

**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_W43

Senator Humphries provided in writing.

Question

Catholic Social Services Australia makes the following comment in its submission:

“For streamed services alone, there were four criteria (weighted). However there were 16 sub-criteria (not weighted) and since one of these was broken down further, there were a total of 29 un-weighted sub-categories to respond to. Such a structure leaves considerable scope for individual assessor judgment and inconsistent decision making. For a provider, this is more of a ‘raffle’ than a credible selection process. As a result, in DEEWR feedback sessions, providers are frequently informed that they failed to emphasise some particular sub-criterion sufficiently. For providers, establishing the relevant balance among sub criteria is a guessing game.”

Please comment on this criticism from CSSA. What information was provided to tenderers to assess the appropriate weight to attach to each of the sub criteria?

Answer

Job Services Australia is a major reform to employment services. In developing the model there was extensive consultation with stakeholders and industry across a range of considerations including the selection criteria and weightings.

The selection criteria and weightings published in the *Request for Tender for Employment Services 2009-12* (RFT) were consistent with feedback from the industry and other stakeholders.

There were four weighted Selection Criteria for Stream Services as set out in Section 4.9 of the RFT. These criteria were further divided into sub criteria. In most instances this required a tenderer to address 22 sub criteria, or to a maximum of 24 if the tender was for a specialist service in a remote area.

The sub criteria were designed to provide tenderers with guidance on how to construct their tender response. This provided tenderers with direction to ensure they maximised their opportunity to demonstrate their experience, expertise and claims and how this translates to the new integrated employment services.

The RFT did not specify weightings for the sub criteria. The Department appropriately applied an equal weighting to each of the sub criteria when assessing tenders.

All staff involved in the evaluation process received detailed training and support covering each stage of the evaluation. Tender documentation prepared for the tender included a set of guidelines covering all stages of the tender evaluations process from lodgement of tenders to the final decisions.

Assessment of a tenderers response to the published section criteria took into account all the information contained in the entirety of the tender submission (even if the relevant material, claims or examples was contained within a response to a different sub criterion than that being assessed).

Guidelines, governance arrangements and evaluations processes were approved and signed off by the Probity Adviser prior to the tender closing in November 2008.

There were multiple levels of assessment and review as well as credential and financial viability checks. A formal quality assurance process throughout the whole process was overseen by legally qualified staff.

The RFT identifies how the tenderer was to complete their claims against the selection criteria