

Employment and pre-vocational assistance

Disability open employment services

Disability open employment services, administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations assist job seekers with disabilities who have significant or ongoing support needs, by providing training, job placement and on the job support.

Nationally, there are 229 organisations providing open employment services from 326 outlets. In 2003–04, open disability employment services helped 48,431 people with moderate to severe disabilities find and keep work in the open employment market or in self-employment. Of these people, 24.23 per cent were identified as having a psychiatric disability.⁴⁵ The government announced in the 2005–06 budget that there will be an additional \$173.6 million for an additional 21,000 places over three years from July 2006.

Job Network

Job Network, administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is a national network of community and private organisations contracted to find jobs for unemployed people. Job Network also provides employment services for people with disabilities (including those with mental health conditions or illnesses), who do not have ongoing support needs.

As announced in the 2005–06 budget, the government has committed to fund an additional 137,000 places over three years from July 2006. Some of these places will go to people with disabilities on a demand driven basis.

From 1 July 2005, jobseekers in receipt of the Disability Support Pension will be able to register directly with a Job Network member without the need for a referral from Centrelink. Centrelink will continue to be able to refer job seekers on the Disability Support Pension to Job Network. Disability Open Employment Services already directly register Disability Support Pension recipients for their services.

Job Network members also have access to a dedicated pool of funds, called a job-seeker account, to purchase a wide range of assistance to help eligible job seekers address their barriers to employment and assist them into work. There are a number of Job Network members who have specialist capabilities in working with job seekers with a disability or mental health problem.

Prevocational assistance account

From 1 July 2006, pre-vocational assistance will be available to people who undertake comprehensive work capacity assessments. Assessors can use the new funding stream to organise short-term prevocational assistance, such as pain management courses, work conditioning courses (eg fitness for work) or mental health interventions.

These shorter term programs do not replace the range of longer term programs, such as disability employment assistance, the Personal Support Program and vocational rehabilitation, which are available to help jobseekers with disabilities address barriers to employment. These existing programs are structured to assist jobseekers with multiple barriers, however, access to short term interventions to improve the work capacity of jobseekers who have less complex barriers to employment is often limited. The new account will meet this gap, improving the range of services available to jobseekers with disabilities.

Personal Support Program

The Personal Support Program (PSP) administered by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, bridges the gap between crisis assistance and employment assistance programs. It provides assistance to people whose non-vocational barriers (such as homelessness, mental health problems or mental illness, drug or gambling problems or social isolation) prevent them from getting a job or benefiting from Job Network or other employment assistance services.

The program is open to people of workforce age receiving income support, as well as those aged 15–20 years who do not receive any payment but are registered as job seekers with Centrelink. The program will assist 45,000 participants in 2004–05. As announced in the 2005–06 budget, the Australian Government has committed to fund an additional 25,000 places over three years from July 2006.

There are currently 142 organisations, covering around 600 sites across Australia, funded to deliver PSP services. Around 40 per cent of PSP providers offer specialist assistance, for example, targeted to people with mental health problems or mental illness, ex-offenders or people facing drug and alcohol issues. There are approximately 60 sites (10 per cent) registered as having a speciality in mental health and 10 sites registered as having a speciality in physical or intellectual disabilities. As at 1 November 2004, there had been 7828 participants on the program with a mental health barrier.

Job placement employment and training

The Job Placement Employment and Training (JPET) program is an employment preparatory program administered by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that assists disadvantaged and disconnected young people aged 15 to 21 years (with a focus on 15–19-year-olds) to overcome multiple personal and social barriers.

JPET is delivered by a network of services with experience in assisting disadvantaged young people and who can draw on and work collaboratively with existing community support services and networks within their local community. JPET providers have flexibility to tailor service delivery strategies to meet participant's individual needs and local circumstances. There is no single model for service delivery. The range of service strategies include case management support and referral services, group work, casual and drop in assistance, training and learning activities, and formal and informal counselling.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation services are available to Australians of working age who have a disability, injury or health condition. Vocational rehabilitation programs are tailored to individual needs and can include vocational assessment and counselling, job preparation,

placement and training, injury management and workplace modifications. Vocational rehabilitation assists people to manage the impact of their condition on their quality of life and helps them to get and keep a job.

As announced in the 2005-2006 Budget the Australian Government has committed an additional \$186 million to fund an additional 41,700 places for three years from July 2006. **Further information on Vocational Rehabilitation services can be found in Attachment 14.**