

SENATE
STANDING COMMITTEES ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
INQUIRY INTO AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC RESPONSE TO THE WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION'S COMMISSION ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH
REPORT, CLOSING THE GAP WITHIN A GENERATION

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Senator Siewert asked on 23 November 2012, Hansard page 41 (paraphrased):

Question

Can you clarify the role of Disability Services Australia (DES) and Job Services Australia (JSA)—can they continue to support people after they have got a job, to maintain that job? Also, are you aware of how effective it would be for service providers outside DES/JSA to be able to maintain that ongoing contact with people?

Answer

Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services (DES) providers have a specialist role in assisting people with disability, injury or health condition to secure and maintain sustainable employment and have the flexibility to ensure services are tailored to the individual needs of job seekers. Services are tailored to recognise all factors relevant to the individual including the type and nature of disability, caring responsibilities, age, cultural and linguistic diversity, skills and experience.

DES providers assess the impact that a participant's injury, disability or health condition has on their ability to find and retain a job, and work with participants to develop an individually tailored pathway to employment. Once the participant is placed in a job DES providers support and manage the impact of a participant's condition in the workplace, providing ongoing support in the workplace for as long as it is required. This may include providing assistance such as workplace modifications, information, training and support for employers, staff and the job seeker.

For participants who achieve a 26 Week Employment Outcome, DES providers will initially determine if ongoing support is best suited to an individual participant's needs or if the participant can be exited as an independent worker. For those who require ongoing support to retain their job, three support options will be available:

- Flexible Ongoing Support—available in both DES programs
- Moderate Ongoing Support—available in the Employment Support Service only; or
- High Ongoing Support—available in the Employment Support Service only.

The DES provider is responsible for delivering the appropriate level of ongoing support to an eligible participant, or transferring them to another DES provider who is able to provide the support.

A participant who is not exited as an independent worker can receive ongoing support for up to 52 weeks from the job place anchor date at an appropriate level determined by the DES provider. The requirement for further support is then determined by an undertaking an independent Ongoing Support Assessment (OSA).

Job-in-Jeopardy assistance is also available through DES to provide immediate support to help employees who are likely to lose their job as a result of their injury, disability or health condition. An employee or employer may approach a DES provider directly or contact Centrelink which will refer them to the most appropriate SES service for Job-in-Jeopardy Assistance. When a Job-in-Jeopardy participant achieves a Job-in-Jeopardy outcome, they are either exited from the DES program or placed into ongoing support if required, as assessed by an ongoing support assessment provider.

Work-Based Personal Assistance (WBPA) is also available through DES to provide additional, regular personal support in employment for any DES participant who has commenced in the DES Employment Support Service, and who requires support within the workplace because of their physical or neurological

disability or medical condition. DES-ESS providers can claim WBPA fees for up to ten hours of assistance per week, per DES participant.

The Employment Assistance Fund also supports the employment of people with disability by providing financial assistance to purchase a range of work-related modifications and services for people who are about to start a job or who are currently working, as well as those who require assistance to find and prepare for work. Employers, people with disability and employment service providers may apply for assistance through the Employment Assistance Fund.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) maintains strong contractual relationships with DES providers. These relationships are underpinned by a robust performance framework that uses statistical regression analysis to allow the comparison of provider performances across Australia and different caseload characteristics. The performance framework allows the department to monitor the performance of providers against a range of benchmarks, including their ability to provide ongoing support to assist participants to maintain their employment. Ongoing support is an important element of the performance framework used to calculate a provider's performance.

DEEWR does not have equivalent arrangements with organisations that it does not contract to deliver services and is therefore not able to comment on the ability of these organisations to provide services similar to the ongoing support offered in DES.

Job Services Australia

Job Services Australia (JSA) provides Post Placement Support (PPS) to job seekers who are working to aid their transition into the workplace and maximise success in securing long-term employment. PPS can be used to provide support and mentoring to address issues that are likely to impact on a job seeker's ability to continue in their education or employment placement.

JSA providers can use the Employment Pathway Fund (EPF) for the delivery of post placement support to eligible job seekers.

JSA's Access to Mentoring Support for Indigenous Job Seekers Pilot, which commenced on 1 July 2012, provides up to 26 weeks one-on-one post placement mentoring support to voluntarily participating Indigenous job seekers in 20 selected Employment Service Areas across Australia excepting in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

In the 12 months to 30 June 2012, DEEWR's post-program monitoring survey shows that more than 70 per cent of job seekers who were placed into a job by their JSA provider were employed around three months later. This may indicate that the high level of support provided following a job placement helps keep job seekers in work or find other suitable employment opportunities.

For organisations that are not contracted to deliver JSA employment services, the department is not able to comment on the ability of these organisations to provide services similar to those delivered in JSA.