

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2013-14 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 11

Question No: 611

Topic: Disability Employment Services

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Moore asked:

What is the Government doing to remove the many barriers that people with disability face when looking for appropriate and secure employment?

Answer:

The Government has a number of measures to remove barriers for people with disability when looking for employment. These include:

Disability Employment Services (DES) programme – this is the main programme to assist people with disability into open employment. DES providers play a specialist role in helping people with disability, injury or a health condition get ready to look for, find and keep a job. The support DES provides to people with disability is tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) – the EAF is available to assist employers with the extra costs involved in accommodating people with disability in the workplace and purchasing special work-related equipment. It also provides a range of disability awareness training to employers and co-workers to encourage supportive and flexible working practices.

The Supported Wage System (SWS) – SWS is a process that allows employers to pay a productivity-based wage which matches a person's assessed productivity rate. The SWS enables eligible people with disability to access a reliable process of productivity-based wage assessment to determine fair pay for fair work. For example, if an eligible person with disability is assessed as having a work productivity rate of 70 per cent, this may enable them to be employed under the Supported Wage System provisions at 70 per cent of the usual award rate of pay.

The Wage Subsidy Scheme is available for all DES participants and provides up to \$1,500 for placements of eight hours or more per week, for 13 weeks. The Wage Connect subsidy provides around \$6,000 for placing very long-term unemployed job seekers into work at their assessed work capacity for at least 26 weeks for jobs of at least 15 hours per week. Note that currently Wage Connect is paused, but will be available for new applications from 1 July 2014.

JobAccess is an easy-to-use website and free telephone service that provides advice regarding the employment of people with disability. It helps people with disability, employers, service providers and the community access information about services, financial assistance and workplace solutions.

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Online training modules – there are two modules that have been developed and made available to employment service providers. The Mental Health Capacity Building training is designed to increase DES providers’ capacity to better identify and assist people with mental illness to gain employment, and better connect them with the appropriate services. The Indigenous Cultural Awareness training is designed to build the capacity of providers to service Indigenous job seekers and develop stronger links to employers through an improved understanding of the cultural barriers faced in achieving participation outcomes.