

RDA FAR NORTH SUBMISSION INTO THE NEXT GENERATION OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES – DISCUSSION PAPER – ONLINE SUBMISSION

ENHANCED SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED JOB SEEKERS

Job seekers who face complex barriers to finding work often need intensive support. This may include access to additional services and face-to-face assistance from an employment services provider.

Some people find it harder than others to get a job. What types of services would help them become job ready and find work?

The one size fits all approach does not work for employment services, especially when people are not only disadvantaged by physical or mental disabilities, but also by geographical location. Many job seekers in remote and regional areas do not have direct access to employment service or training providers, nor do they have transport to reach these services.

As referred to in the Discussion Paper, the hub and spoke model is currently used and for its purpose, it does mostly work. There is a risk of trying to make employment service providers a one-stop-shop for all job-seeker needs e.g. incorporating addressing of personal issues etc into what their role already incorporates. Career Practitioners and the likes are skilled and trained in areas of employment and career advice and whilst they do deal with some job seeker personal issues etc, they should only be required to refer the client to appropriate services.

Therefore, continuance of the hub and spoke model would be a preferred solution as the model is already in place and with some tinkering it can be more effective for a wider range of job seekers. There can really be no 'single unified enhanced service that assist all highly disadvantaged job seekers', as referred to above it would be too onerous of the provider to meet all of the needs and there are also varying types of disadvantage and a one size fits all approach would not work.

ONLINE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

We interact with apps and websites on a daily basis. They are becoming smarter and more personalised.

How do you think apps and online services could be used to help Australians find work?

Once again, there are many variables to job seekers and employers requirements, therefore it is difficult to provide a central point for all this information. For example, seek.com works as a great tool for job seekers in that they can upload their personal information there for employers to view when they are recommended for positions and employers can adapt their advertising to the vacancy needs, however, not everyone uses seek and therefore some miss out on opportunities. RDA Far North trialled a site called "JobLink" which had the purpose of trying to be a central point for job seekers and clients wishing to update their training needs to go by providing information on local employment vacancies and training opportunities as well as allowing seekers to upload profiles for employers to view. Unfortunately, the website proved to be quite labour intensive and didn't allow for easy linking to these opportunities and wasn't promoted enough through various avenues and has now been shut down due to little or no use over the last few months. For a system to work as this

one was designed to, it would need to be able to link to many different areas and therefore rely on those links to be current and not require updating to the website itself but rely on the linked sites to do their own updates.

People who are geographically disadvantaged can gain from online access to job seeker services, especially as they can't just hop in the car and travel for a face to face appointment most of the time. Any website also needs to bear in mind the data usage required for the site and needs to be low intensive data so that it doesn't use up a lot of job seekers own data on their various online plans. A central government app would be a good way to try and link with job seekers and employers and with other key providers or websites etc. as long as it is marketed in a way so it has key players on board and it easy to use and that employers also embrace the technology.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS

Consistent feedback from employers is that they want employment services to be easy to use, matching suitable, job-ready candidates to employers' needs.

How can future employment services better meet the needs of employers?

For a central service to be suitable for the needs of employers it needs to have a "critical mass" of job seekers to choose from. Employers need to be specific in their needs so that they can find the right match for them. It is crucial before job seekers are considered for positions they need to be employable for that role e.g. they need to be ready to be employed and have all the employer requirements in place.

The Government needs to promote its available services to employers so that they know what assistance they can get. It isn't practical that the Govt can do this on their own, but may need to do so through their own referral agencies and organisations that are key to promoting and referring their services.

The job seekers needs also shouldn't end when they become employed and they may need ongoing mentoring in order to maintain their employment. If this is the case, wage incentives or subsidies would be helpful for both the employer and employee.

Employment service providers need to work closely with employers to gain a sound understanding of their needs so that they can find the best match they can and therefore employers needs to be open in their dealings with the providers as well as possibly being more patient and mindful of the timeline for the process.

Recent government programs such as the Job Accelerator Grant are a great way for employers and potential employees seek financial assistance to gain position. This fund was focussed on new positions only and offered some financial incentives for employers to take on new employees.

JOB SEEKER ASSESSMENT

A good understanding of a job seeker is key to targeting services that meet their needs. On the other hand, the assessment process should not be unnecessarily onerous.

Everyone has different work experience and skills – what's the best way to work out the type of training and support each person needs to find and keep a job?

Whilst Option 2 is a more in-depth process, it may be the preferred model as it will cover more areas of assessment and gives more options for those that have high assessments to move quicker to a 'final' stage and for those that require further assessment and assistance they can go down that longer path. For any success it is key that a job seeker understands the process and timelines associated with the process in that sometimes they think that the provider should find them a job straight away, but they need to be aware of the whole process and that it may take time to get to the end goal. One thing to note for both models is that Disability Employment Services is not necessarily the only referral point and there are other organisations out there that deal with other 'disadvantages' and these need to be highlighted in the model as well.

To assess a job seeker's digital literacy a comprehensive online digital assessment needs to be carried out which includes scenarios from a workplace, for example.

The points-based system for activation for job seekers is a preferred model in that with the system where seekers need to reach a certain number per month, sometimes this meant wasting the seekers and potential employers time by simply dropping in resumes at places of business where no suitable vacancies actually exist. However, if the job seeker was awarded points not only for applying for jobs but also for searches, interviews etc it might provide more incentive for them to focus on what they really want to do and not doing it for the sake of reaching a number.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACHES

Economic and labour market conditions vary across Australia. While some locations are performing well, others are not. International analysis shows strong connections between regional stakeholders can help communities to prepare for change and take advantage of local opportunities.

Locals are often the best place to understand how jobs are changing in their area. How can they be engaged to help their communities get the skills they need to find and keep jobs?

RDA Far North works closely with the Department for Industry and Skills and facilitates, on a quarterly basis, the Far North Industry Leaders Group and the Far North Skills and Employment Network, however, funding for these ceased as of the end of September 2018 with ideas for continuance beyond this date currently being investigated. The Industry Leaders Group is made up of leaders of the main regional industries and training industries such as TAFE who work to address skills and employment shortages at a higher level. The Skills and Employment Network provides an opportunity for jobs and

skills service providers to come together and share information on current or upcoming initiatives and hear from industry representatives on opportunities within the region.

RDA Far North provides a Career Planning service to job seekers in the region with a focus on those facing retrenchment or recently made redundant, underemployed, students and school leavers, parents returning to work and those looking for a career change. The services assist with identifying strengths, exploring further training options, assisting with compiling a tailored resume, assisting in writing cover letters and guidance with addressing J&P criteria and providing interview hints and tips. Traditionally this service has been funded by the State Government, however that funding ceased on the 30 June 2018 and RDA Far North will fund these services to the 31 December 2018, with a view to reviewing funding and provision arrangements for the future.