

Amanda Ford-Asbeck

Inquiry: The administration and purchasing of Disability Employment Services in Australia

Dear Senator Ellis,

I work for a DES provider & have a profound physical disability myself.

I was a chef 4 ½ years ago. Due to my conditions worsening I could no longer do my normal work as a chef & was advised by my Doctors if I did not stop cheffing I would die within 3 months.

I went on Newstart Allowance & was given a suspension for 3 months. Newstart Allowance did not give me enough money to pay my rent so I went back to Centrelink & asked to be sent to a DES provider.

My provider helped me with a Resume, gave me advice on how to reskill & assisted me with job applications. Due to my desperate situation I went to my provider every day, all day to job seek. I enrolled in TAFE & did 2 Diploma courses consecutively. I also did Employment Services Certificate IV.

After 4 months I found the job that I am still in to this day.

I have been through the system & work in the DES system so I feel my opinions should have some weight.

I say **no to the 80%** tender as it causes staff loss & instability to clients & workers.

I say **yes to Quality** as current Star Ratings really only measure job outcomes or Certificate IV outcomes. In my opinion it does not measure the work we actually do.

Many of our clients are not work ready & these days many are so sick they will never be able to work. I recently received a letter from a Doctor stating that he was going to his Federal MP as he was Doctor & had assessed the Job Seeker to be too ill to look for work no matter what Centrelink clerks think (see attached letter marked "a").

Another example is another client of mine. He presented with acute Psychosis. He reported he spent many years imprisoned due to a violent crime he had committed when episodic. He had minimal support. He had attempted suicide which had left him with kidney failure & had to have the muscles cut out of his legs. He was difficult to engage & most workers on my team were a little afraid of him. I was able to engage him & was able to get him to a Psychiatrist who immediately reassessed him & started new medications. I encouraged him to attend a Psychologist as well. We worked together for some time. He went for a DSP & was successful. He came back to us a short time later & stated he would like to try working again. He is still employed for 8 hours a week & continues to improve. This client recently told me that if he had not come to us he would be dead, that he would have killed himself long ago. He stated that we gave him hope & referred to a great Dr that he is still linked too. I have attached his feedback form (marked "b") from some time ago. It still brings tears to my eyes when I read this.

This is why I yes to Quality. I believe we should not just be work outcome focused like Stream Services, that we should have more emphasis put on assisting these often very ill clients.

I say **no to reduced services** as it takes much needed time away from clients & employers to write the very lengthy tenders.

I say **yes to Sector Stability**. Large scale tendering leads to instability for Providers, employees, employers & clients. Just look at how many hiccups we have had since 1st March 2010. Surely this is costing the tax payers unnecessarily, not to mention cutting down trees to change all that paperwork. As a taxpayer I do not see these changes as value for money & have endured the instability these changes have brought about in my workplace.

It is often difficult to place people with a Disability as many employers see them as a high risk (even when they have been offered wage subsidies & workers training allowance). I know this to be true first hand.

I say **yes to Transparency**, I want to know what the Government means by “test the market”. We all know that the current Government is not really good at keeping its word or promises so this really worries me personally.

I would also like to know what the “product” is that the Government is tendering.

I say yes to Solutions. I believe that the emphasis should be on quality of service outcomes.

I believe the Government should hold DEEWR accountable & that the contract managers should address issues of underperformance from providers that are not performing. This must be done in a timely manner. As a worker I feel the contract manager is this mythological godlike creature that really does little to help us when we need additional support or advice.

Thank you for listening to my submission.

Sincerely,

Amanda Ford-Asbeck