

Impact on clients

As the Research Manager of a Disability Employment Service Provider - I am concerned about the disruptive impact that tendering for Employment Support Service (ESS) funding will have on the quality of service delivery to clients of our Disability Employment Services.

The role of our Research Unit is to explore national and international best practice in employment service by: undertaking partnered research with universities; trialling innovative concepts in individual sites for wider application throughout the organisation and; promoting best practice recommendations (resulting from research findings) to the broader community and disability sector.

The Research Unit's primary role is to implement recommendations from Research findings to improve the **quality of direct service delivery**, however, this pursuit would be severely compromised during a tender submission period. Staff resources *will* be diverted from the primary activity of research to assist the tender writing team with the submission. This redeployment of staff for a minimum period of 4 months (from the release of Exposure draft to Final request for tender, Feb 2012 - June 2012 as advised by information releases from DEEWR) will have a significant impact on the Research Team's output with regard to improving quality service provision.

Our organisation recently partnered with a University on a 2 year project to research the employment barriers faced by jobseekers who experience both mental illness and drug and alcohol issues. Recommendations from the findings have been implemented, Disability Awareness Training for our Employment Consultants have been improved as a result and manuscripts have been produced for journal submission which will influence a wide readership. Had significant resources been diverted away from this important 2 year project to tender writing, it would have delayed the implementation of the recommendations or impacted our ability to meet the timelines allocated to the research project.

Research on disability is essential for increasing public understanding about disability issues, informing policy and programs, and efficiently allocating resources. (*World Report on Disability*, WHO and World Bank Group, 2011). The World Report on Disability recommends that **research** on the effectiveness and outcomes of services and programs for persons with disabilities is **essential**. (*Recommendation 9, strengthen and support research on Disability*). Our research unit is well positioned to play a vital research role in improving services to people with disabilities and to implement the recommendations outlined in the World Report on Disability, which has current relevance. However, if the Government decides to proceed with a competitive tender process for ESS services, this will compromise our capacity to deliver on improving services to the clients of our organisation and will impinge on our ability to implement recommendations from the World Report on Disability in order to create enabling environments for people with disabilities.

I therefore urge DEEWR to extend the contract rollover invitation to include level three Employment Support Services, providing opportunity for our Research Unit to get on with the job it does best:- putting vital research into practice to improve the quality of service to people with disabilities.