

ANTI-POVERTY NETWORK

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Media Release

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For Immediate Release**

Australia's largest disability jobs service providers fail to meet quality standards

Anti Poverty Network SA welcomes the release of Disability Employment Services Performance Framework Scorecards

Anti Poverty Network SA welcomes the release of the government's Disability Employment Services Performance Framework Scorecards.

These Scorecards have revealed that some of the largest Disability Employment Service providers, are failing to meet even the most basic standards and are not fit for purpose.

Disability employment service providers are given ongoing service fees from the federal government for their work and can also receive outcome fees when a client has a job for four, 13, 26, and 52 weeks.

Around 250,000 Australians currently use disability employment service providers.

Some of these job providers are being paid millions of dollars in public money for work that job seekers are finding themselves.

They also offer services to job seekers, who are signed on to mutual obligations to continue receiving welfare payments.

Many of the providers that did 'pass' the standards are providers that our members have found to provide inadequate services, due to provider staff being overworked with excessive caseloads and ridiculous KPI's.

Overall, notoriously poor quality providers are frequently deemed by the Department of Social Services to 'meet' the standards.

This underscores the need for Employment Services to be run by the public service.

Another shortcoming of the current system is Mutual Obligations.

In their current form, obligations force jobseekers into a state of 'ticking the box' to ensure they do not lose the payments they are relying on to meet their basic needs instead of encouraging the activities that are most likely to result in long-term high-quality employment.

Hence, mutual obligations should be abolished, particularly those that are the most punitive.

We know how important it is for people with a disability to fully participate in society, and the role that paid employment has in facilitating that, however, the failures of some providers make this extremely difficult.

"Without consultation, I was moved by Centrelink to a DES that had even less understanding of my situation as a person living with a chronic disability than my one that was designed for able people. The new Employment Officer, through no fault of her own, had no understanding of my Disability, age, education, or employment history, she just had no clue of how to deal with me, or even help." Anti-Poverty Network SA spokesperson Duncan Bainbridge said.

Furthermore, it's not just our members who say this, but the failures of the current DES system have been documented in numerous government reports and academic research articles.*

While the scorecard system is a good start, for it to be fit for purpose it needs to judge providers based on adequately meeting the needs of jobseekers.

Ultimately, the government's Provider Systems are not fit for purpose. What is needed is to remove Mutual Obligations and overhaul the DES system.

These are the changes that will improve people's lives.

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TikTok: https://www.tiktok.com/@apn_sa

Tw: twitter.com/AntiPovertyN_SA

Fundraiser: chuffed.org/project/a5rox5db4vq

Media Notes:

*See Fowkes, L. (2011). *Rethinking Australia's employment services*.

Ramia, G., Peterie, M., Patulny, R., & Marston, G. (2020). Networks, case managers, and the job-search experiences of unemployed people. *Social Policy & Administration*, 54(5), 765-776.

House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services. (2023). *Rebuilding Employment Services: Final report on Workforce Australia Employment Services*. Parliament of Australia.

https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportrep/RB000017/toc_pdf/RebuildingEmploymentServices.pdf

Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services (2019). *Jobactive: failing those it is intended to serve*.