

Reading the Tea Leaves: What the Workforce Australia inquiry might mean for disability employment services

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The Workforce Australia inquiry

- is looking at the implementation, performance and appropriateness of Workforce Australia Employment Services; and
- the extent to which WAES delivers services that are fair, leaves no-one behind, respects individuals' diverse needs, and supports job seekers into secure work, in particular the support provided to young people and those who have been unemployed for a long time.

Why am I talking about the ParentsNext interim report?

- The Committee's Interim report on ParentsNext gives us an insight into how the Committee is thinking about a whole range of issues to do with program design, service delivery and compliance mechanisms.

In this session I will

- identify three principles which are clearly evident in the ParentsNext interim report;
- talk briefly about how the Select Committee thinks these principles should be put into practice; and then
- facilitate a discussion about the implications of the Committee's thinking for the DES program and DES service providers.

A strong commitment to quality service provision

- The Committee defines quality service provision as “flexible, person-centred service delivery” and believes it is better to provide a higher quality service to a smaller number of participants than provide a lower quality service to a greater number of participants.

Co-design should include

- funding arrangements
- compliance requirements
- a monitoring and evaluation strategy
- a commissioning model that encourages collaboration
- the mix of for-profit and not-for-profit providers

Commissioning model

- is based on the belief that collaboration and quality service delivery will deliver better outcomes than competition.
 - Service providers should be required to meaningfully participate in formal Communities of Practice;
 - have strong local connections; and
 - a track record of delivering high quality services adapted to the needs of participants.

A commitment to innovation and new ideas

- The design of employment services should support the testing and evaluation of innovative ideas.
- Program evaluations should be independent and monitoring and evaluation data should be publicly available.

Independent evaluations?

- Is it appropriate that a single agency is responsible for procurement, administration, regulation and evaluation?
- Who should be responsible for the evaluation of employment services?
- What employment services data should be made available and in what format?

The application of commonsense

- There is little evidence that the Targeted Compliance Framework is improving participant engagement and enabling participants to achieve their goals.
- There is an almost total lack of experience in the Commonwealth public service in direct delivery of employment services.
 - The department has no view on what makes a high quality, efficient and effective service.

Possible questions

- If co-design is the key to ensuring high quality services, what should co-design look like?
- Is requiring agencies to participate in formal Communities of Practice realistic – will it work?
- What do you think needs to be done to support testing and evaluation of innovative ideas?