

DSS Consultation on Disability Employment Framework Round 2

November 2015

NB - survey monkey was used, this is a copy for records only.

Are there other characteristics that you think are important for a career planner to have?

- As with any support work in the disability sector, the most important factor is likely to be values. While experience in the sector is sometimes useful, if the experience has been in a segregated or congregate setting, the person may bring more limited thinking than career advice.
- Similarly, it is important that those working with people with disability are highly valued and respected - thus those who are valued and successful career planners should be attracted with adequate funding.
- For people with intellectual disability, someone with experience in breaking down tasks and communicating in easy English will be helpful. In some cases, communication techniques will need to be adapted. However, these techniques can also be learned through professional development, on the job.

Are there any other services the people you represent might need to help gain employment that we could provide?

- While DSS is not best placed to provide capacity building, it will be essential that it is funded, in order for people with disability, their families and supporters and employers to engage successfully with an open market approach, particularly as people leave ADE environments and move to open employment. Please see final section for further comments on this.

Are there any other strategies that you think would encourage businesses to employ people with disability?

- While tax incentives for businesses employing "high numbers of people with disability" may be effective, it is also important to guard against congregation of people with disability, a la Australian Disability Enterprises, also known as sheltered workshops. Grouping people with disability together increases their risks of

exploitation and denies them ordinary opportunities and life experiences in everyday settings. We would suggest that a desirable number reflects the number of people with disability in the broader community.

- On the job support is another place where the communication and task management skills described in the previous section may come in useful. If the person with disability has a family member, friend or advocate who is able to help with workplace adjustments and task adaptation this may be appropriate, however, a professional may also help with this. This can be a valuable tool to help managers in a workplace who may not have a great deal of experience in or time for adjusting tasks for all ability levels.

What are the strengths, weaknesses and risks of the proposals?

- Strength of the paper is individualised funding and power to shift services if one isn't working.
- Risks involved in the proposal include that subsidised wage has the potential for abuse by the employer; and the continual risk of meaningless work and lack of options for people with disability. It is important that employers of people with disability are encouraged to have high expectations, while also being encouraged to communicate about any issues that arise with the person and where appropriate their family or supporters. For example, one family member connected with Family Advocacy has a sister with intellectual disability who works in administration in a firm in the CBD. The job has changed and developed with the help of a DES worker over the years, keeping the role stimulating for Anna (not her real name) and meeting the changing needs of the employer. The assumption is that Anna can learn and adapt. However, if there are issues in the workplace, rather than just relying on the DES worker, the employer knows they can also call Anna's sister or mother. This job has lasted several years and is ongoing.
- In a similar vein, the risk of low expectations is potentially reflected in the payment of services, where final payment may take place at 26 weeks. We suggest that, as support in the role is just as important as getting the role, a year would be an appropriate final payment period. This allows for the valuing of ongoing support rather than just 'job placement'.
- Further, as with any service specifically for a vulnerable group, there is a risk that the service will itself become devalued. There are many indicators of this such as employment of staff who are themselves from a vulnerable group, conduct of business in ways that are out of step with what is regular and culturally valued, and activities that are time wasting and/ or meaningless. Guarding and regularly assessing this will be key to success.

What are the operational and implementation issues that would need to be considered if these proposals went ahead?

- Important that integration with the NDIS planning process is considered and trialled.

- The assessment of tasks and capacity for subsidized wages should be undertaken independently, via a reputable evaluation method such as Hay's. Similar to gender bias in job evaluations, care should be taken that the work of people with disability is not undervalued through the use of minimising and passive language in evaluations (for a classic work on this topic see Burton, Clare, 1987 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/13126843?>).
- Capacity building will be key to success, as with the NDIS. See below.

Are there other approaches, proposals or ideas that could be considered when looking at options for a new National Disability Employment Framework?

- While the taskforce may already be aware of this case study, the gradual removal of support for sheltered workshops in Vermont, USA, may provide useful insights. See article: <http://bit.ly/1OrJEe2>
- The discussion paper notes that 'support and advocacy might need to be built into plan', however this is not elaborated on. We suggest that a number of capacity building projects will be necessary for the success of any move to open market. Examples of capacity building for people with disability in the job seeking and employment realm include: decision making, use of technology, engaging positively with potential employers and colleagues, and work appropriate appearance and demeanour. For families and allies, the areas would be similar however, may include harnessing natural community connections and supports, resume building and job seeking, and the art of asking. Family Advocacy would be very happy to assist or discuss this further with the taskforce or others in DSS/ Employment.