

Establishing a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence

Response to Options Paper

As discussed in the Options Paper the unemployment rate for people with disability in Australia has not improved over the last 20 years. Reversing this longstanding trend by commissioning research that will increase the capacity of employment service providers and employers should be the core function of a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence.

I believe a Disability Employment Centre of Excellence should be established as a stand-alone research body that is independent from government and not affiliated with a particular university. The Centre should be governed by a Board consisting of equitable stakeholder representation from:

- the Commonwealth government;
- people with disability/ advocates for people with disability;
- employment service providers;
- employers who are interested in employing people with disability.

While DSS has responsibility for consultation and design activities, once the Centre is established, it is important that the Centre's focus is on increasing employment rates for all individuals with disability who wish to participate in open employment, regardless of whether their point of entry is DES or WAES.

It is also important that the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence does not duplicate the work of existing disability focused research networks and centres. The Centre can do this by facilitating, commissioning or conducting **policy relevant** research. That is:

- research that reflects the diversity of views within the sector, not just the government of the day or particular academic research agendas;
- is focused on issues of concern to the sector;
- and is timely.

The issue of timeliness is crucial. Disability employment services operates within a constantly changing policy environment. If a research process takes three or four years, policy settings have changed by the time research results emerge and research findings are no longer relevant.

However longer-term academic research can still provide useful insights. For this reason the second core function of the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence should be to facilitate, commission or undertake **translation work**. That is, taking the results of traditional disciplinary based academic research and identifying policy implications as well as what additional policy relevant research may be useful.

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