

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Inquiry into the DEEWR Tender Process to award employment services contracts**

**EEWR\_SIH\_H63**

Senator Fifield asked on 11 June 2009, EEWL Hansard pages 80 – 81.

**Question**

The department's seven-step decision making process. Can the department provide the seven steps to us and the timeframe around each of those seven steps and the date at which each of them started and finished?

**Answer**

The evaluation of tender responses was undertaken in accordance with section 4.14 of the *Request for Tender for Employment Services 2009-12*.

Tender documentation included a set of guidelines covering all stages was signed off by the Probity Adviser prior to the tender closing.

The Tender Evaluation commenced on 15 November 2008 and concluded on 31 March 2009 when the department made its final decision.

All tenders were assessed initially for conformance and eligibility to tender.

There were multiple levels of assessment and review as well as credential and financial viability checks.

The Department's tender process included seven levels of consideration and quality assurance:

1. *A team of two experienced Departmental staff undertaking initial assessment of each tender*
2. *Senior account managers reviewed the assessment and moderated for consistency*
3. *Legally qualified staff oversaw a formal quality assurance process*
4. *State Managers undertook a further review and consistency check*
5. *The Department's Tender Review Committee (TRC), comprised of senior departmental officials, reviewed each proposed business recommendation;*
6. *The TRC further considered the assessment and reviewed tenderers' capacity to deliver;*
7. *The TRC conducted a final end-to-end review to ensure the best results for job seekers.*

A comprehensive process for the evaluation was undertaken where tenderers responses and claims were assessed in accordance with approved guidelines and against the published selection criteria including checking of claims against data and information held by the Department or through verifying the claims through external sources as appropriate.

Assessment teams looked across the whole tender response to identify claims and examples to support demonstration by the tenderers of their experience and expertise against the following key factors:

- demonstrated past performance in helping disadvantaged participants;
- a good understanding of the new integrated service provision to achieve outcomes for participants;
- local strategies and collaborative arrangements, including linkages with other service providers at the local, state and national level, which will be used to achieve sustainable outcomes for job seekers with diverse needs; and
- organisational management and governance.

The considerations included assessment of tender responses by teams of two departmental officers and reviews by a senior Account Manager for consistency, and completeness as well as testing any assertions. Assessment and reviews were undertaken by departmental staff with detailed understanding and local knowledge of the ESAs and the capacity and expertise to test and verify claims and validate the appropriateness of local services and strategies and their relevance to the ESA. State Managers also undertook a comparative and consistency check across all the ESAs in their State as well as the providers for whom their State had account management responsibility. The Tender Review Committee (TRC) and delegate also undertook a review and assessment across each ESA, State and nationally.

The seven steps outlined above were overlapping and iterative.

In broad terms, for Stream Services, assessment of tenders by teams was undertaken from 15 November 2008 to February 2009. Reviews occurred over the period January to March 2009. The TRC and delegate considered assessments and recommendations during February and March 2009. The delegate's final decision was made on 31 March 2009. A formal quality assurance process throughout the whole tender evaluation process was overseen by legally qualified staff.

The tender process was supported by robust governance arrangements, reporting and the TRC. An internal legal advisor, the independent Probity Adviser and purchasing experts were also present when this committee met.

The tender process was monitored throughout and at each milestone by the independent Probity Adviser, Clayton Utz, who was satisfied that the process has met all probity requirements and has given an unqualified sign off.