**DSS Consultations - Disability Employment Support Model**

* 1. **Who should be able to access a disability employment support program?**
* The DSS definition of disability for eligible DES jobseekers continues to confuse jobseekers and employers alike as well as the wider community. Jobseekers linked with a DES Provider, when living with injury or health condition likely to have a functional impact of greater than 6 months, frequently state that they feel at a disadvantage when their DES Provider engages with potential employers. Jobseekers spoke of feeling that they were forced to choose to accept extra support from a DES Provider whilst being labelled a having a “disability” or receiving inadequate support from a JobActiv Provider to ensure no label.
* A single employment service model, with escalating levels of servicing, allowing for flexibility to move between levels dependant on need at time, that embraces all Australians requiring employment supports, would immediately remove many of the barriers and challenges faced by jobseekers and employers.
  1. **Should a future disability employment support program include employment pathways such as casual and part-time employment, community engagement, voluntary work and short-term unpaid work experience?**
* All jobseekers should have access to supports required to build capacity to secure sustainable employment including short term paid/unpaid work experience, voluntary work and part-time work. All forms of work build a jobseeker’s capacity, skills, knowledge and experience and people with disability have often experienced limited opportunities to access these pathways. All jobseekers need to be supported with strong frameworks to ensure fair & equitable conditions free from exploitation.
  1. **How can a future disability employment program better align with other programs such as the New Employment Services Model and the Community Development Program?**
* By having collaborative programs available to all job seekers
  1. **What is the role of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in supporting employment pathways, and how can this complement a future disability employment support program?**

NDIS supports in employment are primarily delivered in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). Around 20,000 NDIS participants work in ADEs. With the supports in employment pricing changes, participants can use these supports in a wider range of employment settings, not just in ADEs. On 1 July 2020, the NDIS introduced new pricing for supports in employment that gives participants greater choice and control about where and how they work, who provides their supports, and creates new opportunities for providers.

Supports in employment are primarily delivered in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). Around 20,000 NDIS participants work in ADEs.

With the supports in employment pricing changes, participants can use these supports in a wider range of employment settings, not just in ADEs.

The new pricing also means that while participants will continue to receive the support they need, providers now claim these supports in a unique way.

From 1 July 2020, funding for these supports moved from a participant’s Capacity Building budget, into their Core budget. This will happen as they receive new or renewed plans.

Participants can use their plan funding for frequent and ongoing on-the-job employment supports.

They can use these supports in any workplace they choose, including government and non-government organisations, an ADE, social enterprises, micro-businesses, or in self-employment or a family run business.

 As with other group-based Core supports, the NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits list a single unit price for each different time of the day or day of the week.

This means that providers will claim all supports against the appropriate one-to-one support items by dividing the time spent with the work group equally across all members of the group.

The NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) uses 3 things to determine the budget for supports in employment:

1. reports and assessments
2. participant consultation
3. participant employment goals

Capacity-building employment supports are for participants who need time-limited capacity building supports to help them pursue their employment goals. In an ADE setting this may include:

* interventions to reduce complex behaviours and barriers to sustaining employment
* skills development to transition from a current role to a new role either in the ADE or with a new employer
* developing a career plan.

The NDIS funds participants through their NDIS plan to purchase supports. It does not fund providers directly. Supports in employment funding is available to anyone who meets NDIS access requirements, has a goal to work and who, due to the nature and impact of their disability, will require ongoing, frequent on-the-job support to pursue and achieve their employment goals.

In determining the funds in a participant’s plan, the NDIA applies the principle of reasonable and necessary decision making under the NDIS Act. The NDIA considers the participant’s employment goals, the number of hours the participant is working (or would like to work), the impact of the participant’s disability and the level of support or supervision the participant requires to engage in work and complete their work tasks.

In implementing their plan, participants will be encouraged to discuss their employment support needs with their provider, including skills development or desire for job changes. Plan budgets can be used flexibly to assist with managing changes.

Supports in employment are for participants who are employed and need extra support because of their disability. Supports may be provided one-to-one or within a group-based setting, complementing existing or expected employer supports. Supports are claimed according to the intensity and frequency of supports delivered to achieve employment goals. Supports can include:

* on-the-job assessments related to the impact of a person’s disability on their ability to work
* Job customisation
* on-the-job training and intermittent support with daily work tasks
* Direct supervision and/or group-based support to enable meaningful participation at work
* Supports to manage disability-related behaviour or complex needs at work
* non-face-to-face activities that are related to supporting a participant’s employment, considering a participant’s disability. Physical assistance and personal care delivered in the workplace should be claimed from a participant’s Core – Assistance with Daily Life budget. These supports are provided individually to participants in a range of environments, including the workplace. Supports like managing relationships outside of work, financial and housing issues or other daily living support needs might impact a participant’s attendance and focus on work. supports are outside the scope of employment funding and, if needed, should be discussed with a planner or LAC (LOCAL AREA COORDINATION), to be included in a participant’s plan.

***(How can this complement a future disability employment support program?*** )

The main support would be in a program designed to break down the barriers and perceptions of mainstream employers and to build capacity in for mainstream to be able to support people who have a disability, supplemented by the NDIS.

Other ways the NDIS can support the DES program –

* Improving the delivery model so that participant and employer needs are better met
* Creating an integrated government approach to the provision of disability and employment support
* Addressing the sustainability of the DES program caseload and expenditure
* Ultimately, improving the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disability.
* Prior to NDIS Plan meetings, employment specific meetings between NDIS participants, Local Area Coordinators, School Counsellors, DES Consultants to co-design NDIS Plans, DES Plans, School plans with clear employment pathways and goals.
* Flexibility for concurrent mainstream services, where relevant, to be seen as strategies to build capacity as opposed to duplication of supports

An increased focus on the development of strong collaborative relationships between the NDIS Planners, Local Area Coordinators and DES Providers will build the capacity of people with a disability to successfully transition into suitable, sustainable mainstream employment. Key to on-going, sustainable employment will be the continued collaboration between services and participants ensuring appropriate, tailored levels of support through-out the participants employment journey.

* 1. **How can the assessment process be improved to connect people with disability to the right employment services?**
* Focus on ability rather than deficits
* Incorporate a functional capacity assessment by an independent OT to ensure that the PPT is not over or under employed (Work capacity)
* Ensure that the PPT is given the choice to choose the type of service they require
  1. **What should be considered during the assessment process when determining**

**support required to help a person reach their work potential?**

* their employment capacity and capability
* do informal supports have the capacity and capability to support the person in reaching their work potential.
* resources required to assist the person reach their work potential
* experience of employment pathway
  1. **How can the assessment process stream an individual with disability toward the right type of employment support, depending on need and goal?**
  + Assessing the persons employment functional capacity
  + SMART Goal setting
  1. **Are there different assessments needed at different stages of an individual’s work journey, as they prepare for work, find and maintain employment, and progress their career?**

Ongoing check including

* + Assessing the persons employment functional capacity
  + SMART Goal setting – review
  1. **What has been your experience of receiving employment support from a DES or other employment services provider? What was good about the support? What improvements would you recommend?**
* Improvement – person centred approach
* Reach 5 stars for the person not the organisation for meeting outcomes
* Staff skilled in providing employment services and options available for the person to build capacity, not just ticking boxes to meet their KPI
  1. **What type of services and support would best help a person with disability find and keep a suitable job, and progress their career? Who should provide this support?**
* Ongoing support – check in style option
* Who to provide the support – An Employment Coordinator who is funded to support the person – allocated 12 hrs per year and able to apply for further funding if required due to change in circumstance?
  1. **What education and training opportunities help people with disability overcome the entry barriers to employment?**
* Tailored 1:1 holistic approach- every client is different, stop trying to ‘put everyone in a box’
* Variety of education options, to suit the individual, and that meet their mutual obligations while participating. Requiring a PWD do complete mutual obligations on top of training/short courses etc causes stress, confusion and can often exacerbate their current disability/injury/illness resulting in medical suspensions and clients not participating or building capacity at all and continuing dependence on Centrelink payments
* Upskilling and capacity building training as well as qualifications run through RTO’s. – Digital basic courses, confidence building courses, ESL courses, resume building, dress for success, understanding workplace rights and work requirements, cert I,II, III, IV, etc.- Tailored to the client, every client should not be completing basic courses, should be based on experience etc.
* White cards, forklift and other short licensing courses should be funded by providers as well as above basic courses, not just courses that produce outcomes.
* Education should be considered a suitable activity not an ‘extra’ and should meet client mutual obligations while participating. Participants are current discouraged, or not provided any support or assistance in completing additional training that doesn’t lead to an immediate outcome. Resulting in more and more clients being placed in low skill jobs, still relying on Centrelink payments, putting further burden on the system, costing the government additional funds in both Centrelink and DES outcome payments. Rather than building clients capacity to gain more suitable long-term employment, paying higher wages and therefore less reliance DES and Centrelink payments
* The current system encourages DES providers to place clients into roles that they will continue to receive some Centrelink payment, as easier for DES providers to claim outcome payments. Rather than placing clients into more suitable roles and building rapport with clients to produce their outcome evidence, costing the government more and more funding
  1. **How can people receiving disability employment services also be supported to address other barriers to employment (e.g. health service or housing assistance)?**
* Ensure employment services are funded to deliver supports to address all barriers to employment ie secure, long term housing, childcare, mental health supports as well as having outcomes linked to successfully addressing these barriers.
* Fund employment service providers to support jobseekers to seek, gain and sustain employment through realistic goal setting ie achieving sustainable employment goals may require multiple steps including training/retraining, study, career coaching relevant and responsive to economic and labour market opportunities and contemplation of multiples roles before goal achievement
* Providers funded to provide a tailored, individualised approach with to build capacity
  1. **What employment support do mature age people with disability need to successfully gain or retain employment, or transition into new employment or a new career?**
* Ability to offer employers lower, on-going wage subsidies for the life-time of mature aged employee’s
* Provide funding for training/courses/tickets required to reskill especially if unable to return to same field due to age, injury, disability, illness.
* Ensure mutual obligations are met if participating in the above
* Big difference between what providers offer and supply, some are more focused on outcomes and bottom line than the client. Running this service in house would remove this concern.
  1. **What support do young people with disability need to successfully move out of education into suitable work?**
* Understanding and confidence building
* Better funding level assistance, due to lowered BM, clients often level 1 or 2 meaning providers simply refuse to purchase/assist with anything
* Majority of young people are new to the workforce- help build capacity and remove anxiety associated with working for the first time- ensure they know their working rights, courses on self-esteem, working requirements and rights
* Wrap around case management, to assist with other life skills or complications they may be facing- i.e housing
* Longer term service and ongoing support to support client to build skills and capacity once in the workplace until able to find and maintain employment without Centrelink payment supports.
  1. **What best practices from existing DES or other employment programs help young people with disability find and maintain a job?**
* Set realistic, tailored Mutual Obligation tasks
* On-going support
* still needs improvement
  1. **Should there be assistance to prepare young people to think about work much earlier than after they leave school?**
* Conversations about a lifelong commitment to work need to start at the beginning of high school to support students and parents/caregivers well before high school has ceased. Schools should be encouraged and supported to build strong relationships with employment service providers as well as traineeship/apprenticeship groups and NEIS providers to develop school based employment focused programs including work experience, voluntary work, part-time work, micro enterprises, traineeships/apprenticeships as well as the practical skills of resume writing and interview techniques. Employment service providers would be able to provide a level of delivery flexibility to include out-of-school hours ie school holidays and before/after-school hours to ensure the involvement of parents/caregivers.
* Students with disability should have access to the same part-time job opportunities as students who do not have a disability and DES providers have the specialised knowledge to support these students to achieve suitable work.
* Disability Units within high schools should not be able to access ADE’s for long term unpaid work experience opportunities for their students – this practise is a conflict of interest and limits the ability of students and parents to explore all available options. After 6 – 24 months of weekly work experience, most students engaged in this practise will transition to paid work within the ADE after leaving school without having explored other options. Whilst ADE’s provide a valuable option for some people with disability, schools should be tasked with ensuring students have access to multiple experiences in order to exercise choice and control
  1. **How can disability employment services work better with the education system to enhance employment prospects for young people?**
* Provide school based employment programs that include on-site DES providers, traineeship/apprenticeship groups and NEIS providers
* Embed an understanding within the education system that the outcome of education is the ability of all to seek, gain and sustain employment
  1. **What are the most important things that can be done to build an employer’s confidence to employ a person with disability?**
* Ensure on-going support available to employers and employee’s to resolve barriers and challenges
* Support employers to recognise benefits of employing people with disability
* Clear communication of the functional impact of the disability on the role and strategies to reduce or eliminate the impacts
* An action plan developed in consultation with the jobseeker and employer identifying potential risks and barriers with clearly aligned strategies to address issues as they arise
  1. **What services and supports does a disability employment support service need to offer employers to enable them to recruit people with disability, maintain their employment and promote career growth?**
* On-going support to manage barriers
* Ability to link and engage employer’s with mainstream & community supports to confidently manage their workforce ie Job Access
  1. **What are examples of good practice of employer engagement and employer-led initiatives that have been shown to improve employment outcomes for people with disability? How could these be scaled in the disability employment program?**
  2. **What other information, services and supports do employers need to support employees with disability?**
* Linkages and access to key Peak bodies to support employers build workforce understanding of specific disabilities ie mental health, brain injury, multiple sclerosis etc
  1. **What specific assistance or flexibilities would better support people with disability to meet their mutual obligation requirements?**
* DES provider and jobseeker co-design individualised, capacity building action plans that support a tailored approach to meeting mutual obligation requirements
* These plans would be regularly reviewed and up-dated to reflect achievement of agreed actions, removal of actions due to changed circumstances and setting of new actions
* Such action plans would include all forms of participation and engagement ie voluntary work, work experience, training/study, personal growth activities or other such activities required to sustain employment ie secure housing, supported transition of children to out-of-school hours care
  1. **How should a future program consider other forms of participation and engagement, such as voluntary work or community engagement?**
  2. **How could the future funding arrangements ensure services across a continuum of work readiness, placement and retention are tailored to the needs of the participant?**
* Consideration of funding for outcomes other than employment outcomes
  1. **What are the right pricing and funding arrangements, balancing provider viability with the cost of delivering high quality services to participants and employers?**
  2. **How could the future funding model be adapted to recognise changes in the labour market and types of employment available in the modern Australian economy?**
  3. **How can service quality and expertise be rewarded and balanced against quantity of outcomes?**
  4. **How could funding arrangements for ongoing support be improved to ensure supports and services are tailored to the needs of the participant and the employer?**
  5. **What do good providers currently do to support people with disability into work?**
  6. **How should an effective and efficient competitive provider market be structured and how should business be allocated?**
  7. **How can the future program settings encourage and reward innovation and continuous improvement? What works well in the current program?**
  8. **What arrangements should be in place for market regulation and quality assurance of services?**
  9. **What legal model would be most appropriate to manage the terms and conditions of the agreement between Government and disability employment services providers?**
  10. **What is needed to lift workforce capability and the quality of the workforce delivering disability employment services and supports for both participants and employers?**
* A strong framework that sets clear expectations but also flexible enough to encourage and celebrate innovative approaches
  1. **Is there a market need for specialist providers (disability/industry/age cohorts) that would increase employment opportunities?**
* Specialist knowledge embedded within generalist services reduces the “silo” effect of having specialist providers. Specialist staff within generalist teams also support building the capacity and upskilling of all team membersas well as ensuring that job seekers who may multiple cohort criteria have access to all required supports. At times, specialist staff within generalist teams can experience feelings of being isolated and this can be overcome by the formation of regional specialist alliances to support sharing of skills, knowledge and experiences as well developing networks to facilitate strong communication.
  1. **What will success look like for:**
     1. **people with disability**
* when people with disability have full access and support to economic participation that meets their needs
  + 1. **the community**
* when our communities have an expectation that economic participation is for all regardless of ability, age, gender,
  + 1. **employers**
* when employers
  + 1. **service providers**
    2. **Government**
  1. **What data do we need to know if the program has been effective?**
* Have data that quantifies if employers have been able to independently adjust their internal recruitment strategies to recognise the advantages of employing people with disability, after positive experiences with a DES Provider?
  1. **How can people with disability, employers and providers help to measure and report on the performance of the new program?**
* Build the capacity of all stakeholders to recognise what successful outcomes look like
* Provide all stakeholders with multiple ways to provide feedback ie digital surveys, verbal surveys, F2F/virtual feedback sessions, F2F/Virtual forums
* Regular written and electronic feedback to all stakeholders of feedback outcomes to encourage an on-going feedback loop
* Easily accessible Compliments, Comments and Complaints
* Ensure multiple outcome measures available for feedback ie social outcomes, employment outcomes for jobseekers as well as carers and family, improved school attendance for young people supporting family members with disability
  1. **What do people with disability and employers need to make an informed choice to select the best provider for their needs and how should this information be made available?**
* Access to unbiased information from trusted sources.
* Disability Units within high schools should not be able to access ADE’s for long term unpaid work experience opportunities for their students – this practise is a conflict of interest and limits the ability of students and parents to explore all available options. After 6 – 24 months of weekly work experience, most students engaged in this practise will transition to paid work within the ADE after leaving school without having explored other options. Whilst ADE’s provide a valuable option for some people with disability, schools should be tasked with ensuring students have access to multiple experiences in order to exercise choice and control