Disability Employment Reforms

Disability Employment Australia Conference – 13 June 2024

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## Disability Employment Australia Conference

Title slide 2024 ‘Ready for Reform’.

## Disability Employment Reform

Presenter is Kellie Spence, Group Manager of Disability Employment in the Department of Social Services.

## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Social Services acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and their connections to land, water, culture and community.   
  
We pay our respects to the elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

## Probity Statement

The Department of Social Services is committed to conducting a fair, honest, and transparent process for the design and implementation of the new specialist disability employment program and related services.

For today's event, this means that:

* this presentation will be made publicly available on the DSS Engage website
* any views expressed, or information provided, by attendees to this event will be considered, along with the views expressed and information provided by other stakeholders.

## Overview

The new disability employment program commences 1 July 2025.

## Key Topics this presentation will cover:

## New Program design

## Performance Framework

## National Panel of Assessors and the Centre of Excellence

## DSS Program Management continuous improvement

## Simplified program design

The design of the new program will improve overall access to support and improve the quality of services delivered for both participants and employers.

The two current DES programs will be consolidated into one program:

* **Disability Management Service (DMS)** helps job seekers with disability, injury and/or a health condition who need assistance to find a job and occasional support in the workplace to keep a job.
* **Employment Support Service (ESS)** helps job seekers with permanent disability who need assistance to find a job and regular, ongoing support in the workplace to keep a job.

Below is a summary of the new program:

* A diverse network of providers help people with disability, injury and/or a health condition to prepare for, find and maintain sustainable employment.
* Supporting and complementary services include the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence and the National Panel of Assessors.

## Participant eligibility for the new program

The new program continues to target those who will benefit most from a specialist disability employment program.

Eligibility will be expanded, until June 2028, to support new volunteer cohorts. An additional 15,000 people each year are expected to register including:

* those with a work capacity of less than 8 hours per week, and
* those not receiving an income support payment.

Proposed expanded eligibility arrangements for an initial 3 year period with an evaluation to assess if the DES program is working effectively for these cohorts.

## New approach to employment assistance

The new program will have **no participation time limit**.

There will be 2 service offers – intensive and flexible.

Providers will offer a range of customised supports to participants depending on where they are in their employment journey and their capacity to participate.

Providers will explore options and pathways to employment with participants under both services.

**Intensive Service** is the default for those who are preparing for work and looking for work.

**Flexible Service** targets participants who are already engaged in other activities (such as work, training, or non-vocational supports) or need to build their capacity to fully engage.

## Meaningful engagement

Providers will work with participants to build meaningful relationships.

Engagement will be through the delivery of a quality service that focuses on **shared employment goals** led by the participant and assisted by the provider.

**Less reliance on compliance** to drive initial engagement.

* Requirements met through meaningful engagement, with voluntary activities in Job Plan.
* Option to increase details of requirements in the Job Plan if needed.

## Market strategy

The new program aims to strengthen the quality and diversity of providers.

Specialist providers with deep expertise in a participant cohort AND CAN OPERATE ACROSS Employment Service Areas.

The market strategy will create stronger market stewardship with market controls to achieve diversity and viability that supports participant choice.

## Measures of quality and performance

Performance framework and measure of quality have been the focus of the first phase of reforms and will continue to evolve.

The provider performance framework will:

* be participant centred
* be inclusive and responsive
* be equitable and accessible
* be transparent
* reduce regulatory burden, and
* enable continuous improvement.

The proposed Provider Scorecard focuses on 3 measures:

* Effectiveness
* Efficiency
* Quality.

## National Panel of Assessors

The National Panel of Assessors (NPA) program is a standing panel of independent assessment service providers contracted to provide assessments to support the needs of people with disability in the workplace.

The NPA program will continue to provide high-quality assessment services from 1 July 2025..

## Disability Employment Centre of Excellence

## The Centre of Excellence will:

* Increase employment outcomes.
* Increase awareness and share best practice examples that work, including: customised employment, job coaching and career planning.
* Build provider skills and knowledge to understand employer needs and to help employers hire and support employees with disability.
* Provide training and resources to providers and employers to increase their overall capability.
* Foster collaboration across relevant sectors.

## Continuous program management improvement

There are a range of measures that will support continuous improvement, including:

* Strengthening risk management, governance and program assurance.
* Feedback from the NDIS and DES Pathways Pilot.
* Improving communication, engagement and responsiveness.

## Questions?

At the conclusion of the update by Kellie Spence, Group Manager — Disability Employment Services, questions were answered.

## Feedback and more information

New information will be made available through the Department of Social Services ([www.dss.gov.au/new-specialist-disability-employment-program](http://www.dss.gov.au/new-specialist-disability-employment-program)) and DSS Engage: ([www.engage.dss.gov.au](http://www.engage.dss.gov.au)).

If you have any ideas or concerns, you can email: [DESConsultations@dss.gov.au](mailto:DESConsultations@dss.gov.au)

## Closing slide - Thank you!