



Terms of Reference

Disability Employment Services (DES) Reference Group

Context

The Government's Disability Employment Services (DES) program plays an important role in helping people with disability, chronic illness or injury gain employment in the open labour market.

As of May 2021, there are over 100 service providers who support more than 310,000 registered participants in job search, in the workplace and in education. As an employment services program, DES focuses on, and pays for, the matching of individuals to job opportunities, as well as pre-employment and post-employment support.

The Disability Employment Reform Branch within the Department of Social Services (DSS) will prioritise DSS' work in providing advice to Government on employment supports for people with disability.

A key focus will be to consider:

- Options to reform DES from 1 July 2023, when the current DES Agreement expires;
- How to improve employment outcomes for people with disability; and
- How to better meet the needs of DES participants and employers.

Purpose

The Disability Employment Services Reference Group (the Reference Group) will provide advice and guidance on high level strategic issues such as increasing employment opportunities for people with disability by improving information, services and supports to jobseekers with disability and employers for DES for 2023.

Role

- Provide strategic advice and guidance to DSS on ways to improve employment outcomes for people with disability and for support to be provided in an efficient and effective manner.
- Provide advice on the intersection between DES and other systems such as income support/social security, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), post school transition, other employment programs.
- Provide advice and guidance to DSS on how to improve the experience of:
 - Participants and employers interacting with the DES program, to ensure that high quality practices by providers are championed, and to ensure that participant outcomes remain central to the success of the DES program.
 - Employers interacting with the DES program, including meeting the needs of employers to provide the support required to employ more people with disability and retain people for disability as employees for a longer duration.
- Assists DSS to effectively engage with stakeholders on reform options, by providing input on a public discussion paper, and advising how to incorporate appropriate stakeholder feedback into the design of reform options.
- Advise of any risks, issues or concerns that may arise while co-designing and/or implementing reforms to the DES program.

- Advise of how best to consult and engage with people with disability who may experience significant disadvantage in obtaining and retaining employment. This includes, but may not be limited to: autistic people, people with intellectual disability, children, and young people with disability, women with disability, LGBTIQ+ individuals with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.
- Actively support DSS to reform DES and co-design a world-class disability employment services program that treats people with disability with dignity and respect, is consistent with Australia's international human rights' obligations, rewards innovative conduct, encourages long-term investment by DES providers and delivers value for money.
- Provide advice and guidance on issues relating to policy and operational aspects of the current DES program, which may be referred to a separate Working Group to be considered.
- The Reference Group is not a decision-making forum; it will provide recommendations to DSS for consideration in its advice to Government on future arrangements for DES. DSS will respond to all recommendations provided by the Reference Group in writing within 21 days or as agreed with the Chair.

Summary