House of Representatives
Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services

QUESTION ON NOTICE
Date of hearing: 16 June 2023

Dr Ann Nevile

Mr Hill on 11 August 2023, Proof Hansard page 14

Workforce Australia | Role of an enabling organisation

Question

CHAIR: Can I ask you to take this on notice. I know we are short on time. The reason we wanted to get you back for this conversation is there was a lot of really good challenging counterfactuals and ideas in your submission. Part of our challenge is to keep our minds open and imagine how the world could be different as we measure, 'These are the things that work about what we've got, but the world can be different.' So it's a very helpful submission in that regard. If I distil what you're suggesting, there's an independent regulator that looks at licensing and quality and things like that. There's what BSL or others might term an enabling organisation. You've called that a regional office. Then there's a series of specialist support services. They could be not-for-profits. They could be private. They could be public. They could be a mix.

Dr Nevile: Yes, exactly.

CHAIR: But I added the word 'specialist' in picking up on what you were saying. If you're able just to give us a bit of a table—and again it's a brain dump, an illustration to open our minds, picking up on the Deputy Chair's question—on what are the functional roles and responsibilities that would sit with an independent regulator? What are the roles and responsibilities in an Australian context that might sit with an enabling organisation or regional office? What tasks or things would you want specialist services to provide?

…

CHAIR: We're not asking you to design the system; it's just to help illustrate this.

Dr Nevile: A simple diagram?

CHAIR: Yes, just a simple table.

Dr Nevile: Yes, I can do that.

Response

See attached document.

Attachment

Entity	Roles/Responsibilities	Comments
Independent Regulator	1. Assess the capacity of organisations who wish to provide, or continue to provide, Workforce Australia Employment Services against a set of agreed performance criteria which could include items such as: • Financial viability and planning • Governance structure • Staff recruitment and training • Complaints/feedback processes • Connections to other local organisations • Existing, or planned, employer engagement strategies 2. Undertake an independent evaluation of the WAES program every four years. 3. If asked, provide the Federal Parliament with a report on the performance of WAES providers based on the annual or biennial licensing reviews. 4. Maintain a register of individuals with relevant experience who are interested in working with service providers in evaluating innovative changes.	If an organisation meets all the agreed criteria, the Independent Regulator gives them a licence to operate. Initially, an organisation's licence is reviewed by the Independent Regulator every year for the first three years. After that, high performing organisations, those that meet all criteria and exceed expected performance in some criteria, have their licence reviewed every two years. These program wide evaluations would identify outcomes over the 4 year period and explore the reasons behind observed performance (ie what happened, and why?) For example, a major focus of the program wide evaluations would be the effectiveness of the relationship between departmental regional offices and the individual service providers operating in each region.

DEWR (Central Office)	1. Co-ordinate the process of developing a set of agreed registration/licensing criteria. 2. Ensure departmental regional offices are given sufficient funding/staff resources to effectively carry out their responsibilities. 3. Review the annual plans produced by each departmental regional office which, initially, set out what actions they plan to do to fulfill their responsibilities and, in subsequent years, report on progress against each action and identify any new actions to be undertaken in the following year. 4. Undertake any policy development work which may arise as a result of the program wide evaluations carried out by the Independent Regulator.	
Departmental Regional Offices	The over-arching responsibility of departmental regional offices would be: • to develop and maintain productive working relationships with all service providers in their region. Regional Offices would fulfill this over-arching responsibility by: • developing a good understanding of the needs of major employers in their region; • using this knowledge to assist local service	

	providers develop effective employer engagement strategies. • Using their knowledge of local service providers to connect employers directly with agencies best placed to meet their needs. • Using their knowledge of local service providers across a range of programs to facilitate collaborative working arrangements. • Developing and maintaining a repository of good practice and 'lessons learnt' which can be accessed by all service providers within the local area and across Australia.	
Specialist services	1. Meet, or exceed, all agreed criteria to retain their licence. 2. Ensure staff who work with job seekers have the requisite skills. 3. Allocate sufficient staff resources to facilitate the development of real Job Plans for all clients of their service. 4. Introduce a monitoring framework that allows the organisation to monitor progress against all Job Plans and against all relevant licensing criteria, for example, the development of collaborative arrangements with other agencies in the local area, or employer engagement activities.	A real Job Plan would set out: • the most significant barriers the job seeker faces in gaining and sustaining employment; • the actions the service provider will undertake to assist the job seeker overcome, or minimise the effects of these barriers; and • the actions the job seeker will undertake.

Direction of Accountability