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| **NIAA Input - New Disability Employment Support Model** | |
| Question no | Comments |
| 6  6.1  6.2 | **6. How do we best tailor mutual obligation requirements to increase the likelihood of people with disability finding work in the future?**  **6.1. What specific assistance or flexibilities would better support people with disability to meet their mutual obligation requirements?**  **6.2. How should a future program consider other forms of participation and engagement, such as voluntary work or community engagement?**  NIAA notes that the document states that ‘Currently, people eligible for disability employment services include those with a disability, injury or health condition that will last more than 6 months’.  Assuming that addiction fits within the above definition, it could be considered that undertaking alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation could count as a reasonable form of mutual obligation because it would increase the likelihood of people with disability finding work in the future, in this case people with an addiction disability. |
| 1.1  2.1  3.2  4.2  5.1  7.1  8.1  8.6  9.4 | **1.1. Who should be able to access a disability employment support program?**  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers with a disability who have complex support needs should be explicitly identified as a priority cohort for this program.  There is a higher prevalence of disability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples than non-Indigenous Australians.  Almost half (45%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15 years and over live with one or more disabilities or restrictive long-term health conditions, according to the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report (2020). The report further states that across all age groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience higher rates of disability than  non-Indigenous people. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the rate of co-occurring disabilities is 2.5 disability types per person. This means every person experiencing one disability type will most likely be living with an additional one or two other types of disability.  Additionally, rates of mental and psychological distress occur at five times the rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability compared to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. DSS could consider NESM specialist license arrangements for priority cohorts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ex-offenders.  **2.1. How can the assessment process be improved to connect people with disability to the right employment services?**  NIAA suggests reviewing the assessment tools and providing additional, targeted training to assessors to ensure that they are culturally appropriate, sensitive and can effectively assess the needs of those people with disability from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.  Note: DESE is exploring options for online cultural competency training for employment service providers and employers. If this program progresses, there could be opportunity to extend to DES providers and employers of DES participants]  **3.2. 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?**  This question notes that ‘appropriate job matching and culture fit are linked to participants achieving long-term employment outcomes’.  The consultation paper could highlight that a culturally appropriate workplace is particularly important for Indigenous Australians.  Support currently available under DES does not take into account broader/additional barriers and issues experienced by some job-seekers with access to other services and support required to achieve sustainable employment outcomes.  DSS is encouraged to include in DES intensive case management, strong support for target groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers with disability & complex needs to address barriers and challenges. Hurdles exist for those with multiple and complex needs who require intensive assistance with navigating welfare systems such as housing, health and other systems to achieve effective and sustainable employment outcomes. Support should also include long-term mentoring (beyond 26 weeks and by appropriately trained mentors) to best support sustainable employment outcomes.  NIAA’s Remote Employment Programs & Implementation Branch (responsible for the Community Development Program (CDP)) is interested in seeing the results of the consultation process, as information gathered will likely be relevant to CDP (and the new Remote Engagement Program) and services provided to job seekers with disability in remote Australia.  **4.2 Should there be assistance to prepare young people to think about work much earlier than after they leave school?**  The recent evaluation of the NIAA funded TAEG-School Based Traineeships Program found that working with student trainees to provide work experience, qualifications, life skills and mentoring gave them an advantage in competing for employment ([Evaluation of the TAEG-School Based Traineeships Program 2016-19 Final Report (niaa.gov.au)](https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/evaluation-taeg-school-based-traineeships-program-2016-19.pdf)). NIAA would encourage DSS to provide assistance (including mentoring, career advice, and targeted training) through DES for students with a disability.  **5.1 What are the most important things that can be done to build an employer’s confidence to employ a person with disability?**  Ensuring culturally safe workplaces are critical to the recruitment, retention and promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers, including those with a disability.  NIAA encourages DSS to work with service providers and commitments from DES-supported workplaces to ensure they are culturally safe and culturally appropriate. This should include the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in the co-design and development of any support.  NIAA reinforces the need for employment strategies to be culturally aware, respectful and effective at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provide access to a service safe from discrimination. A culturally safe environment is created when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ experiences are believed and validated, their cultures are centred and valued in service decisions and delivery, they feel welcomed and they do not experience any form of racism.  Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) is the foundation for physical and mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Employment support and potential employers should be aware of the impacts of SEWB on successful employment outcomes.   * Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples may experience disability in different ways to other population groups. The efficacy of a support program that does not understand or reflect the cultural needs and differences of the population it is set up to assist may be compromised. * The program would benefit from having an Indigenous-focused team or workforce that can meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability or mental health concerns   Noting the intersection between disability and mental health, NIAA suggests that a disability employment program could also act as a touch point to identifying those currently in distress and providing appropriate referrals to mental health support services.  **7.1. 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?**  NIAA encourages DSS to include special incentives for providers who achieve positive outcomes for those job-seekers with disability who have complex support requirements. The funding model should appropriately recompense those providers who spend that additional time (resulting in increased service costs to providers) with clients (job-seekers) to achieve better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts which often involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers with disability.  **8.1. How should an effective and efficient competitive provider market be structured and how should business be allocated?**  It is important that Indigenous organisations are selected as part of the provider market. In addition, mandatory cultural training and cultural competency performance indicators should also be factored into the design of the DES program.  **8.6. Is there a market need for specialist providers (disability/industry/age cohorts) that would increase employment opportunities?**  It is important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are selected as part of the provider market/panel of providers (and that the IPP is applied). We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer to be serviced by Indigenous organisations which in turn are more likely to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.  **9.4. 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?**  In line with Closing the Gap Priority Reform, DSS should ensure shared access to data and information; and that the performance framework aligns with CTG Targets 7 and 8. |