

Terms of Reference for the Senate Inquiry on the administration and purchasing of Disability Employment Services in Australia

Disability Employment Australia proposed the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry to Senator Siewert earlier this month, and as a result of much consultation with herself and other key Senators we were able to get the Inquiry referred to the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Reference Committee on Tuesday the 23rd of August 2011.

Senator Siewert submitted that the following matter be referred to the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee for inquiry and report by 22 November 2011:

The administration and purchasing of Disability Employment Services (DES) in Australia, with particular reference to the Government's 2011-12 budget announcement to undertake a competitive tender of the Disability Employment Services – Employment Support Services program for contracts with a performance rating of three stars and below under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' DES Performance Framework, including:

- a. the impact of tendering more than 80 percent of the current DES on the clients with disability and employers they support under the current contracts;
- b. the potential impact of losing experienced staff;
- c. whether competitive tendering of more than 80 percent of the market delivers the best value for money and is the most effective way in which to meet the stated objectives of:
 - (i) testing the market,
 - (ii) allowing new 'players' into the market, and
 - (iii) removing poor performers from the market;
- d. whether the DES Performance Framework provides the best means of assessing a provider's ability to deliver services which meet the stated objectives of the Disability Services Act 1986 such as enabling services that are flexible and responsive to the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities, and encourage innovation in the provision of such services;
- e. the congruency of three year contracting periods with long-term relationship based nature of Disability Employment Services – Employment Support Services program, and the impact of moving to five year contract periods as recommended in the 2009 Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee report, DEEWR tender process to award employment services contract; and
- f. the timing of the tender process given the role of DES providers in implementing the Government's changes to the disability support pension

Please Note: Submissions close 26 September 2011.