

Jobsupport Input re the Inclusive. Accessible. Diverse.

Shaping your new disability employment support program

Consultation paper

Jobsupport welcomes the opportunity to have input into the DES program review. We are pleased to provide input and would be happy to expand on any of the points raised.

Jobsupport is a specialist Disability Employment Service (DES) and arguably has the best open employment outcomes rates in Australia.

Jobsupport specialises in people with a moderate intellectual disability (MID). A person with Down syndrome would be a typical client. The typical client:

- Has attended a special class or special school. In NSW a special class has 10 students, a special education trained teacher and 0.5 of a teachers aide.
- Needs to be travel trained on any new travel route (76% of the 2020 school leavers with MID were unable to use public transport when they left school).

Jobsupport's results and savings to government

Jobsupport's employment outcome rates

- 52-week outcomes by type of disability (December 2017) twice those achieved by the next best service
- The September 2021 Star Ratings showed that every Jobsupport contract was 5 Star.
- As of February 29, 2020 (pre COVID) Jobsupport was supporting 831 clients in open employment:
 - Average wage per week - \$408
 - Average hours per week - 20
 - Average job tenure - 7.7 years

Jobsupport cost savings to Government

The September 2020 Centre for International Economics (CIE) report estimates that Jobsupport's Sydney service saves \$12.8 million recurrent relative to the DSP and NDIS funding participants would receive without open employment. The 40 year present value saving if Jobsupport's results were replicated across Australia is \$1 billion.

The net weekly cost of a Jobsupport participant in the open employment ongoing support phase is only \$13.27. As at 29 February 2020 the average (annual) ongoing support funding for Jobsupport's 837 employed participants was \$9 036 and the average disability support pension offset was \$8 346.

The cost of replacing the client would be \$31,925. The cost of alternate NDIS services if the client was not in employment would be \$16,994 recurrent.

There has been a history of well- intentioned but unsuccessful approaches to achieving open employment for people with MID.

- Prior to the 1986 Disability Services Act this group didn't achieve open employment.
- The 1985 Handicapped Programs review reported that in 1983/84 only 27/9000 people achieved open employment from an ADE. The 2015 DSS DES discussion paper reported 20,000 in ADEs (70% intellectual) with 0.8% achieving open employment.
- The 2001 NSW Disability Census reported 12/1525 people moving from Post School Options (PSO) to open employment. The majority of PSO participants had an intellectual disability.

- The National Centre for Vocational Education Research reported that in 2012-13 only 8.1% of the 12,767 people with an intellectual disability in VET were in open employment six months after the course graduated.
- The DEEWR Evaluation of Disability Employment Services 2010-2013 reported that:
 - Jobsupport achieved two to three times the outcome rate of other providers with MIDL participants.
 - Jobsupport was responsible for 72% of the 26-week 15+ hours per week employment outcomes across Australia.

The DES data reports disappointingly low open employment outcome rates, however, the higher outcomes achieved by a handful of services such as Jobsupport demonstrate that better outcomes are possible.

The DES program has made a serious and praiseworthy attempt to improve open employment services.

- An Employment Services System (ESS) data collection has been introduced.
- An outcome-based performance framework has been established.
- Consequences have been introduced for poor performance. Over 50 per cent of the DES ESS contracts were reallocated in 2013 following a tender process.
- Performance data has been published by disability type for every service.

However, even allowing for the different measurement approaches used over time there appears to be little impact on outcome rates from these measures alone.

DES outcomes over time

Year	13-week Employment Outcome	26-week Employment Outcome
	Per cent	Per cent
January 2010 DEN Capped ¹	38.64	33.67
Dec 2011 – DES-ESS ²	26.80	22.60
January 2013 – DES-ESS	30.50	30.40
December 2014 – DES-ESS ³	28.60	29.10
May 2015 – DES-ESS	27.70	28.30
February 2017 – DES-ESS	29.80	29.20
March 2020 – DES-ESS ⁴	22.4	21.4
January 2022 – DES ESS ⁵	21.2	20.7

Notes: **1.**The DES evaluation used a different cohort methodology and discounted DEN 26-week outcomes by 2.6% to allow for different program rules. **2** The 2010 -13 contract ran from March 2010 and didn't include carry over outcomes from the previous DEN contract. **3** The 2013-18 contract ran from 2013. Outcome KPIs use a 3 year rolling period, however approximately 50% of contracts are new, only run from March 2013. **4** The 2018-2023 contract ran from July 2018 didn't carry over outcomes and the outcome KPIs use a 2 year rolling period. **5** COVID impacted

Source: DEEWR

Change management theory suggests that change only occurs when there is a reason to change. The leading US academic John Kotter identified complacency as the main impediment to change. DES has done a commendable job in introducing consequences for poor performance. The missing ingredient is information on how to improve. A DES review based

on stakeholder opinions won't produce optimal outcomes for people with an intellectual disability because many popular ideas don't work.

The DEEWR *Evaluation of Disability Employment Services 2010-2013 Final Report* recognised that Jobsupport's higher outcomes are achieved because the organisation has put considerable effort into identifying what works for people with a moderate intellectual disability.

Jobsupport's CEO reviewed all the available literature from the early US demonstration projects in 1985 as part of a masters degree. He is on the editorial board for the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* and continues to monitor new literature. The leading programs were visited in 1985 and every few years thereafter.

More recently, Jobsupport commissioned the Rehabilitation Research and Training Centre (RRTC) at Virginia Commonwealth University and the Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Sydney to conduct a worldwide literature review to identify any articles or studies over the last 50 years that included data on what works for achieving open employment outcomes for people with an intellectual disability. Copies of these reports are attached.

Unfortunately, there are significant challenges in identifying what practices work from the existing literature.

- Most articles are opinion pieces that don't include analysis of outcome data.
- The articles that do include outcome data typically target broader populations (that is, a mix of disability types, not just intellectual disability). The impact of an intervention is then reported across the entire population even though it may have only worked for some types of disability.
- Even where disability specific outcome data is provided the description of the actual intervention is typically superficial with the same terms used to refer to quite different approaches across authors. This literature simply does not identify the relevant practical details of the practices studied.

The literature for what works in achieving open employment for the people with an intellectual disability identifies four key components that all need to be present for successful job placement and retention. These are:

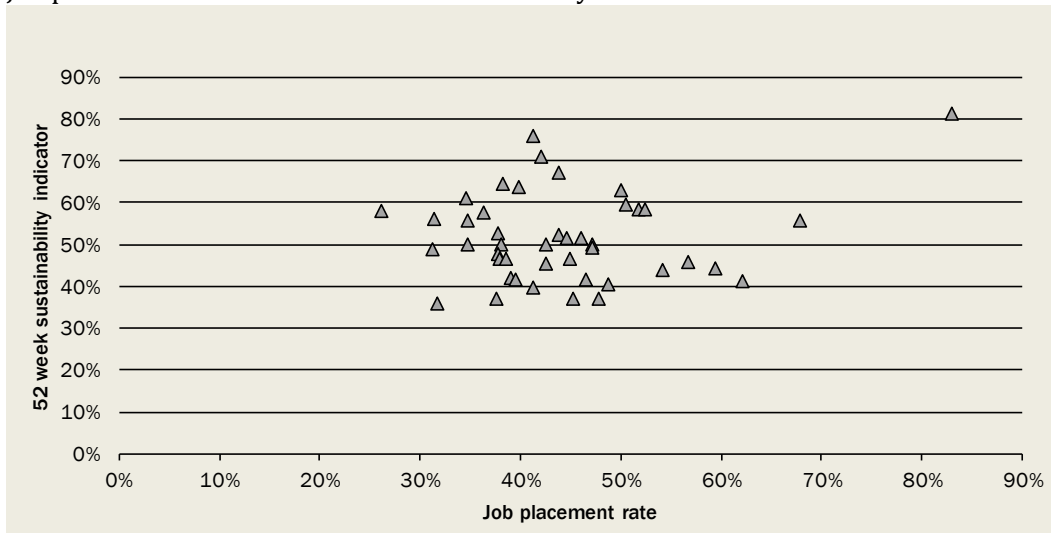
- An assessment process that identifies client strengths and possible weaknesses with a view to matching the person against a job.
- Job search and customisation or job carving to create a job that meets a genuine need for the employer whilst also matching the client's strengths and job preference.
- Systematic instruction based on applied behaviour analysis theory. It was the introduction of systematic instruction including task analysis, prompting and reinforcement that initially demonstrated the employment potential of people with an intellectual disability in the 1970's.
- Ongoing support to meet the changing needs of clients and employers. Ongoing support is much cheaper than replacement and is the area of the program that generates significant savings to Government.

While the literature is clear that these components are all critical, it does not provide information about which approach is best within each component. Hands on investigation is needed to document the approaches used by the services achieving the best outcomes for different populations.

There is currently no information available on the practices used by the best performing services by type of disability.

Indeed, the available data suggests that for most providers, there is little integration between the four components as there is no link between initial placement rates and 52 week job sustainability. This is illustrated in the chart below which indicates a random scatter between initial job placement rates and 52 week outcome rates. A service that is good at one is not necessarily good at the other. (The single outlier with high rates on both axes is Jobsupport)

Job placement rate versus 52 week sustainability indicator



Notes: The 52-week sustainability indicator is the proportion of clients for which the job lasted a year from first starting the job.

Data source: DES-ESS database

The DES reporting of outcomes by disability type allows some broad comparison of outcome rates between services. Examining the latest available data illustrates considerable diversity of results.

For example:

- The job placement rate varies between 25 per cent and 83 per cent, with an average of 45 per cent.
- The 52-week job sustainability rate varies from 36 per cent to 81 per cent, with an average of 52 per cent.

Combining these two rates gives an indication of an *effective* 52-week outcome: the probability that a client commencing with a service will achieve a job that lasts 52-weeks. This probability ranges from 11 per cent to 67 per cent, with an average of 23 per cent.

Thus, a client commencing with the lowest performing service has a one in ten chance of getting and maintaining a job for a year. With the top performing service, this is a two thirds chance. The average, however, is only a one in four chance. In terms of effective outcome rates, there is a twofold difference between the best and second best performer.

The wide diversity of results, and the very low overall outcomes suggest that either:

- Practices that actually work are not understood or disseminated; or
- There are effective (and unintended) barriers to the adoption of best practice; or
- Some combination of these.

The DES data is probably the best in the world and provides a unique opportunity to improve outcomes

The DES database provides an opportunity for outcome improvement. It could be used to identify the best performing services in Australia by type of disability. These services could then be investigated, and detailed information distributed describing how the services operate. Given the diverse range of results, there is an opportunity to undertake careful analysis of actual 'on the ground' practices to discover which approaches are driving the different outcome levels. From this understanding, it would be possible to:

- Disseminate information about what practices work (as distinct from popular approaches)
- Ensure that the policy environment supports practices that actually work.

Improving DES performance will require both a continuation of consequences for poor outcomes (a reason to change) and the investigation, documentation and dissemination of the approaches used by the best performing services by type of disability (a means to improve).

The DES outcome data by type of disability was previously published every six months. A resumption of the publication of this data is important. The data forms a basis for the improvement strategy approach outlined above and is also important to provide a basis for informed choice for DES clients and their employers. An informed market should result in a 'vote with your feet' effect that provides an additional consequence for poor performance.

Aspects of current DES funding and policy are inconsistent with what works. For example:

- Outcome based funding is no longer based on the real cost of achieving outcomes. Inclusion Australia estimated that EA/PPS funding for people with an intellectual disability has been reduced by at 54% since 2010 (24% no indexation and 30.5% risk based funding impact).
- DES ongoing support audits are inappropriate because they require support to be provided on a set schedule instead of allowing providers to provide support based on employer and client needs. Ongoing support audits have been criticised by provider and disability peaks, academics, employers, clients/families and services providers.
- The defunding of ongoing support outside of designated flexible periods for clients who are employed but not required to attend work because of COVID is counterproductive. People with a moderate intellectual disability require support if they are to resume employment attendance and avoid costly replacement. People with an intellectual disability have been particularly disadvantaged in office settings where other staff are working from home but their job can't be done remotely.

It will be important that the DES taskforce identifies the best performing services by type of disability and ensures that funding and policy is consistent with what works and doesn't unintentionally break what is working. Funding or policy inconsistent with what is currently working well doesn't make sense.

The Achilles heel of outcome-based funding is creaming. A separate funding stream should be established for DSP or NDIS eligible individuals

Jobsupport supports an outcome-based funding approach for DES services. Every funding approach has its difficulties because you get what you pay for. Paying for inputs such as

billable hours incentivises service provision and dependency rather than outcomes. Paying for outcomes incentivises a concentration on the clients most likely to achieve outcomes i.e. creaming.

Case Based Funding was originally informed by Dan O'Brian's Milestone Payments work in Oklahoma. His view is that it is impossible to eliminate creaming and the best way of lessening the ability of services to cream was to create a separate stream focused on clients requiring higher support.

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