



## TALKING POINTS

<b>Subject</b>	<b>National Panel of Assessors Request for Tender Public Briefing</b>	
<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>21 October 2024</b>	1:00 – 2:00 pm AEDT
<b>Presenter</b>	<b>Pene Futchter and Sonya McCarthy</b>	

## Slide 1/ Title



National Panel of Assessors (NPA)

Request for Tender (RFT)

**Public Briefing**

Monday 21 October 2024

✉ [DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au](mailto:DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au)

- Good afternoon everyone.
- Welcome to the Industry Briefing for the National Panel of Assessors program.



- My name is Pene Fatcher, I am the Branch Manager of the Disability Employment Programs branch in the Department of Social Services.
- To provide a visual description – I am a woman in my middle years, I have shoulder length blonde hair, and I am wearing a blue coloured top.



## Slide 2/ Acknowledgement of Country

### Acknowledgement of Country



The Department of Social Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, water, culture and community.

We pay our respects to the Elders both past and present.

- I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we meet today.
- I am coming to you from Ngunnawal Land today. And I pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.
- I extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are joining us in this event today.



## Slide 3/ Probity Statement [to be read verbatim]

### Probity Statement

The Department of Social Services is committed to conducting a fair, honest, and transparent process for the design and implementation of the National Panel of Assessors (NPA) program and related services.

For today's event, this means:

- this presentation will be made publicly available on [engage.dss.gov.au](https://engage.dss.gov.au)
- Q&A and comments will not be open for this event
- any questions in relation to the RFT must be submitted to [DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au](mailto:DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au) and may be published (with the identity of the person or organisation asking the question removed).

- Before we go further, I need to read the Probity Statement.
- The Department of Social Services is committed to conducting a fair, honest, and transparent process for the design and implementation of the National Panel of Assessors program and related services.
- For today's event, this means that:
  - this presentation will be made publicly available on [engage dot dss dot gov dot au](https://engage.dss.gov.au).
  - Q&A and comments will not be open for this event.
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## Slide 4/ Industry Briefing Overview

### Industry Briefing Overview

#### Key Topics

1. Indicative timeline and overview of the RFT
2. Summary of the new NPA program
3. Key changes from the Exposure Draft
4. Lodging a response to the RFT



The NPA program  
commences  
1 July 2025



- Today we will go through four main topics
  1. Indicative timeline and overview of the Request for Tender or RFT
  2. Summary of the new National Panel of Assessors or NPA program
  3. Key changes from the Exposure Draft, and
  4. Lodging a response to the RFT



## Slide 5/ Indicative Timeline

### Indicative Timeline

Date	Key element
Wednesday 16 October 2024	Release of the Request for Tender for the NPA program.
Monday 21 October 2024	NPA RFT Industry Briefing.
Monday 4 November 2024 at 5.00pm AEDT	Deadline for Respondents to submit any questions or requests for clarification about the RFT.
Monday 11 November at 12.00pm AEDT	Closing date and time for responses to the NPA RFT.
March 2025	Notification of tender outcomes.
April 2025	Commencement of the transition period to the new NPA.
1 July 2025	The NPA program commences.

RFT reference: Page 3

- The Government's 2024 Budget announcement outlined the introduction of the new specialist disability employment program, commencing from 1 July 2025.
- This announcement included confirming the continuation of the NPA program from 1 July 2025.
- Before providing an overview of the program, I will run through the key timeframes for the NPA RFT process.
  - The Exposure Draft was released on Friday 30 August 2024.
  - The RFT was released on Wednesday 16 October 2024.
  - The deadline for Respondents to submit any questions or requests for clarification about the RFT is Monday 4 November at 5.00pm AEDT.



- The closing date and time for submitting tender responses to the RFT is Monday 11 November at 12.00pm AEDT.
- The notification of tender outcomes is expected to be in March 2025.
- Commencement of the transition period to the new NPA program will be in April 2025.
- The NPA program will commence on 1 July 2025.





## Slide 6/ Overview of Request for Tender

### Overview – Request for Tender

- The NPA program will provide a range of Assessment Services to support the needs of people with disability in the workplace. The new program will be delivered in 111 Employment Services Areas across Australia.
- Deeds for the NPA program are for an initial term of **three years** — from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028 — with the option to offer discretionary extensions for up to additional 3 years.
- All Respondents must meet the conditions for participation and minimum content and format requirements if they wish to submit a tender for the NPA program.
- The Contact Officer is the only means of contact between the Department and Respondents during the RFT period.
- The Contact Officer can be contacted via email at [DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au](mailto:DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au).

- The NPA program will provide a range of Assessment Services to support the needs of people with disability in the workplace.
- The new program will be delivered in 111 Employment Services Areas across Australia, including Norfolk Island.
- The Department will issue Deeds for the NPA program for an initial term of three years — from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028 — with the option to offer discretionary extensions for up to an additional 3 years.
- All Respondents who wish to submit a tender must meet the conditions for participation and minimum content and format requirements. This will be discussed in more detail later in the briefing.



- The Contact Officer through the Disability Employment Purchasing Hotline is the only means of contact between the Department, Respondents or other interested stakeholders including Peak bodies during the RFT period.
- The Hotline can be contacted via email at DE2025Purchasing at dss dot gov dot au.
- The Government wants to ensure that a diverse range of suitably qualified and experienced Respondents have the opportunity to become Providers.
- To become a Provider, Respondents will be required to demonstrate an understanding of employment support requirements, such as workplace barriers for people with disability, including people with high support needs.
- Respondents will also be required to demonstrate that they have qualified and experienced Assessors who meet the mandatory qualifications and skills that I will outline shortly.
- It is important that all Assessors also have strong communication skills to ensure high quality Assessments for the person with disability.

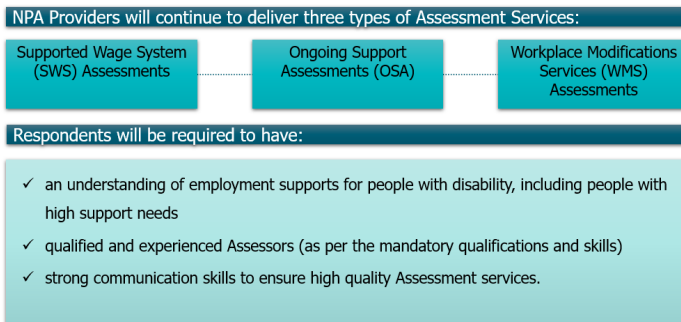


- From April 2025, arrangements will be in place to support the transition to the new NPA program.



## Slide 7/ Overview of NPA Program

### National Panel of Assessors (NPA) program - Overview



RFT Reference: 2.2.1 Provider Services, 3.2 NPA program overview

- The Government is committed to ensuring that from 1 July 2025 there continues to be NPA Providers to deliver high quality, fair and independent Assessment services for people with disability.
- NPA Providers will provide three types of Assessment services:
  1. Supported Wage System or SWS Assessments
  2. Ongoing support Assessments or OSAs and
  3. Workplace Modification Services or WMS Assessments.
- Respondents will be able to bid to deliver either:
  - all three Assessment types, or
  - OSAs or SWS Assessments only, or
  - WMS Assessments only.



## Slide 8/ Supported Wage System

### Supported Wage System (SWS) Assessments

- The SWS is an industrial relations mechanism that has been in place since 1994.
- The SWS enables employers to pay a productivity-based wage to people whose work productivity is reduced because of disability.
- This Assessment can only be undertaken by a qualified independent NPA Assessor.



- The Supported Wage System is an industrial relations mechanism that has been in place since 1994.
- The Supported Wage System enables employers to pay a productivity-based wage to people whose work productivity is reduced because of disability.
- For example, someone with an assessed work capacity of 70 per cent is entitled to 70 per cent of the relevant pay rate in their award or registered agreement.
- This Assessment can only be undertaken by a qualified independent NPA Assessor.
- Further detailed information on SWS Assessments will be provided in Guidelines, which will be issued to successful Respondents with letters of offer.



## Slide 9/ Ongoing Support Assessments

### Ongoing Support Assessments (OSA)

An NPA Assessor will undertake an Assessment of a new specialist disability employment program Participant to determine:

The level of support they require in employment, which could be:

- None – where the OSA recommends the NSDEP Participant does not require Ongoing Support
- Flexible Ongoing Support
- Moderate Ongoing Support
- High Ongoing Support

The review interval for the next Assessment (1, 2 or 5 years)

- From 1 July 2025, OSAs will be available to participants of the new specialist disability employment program or new program who meet specific criteria.
- Ongoing support will also be available to employees with a disability, injury or health condition who are having difficulty fulfilling the requirements of their role and have not come through Post Placement Support. This is referred to as participants in Ongoing Support (Work Assist).
- The Assessment process for an Ongoing Support (Work Assist) participant will be the same process as a regular OSA.



- An NPA Assessor will undertake the Assessment to determine the level of support the participant requires. The levels are:
  - none – where the OSA recommends the Participant does not require Ongoing Support
  - Flexible Ongoing Support
  - Moderate Ongoing Support, or
  - High Ongoing Support.
- The NPA Assessor will also make a recommendation on the duration of support and timing for the next OSA review.
- The review interval will be 1, 2, or 5 years based on the Participant's circumstances and needs.
- The OSA will normally consist of:
  - an interview with the new program Provider and new program Participant
  - a file assessment of support provided in the period since Job Placement or since the last OSA, and
  - a workplace Assessment which should include an interview with the new program Participant's employer.



- Further detailed information on Ongoing Support Assessments will be provided in Guidelines, which will be issued to successful Respondents with letters of offer.





## Slide 10/ Workplace Modifications Services Assessments

### Workplace Modification Services (WMS) Assessments

NPA Assessors conduct WMS Assessments for people with disability to identify barriers to accessing or performing their work

WMS Assessments will recommend equipment, modifications and other support, funded through the Employment Assistance Fund, to remove the identified barriers



- NPA Assessors will conduct a WMS Assessment for people with disability to identify barriers to accessing or performing their work.
- WMS Assessments will recommend equipment, modifications and other support, funded through the Employment Assistance Fund, to remove the identified barriers.
- Further detailed information on WMS Assessments will be provided in Guidelines, which will be issued to successful Respondents with letters of offer.



## Slide 11/ Fees

### Fees

	Payment Type	Amount (GST Inclusive)
<b>OSA</b>	OSA fee	\$475.36
	SWS Assessment fee	\$679.10
	Additional SWS Assessment payment if the assessment is conducted in a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program region	\$475.36
<b>SWS</b>	Approved additional fee for Assessments that exceed 5 hours	\$135.82 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	Approved additional fee for SWS Assessments conducted in a Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program region that exceed five hours	\$230.89 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	WMS Assessment fee	\$135.82 per hour up to a maximum of 5 hours
<b>WMS</b>	Approved additional fee for Assessments that exceed 5 hours	\$135.82 per additional hour up to a maximum of 4 additional hours
	Additional travel costs (for which travel time will not include time used for Assessment or reporting services)	\$56.59 per hour for travel time, up to a maximum of 8 hours per day, where a return trip exceeds 200 kilometres

Note: Fees are indicative and based on 1 July 2024 fee amounts. Fees will change from 1 July 2025.

RFT reference: 3.9 Fees for the National Panel of Assessors

- All Assessment

fees will be paid via a fee for service model when an Assessment is completed.

- Annual indexation of the fee schedule on 1 July each year will adjust payment rates in line with a measure of inflation.
  - The Department will notify Providers about any changes to payments before they come into effect.
- All fee amounts I mention are GST inclusive and are indicative fees based on 1 July 2024 amounts. Fees may change from 1 July 2025.
- The fee for an OSA will be \$475.36.
- The fee for a SWS Assessment will be \$679.10, with additional fees available for Assessments that exceed



5 hours (up to a max of 4 additional hours) or  
Assessments in remote areas.

- The fee for a WMS Assessment will be \$135.82 per hour up to a maximum of 5 hours, with additional fees available for Assessments that exceed 5 hours (up to a max of 4 additional hours) or Assessments requiring travel.



## Slide 12/ Key changes from Exposure Draft 1/2

### Key changes from the Exposure Draft 1/2

- **The introduction of a cap of up to 10 providers per Assessment type in each Employment Services Area (ESA)**
  - ❖ Addresses feedback of oversaturation and ensures a balance of large and small providers in the market.
  - ❖ The number of NPA Providers in each ESA will not exceed 10 Providers for each Assessment type.
  - ❖ Some ESAs may have less than 10 providers per Assessment type, depending on the size and characteristics of the ESA.
- **The introduction of greater flexibility for eligible qualifications across the three types of NPA Assessment Services**
  - ❖ To increase flexibility and attract Assessors with appropriate skills, the Department will provide a single qualification list for all Assessment types which cover all three Assessor categories.
  - ❖ WMS Assessors will continue to require a full (not provisional or restricted), up to date, qualification that is registered, accredited or recognised with the relevant association (such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency).
    - This does not apply to Assessors conducting OSAs or SWS Assessments.

RFT reference: **2.2.2** Employment Services Areas, **3.3.2** Mandatory Qualifications and/or Skills

- We would like to thank everyone who took the time to send through their feedback during public consultation, including on the Exposure Draft of the RFT.
- After reviewing and considering the feedback we received, we will now step through some changes that have been made for the final RFT.

### *Introduction of cap on providers*

- As outlined in the Exposure Draft, the Department will introduce a cap on the number of NPA providers in each Employment Services Area or ESA.
  - This change is based on earlier feedback regarding issues of oversaturation in many ESAs in the current NPA program.



- The feedback received during the Exposure Draft process was generally supportive of introducing a cap, with suggestions that a higher cap would benefit smaller providers to participate in the market.
- Based on this feedback, the Department has introduced a cap of up to 10 providers per Assessment type in each ESA.
- This approach will address feedback of oversaturation and ensure a balance of large and small providers in the market.
- Some ESAs may have less than 10 providers per Assessment type, however the number of providers in each ESA will not exceed 10 per Assessment type.
  - For example, in one ESA there may be 6 Providers who deliver OSAs and SWS Assessments, 4 Providers who deliver all three Assessments and 6 Providers who deliver WMS Assessments only.
- Respondents can bid to deliver Services in an entire ESA or to only provide partial coverage.



- Respondents must be able to deliver face-to-face Assessments in each ESA they tender for.

### *Greater flexibility for eligible qualifications*

- There was feedback on the Exposure Draft that identified the increase in Assessments for a broader range of disability types and that a broader set of skills would be appropriate to meet this demand.
- Introducing greater flexibility for eligible qualifications across the three types of NPA Assessment Services will increase flexibility in the program and attract Assessors with the appropriate skills to ensure participants receive a quality Assessment.
- The following qualifications have been added to the eligible qualifications:
  - Psychologist
  - Psychiatrist
  - Orthoptics/Optometry
  - Audiology.
- WMS Assessors will continue to require a full, up to date, qualification that is registered, accredited or recognised with the relevant association, such as



the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation  
Agency.



## Slide 13/ Key changes from Exposure Draft 2/2

### Key changes from the Exposure Draft 2/2

➤ **The removal of 'specialist' WMS Assessment Providers**

- ❖ This allows providers more flexibility to engage Assessors with specific areas of expertise, aligning with the mandatory qualifications required of Assessors.
- ❖ This may also broaden the scope of WMS Assessors working across ESAs, which can go to ensuring the participant receives a quality Assessment from an Assessor who has skills in a particular disability type or area of expertise.
- ❖ This will not limit a respondent's application as an organisation who only offers one type of specialist Assessment e.g. vision impairment.

➤ **The introduction of the Capacity Building Fund**

- ❖ Eligible NPA providers can apply for up to \$25,000 in financial support to meet costs associated with obtaining their Right Fit For Risk (RFFR) accreditation or certification against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).

RFT reference: **3.8** Capacity Building Fund

### *Removal of Specialist WMS Assessments*

- The removal of 'Specialist' WMS Assessment Providers will give more flexibility to Providers to engage Assessors with specific areas of expertise and broaden the scope of WMS Assessors working across ESAs.
- This was in response to feedback that there has been an increase in referrals for WMS Assessments for vision impairments, hearing impairments and mental health conditions.
  - Data showed almost half of WMS Assessments for last financial year were for these impairments.





- Removing this as a separate criterion aims to further ensure individuals with disability receive a quality Assessment from an Assessor who has skills in a particular disability type or area of expertise.
- Removing the Specialist WMS criteria will not limit a Respondent's application as an organisation who only offers one type of Assessment e.g. vision impairment.

### *Introduction of the Capacity Building Fund*

- Another change that was made since the Exposure Draft is the introduction of the Capacity Building Fund for eligible NPA Providers.
- The Fund will allow eligible Providers to apply for up to \$25,000 in financial assistance to help with compliance costs for the National Standards for Disability Services as well as Right Fit for Risk accreditation.
- Please note that not all Respondents will be eligible to access the Fund. Eligible organisations will include those who:
  - are offered a Deed, and



- meet the definition of a ‘small’ business (using the Australian Taxation Office definition), and
- are a not-for-profit organisations.
- Further information on the Fund will be made available in Guidelines, which will be issued to successful Respondents with letters of offer.



# Slide 14/ Mandatory Qualifications and skills 1/2

## Mandatory Qualifications and Skills 1/2

### Skills

- Strong communication skills with the ability to consult and provide sensitive advice
- the ability to complete Assessments to a high standard
- the ability to produce detailed written reports on completion of Assessment
- the ability to assess barriers and negotiate solutions to meet the needs of people with disability, and
- technical skills related to the relevant process of Assessment.

RFT reference: 3.3.2 Mandatory Qualifications and/or Skills

- NPA Assessors are required to have the following skills:
  - strong communication skills with the ability to consult and provide sensitive advice
  - the ability to complete Assessments to a high standard
  - the ability to produce detailed written reports on completion of Assessment
  - the ability to assess barriers and negotiate solutions to meet the needs of people with disability, and
  - technical skills related to the relevant process of Assessment.



- Each Assessor must be able to demonstrate a minimum of 2 years practical experience in disability employment, workplace productivity assessments, or related sectors.
- Each Assessor must have knowledge of:
  - duty of care and professional ethics
  - employment assistance options available to people with disability seeking employment, and
  - relevant work health and safety, industrial relations and anti-discrimination legislation.



## Slide 15/Mandatory Qualifications and Skills 2/2

### Mandatory Qualifications and Skills 2/2

Mandatory qualifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rehabilitation counsellor</li><li>• Occupational therapy</li><li>• Physiotherapy</li><li>• Nurse</li><li>• Medical practitioner</li><li>• Psychologist/Psychiatrist</li><li>• Orthoptics/Optomety</li><li>• Audiologist</li><li>• Exercise physiologist</li><li>• Vocational training, or</li><li>• other diploma or higher-level qualification which the Provider considers is relevant to providing the required Assessments (and as approved by the Department).</li></ul>

RFT reference: 3.3.2 Mandatory Qualifications and/or Skills

- Assessors looking to provide Assessments under the NPA program are required to have a particular qualification, including:
  - Rehabilitation counsellor
  - Occupational therapy
  - Physiotherapy
  - Nurse
  - Medical practitioner
  - Psychologist/Psychiatrist
  - Orthoptics/Optomety
  - Audiologist
  - Exercise physiologist



- Vocational training, or
- other diploma or higher-level qualification which the Provider considers is relevant to providing the required Assessments (and as approved by the Department).
- If a potential Assessor has another diploma or higher-level qualification which the Provider considers is relevant to providing the required Assessments, they should contact the Department for approval.
- Assessors will be provided with links to training for OSAs and SWS Assessments that must be completed before they begin undertaking Assessment work.



## Slide 16/ Approving NPA Assessors

### Approving NPA Assessors

Under the new program, it is the responsibility of the NPA Provider to approve their individual Assessors.

NPA Providers must gain approval from the Department in writing if a potential Assessor has qualifications that are not on the approved list of qualifications.

NPA Providers will be subject to performance assurance activities by the Department, including activities to ensure:

- Assessors are suitably qualified, and
- Assessors are not undertaking Assessments where there may be a conflict of interest.

RFT reference: **3.3.1** Nominated Assessors

- Under the new NPA program, it will generally be the responsibility of the NPA Provider to approve their individual Assessor personnel.
  - Assessors should only be approved if they have the mandatory qualifications and relevant skills, experience and knowledge outlined by the Department.
- Currently, NPA Providers are required to apply to have an NPA Assessor approved by the Department, providing documentary evidence to support the application. This change has been implemented to reduce red tape on NPA Providers.
- However, if an NPA Provider wishes to approve an Assessor who does not have the listed mandatory



qualifications, that Provider will be required to write to the Department seeking approval prior to the commencement of any Assessments.

- The Department will reserve the right to request documentary evidence of relevant qualifications and skills for each Assessor at any time.
- NPA Providers will be subject to program assurance activities, which will include checks that Assessors are not undertaking Assessments for which they are not qualified or where there may be a conflict of interest.
- For example, Assessors should not be undertaking Assessments for any organisations who are considered a Related Entity.
  - As an example, let's take an Assessor who works for two NPA Providers - Provider A and Provider B, who is also a DES Provider.
  - Provider A gets allocated an Assessment of a Participant of the DES Provider (Provider B).
  - The Assessor must not undertake the Assessment on behalf of Provider A as they also work for Provider B and it would be considered a conflict of interest.





- Assessment Services will be allocated to Providers using the Department's IT systems or the JobAccess Provider on a fair and equitable basis.



## Slide 17/ Performance Management

### Performance Management

NPA Providers will be required to adhere to:

- ✓ the NPA performance framework
- ✓ the *Disability Services and Inclusion (Code of Conduct) Rules 2023*
- ✓ Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- ✓ the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS), and
- ✓ performance discussions with the Department.

RFT reference: 3.7.1 Performance Management

- The Department is committed to ensuring NPA Providers deliver high quality Assessments for people with disability.
- NPA Providers will be required to adhere to an NPA Performance Framework, as well as comply with the:
  - *Disability Services and Inclusion (Code of Conduct) Rules 2023*
  - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as outlined in the RFT document, and
  - National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).
- The NSDS are the compliance standards for regulated activities under the *Disability Services and Inclusion Act* or DSI Act.



- The NPA program is not considered a regulated activity under the DSI Act, however, it will be a contractual requirement in the Deed that Providers maintain a certificate of compliance with the NSDS.
  - For the purposes of the Deed, a certificate of compliance could be one issued under the *Disability Services Act 1986* or the *Disability Services and Inclusion Act 2023*.
- To obtain a certificate of compliance, Providers will be required to have an audit undertaken by an accredited certification body.
- Audit requirements are detailed in the Human Services Scheme Part 7 – NPA Scheme, which can be found on the Department’s website.
- Under the Deed, Providers who do not currently hold a certificate of compliance for the NPA program will have until 1 July 2026 to obtain a certificate of compliance.
- Current Providers who hold a certificate of compliance for the NPA program will be required to be re-certified before their current certification expires.

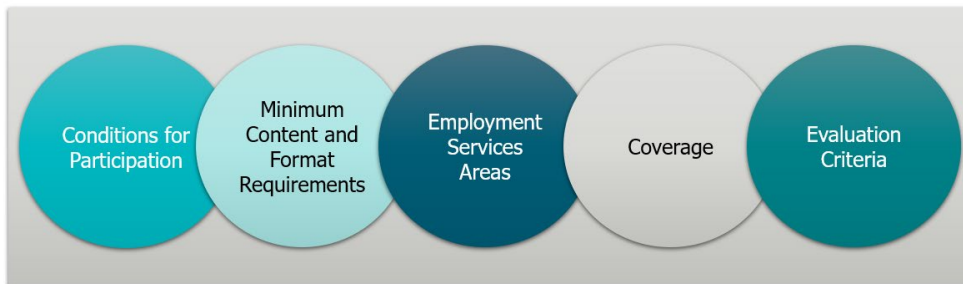


- I will now hand over to Sonya to go through the RFT process.



## Slide 18/ Request for Tender process – Considerations for Lodging a Response

### Request for Tender (RFT) process – Considerations for Lodging a Response



- Thanks Pene. My name is Sonya McCarthy, I am the Acting Branch Manager of the Disability Employment Implementation Branch in the Department of Social Services.
- To provide a visual description – I am a woman in my [x (years old)], I have blonde hair, and I am wearing a x coloured top.
- I'll now go through the key aspects of the RFT process.
- I will go through these in some detail, and it is important that you read the relevant parts in the Request for Tender.



- They are pretty technical as a result, so please bear with me.
- Throughout the next few slides, I will refer to a Respondent. What I mean by this is the organisation or body that prepares a tender bid or response and submits it.
- Lodging a response to the Request for Tender will constitute an offer by the Respondent to provide the services on the terms and conditions set out in their response and the Draft Deed.
- It is the document that the Department will use for the evaluation.
- When lodging a response, there are a few aspects that you need to be aware of.
- The Request for Tender document includes important information that Respondents should read and be aware of before submitting a response.
- The Request for Tender also includes conditions for participation and minimum content and format requirements.
- Respondents must satisfy these elements in order for their response to be considered against the evaluation



criteria. In other words, these are the threshold requirements for a response to move forward into detailed evaluation.

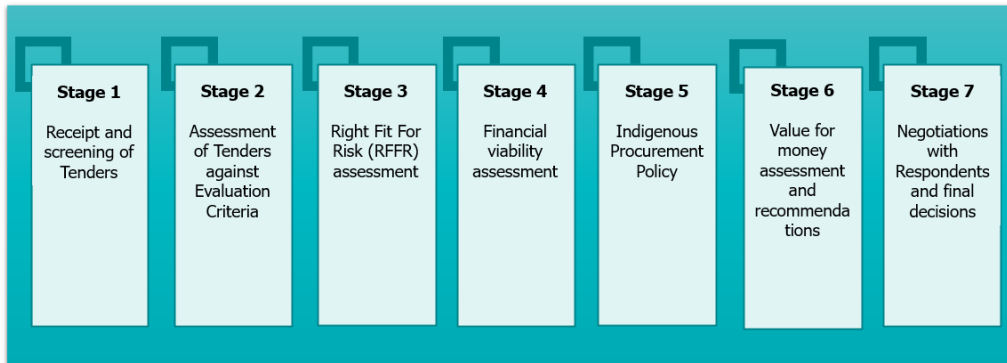
- The Request for Tender also includes information about Employment Services Areas and coverage. For this process:
  - Maps of Employment Services Areas are at Appendix C to the RFT.
  - Appendix D of the RFT explains where Respondents can find data on the number of Assessments per ESA for previous financial years.



## Slide 19/ Request for Tender process – evaluation of responses

### Request for Tender (RFT) process – Evaluation of Responses

Staged approach to evaluation:



RFT reference: 6.3 Evaluation of Tenders

- Responses will be evaluated through a staged approach as outlined on this slide.
  - Stage 1: Responses will be downloaded and undergo checks, including checking that all information was provided and was received by the closing time and date.
  - Stage 2: Responses will be assessed against the evaluation criteria, noting that the Department will use all information available, including the responses to criteria and any available data and referee reports.
  - Stage 3 – Right Fit For Risk assessment (RFFR): The Department, with the assistance of the





Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), will assess the status of a Respondent's RFFR accreditation, or readiness to achieve RFFR accreditation under the External Systems Assurance Framework (ESAF).

- Stage 4 – The Department will assess the financial viability of Respondents, again using all information available to it, including the information provided by Respondents.
- Stage 5 – The Department will apply the Indigenous Procurement Policy, including by evaluating Responses for ESAs in an applicable Remote Indigenous Procurement Policy (RIPP) remote area in line with the Mandatory Set Aside Requirements.
- Stage 6 – The Department will conduct an overall value for money assessment to inform recommendations for offering a Deed.
- Stage 7 – Following the Closing Time of the RFT, the Department may enter into negotiations with one or more Respondents, including detailed



discussions with Respondents with the goal of achieving the best value for money.

- The Group Manager of the Disability Employment Group is the Delegate for this procurement process and will make the final decisions.
- Any decision of the Delegate in relation to the outcome of this procurement process is final and not subject to review or appeal.



## Slide 20/ Request for Tender process

### – Indigenous Procurement Policy

#### Request for Tender (RFT) process – Indigenous Procurement Policy

- The Indigenous Procurement Policy helps stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy.
- Mandatory Set Aside requirements will apply to this Request for Tender.
- Any Tenders for the 9 ESAs listed in section 6.3.5 of the RFT, from Indigenous small to medium enterprises (SMEs) will be considered for offers of business before Tenders from other Respondents (that are not Indigenous SMEs) for those ESAs.

RFT reference: **6.3.5** Stage 5 - Indigenous Procurement Policy

- The Indigenous Procurement Policy helps stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship and business development, providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy.
- The Mandatory Set Aside or MSA requirements apply to all ‘remote procurements’ regardless of the value of the procurement and will be applied to this RFT.
- A ‘remote procurement’ is a procurement exercise for a ‘remote contract’, which is a contract where the majority of the value of the goods and services will be delivered in a remote area.



- Remote areas are identified in the Remote Indigenous Procurement Policy map on the National Indigenous Australians Agency website.
- A MSA check was conducted prior to the release of the Request for Tender and the Department has identified 9 ESAs that intersect with a remote region and to which the MSA requirements will apply. These are:
  - Far West NSW (Broken Hill)
  - Mt Isa QLD
  - Goldfields / Esperance WA
  - Mid-West and Gascoyne WA
  - Kimberley WA
  - North Country SA
  - Port Lincoln / Ceduna SA
  - Darwin NT, and
  - Alice Springs NT.
- This means that Tenders received from Indigenous small to medium enterprises (SMEs) for these ESAs will be considered for offers of business before Tenders from other Respondents that are not Indigenous SMEs.



- Any Indigenous SMEs submitting a Tender under the MSA requirements will need to:
  - be registered on Supply Nation
  - be registered on the public register maintained by the Office of the Registrar for Indigenous Corporations, or
  - provide certificates or letters of Indigeneity for the Indigenous owners, certified by a recognised Indigenous organisation such as a land council.



## Slide 21/How will tenders be assessed?

**How will tenders be assessed?**

**Evaluation Criteria**

Weighted Evaluation Criteria (Selection Criteria)	Unweighted Evaluation Criteria
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Organisational Capability and Capacity</li><li>2. Quality</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ Evaluation of Risk</li><li>➢ Benefit to Australian economy</li><li>➢ Response to Modern Slavery practices</li><li>➢ Response to environmental sustainability statement</li><li>➢ Response to multicultural access and equity</li></ul>

RFT reference: 5.1 Selection Criteria

- The Evaluation Criteria used to evaluate Tenders will comprise weighted and unweighted criteria.
- In the RFT, weighted Evaluation Criteria is referred to as ‘Selection Criteria’.
- There are two weighted selection criteria that will apply to all Respondents.
  - The first criterion relates to Organisational Capability.
  - The second criterion relates to Quality.
- I will go through each criterion shortly, but please make sure you also read about the Evaluation Criteria in the RFT, which contains the detailed requirements to follow.



- Respondents should include evidence such as case studies, examples or relevant data to support their responses.
- Responses to each criterion will be scored (subject to weighting), and the scores will inform the value for money evaluation and allocation of business.
- In responding to the selection criteria, Respondents should refer to the Statement of Requirements in the Request for Tender.



## Slide 22/ Organisational Capability (SC1)

### Organisational Capability (SC1)

The extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation has the capability and capacity to deliver OSAs and SWS Assessments, and/or WMS Assessments, (as applicable).

RFT reference: 5.1.1 Selection Criterion 1 – Organisational Capability

- The first selection criterion is about organisational capability.
- This criterion considers the extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation has the capability and capacity to deliver OSAs and SWS Assessments, and/or WMS Assessments (as applicable).
- This criterion has a weighting of 45 per cent and a character limit of 20,000 characters including spaces.





## Slide 23 /Quality (SC2)

### Quality (SC2)

The extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation will provide quality Services, including any Services provided by Subcontractors (if applicable).

RFT reference: 5.1.2 Selection Criterion 2 – Quality

- The second selection criterion is about quality.
- This criterion considers the extent to which the Respondent has demonstrated that its organisation will provide quality Services, including any Services provided by Subcontractors (if applicable).
- This criterion has a weighting of 55 per cent and also has a character limit of 20,000 characters including spaces.



## Slide 24 /Unweighted Evaluation Criteria

### Unweighted Evaluation Criteria

- Evaluation of Risk
- Modern Slavery
- Environmental sustainability
- Multicultural access and equity
- Benefit to the Australian economy

RFT reference: 5.2 Unweighted Evaluation Criteria

- In addition to the weighted selection criteria, Respondents will be evaluated against unweighted Evaluation Criteria, Which comprise:
- Evaluation of Risk – Tenders will be evaluated based on the risks identified in connection with the Tender and the Respondent.
- Modern Slavery – Respondents should provide a statement describing how they will identify, assess and address risks of Modern Slavery practices in the operations and supply chains used in the provision of the Services. The statement will be used to assess the Respondent against the Modern Slavery evaluation criterion.
- Environmental sustainability - Respondents should provide a statement describing how their approach



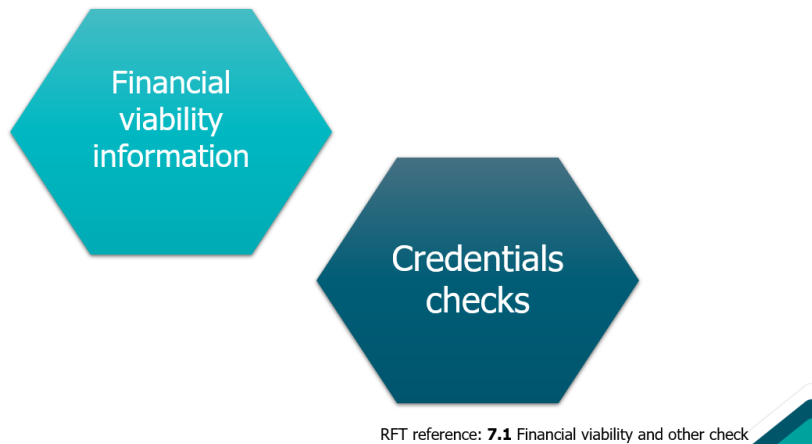
to delivering the Services will improve environmental sustainability. This statement will be used to assess the extent to which the Respondent will support Australia's environmental sustainability.

- Multicultural access and equity – Respondents should provide a statement describing how their delivery of the Services will meet the needs of all Participants regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This statement will be used to assess the extent to which the Respondent will support multicultural access and equity.
- Benefit to the Australian economy - Respondents should provide a statement to demonstrating how their Tender provides a direct economic benefit to Australia. This statement will be used to assess the extent to which a Tender provides a benefit to the Australian economy.



## Slide 25/ Financial viability and other checks

### Financial viability and other checks

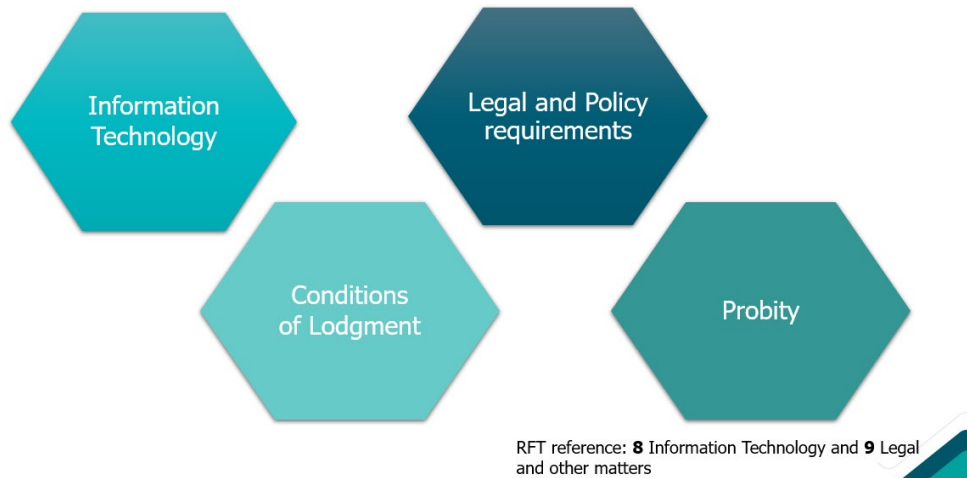


- The Department may perform security, probity and financial investigations as necessary in relation to any Respondent, its employees, officers, partners, associates, Subcontractors or Related Entities.
- Respondents must satisfy the Department of their financial viability to meet the requirements of the Request for Tender.
- If tendering as a Group Respondent, each member of the Group Respondent, including the lead member, must complete a separate Financial and Credentials Information Form.
- Respondents must also provide information to allow the Department to undertake a credentials check on their organisation.



## Slide 26/ Legal and other matters

### Legal and other matters



### Information Technology

- All Providers will be required to obtain accreditation with Right Fit For Risk or RFFR requirements.
- RFFR is the mechanism through which the Department gains assurance that providers and their third party systems operate at an appropriate level of security.
- Respondents that do not hold RFFR accreditation must upload the RFFR Questionnaire with their Tender.

### Conditions of lodgement

- There are a number of conditions of lodgement for this RFT.



- It is the Respondents' responsibility to ensure that it has met these requirements when lodging their response to the Request for Tender. For example, you will need to:
  - read the entire Request for Tender, including any other information made available such as Addenda
  - make your own inquiries regarding the risks, contingencies and other circumstances that may impact on your decision to submit a response
  - satisfy yourselves as to the terms and conditions of the Draft Deed and your ability to comply
  - make your own assessment and investigations
  - take note of the Closing Date and Time
  - satisfy yourselves that your organisation's response is complete, accurate and provides the necessary information to be assessed, and
  - keep a copy of the submitted response and attachments.



## Legal and policy requirements

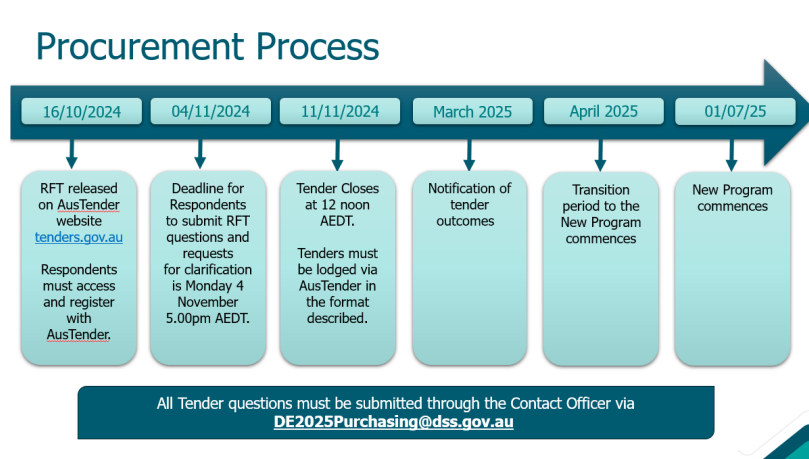
- As per section 9.3 of the RFT document, it is the responsibility of each Respondent to ensure compliance with all relevant laws and government policies in preparing and lodging its Tender as part of this RFT process.

## Probity

- The Department is committed to conducting a fair, honest and transparent process for the procurement of services for the new model.
- The Department has appointed Ashurst Law as the external Probity Adviser. The role of the Probity Adviser is to advise the Delegate on the probity and integrity of the procurement processes.



## Slide 27/ Procurement Process



- I will now take you through the procurement process itself.
- As you will note in the procurement documentation, providers of the NPA program will be selected through an open Request for Tender that will be conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) and the Department's own internal policies and guidelines to help ensure a fair and transparent process.
- So please pay particular attention to the key dates as specified in the request for Tender, which I am about to take you through now.
- Respondents may submit questions to the Contact Officer by email at [DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au](mailto:DE2025Purchasing@dss.gov.au)





dot au until Monday 4 November at 5pm Canberra time.

- Respondents should also be aware that all questions received, and corresponding answers provided, may be published, to help to ensure that all potential Respondents are given equal access to information regarding the RFT process. However, published questions will not identify the person or organisation which posed the question.
- The Closing date and time for submitting a response to the Request for Tender is on Monday 11 November at 12pm noon Canberra time. For your response to be considered by the Department, it must be lodged via AusTender before the closing time.
- The Department will conduct the Tender evaluation process from the Tender close date, with the notification of outcomes to Respondents currently expected to be in March 2025. For successful Respondents, Deeds are expected to be distributed soon after the outcomes are notified.
- Service delivery will commence from 1 July 2025.



- The Deed will be for a period of three years, with the potential for a three-year extension.



## Slide 28 – Tender Lodgement

### Tender Lodgement

- Tenders must be submitted through AusTender by the Closing Time of Monday 11 November 2024 12pm noon AEDT
- No late Tenders will be accepted
- The Department will accept Tenders lodged in Microsoft Excel 2010 (or above) in the format provided as the response template.

RFT reference: **10** Tender lodgement

- The only way to submit a Tender is through AusTender, which is the Australian Government's designated procurement information system. This is very important, as any Tenders submitted in another way (such as by email, post, fax or by hand cannot be accepted for evaluation by the Department).
- Organisations wishing to respond to this RFT must submit their Tender via AusTender, by the Closing date and time.
- To access the RFT documents and submit a Tender, Respondents will need to register with AusTender via the AusTender website (tenders dot gov dot au).
- There is no fee for registering with AusTender.
- If a Respondent has obtained RFT documentation from a source other than AusTender, the Department



does not guarantee the accuracy or currency of the document.

- It is the responsibility of Respondents to ensure that their infrastructure, including IT operating system and browser version levels, meet the minimum standards needed for AusTender.
- Neither the Department nor the government will take any responsibility for problems arising from Respondents' infrastructure and or internet connectivity.
- As mentioned, the Department will not accept Tenders by any other method. Respondents should allow plenty of time to upload their Tender in the case that they may encounter technical difficulties.
- I would really like to stress that there is no scope for the Department to accept any late response, unless late as a consequence of mishandling by the Department.
- Respondents must address everything the RFT requires. So please make sure you refer to the Request for Tender, including the Tender checklist.



- Tenders must be lodged before the Closing Date and Time which is 12 pm AEDT on Monday 11 November 2024.
- The Closing Time will also be displayed in the relevant AusTender webpage together with a countdown clock that displays in real time the amount of time left until Closing Time (for more information see the AusTender Terms of Use).
- For the purposes of determining whether a Tender has been lodged before the Closing Time, the countdown clock will be conclusive.

### Tender File Formats, Naming Conventions and Sizes

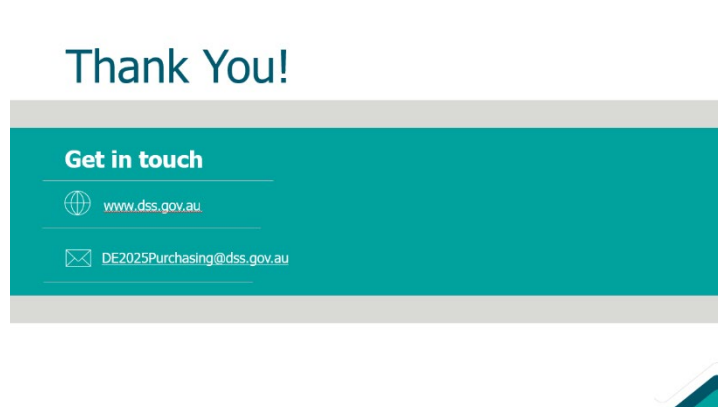
- The Department will accept Tenders lodged in Microsoft Excel 2010 (or above) in the format provided as the response template. Requested attachments, including your Respondent's Declaration, will be accepted in PDF format v4.1 (or above). 3.3.2.
- The Tender file name/s:
  - should state the Respondent organisation's name; and



- should state the part or parts of the Tender they represent, where the Tender comprises multiple files.
- Tender files should not exceed a combined file size of 5 megabytes per upload.



## Slide 29/Thank you



- Please ensure that you read the RFT, the draft Deed, the appendices and attachments very thoroughly before preparing your Tender.
- Today's session is a brief overview of the contents of the RFT, and you should do your own research and access other sources of information to assist in the preparation of your Tender.
- Before completing your Tender, you must ensure that you have included all relevant documents and information, including all required forms and uploads.
- Unfortunately, we are unable to take questions about the RFT in today's session, but you can direct questions or requests for clarification to the Contact Officer at DE 2025 Purchasing at dss dot gov dot au.



- On behalf of Pene and myself we would like to thank you very much for joining us today.
- We hope this webinar was helpful.