

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my horror at the Government's decision to retender over 80% of the DES services currently in operation. I find that it is unfair to all services that have received 3 stars, and thus performing, to have to go through this process again. The tender process, whilst time consuming for staff, also instills fear of job losses and inability to perform well.

Services such as the one I work for, have spent years building relationships with local businesses, mental health services and other services in the area to provide a comprehensive service to clients. Disruption to this will cause a flow on affect and uncertainty amongst clients and stakeholders. Ultimately, the clients are the people who will suffer the most from this.

This type of action by the Government causes fear for those working in the industry and puts undue pressure on staff to perform at any cost to place clients so they can maintain their place in the industry. This is unacceptable. As a disability service, our goal is to promote social inclusion. Many of our clients struggle to compete in the open job market and therefore come to our service for assistance. If staff are required to focus on placing clients into jobs instead of focusing on the clients wants and needs, then it is the client who suffers as a result.

The focus of our work should be ASSISTING CLIENTS not worrying about the success/failure of our business to perform. Considering the client barriers that our organization works with, it is unrealistic to expect such high outcomes.

I support my organization in its efforts to change this decision and feel that the following recommendations be considered:

- That contract rollover should be extended to include level three Employment Support Services, as well as levels four and five. Only levels one and two should re-tender for contracts
- That the Government integrate quality as a requirement for service delivery, that is equal to the emphasis on quantity of services outcomes within the star rating system
- That the Government should hold DEEWR accountable for contract management, and addressing issues of underperformance in a timely manner through a fair and due process to exit consistently poor performing providers from the market.

That the Government acknowledges the specialised nature of Disability Employment Services, and ensures that any procurement process in the future is congruent with the long-term relationship-based nature of these services. In addition, that that procurement processes take into account the way in which services are imbedded in local communities and the support they provide to people with disability as well as their employers.

I thank you for your consideration,