



# Western Australian Association for Mental Health Submission New Disability Employment Services Model





**Contents**

**1. About WAAMH ..... 3**

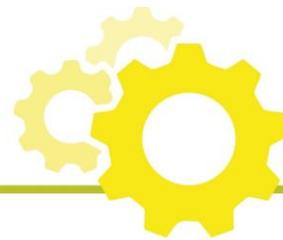
**2. Individual Placement and Support and IPS WORKS ..... 3**

**3. Responses to key Questions ..... 4**

**4. Contact ..... 7**

**5. References ..... 8**

**6. Appendix A: IPS Core Practice Principles ..... 9**



## 1. About WAAMH

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) welcomes the opportunity to submit responses to the New Disability Employment Services model – Consultation Paper.

[WAAMH](#) is the peak body for the community mental health sector in Western Australia and exists to champion mental wellbeing, recovery, and citizenship. WAAMH recognises a continuum of supports built on principles of human rights, recovery, co-production, personalisation and choice, social inclusion, and cultural connection – are essential to the promotion, protection, and restoration of mental wellbeing. WAAMH promotes and advocates for further develop this network for supports.

WAAMH's memberships comprises of community managed organisations providing mental health services, programs or supports, people and families with lived experience of mental health issues and suicide with whom WAAMH engaged in genuine partnership. WAAMH also engages a wide network of collaborative relationships at a state and national level with individuals, organisations and community members which share its values and objectives.

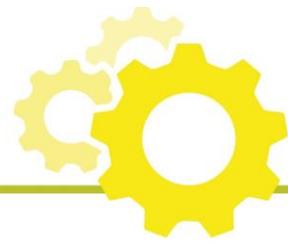
WAAMH recognises the importance of employment to the prevention of poor mental health as well as to a person's recovery from mental health challenges. Employment provides important opportunities for social connection and valued social roles. It also improves economic security which empowers people to address other needs in a sustainable way, including housing which is known to be a contributor to mental health and well-being. It is for this reason that WAAMH made a commitment to investing in our organisation's capacity to promote and implement Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in Australia.

## 2. Individual Placement and Support and IPS WORKS

IPS is an internationally utilised and evidence-based model of employment support. Research has demonstrated that the IPS model developed by Drake and Becker (USA) is the most effective approach of assisting people experiencing disability and mental health challenges in achieving employment and education outcomes. The IPS model has been evaluated in 28 randomised controlled trials in various international settings (Bond, 2020). In each controlled trial both in Australia and internationally, all showed results that more than doubled the employment outcomes for people with disability compared to other vocational programs. (Brinchmann et al., 2019).

[IPS WORKS](#) is a dedicated unit within WAAMH. IPS WORKS offers practical support and training to organisations that are implementing or want to implement an IPS program within their services. We offer a range of technical support services. We specialise in consultancy, the customised development of IPS program tools and templates, training, and evaluation of IPS programs.

We recognise that paid employment is a basic human need and endorse the IPS model as person-centred, fostering hope and promoting social inclusion. At WAAMH we understand that employment can reduce the negative impacts of living with a mental health condition and disability by increasing self-worth, alleviating symptoms, and increasing satisfaction and well-being.



### 3. Responses to key Questions

WAAMH is responding to the key questions 3, 4 and 5 of the New Disability Employment Support Model – Consultation paper. WAAMH’s response to these questions will be based around IPS core practice principles and how IPS principles fit in the broader Disability Employment Services (DES).

IPS employment support is based on the participant’s preference and motivation to seek employment. IPS can be better suited for participants (both young people and adults) with disability. In the IPS model, integration with the mental health treatment team is a key to assisting participants remain in employment and/or education long term. For those participants who may not have ongoing regular treating mental health professionals or when the IPS programs are integrated with other support services, IPS programs are integrated with those referring program which can include housing support, drug and alcohol or youth services. Building capacity alongside the mental health practitioners whilst focusing on increasing employability skills is key to increasing the self-confidence, self-esteem and overall health and well-being of participants. Positive work and school experience have been reported as important factors for young people not only because they lead to independence, but also because they allow for engagement in the typical activities of evolving adulthood and strengthen their self-esteem, sense of belonging and lower stigma (Lloyd & Waghorn, 2007).

The IPS model of employment support is based on following eight core practice principles:

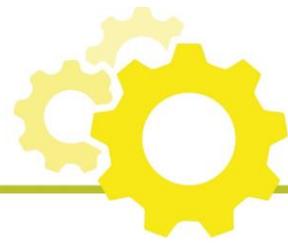
- Competitive employment is the primary goal
- Integrated with mental health treatment
- Client Preferences
- Benefits Counselling
- Rapid Job Search
- Time Unlimited Follow Along Supports and
- Systematic Job Development
- Zero Exclusion

*Refer to Appendix A for additional information on IPS Core Practice Principles*

#### **Employment services and supports for people with disability (adults and young people): -**

Supports should:

- Be individualised and fit for purpose for each individual’s disability and support needs;
- Include natural supports such as friends and family as a key part of the ongoing planning and support;
- Provided in collaboration with their treating health care professionals including GPs where applicable;
- Be holistic and include multiple stakeholders whom each provide unique support to the participant in each area of their life. NDIS supports could be used to meet many elements;
- Have a set plan based around participant’s preference rather than putting them into “any” job. Job plans should be created with them that takes into



- consideration their life circumstances, strengths, challenges and needs; and
- Build a genuine rapport with all participants and ensure support is offered from the beginning of the employment relationship to when the participant decides to exit the employment program.

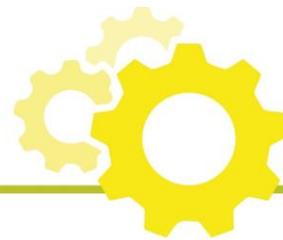
Experience also suggests that IPS is helpful in modelling for mental health clinicians that employment is possible for people who they have identified as having limited opportunities for recovery and employment participation and increasing their beliefs about what is possible for people with persistent mental health challenges.

In addition to the support services being personalised to each individualised needs, the following supports could also be beneficial for a young person to gain and maintain suitable work:

- Practical skills such as – getting Tax File Number (TFN), bank account, understanding workplace rights, superannuation, reading payslips and employment contracts;
- Translating theoretical knowledge into everyday practice;
- Interpersonal communication skills including workplace boundaries, personal information sharing or not sharing;
- Support around understanding the workforce and the industry in which they want to gain work;
- Support to meet and engage with potential employers to understand how they might fit in to the work environment as well as identify what steps they need to take to build their employability;
- Ongoing support with the assistance from both the employment specialist and mental health providers; and
- Option to explore apprenticeships and traineeships opportunities.

**Education and Training Opportunities:** - Any training and education should be based on the participant's career and vocational goals. In addition to any industry specific trainings and education courses, other life skills trainings such as assertive communication skills, sharing sensitive information (disclosure), workplace rights and discrimination, benefits planning would be beneficial for people with disability. The IPS model of employment support includes support around disclosure and benefits planning as part of the support services in addition to the traditional job search and resume writing. Young people should be encouraged to pursue formal education that aligns with their long-term career goals.

Employment Specialists should have sufficient time to engage and develop relationships with these stakeholders on behalf of the participant. The IPS model of employment support encompasses this collaborative work with any other stakeholders that are involved in supporting the participant as a part of the service delivery model. The best practice in the IPS model of employment support is for the Employment Specialists to have smaller caseload to allow them to have adequate time to dedicate to providing tailored services to the young person and provide supports in the community, as well as make joint appointments with other stakeholders such as Centrelink worker or housing officer including treating health professional is encouraged. Such a holistic approach reduces disengagement and encourages the participant to access supports to help them move forward.



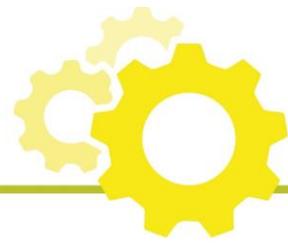
Young people need to be provided with flexibility in how they achieve their desired outcomes of employment and/or education. Some may require assistance with work experience to build on their capacity and skills. Schools need to employ a school psychologist and qualified guidance counsellors to assist with identifying career goals and linking in with appropriate training providers and employers. Guidance should be provided with assisting young people with accessing and securing traineeships/apprenticeships.

**Who should provide these supports:** - These supports should be provided by suitably employment specialists who are trained in elements of practice that are essential to supporting people with mental health issues. These include trauma informed care, recovery-oriented practices, mental health first aid, cultural awareness, motivational interviewing in addition to the usual skills in communication, resume writing and interpersonal skills.

**Support for Employer – Good practice:** A systematic Job Development approach is used in the IPS employment program is an example of a good practice of employer engagement. In IPS, participants are encouraged to participate in job search activities as much as possible. Most of the employer engagement is carried out face to face and the relationship is built over several contacts rather than the traditional ‘reverse marketing’ approach that is commonly used by the DES providers. Job development in IPS is based on the ‘three cups of tea’ methodology which was originated from the Balti proverb *“The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honoured guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family”* which basically translates to you have to have three interactions with someone before they will “trust”, “buy” or “hire” (Shift Management, 2021). The employment specialist will also be able to work with the employer to job carve a position fits the participant skills, strengths, and abilities. Often the role is modified and customised so it can be successfully performed by the participant while meeting the needs of the employer. This can lead to improved productivity and increased confidence for the participant. Job carving for participants could also mean making reasonable adjustments to allow flexibility in work hours to meet the needs of the participant and employer.

**Adaptability of IPS Model:** - The IPS model can be applied in any setting and can be scaled up to larger service areas. Because IPS can be integrated into existing service systems rather than requiring a specific new service system of its own, it represents significant value for money given its effectiveness. International evidence demonstrates the variety of settings in which IPS can be delivered to respond to the unique needs of participants including First Nations people, veterans, and people who are experiencing homelessness. Here in Western Australia, WAAMH has worked with a community housing provider here in Western Australia to design an IPS approach that would integrate IPS into the community housing service and help to increase people’s confidence about gaining and sustaining employment and entering the private housing market.

One example of IPS’s adaptability is the IPS Youth Program which is currently being delivered through 50 headspace sites across Australia. The Department of Social Services (DSS) is currently funding this roll out. The IPS Program originally commenced as a trial in 14 sites which was expanded and extended to 10 additional sites in 2019 before being transitioned into Program in 2021 and extended to 26

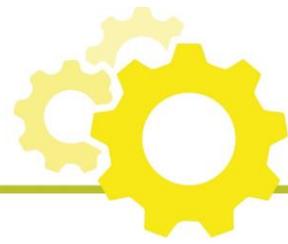


additional sites to make up the total of 50 headspace sites ("Individual Placement and Support Program (IPS) Program | Department of Social Services, Australian Government", 2021). The mid trial evaluation completed by KPMG in 2019 found that the 43% of the individuals accessing IPS Program had achieved an employment and/or education outcomes. In addition to the improved outcomes, increase in confidence, self-esteem, and resilience along with an improved ability to seek employment or education opportunities were also noted as a direct result of having been in the IPS program (KPMG Consulting, 2019).

The Productivity Commission Report published in 2020 recommended for the IPS model of employment support to be extended beyond its current limited application through a staged rollout to potentially all State and Territory Government community mental health services, involving co-location of IPS employment support services. WAAMH supports this recommendation to implement IPS across all mental health services.

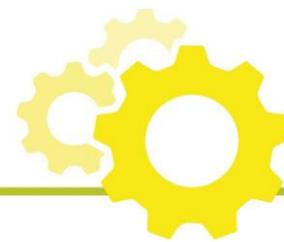
#### **4. Contact**

For further information contact Roshani Shrestha, Acting Program Manager – individual Placement & Support at [rshrestha@waamh.org.au](mailto:rshrestha@waamh.org.au) or 08 6246 3000.



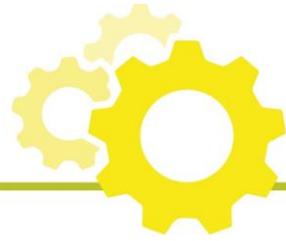
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## 6. Appendix A: IPS Core Practice Principles

- 1. Competitive employment is the primary goal:** Employment Specialists support consumers to secure competitive jobs within the open labour market, paid at least minimum wage or the same rate as others for performing the same duties.
- 2. Integrated with mental health treatment:** IPS services are embedded with clinical support. Employment specialists are integrated into mental health treatment teams to ensure coordinated services for individuals who wish to find paid work. Fully integrated services enable the employment specialist and members of the clinical mental health team to work together and share information and ideas for the benefit and recovery of the individual.
- 3. Zero exclusion:** All individuals with severe and enduring mental ill-health who are personally motivated to find competitive employment have equal opportunity to access the IPS program. Eligibility is not based on diagnosis, symptoms, work history, drug or alcohol use or cognitive impairment. Motivation to find a job and self-belief around ability to do this are the best predictors of who will successfully make a move back to work.
- 4. Client Preferences:** Supports and job search activities are based upon client preferences. A person is supported to explore their interests so that a positive job match can be made with the anticipation of obtaining a job of choice that leads to better job satisfaction and length of job tenure.
- 5. Benefits counselling:** Work incentives planning, or benefits counselling refers to job seekers being offered comprehensive, accurate, timely and individualised financial information to make informed choices regarding how their income support payments may be affected or how potential earnings may impact on benefit or support entitlements. A return to work may be daunting if income support is at risk and fear of losing allowances is a major reason why individuals may not want to seek employment.
- 6. Rapid job search:** There is an immediate focus on identifying individual job goals and beginning the process of job search within 30 days of program entry; as opposed to completing lengthy pre-employment assessments, training, and work experience. Rapid job search capitalises on a person's motivation to find competitive employment.
- 7. Systematic job development:** Employment specialists systematically visit employers, based on job seeker preferences, to build relationships. By meeting face-to-face over multiple visits, employment specialists learn about the work environment and the employers' work needs and hiring preferences. They also find out about vacancies they may not have been aware of. They gather information about the nature of job opportunities and assess whether it could be a good job fit for jobseekers on the IPS program.
- 8. Time unlimited support:** Individualised, appropriate, time unlimited follow-along support should be offered to a person after they commence competitive employment. Employment specialists work alongside the consumer and their wider



circle of support (where permission is given) to ensure that a plan is in place identifying wrap around supports, especially natural workplace supports. This can ensure job placements are successful longer-term. Consumers should be supported to become as independent as possible in their vocational roles, whilst ensuring individualised support and assistance can be provided as needed.