proposed change: Assisting participants in the workplace

### **Recommendation: Job supports should be time unlimited and individualised for every employed participant.**

Every employed participant should be entitled to robust and individualised Ongoing Support. McHugo et al. (1998) assessed employment outcomes of IPS participants who gained employment 42 months after they were enrolled in an IPS program. The participants were divided into two groups: those who continued to receive vocational services and those who did not. Among those who were receiving vocational support, 71% were employed, while those who were not receiving vocational support, 28% were employed. Likewise, Bond and Kukla (2011) studied the employment outcomes of 142 participants who had obtained employment in an IPS program and found significant positive correlation between frequency of employment specialist contacts and months employed. Furthermore, a 1992 summary of 19 international case studies by the International Labour Organisation on preventing stress at work, found that it was possible to make improvements by tailoring changes to specific workplaces. Common features included: appropriate commitment and effort from management; support by management and the workforce; participation of the workforce in planning and implementation; and the creation of trust.

## Proposed change: Building employer demand

**Recommendation: Employer engagement should be individualised to meet the preferences and needs of the individual jobseeker and employer.**

In evidence-based supported employment, employment specialists meet with jobseekers to identify preferences for employment and then look for jobs that match these preferences (Becker et al., 2003). Employment specialists partner with jobseekers and follow their direction when job matching. In a study on the competencies of employment specialists for effective job matching, Glover et al. (2011) found that high-performing employment specialists possess competencies in six domains: time management, advocacy, building partnerships with jobseekers, working as part of a team, face-to-face communication, and networking. Moreover, spending time developing very personalized and collaborative relationships with employers is critical to successful job matching (Becker et al., 2003; Cook et al., 1994; McMahon et al., 1979). Employment specialists should be encouraged to view employers as customers and learn about their businesses and should share how the strengths of jobseekers can meet their hiring needs (Swanson et al., 2008).

## Conclusion: Employment services should be integrated and co-located in disability and specialist support organisations

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Individual Placement and Support is an evidence-based employment model intended for people experiencing mental health conditions and more recently other target populations, including those with disability. IPS principles and practices fit with the proposed changes outlined by the Disability Employment Taskforce and should be seriously considered as a viable framework for the New Disability Employment Services from 2018.

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