The Next Generation of Employment Services: summary of consultation responses

October 2018

Social Research Centre

Org

Contents

List of Figures

Executive Summary

In July 2018, the Department of Jobs and Small Business (the Department) commissioned the Social Research Centre to review and analyse the submissions received in response to the Discussion Paper, 'The Next Generation of Employment Services' which was released for public comment in late June 2018. Over 450 responses were received from individuals, employment service providers, community and not-for-profit organisations, employers and peak bodies. This report presents a summary of the main issues raised, and responses to, the Discussion Paper.

Background

Employment services in Australia are currently governed by the jobactive contract, which has been in effect since 2015. The jobactive contract is set to expire in 2020, and with this date rapidly approaching, there is a need for the Department to consider the future of employment services. To facilitate the move to a new contract, the Department engaged in a 'public consultation' process. This involved publishing an online Discussion Paper which outlined some proposed changes for the future employment services contract, and inviting a range of stakeholders to provide feedback on the ideas that were presented. A similar process was undertaken prior to the move to jobactive in 2015.

This report distils the submissions to the discussion paper, which were thematically coded and synthesised, into key emerging issues from the main consultation themes. The report provides a summary of the findings on the nine main areas covered by the Discussion Paper:

- Government employment services today, and goals for future employment services

- helping disadvantaged Australians into work

- empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services

- better meeting the needs of employers

- assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

- incentives for job seekers to find work

- targeted regional and local approaches

- a service culture built on competition and quality

- transitioning to a future employment services model.

The insights provided in this report will help to inform the deliberations of the Advisory Panel and the recommendations to Government. This is a summary of the broad range of views, from an extensive range of stakeholders. For a complete capture of all concepts, views and feedback, the reader should refer to the individual submissions.

Aim and method for the analysis of submissions

The objectives of this report are:

- to determine what issues were most salient, and for which groups

- outline the key deficits and positives associated with employment services

- Highlight suggestions for improvement to be implemented in the 2020 contract

- Gauge the sentiment/reaction of stakeholders to ideas presented in the discussion paper

Stakeholders were able to submit responses to the paper in one of two ways:

- an 'online' submission: this type of submission involved stakeholders responding using a set template that was prepared by the Department. This template had five set questions for stakeholders to respond to, with the option to also upload an attachment

- a 'full' submission: this type of submission was less structured than the online responses and allowed stakeholders more freedom to respond in the manner they wished to. Stakeholders were able to submit longer documents, detailing their thoughts on the paper.

Summary findings

Stakeholders were broadly supportive of the key elements of the reform vision. They recognised the need for change and welcome the opportunity to have input into the design of the new model. Stakeholders demonstrated support for:

- a targeted and tailored service for job seekers

- providing better and more tailored assistance to employers

- increasing the level of support available for disadvantaged job seekers

- a flexible and positive approach to activating job seekers

- an approach that is tailored to the local area.

Online servicing

Stakeholders acknowledged the potential of digital technology to assist job seekers, employers, and providers alike, although they expressed concerns which were largely centered on accessibility and usability of a digital service, and the fear of isolation from human interaction this could lead to. Most supported the idea of a blended service, providing the best from both service types. Job seekers were particularly concerned about being able to access these services, with challenges noted around access to smart phones and other devices, the cost of data to use online services, and the digital skills to navigate services and apps.

Adapting to a changing labour market

Stakeholders felt the new employment services system needed to recognise and adapt to a changing labour market. The decrease in the availability of full-time work in entry level positions and the increase in contracting arrangements through the gig economy has changed the way people interact with the labour market. Stakeholders feel this should be reflected in the new model.

Servicing employers

Employers are typically time poor, and desire efficient simple interactions with employment services. The importance of the relationship between providers and employers was emphasised as being essential to better meet the needs of employers. The main priority of employers is to find appropriate candidates to fill their vacancies; stakeholders (including providers) suggested that they require little further incentives to hire job seekers but require job seekers with the appropriate job-ready employability skills.

Employers and community services supporting job seekers expressed a desire for ongoing post-placement support to ensure the needs of employers and the job seekers they hire, are better understood.

Holistic servicing of job seekers

Stakeholders want to see a more holistic approach to servicing and providing assistance, with an employment service that is integrated with other social services. This would allow employment services to provide job seekers with information and access to other social services needed, assisting job seekers with all their needs. Job seekers in particular highlighted the need for a more personalised in-depth servicing and support from consultant, with time spent discussing needs and circumstances rather than a cursory discussion to check compliance and progress.

Holistic assessment of job seekers

Stakeholders (across all stakeholder groups) consistently expressed a preference for an holistic job seeker assessment that focused on strengths as well as support needs. This would consider all aspects of a job seeker's life and circumstance and would be flexible enough to account for changing circumstances and would allow employment services to facilitate and provide holistic assistance.

There was strong support for a positive focus on job seeker activation, which recognises and rewards achievement, with less focus on meeting consistent ongoing obligations. Stakeholders advocated providing job seekers with greater control and choice over the services they receive, how they are assisted, and their long-term goals.

Regional and local approaches

Comments and ideas on regional approaches were consistent throughout stakeholder submissions. They expressed a desire to see an employment service that adapts to regional variations in labour markets, emphasises stronger relationships with local communities and facilitates place-based solutions to employment.

Market competition and service quality

Many current employment service providers and community service organisations expressed concern over what a new market structure might look like. There was widespread acknowledgement that some level of competition was required to provide choice and continued improvement but there was also concern over a crowded market, and that competition hinders collaboration and potentially limits diversity and innovation.

Providers also desired greater stability in the market through longer term contracts/licenses. They felt this would assist with staff retention, and improving the quality of employment service consultants.

There was broad support for a provider licensing model.

1.   Introduction and Method

In July 2018, the Department of Jobs and Small Business (the Department) commissioned the Social Research Centre to review and analyse the submissions received in response to the Discussion Paper, 'The Next Generation of Employment Services' which was released for public comment in late June 2018. Over 450 responses were received from individuals, employment service providers, community and not-for-profit organisations, employers and peak bodies. This report presents a summary of the main issues raised, and responses to, the Discussion Paper.

1.1.   Background

Employment services in Australia are currently governed by the jobactive contract, which has been in effect since 2015. The jobactive contract is set to expire in 2020, and with this date rapidly approaching, there is a need for the Department to consider the future of employment services.

To facilitate the move to a new contract, the Department engaged in a 'public consultation' process. This involved publishing an online Discussion Paper which outlined some proposed changes for the future employment services contract, and inviting a range of stakeholders to provide feedback on the ideas that were presented. A similar process was undertaken prior to the move to jobactive in 2015.

The Discussion Paper was divided into ten chapters, each focusing on a key element of employment services, and some proposed ideas for each. Stakeholders were invited to provide a response to each of these elements in their submission. The chapters outlined in the discussion paper were as follows:

- Chapter 1: Employment services today
- Chapter 2: The goals for future employment services
- Chapter 3: Helping disadvantaged Australians into work
- Chapter 4: Empowering job seekers and employers through online services
- Chapter 5: Better meeting the needs of employers
- Chapter 6: Assessing job seekers to tailor supports to their needs
- Chapter 7: Incentives for job seekers to find work
- Chapter 8: Targeted regional and local approaches
- Chapter 9: A service culture built on competition and quality
- Chapter 10: Transitioning to a future employment services model.

Engaging in a process of public consultation indicates a move towards 'user-centred' design, and it is hoped that this consultation will allow the Department to better tailor the new contract to the needs of stakeholders. It is important that any changes implemented will benefit those involved in the system.

1.2.   Research aims and objectives

The current research aims to provide an insight into stakeholder's views towards the proposed changes to employment services outlined in the discussion paper. In particular, the objectives are:

- to determine what issues were most salient, and for which groups this was the case
- outline the key deficits, and major positives, associated with employment services

- highlight suggestions for improvement to be implemented in the 2020 contract

- gauge the sentiment/reaction of stakeholders to ideas presented in the discussion paper

- to ultimately inform the future of employment services, based on 'user-centred design.'

1.3. Research Methodology

The public consultation process ran from June through to August 2018 (specifically, from June 29 until August 10). Stakeholders were able to submit responses to the paper in one of two ways:

- An 'online' submission: this type of submission involved stakeholders responding using a set template that was prepared by the Department. This template had set questions for stakeholders to respond to. These included:

  o Some people find it harder than others to get a job, what types of services would help them become job ready and find work?

  o How do you think apps and online services could be used to help Australians find work?

  o How can future employment services better meet the needs of employers?

  o What's the best way to work out the type of training and support each person requires to find and keep a job?

  o Locals are often best placed to understand how jobs are changing in their area, how can they be engaged to help their communities get the skills they need to find and keep jobs?

- A 'full' submission: this type of submission was a more structured submission than the online responses and allowed stakeholders more freedom to respond in the manner they wished to. Stakeholders were able to submit longer documents, detailing their opinions on the paper.

Online submissions tended to consist mainly of job seekers and other individuals (such as students and employed individuals) and were generally concise in detail, whereas full submissions tended to contain provider responses, as well as those from community service sectors, Government organisations, and education/training providers. In total, 484 records were received (from 454 unique submissions). Figure 1 summarises these submissions, providing an overview of responses by stakeholder group, and

Figure 2 identifies the state or territory of these respondents.

Figure 1   Contributions to the Discussion Paper by Stakeholder Group

COUNT OF CONTRIBUTOR TYPE

	community service	employer	gov'ment	individual	job seeker	other org	peak body	provider	provider (nfp)	training org - rto, tafe, etc
Total	38	14	7	152	179	8	25	10	16	5
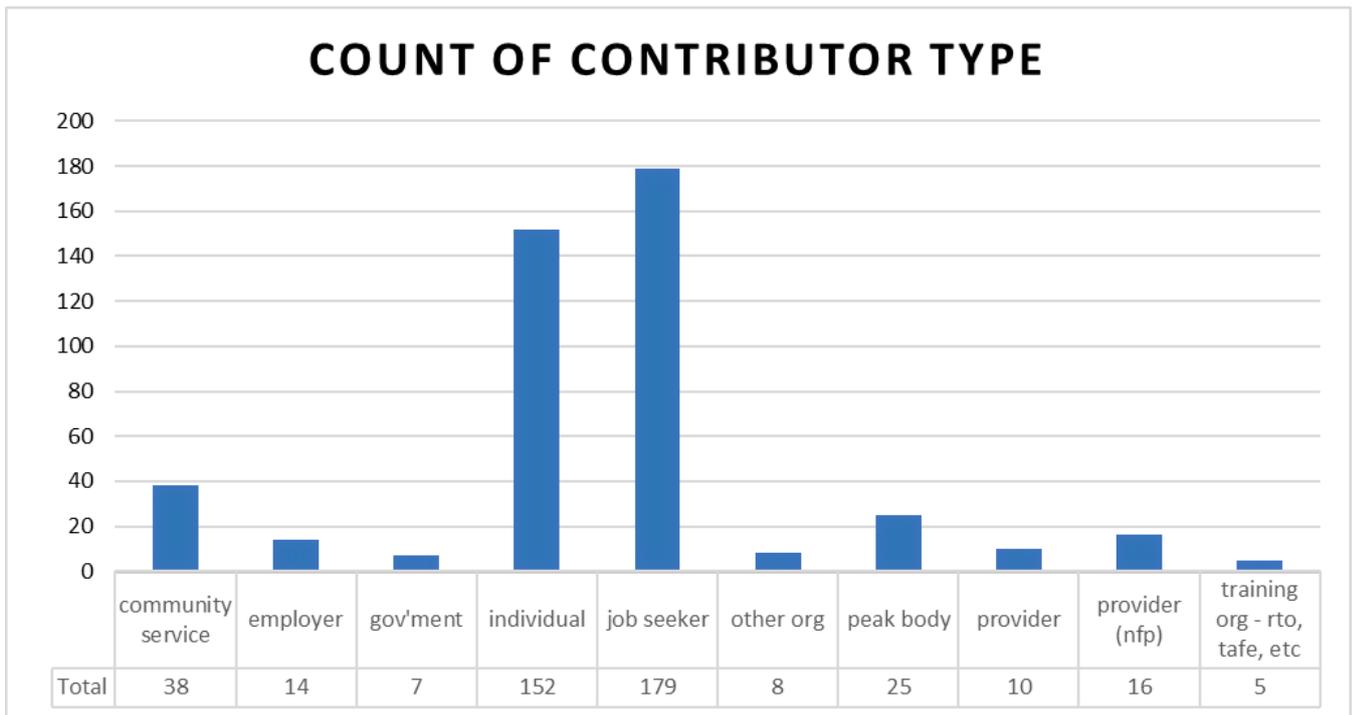
Figure 2   Number of Submissions to the Discussion Paper by State and Territory

COUNT OF STATE OR TERRITORY

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Unassigned
Total	3	99	1	81	35	21	96	51	67
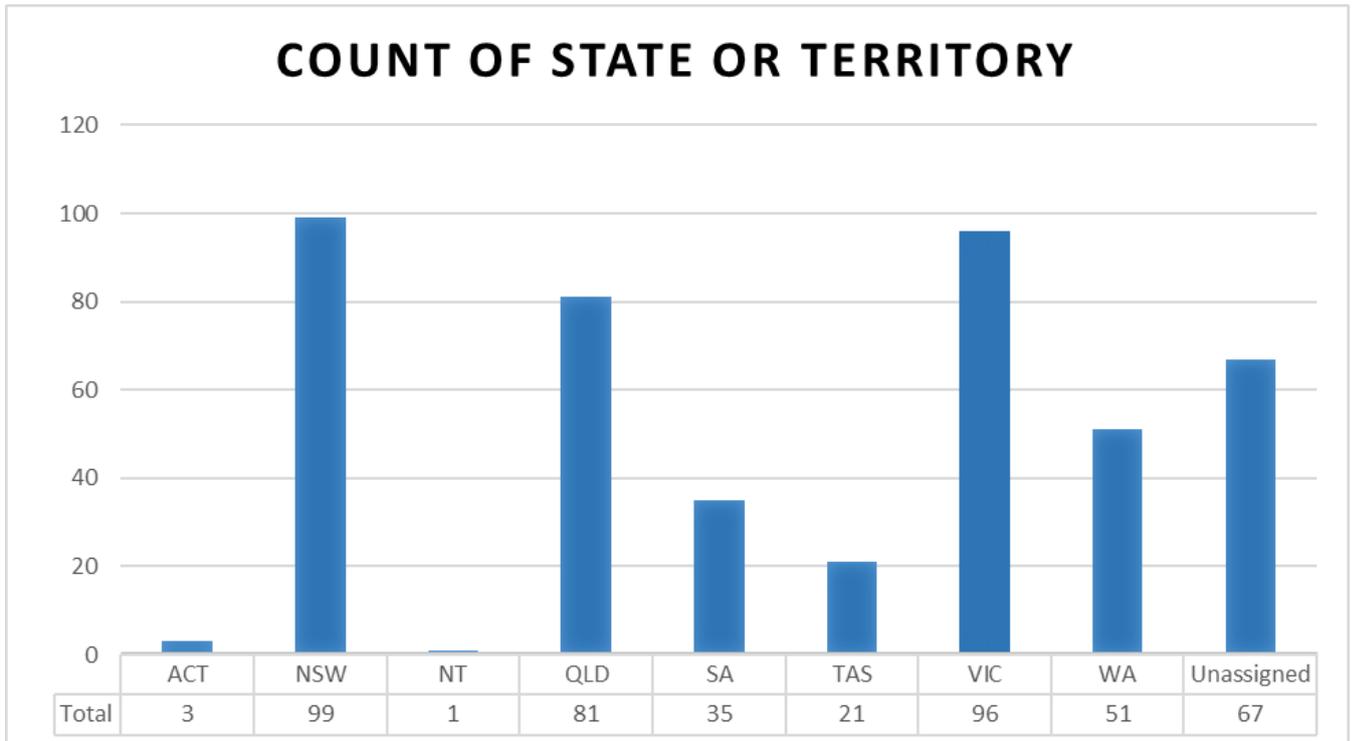
1.3.1.   Qualitative Analysis and Reporting

This report summarises, thematically, the written submissions to the Discussion Paper, and as such is based on qualitative non-numerical data. Qualitative data allows exploration of the experiences, perceptions and views among a defined population (in this case, a range of stakeholders responding to a consultation about future employment services).

In research that utilises primarily non-numerical data (i.e. qualitative written word, rather than quantitative or numeric information), the use of numbers within reported findings is generally avoided. However, in this instance, figures and numbers have been used in an attempt to present an overview of the relevance or salience of particular themes and sub-themes across the different stakeholder groups who have responded to the consultation. This quantification should not be interpreted as an indication of, for example, the proportion of a sub-group that have a particular view – this would only be possible if a robust and statistically representative survey was undertaken. Rather, it provides an insight **among those who responded to the consultation** of the key topics of importance, and highlights the issues raised among those respondents. Thus, the report does not offer any insights on those who did not respond to the consultation (either through choice, or being unaware of the consultation itself).

Interpretation of this report

Within qualitative analysis, it is also common practice in the reporting of qualitative data to provide some indication of the commonality of themes, issues or experiences using terms such as **most/nearly all, most, some, or a few/on occasion**, and this approach has also been utilised in the narrative in this report. This provides the reader with some indication of the salience of themes or findings, and how widespread they were across the consultation responses. It should be noted that the findings presented cannot be assumed to be representative of the overall population, and thus inferences should not be drawn to wider groups; rather it provides a robust overview of views and salience of topics among those that chose to respond to the consultation. Caution should be exercised in extrapolating any of these findings to their wider population, and any quantification should not be relied on to provide a substantive or statistically robust measure – the core data on which all of this analysis has been undertaken remains qualitative in nature.

Data from submissions were received by two main sources – online completion of a short web proforma, or through full submission documents. Notably, most individual responses (for example, from individual job seekers) were received via the short online proforma, and most other stakeholder responses (including providers, peak bodies etc) were via full submissions. Naturally this means that the individual level data are of less detail and coverage than from full level submissions – this should be borne in mind when considering the results in this summary report.

Data collected from the public consultation submissions were thematically coded by researchers (through reading each individual submission and allocating code to the text dependant on the topic and theme) using the qualitative software NVivo, using an agreed coding frame. This allowed for all responses to be stored in a central database, and for each individual response to be coded thematically based on the key topics raised throughout submissions. The SRC based the coding framework on the chapters outlined in the discussion paper. Thematic coding allows for themes and response patterns to be identified across stakeholder groups. The qualitative coding approach adopted by the SRC also brings a level of 'quality assurance' to analysis. All insights presented in this report are directly traceable back to the NVivo dataset, and to the original source document. The final, fully coded dataset has also been provided to the Department of Jobs and Small Business.

Report structure

The findings of the public consultation will be presented in-line with the most commonly discussed themes/issues. These closely reflect the chapters outlined in the discussion paper, and are as follows:

- Section 2: Employment services goals.
- Section 3: The case for change.

- Section 4: Helping people into work.

- Section 5: Empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services.

- Section 6: Better meeting the needs of employers.

- Section 7: Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs.

- Section 8: Activation and incentives.

- Section 9: Regional and local approaches.

- Section 10: Market competition and service quality.

Each of these sections contains a summary box, detailing the key deficits and positives, as well as some recommended points for improvement. Each section also contains a breakdown of the key issues raised for each theme, and the stakeholders who responded to each. This is followed by a detailed summary of the insights offered by stakeholders throughout the consultation.

Stakeholder groups

Submissions received were characterised by the type of stakeholder group that supplied them (see Figure 3). Each group is characteristically different, and tends to comment on issues of greatest concern to them. Thus, one can assume that the greater the volume of topics on a particular issue, the more salient that issue is to the stakeholder group. However, a low volume of comments on an individual topic does not necessarily mean they support the proposition (or otherwise), but it does perhaps suggest that they have less knowledge, insight or concern about that topic.

As previously noted, submissions were received from 454 unique respondents. From these respondents, a total of 484 records were coded in NVivo. This discrepancy is due to some respondents submitting multiple records throughout the consultation (for example, some respondents submitted both an online submission, as well as an attachment classified as a full submission).

- Responses were received and calculated from 179 job seekers. Job seekers tended to comment on the aspects of employment services that they interact with, as contained in chapters such as on improving online services or helping people into work.

- Job seekers made few comments on areas of employment services that are not directly involved in service delivery, such as market competition or transitioning to the new contract.

- Providers (26 submissions) are the stakeholder group most familiar with employment services and its operation. As such, they were among the most engaged stakeholder groups in the consultation, commenting on almost every concept canvassed in the discussion paper.

- Employers (15 submissions) commented on areas within each chapter of the discussion paper relevant to them, such as regional and local approaches, incentivising employers etc. They tended to refrain from commenting on areas outside their subject matter knowledge.

- Other stakeholders include Not-For-Profit organisations or charities (38), peak industry bodies (25), training and education providers (5), other government bodies (7) and identified individuals (152). These stakeholders tended to comment on all areas.

- Individuals consisted of a diverse range of respondents, such as ex-job seekers, employed individuals, academics, and provider staff. Although respondents were diverse, most tended to have direct experience with employment services, and the themes commented on were comparatively similar to job seekers. As such, results for job seekers and individual respondents have been reported together at varying stages throughout this report.

There were some other stakeholder groups responding to the discussion paper that warrant highlighting.

- There was a total of seven submissions from individuals identifying as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander, and from two organisations representing those groups. The key issues raised largely reflected those raised by other stakeholder groups, with the exception of the need for cultural competency for organisations providing services to Indigenous job seekers.

- The number of individual employers responding to the discussion paper was 15. However, there were several employer peak bodies that also responded, representing several hundred employer members. Thus, where employer views are represented in this document, they cover a wider group of employers than the 15 individual employers. Notable issues raised by these groups included a focus on vocational education, addressing skills gaps and the minimisation of administrative burden for employers.

- Employment service providers are represented as both profit and not-for-profit.

A breakdown of the top issues raised by these stakeholder groups, and by demographic characteristics (gender, age, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, and geography), can be found in Attachments D and E respectively.

Figure 3   The top 10 issues raised by stakeholders in their submissions

TOP 10 ISSUES RAISED

Issue	(chart)
Online tools and services	
Other services needed	
Education and training	
Improving services from consultants	
Matching services to goals and needs	
Online target groups	
How providers should work with employers	
Delivery models for enhanced services	
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	
Engaging with local stakeholders	

Legend: Job seekers and individuals ■ Providers ■ Employers ■ Community service ■ Peak bodies ■ Other groups

For a broad glance of the issues raised by different stakeholder groups, Attachment A shows the number of submissions from each stakeholder group, and the issues raised by each stakeholder group. This provides a quick glance of the volume of concern to particular issues each stakeholder group has. Attachment C contains the top 100 words mentioned by the largest stakeholder groups in their submissions (job seekers and providers). This demonstrates the frequency and emphasis on particular terms that consultation responses focused on. Attachment D indicates the top themes for each stakeholder group, according to the volume of data received via the submissions.

2. Employment services goals

Summary Findings

There was overall widespread general support for the future employment service goals set out in 'The Next Generation of Employment Services Discussion Paper.' Further suggestions included:

- a general goal of the reduction of long-term unemployed job seekers, with an associated reduction in welfare dependency

- flexibility in the new model to allow for innovation in service delivery

- a continued focus on the reduction of administration and red tape, to help reduce the efforts on compliance monitoring, thus releasing time for frontline staff to focus on service delivery

- the provision of targeted, focused support on those who need it and who are the most disadvantaged in the labour market

- improved satisfaction with, and confidence in, employment services (from both job seekers and employers)

an employment service that recognised, and rewarded, a wider range of outcomes such as gaining employability skills, 'distance travelled' towards employment, entrepreneurial skills, work experience and volunteering, and the recognition of skills obtained overseas.

Figure 4   Proportion of Submissions concerned with the goals of employment services, within each stakeholder group

GOALS IDENTIFIED

Other groups — 7.00
Peak Bodies — 4.00
Community service — 10.00
Employers — 2.00
Providers — 16.00
Job seekers and individuals — 5.00
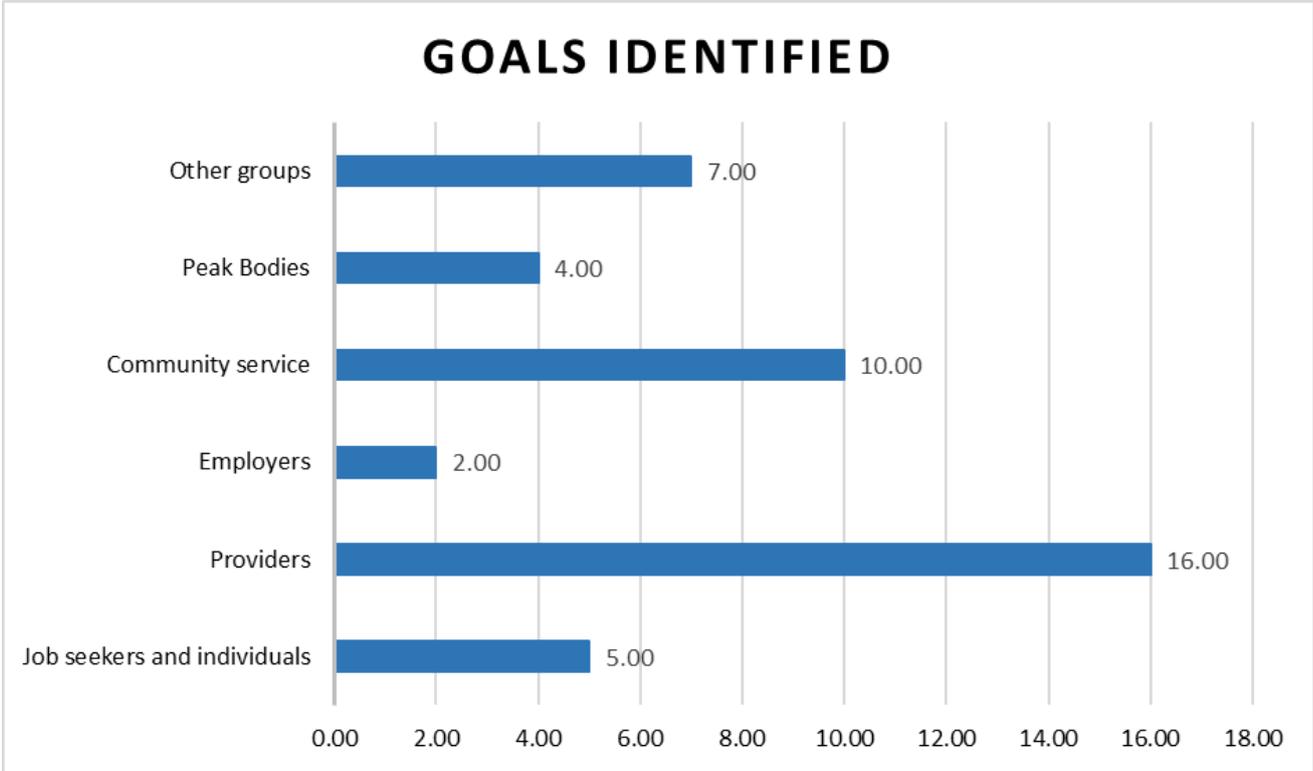
Figure 4. The majority of these were submissions from providers. In fact, more than half of all submissions from provider organisations mentioned the goals of employment services. This suggests that the overarching goals of employment services were not at the forefront of many stakeholders' concerns.

The established goals for future employment services were positively welcomed by stakeholders, however there was a common view that they were not ambitious enough for a new model and could be more specific or focused. Further, implicit in many submissions was the need for employment services to focus on sustained outcomes for job seekers, particularly in a labour market that is increasingly fragmented.

The most common stakeholder suggestions for specificity and focus have been amalgamated and presented alongside the suggested goals put forward by the Department in the Discussion Paper.

- 'Maximise job seeker outcomes' – work from a strengths-based, person-centred approach to deliver services to all job seekers.

- 'Responsive to a changing labour market' – understanding regionality, changing labour markets, and assisting in up- or re-skilling job seekers to reflect diverse labour market needs (i.e. matching job seeker skills to these local markets).

- 'Strengthening engagement of employers and job seekers' – possibly by offering more incentives to employ those who are the most disadvantaged, and aligning services with employer needs and expectations.

- 'Deliver efficiency and value for money' – an increased use of digital technologies to help deliver an effective service and reduce administrative burden, and recalculating outcome payments to encourage long-term employment.

- 'Enabling effective activation' – providing targeted and intensive support for the most disadvantaged job seekers, and cultural specific services where appropriate.

- 'Promote fairness and equity' – ensuring that already disadvantaged groups are not further disadvantaged by employment services.

- 'Encourage self-sufficiency and personal responsibility' – digital self-servicing must be carefully designed, and the selection of job seekers who could be self-servicing through the use of technology should be carefully considered, and assistance provided to support the motivation and self-agency/empowerment of job seekers.

Acknowledging that the existing goals set out in the Discussion Paper were positive, there was widespread agreement that additional goals would further benefit the direction of the new model. Many stakeholders (particularly providers, peak bodies and community service organisations) suggested additional goals to help tighten the new service; many of these suggestions were borne from key learnings from the jobactive model:

- Reduction in long-term unemployment/unemployed job seekers on caseload (a general goal that should be spelt out clearly from the outset of the new model).

- Flexibility in the model to allow for innovation when delivering services.

- A continued focus on the reduction of red tape and administrative burden for providers to help reduce compliance pressures on frontline staff, and to facilitate more flexible delivery of the model/services.

- Providing additional, targeted support to those at highest disadvantage in the job market (a more specific goal that highlights the importance of focusing this model on those highly disadvantaged groups of job seekers).

The following suggestions for additional goals were also made:

- increased satisfaction/confidence among job seekers and employers in new model

- reduced reliance on income support and dependence on welfare

- recognition of other tangible and non-tangible outcomes, for example, entrepreneurship, overseas skills, attaining a driver's license, and completing work experience.

3.   The case for change

Summary Findings

- Changes to the labour market, and the need for employment services to respond and adapt to those changes, was the most commonly raised issue throughout responses.

- The increased fragmentation of work, with fewer permanent full-time roles available, and more part-time, casual, short-term, seasonal and contract work in the 'gig' economy, were also frequently highlighted across many different stakeholder groups.

- A rise in portfolio careers (with people having multiple jobs), new models of self-employment (for example, Uber, Airtasker), and how this new way of working interacted with employment services was a concern for both providers and job seekers.

- Changes in regional employment were also commonly raised by those in regional locations, including a decline in secure, stable employment.

- The opportunity for job seekers to gain technical skills, to allow them to compete in today's job market, was also identified as a priority by job seekers and community service organisations representing job seeker cohorts.

- The favouring by employers of labour hire firms over and above employment services was also noted by a few respondents, with a need to recognise their place in any future employment services market.

- Increases in jobactive consultants' caseloads was also commonly raised, with a concern about their ability to effectively service clients (including an inability to personalise services according to need), and the overall impact on consultants (including observed high turnover).
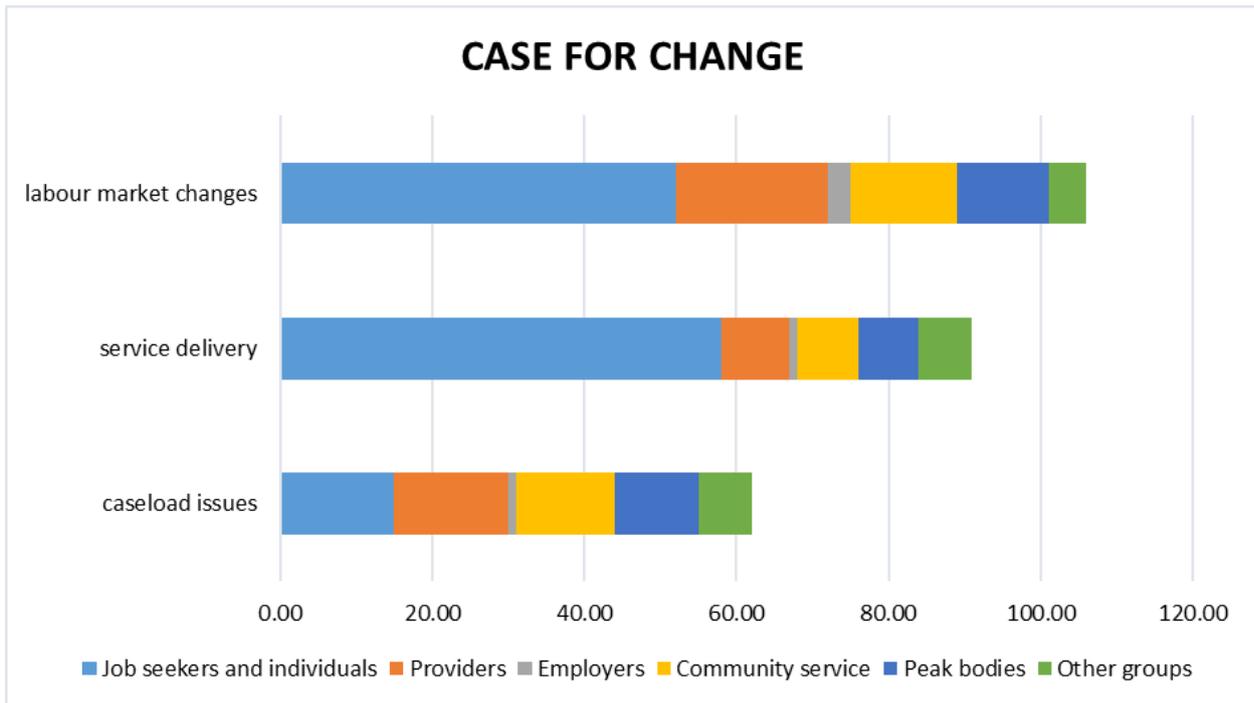
Changes in the labour market and the need for changes to the way services are delivered were the most discussed components of the case for change across the various stakeholder groups. This suggests the size of employment consultants' caseloads is not as big a concern, compared to the need for a change in employment services. Stakeholders are most concerned with the changing nature of work and the need to ensure the new employment services model is able to adapt.

3.1. Overall topic salience and interest

The 'case for change' was a highly salient topic of discussion throughout the consultation for providers and other stakeholders, but less salient for job seekers

The most popular sub-topics included in submissions were as follows:

- labour market changes (discussed in 106 submissions)
- service delivery changes (discussed in 91)
- caseload issues (discussed in 62 submissions).

3.2. Labour market changes

- Stakeholders highlighted a general lack of permanent, full-time employment for Australians (moving away from the traditional pattern employment) towards increased levels of part-time, casual, seasonal (particularly in regional areas) and contract work in the 'gig' economy, and the general casualisation of the workforce across Australia. The considerable rate of under-employment in many areas of Australia was also raised, with concerns that the current labour market made it difficult for job seekers to secure ongoing employment. The casualisation and fragmentation of the labour market was highlighted as having wide-reaching impacts on the 'outcomes' providers can claim in the current jobactive contract and

therefore, any new model would need to consider whether claims-by-results will work in this new labour market.

- Submissions also highlighted the rise in the number of people having to work multiple jobs (portfolio careers) simultaneously, as well as self-employment roles (such as through Uber or Airtasker) to supplement part-time employment. Again, it was emphasised that a new model would have to recognise partial outcomes, as well as infrequency and changes in longevity of employment, to better reflect outcomes for providers and payments for job seekers.

- Most stakeholders agreed that there is a lack of entry-level positions or low-skilled jobs in Australia. There was a repeated view that employers contribute to the problem by consistently recruiting the most qualified job seeker for the role regardless of job-readiness, or requesting years of work experience for low-paid entry-level type roles. There were also concerns that technology has the potential to compound the number of low-skilled jobs as automation and artificial intelligence begins to govern certain industries.

- Views were expressed that regional differences in labour markets should be reflected in the development of a new service model. A notable lack of employment opportunities in regional areas was highlighted as making it difficult for some job seekers to find long-term job security. Some stakeholders highlighted that technology would negatively impact on regional communities, because more jobs could be worked remotely and/or become mechanised.

- There was a recognition among stakeholders that the labour market is moving towards technology-facilitated roles, whereby remote working is feasible, and moving distinctly away from 'traditional' jobs. Relatedly, it was highlighted that job seeker skills need to be relevant for these jobs to allow them to be competitive in an already-saturated job market.

- A few individual stakeholders discussed career mobility, i.e. that employees are not expecting to have a job for life, and people will move between companies, roles and even industries, as many skills are transferable. These labour market changes were identified as a further reason for needing greater flexibility in the employment service system, to adapt to increasing likelihood of short-term contracts and short periods of unemployment, whilst people look for their next role.

- A few stakeholders noted the impact of an increased reliance by employers on labour hire firms, and a concern that this was detrimental to the reduction in long-term unemployment, because the opportunities for secure or stable employment through labour hire firms was limited. Employers were seen to favour labour hire firms because of their rigorous screening processes and offer of contract/part-time employees.

3.3. jobactive caseload issues

- There was general agreement that individual caseloads for employment consultants were too high in jobactive, and that this inevitably meant that job seekers were not given the necessary level of servicing. The prevailing view was that there was a lack of personalisation in the jobactive model because of these high caseload numbers; a new model should be flexible to allow for personalised use and delivery of services.

- A few job seekers and providers understood that employment consultants had a high caseload of people to service, and this often led to a less-than-satisfactory level of service for the job seeker.

- Highlighted as a symptom of the high caseload experienced by employment consultants in jobactive, was the high turnover of case managers employed by employment services providers. It was suggested that a reduction in caseload, and the ability to provide a more targeted service to job seekers may lead to higher job satisfaction among case managers and increased retention of staff.

- In the new model, stakeholders (peak bodies, community service organisations and a few individuals) recommended that caseloads for employment services employment consultants be reduced, so that staff have time to get to know their job seekers and build rapport, identifying needs and putting plans in place to help support those needs and provide targeted support.

- There was some suggestion that lower caseloads could mirror service provision seen in other specialist employment services programs, such as Transition to Work, where the caseload was lower, and clients were offered more targeted, intensive support.

- It was also suggested that a reduction in caseloads could free up individual employment consultants time to build relationships with local industries, employers and support services.

- Providers noted the rapid increase in CALD, migrant and refugee job seekers on jobactive caseloads in the last few years. This was observed as having placed stress on providers in areas where there are high concentrations of these groups, particularly in light of there being no separate program for the servicing of these job seekers, many of whom were acknowledged to have complex barriers to employment (including include age, English literacy and language levels, education, work history, and IT skills). More targeted support was highlighted as a need for future caseloads of CALD, migrant and refugee job seekers, and potential employers, so that they have opportunities to gain sustainable employment.

- Stakeholders agreed with the Government's finding that disadvantaged job seekers were more likely to remain on the jobactive caseload because they did not receive the targeted, intensive support that they needed to find and sustain employment. A new model would need to build capacity of these most disadvantaged job seekers.

- There was an overall agreement that all disadvantaged job seekers (CALD, refugee/migrant, Aboriginal, young people, older people, people with disability, long-term unemployed) need to receive targeted and intensive support (often non-vocational) to find and sustain employment and that this is not achieved in the current jobactive servicing model.

4. Helping people into work

Summary Findings

Positives

- Directing services to the most disadvantaged job seekers: most stakeholders agreed with the suggestion that services should be directed to better service disadvantaged cohorts. Nonetheless, it was highlighted that the current jobactive model did not allow for this.

- Work experience programs: stakeholders praised work experience programs (such as PaTH) that allowed job seekers access to work experience with the potential for employment. This was strongly favoured compared to Work for the Dole. Job seekers in particular highlighted the benefit of work experience and internship programs.

Deficits and pressure points

- Most stakeholders viewed jobactive as a 'one size fits all' approach: stakeholders recommended more flexible servicing, allowing them to tailor services to the goals and needs of individual job seekers. However, there is a need to address issues related to compliance and funding to allow for this. This was recognised across most stakeholder groups. Providers in particular criticised the lack of flexibility afforded to them under jobactive. It was noted that if they were to provide more individualised services for disadvantaged job seekers, they needed flexibility to be able to do so.

- Job seekers unsatisfied with employment consultants: it was evident that job seekers felt that their needs were being ignored. Most stakeholders indicated that consultants were under extreme compliance and administrative demands, impacting on their servicing.

- Issues with education and training: job seekers noted that there was a lack of provider funding to refer them to the courses they needed. There was also some concern with job seekers being referred to lower quality, in-house training offered by particular providers.

- Work for the Dole widely criticised: Work for the Dole was viewed as overly punitive, and there was a concern that placements did not offer any practical work experience. This stemmed predominantly from job seekers, with few comments from other stakeholders.

- Concerns with the proposed self-servicing model: there was concern that self-servicing contradicted the philosophy of early intervention and might put job seekers at risk of long-term unemployment. The proposed 12-month timeframe was seen to be too long. Most of this concern was driven by providers, with few other stakeholder groups commenting.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Providers supported a suite of services to help job seekers become work ready. These included both vocational and non-vocational training. Some providers noted that there needed to be a more concerted effort to collaborate with other relevant stakeholders (such as community organisations, training providers, etc.) to help address job seeker barriers.

- Although providers supported flexible and individualised servicing, involving a range of diverse services, it was acknowledged that this was difficult under the jobactive model. Providers advocated for greater freedom to tailor supports on a case-by-case basis, highlighting that heavy compliance and contractual restrictions currently prevented this. It was also noted by many providers that use of the employment fund was overly rigid at present – respondents suggested allowing room for innovation when using these funds.

- Many providers highlighted that the current employment services system constrained their ability to service the most disadvantaged job seekers (often described as a 'work first' mindset). Similarly, providers noted that they were aware that some job seekers were reticent to secure (often unstable) employment, removing the 'safety net' of benefits.

- Providers tended to recognise the need for specialist services for specific cohorts of job seekers, although for the most part, they encouraged a single unified service (perhaps with the exception of TtW, as raised by some respondents). This was corroborated by provider peak body responses, of which both advocated for a unified servicing model. The key benefit of a unified model was seen to be that it encouraged a 'no wrong door' approach. Further, some providers were concerned that increasing the number of specialist services would lead to a truncated caseload, making employer servicing difficult.

- Providers indicated that, if a unified approach was to be adopted, there would need to be more flexibility afforded in the way job seekers are serviced. Providers indicated that they would be able to adequately provide more 'specialist' services if flexibility was allowed.

- Some providers indicated that job seekers who "found own employment" or who belonged to a stream A caseload and found work often required the same degree of service intensity as stream B & C job seekers. There was some concern that moving towards a self-servicing system indicated a failure to acknowledge the work in servicing this cohort.

- Providers commented that 12-months was too long for self-servicing, instead favouring a period of around 3-months, with the option to move to face-to-face services before then if required. There was concern that job seekers would transition to long-term unemployment as a result of self-servicing. Instead, early intervention was viewed as a preferable option.

- Most providers indicated that high caseloads and administrative burden (driven by compliance) were the main determinants in staff turnover. As such, reducing compliance demands and capping caseload sizes were seen to be the main solutions for this. While providers recognised a need to train staff, it was acknowledged that having a minimum standard of formal qualification was not conducive to producing a skilled workforce. Rather, providers recommended continual professional development available to staff.

Job seekers:

- Most job seekers indicated a need to be understood by their provider, commenting that at present, they felt that their individual barriers to work were being ignored. Job seekers expressed a desire for consultants who listened, as opposed to focusing on compliance.

- Job seekers advocated for improved access to education and training, viewing their perceived lack of skills and experience as a key reason for their unemployment. Job seekers suggested having more funding, allowing for increased access to courses. There was also some concern of being referred to low quality internal courses run by providers.

- Many job seekers had positive perceptions of work experience programs, believing that it would help to build work readiness skills. With that being said, Work for the Dole was largely criticised by this cohort, with many viewing it as overly punitive. Job seekers repeatedly questioned the utility of Work for the Dole for improving work readiness.

- Unlike providers, job seekers tended to advocate for specialist services. Some suggested having services directed at certain cohorts (e.g. mature aged job seekers), whereas others suggested having specialist providers with expert knowledge of particular industries.

- Job seekers were highly critical of their employment consultants. Many respondents questioned the knowledge and qualifications of their consultant, leading to evident frustration and a feeling that they were not being adequately serviced by providers.

Peak bodies:

- Peak body respondents indicated that job seekers needed support to address more fundamental barriers to employment, such as homelessness, literacy, language barriers, and soft skills. This was seen to be important in moving towards an holistic approach.

- Many peak body respondents were particularly concerned with the supports offered to CALD job seekers (likely stemming from the fact that many peak body organisations represented specific migrant groups). Things such as ensuring services were being delivered in a culturally sensitive way, and providing translation services were highlighted.

- Peak bodies generally advocated for specialist support services (often targeted at the cohort the peak body was advocating on behalf of, i.e. CALD specialist services were suggested by many peak body respondents). There was some concern that unified services would lead to the needs of disadvantaged cohorts not being adequately met.

- Peak bodies were aware that services delivered by employment consultants suffered due to high caseloads and the demands of compliance. It was suggested that caseloads be reduced, and minimum standards of qualification be introduced. It was argued that a base level of competency was needed to service certain marginalised cohorts, such as people from a CALD background, people with mental health issues, or Indigenous job seekers.

Community service organisations:

- Most community service organisations expressed concern that disadvantaged cohorts of job seekers (CALD job seekers, younger job seekers, etc.) were not being adequately serviced under jobactive. These organisations advocated for having vocational and non-vocational services better tailored to meeting the needs of these cohorts (e.g. simplifying language for CALD), suggesting that an individualised, holistic approach be adopted.

- Providing work experience and education opportunities for job seekers was supported.

- Some community service organisations suggested intensifying the support and incentives offered to disadvantaged cohorts to ease the transition to employment were needed. Educating clients on the benefits of work, and allowing extended access to post-placement support, case management, and financial benefits, e.g. health care cards were suggested.

- Much like peak bodies, community service organisations favoured specialist enhanced services, generally targeted towards the cohort of job seekers they were advocating on behalf of (e.g. young people, CALD job seekers, people with disability, mental health, etc).

- Comments from community service organisations on the competency of employment consultants tended to mirror that of peak bodies. To summarise, minimum qualifications and training were favoured, particularly when dealing with certain cohorts (such as CALD job seekers, with cultural competency seen to be particularly important). The role that large jobactive caseloads had in impacting consultant servicing was also acknowledged.

Employers:

- Employer comments in this section were sparse. There was some indication that employers wanted to see job seekers trained in soft skills, particularly in relation to how to present in interviews, dealing with customers etc. in addition to specific vocational skills.

Key recommendations

- Reduce the compliance and administrative demands on provider staff.

- Allow for more flexible servicing (which will help to service disadvantaged cohorts).

- Continue to promote work experience programs in place of Work for the Dole.

- Improve connections between providers and other local service providers.

Figure 6   Proportion of submissions concerned with aspects of helping people into work, within each stakeholder group
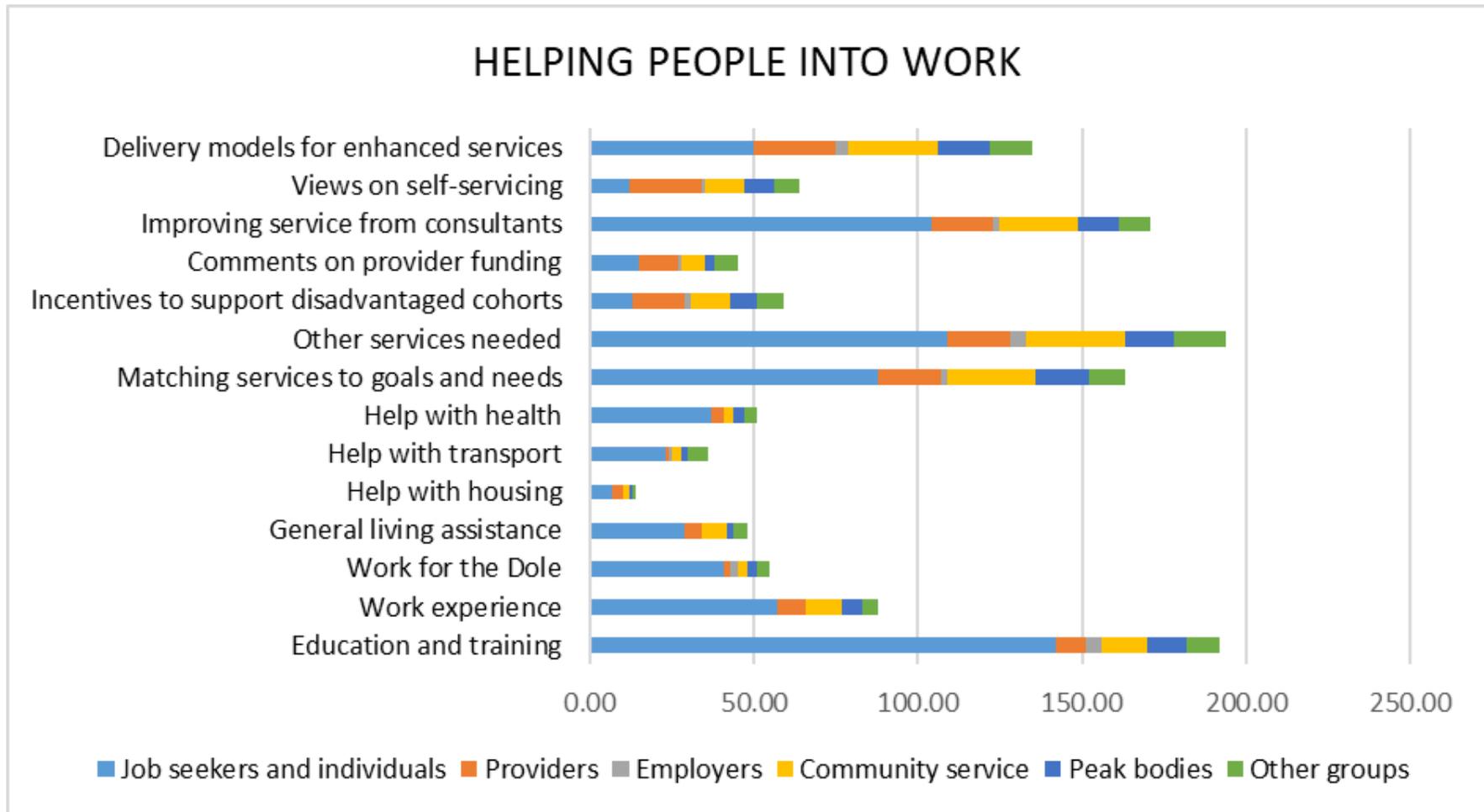
4.1. Overall topic salience and interest

Helping people into work was the most discussed concept in the discussion paper, with the majority of every stakeholder group commenting on a range of issues with the discussion paper chapter. This was the issue job seekers and providers were the most engaged with, most likely due to these being the most directly relevant areas of employment services to each group. Providers were particularly concerned with service delivery modes (self-servicing and enhanced servicing). Job seekers were most concerned with education and training options, the quality of service they receive from providers, and matching their goals to their specific needs. Employers were most engaged with the delivery modes for enhanced services and education and training options for job seekers. These top five concepts (see Figure 6) drew the most comments across all stakeholder groups combined.

This reflects the fact that most stakeholders were pushing for a person-centred, flexible servicing model that would allow for services to be tailored to the individual needs of job seekers. Furthermore, the specific services that were discussed varied significantly (hence, most of these were coded under 'general/other services needed', rather than a specific subcategory). One notable exception to this was education and training, which was frequently discussed, particularly among the job seeker cohort.

4.2. Services needed for job seekers

What services should be available to job seekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market and how can they be delivered in a culturally competent way?

- Stakeholders identified a diverse range of services needed for job seekers. These included both vocational (e.g. résumé writing, interviewing skills, accredited training) and non-vocational (e.g. development of soft skills). Ultimately, respondents expressed that they wanted to see greater diversity in the types of services offered by employment services.

- Many respondents highlighted that employment services should focus on sustainable employment, and that this could be achieved by fostering transferrable skills in job seekers.

- Job seekers commonly referred to jobactive as a 'one size fits all' approach, and highlighted the need for a more personalised service, moving towards a case management philosophy.

- Some stakeholders indicated that employment services needed to integrate more effectively with other support services available (e.g. other relevant programs and state/local Government departments). Adopting an holistic approach to servicing job seekers would allow for complex barriers to be addressed, while removing competing obligations.

- It was suggested that providers needed to better understand the current skills shortages in the labour market, allowing them to target the servicing of job seekers to meet these needs.

- Cultural competency was deemed to be lacking under the current jobactive system by many stakeholders. Making services more accessible through simplified language and easier access to translation services was encouraged. It was noted by several stakeholders that migrant job seekers often faced competing demands between settlement activities and their mutual obligations. The 6-month period for migrants to focus on AMEP was supported.

- Social support was highlighted to be important for developing job seeker soft skills. In particular, stakeholders noted the need for networking, gaining references, and understanding workplace culture (the latter important for CALD job seekers in particular).

4.2.1. Education and training

- There was a general sentiment among stakeholders, particularly job seekers, that providers needed access to more funding for education. Job seekers indicated that providers were often unable to fund the courses they wanted to complete, meaning that they had to shoulder the burden, or miss out completely. TAFE was highlighted as being particularly expensive.

- Echoing the above point, some respondents advocated for more flexibility in funding non-accredited training courses. Accredited courses were viewed as being prohibitively expensive and restrictive in content. Training with outcomes more focused on empowerment, and building self-confidence were seen as helpful for improving job seeker soft skills.

- There was some concern with providers offering in-house training, or having 'deals' with certain training providers. Stakeholders indicated that this presented a conflict of interest, meaning that job seekers may not have access to the highest quality training courses.

- Some job seekers were evidently frustrated about doing courses that were either above or below their capabilities. There was suggestion that courses needed to be better targeted to the individual needs of job seekers, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach to training.

- A few respondents noted that the current labour market demanded workers with a diverse skillset. As such, instilling 'transferable' skills in job seekers was highlighted as a priority. Furthermore, abolishing restrictions on the number of courses per job seeker was seen to be necessary (i.e. some employers desire candidates with multiple degrees and diverse skills).

- Recent migrants expressed a need for assistance with obtaining recognition of their overseas qualifications - obtaining recognition would help to avoid double-up with training.

4.2.2. General living assistance

- It was identified by many stakeholders that job seekers often have more pressing issues than finding employment, such as dealing with homelessness, childcare, mental and physical health, and transport issues. The 'work first' mindset in jobactive was viewed to be unhelpful.

- Most comments related to the financial difficulty experienced by job seekers, stemming from low benefit payments. Difficulties such as paying for food, rent, and internet were highlighted.

- It was noted that people would not find employment while facing concurrent barriers.

Health

- Mental health support was highlighted as a key need. This was seen to impact on the self-confidence and motivation of job seekers, in turn impacting their search for employment.

- Physical health issues were also noted as barriers to employment. Access to physiotherapy and subsidised medical appointments was suggested as a potential way to overcome this.

- The need for interdisciplinary services and collaboration among sectors was highlighted. Some stakeholders stressed that the medical model of care does not currently intersect with social services. A need for more holistic support was highlighted.

Housing

- Homelessness and difficulty finding affordable housing were highlighted as key issues. It was noted that employment services needed to be better equipped to deal with such challenges, as while a job seeker faces housing difficulties, employment is not a priority.

Transport

- Some stakeholders suggested offering more financial support for transport. This was seen to be a major barrier to gaining employment and engaging with employment services. This included not having a driver's licence, and not being able to afford public transport tickets.

4.2.3. Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker

- There was widespread agreement among most stakeholders that better employment outcomes would be obtained if job seekers were matched with work that they were interested in and suited to. There was push back against the perceived 'work first' philosophy of jobactive, whereby job seekers are pressured to accept the first job that they are offered.

- Most stakeholders were critical of the rigid compliance framework of jobactive, indicating that it did not allow them to effectively service the most disadvantaged cohorts of job seekers. Respondents advocated for a flexible approach to servicing, in which job seekers had agency and control, unlike the 'one size fits all/cookie cutter/tick box' approach of jobactive.

- Job seekers expressed that they were not listened to by their provider. Career counselling and mentoring services were suggested, in line with adopting a 'person centred' approach.

- Most respondents viewed Job Plans as being inflexible. It was suggested that the job seeker should have complete autonomy over the Job Plan, not just the ability to choose from pre-selected activities. It was noted that Job Plans should be made engaging and user-friendly.

- Transition to Work and ParentsNext were compared favourably to jobactive in this regard.

4.2.4. Work experience

- Work experience was generally viewed positively, and more of it was encouraged. It was viewed as an opportunity to develop skills, create social connections, and build motivation.

- Some stakeholders wanted work trials to be more widely available, for example, making initiatives such as PaTH available to a wider cohort of job seekers.

- Nonetheless, a few respondents cautioned against the misuse of work experience, for example organisations taking advantage of job seekers to avoid paying for employees.

- Volunteering organisations highlighted a need for recognition as to the role they were able to play in helping people to find work. There was some concern that jobactive providers were misusing their services and taking advantage of volunteer roles – may need to be regulated.

Work for the dole

- Feedback on Work for the Dole was mostly negative. It was generally viewed as an overly punitive requirement, and most stakeholders thought that it should be abolished. Instead, it was suggested that other paid work experience programs could be expanded in its place.

- There was widespread concern about the types of activities job seekers were being placed into. They were seen as not relevant to finding work and generally 'time wasting' activities.

4.3. Incentives to support disadvantaged job seekers

What incentives might be useful to assist job seekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market to find work?

- Widespread agreement that re-directing services to the most disadvantaged was the right direction from the Department. Nonetheless, there was evident frustration that the current jobactive model (i.e. compliance and outcome funding) did not adequately allow for this.

- Some job seekers feared that gaining employment would make them worse off financially (i.e. needing to pay for transport, losing access to certain benefits, such as housing and healthcare). This uncertainty was exacerbated for job seekers by the likelihood of employment being unstable – that is, casual hours and likely on a short-term basis.

- Some mention was made of offering financial incentives to job seekers (for example, fuel vouchers, clothing, healthcare cards) during the initial period after gaining employment. Support for this stemmed from easing job seekers away from the 'safety net' of benefits.

- There was recognition that providers currently have little incentive to direct assistance to the most disadvantaged cohorts. It was reasoned that the structure of jobactive compliance and outcome funding incentivised the servicing of job seekers who were closest to finding work.

- Some stakeholders suggested that there should be enforced requirements on providers to meet a certain quota for placing disadvantaged cohorts into employment. This would ensure that providers directed more energy and resources into servicing disadvantaged cohorts.

4.3.1. Comments on provider funding

- Providers noted they were restricted in what they were able to spend on (and how much they were able to spend) for each job seeker, limiting the ability to service disadvantaged cohorts.

- Some novel suggestions included having an 'individualised funding' scheme (where job seekers can tailor services themselves) and having an 'innovation fund' available for use.

- Stakeholders stressed that more funding for providers would be costly in the short-term, but would pay dividends for the Government in the long run - framed as a long-term investment.

- Another suggestion was to have an overall funding cap, as opposed to a cap per job seeker. This would allow providers to direct their resources where they perceived the most benefit.

4.4. Delivery models for enhanced services

Are enhanced services best delivered through a single unified service or a model that includes specialist service provision directed at particular cohorts of job seekers, as well as a core service?

- Job seekers strongly favoured having specialist providers for different cohorts (e.g. mature aged, CALD, young people, parents, etc.) or that targeted specific industries of employment.

- Responses from the two employment services peak bodies gave support for a generalist, unified servicing model. Some provider responses were more varied, recognising the need for specialist services, although they differed in how they wanted these services integrated.

- The current Hub and Spoke model was supported by some providers, with specialist services around a core program. However, a few suggested that a unified approach would work better, with limits placed on the number of providers. There was also caution expressed that job seekers did not 'slip through the net' with a Hub and Spoke model.

- Although providers recognised the need for specialist services, some indicated that generalist providers were best placed to deliver these services, on the proviso that they were allowed more flexibility in their servicing model. It was reasoned that providers would be able to more effectively service specific cohorts if they were given more freedom to tailor support.

- Other stakeholders (such as community services) also tended to advocate for specialised services, often ones which targeted the specific cohorts they were advocating on behalf of.

- Two peak bodies representing Indigenous communities suggested that providers interested in servicing this cohort should undergo a pre-approval process when tendering.

- The main advantage of specialist services was seen to be allowing greater understanding of job seeker needs, potentially facilitating better outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers.

- Generalist services were favoured by some supporting a 'no wrong door' approach and avoiding fragmentation of service delivery. It was argued that specialist services would cause some job seekers to fall through the cracks, and there is the potential for specialist services to be perceived more favourably compared to the generalist services.

- TtW and ParentsNext were generally well received and endorsed by respondents who commented on these two initiatives.

4.5. Improving the quality of service from consultants

How could the quality of services job seekers receive from their employment services consultant be improved?

- There was widespread agreement that the quality of services from employment consultants could be improved. High caseloads (average of ~ 150), compliance/administrative demands, and job insecurity (due to the contractual nature of the service) were cited as the main pressures faced by consultants, potentially contributing to reports of poor service quality.

- Job seekers expressed dissatisfaction with their employment consultants. Most felt that they were not being listened to, being rushed through appointments, and that their consultant was unqualified (either lacking in post-secondary qualifications or perceived to be too young).

- Some stakeholders advocated for mandatory qualifications, whereas others cautioned against this. It was acknowledged that there would be no single qualification that could adequately prepare someone to work in employment services. Rather, it was suggested that there needed to be greater investment in ongoing professional development for consultants.

- An exception was made for specific cohorts, where it was deemed that particular qualifications may be needed for adequate servicing (e.g. refugees, mental health, etc).

- Communication, cultural awareness, and knowledge of the local labour market were viewed by respondents as being the key areas of competency needed for skilled consultants.

- Some stakeholders indicated that jobactive had introduced an overreliance on the ESS for decision making. As such, a reduction in compliance requirements was strongly encouraged.

4.6. Views on self-servicing

- Most stakeholders commended the emphasis on directing more attention towards the most disadvantaged job seekers, although support for this notion was generally overshadowed by concern for the potential negative impact online self-servicing could have on job seekers.

- There was a high degree of concern evident among stakeholders that job seekers left in self-servicing would be at a high risk of transitioning to long-term unemployment, going against the philosophy of early intervention (which was seen to be an integral part of employment services). This was exacerbated by the proposed 12-month period of self-servicing – most stakeholders suggested that a period of three to six months would be more appropriate.

- Many respondents indicated that there needed to be various 'safety nets' in place to avoid the above concerns. Namely, trigger points at 3, 6, and 9 months in self-servicing were recommended to determine whether job seekers were still suitable for online self-servicing.

- It was strongly suggested that self-servicing does not replace face-to-face servicing completely. Rather, most stakeholders recommended a 'blended' servicing model – the right service at the right time for the right people. It was recommended that job seekers should have choice with the service they accessed, and should be able to transition between them.

- Some providers expressed concern that the Department was relying on jobactive statistics of 'Found own Employment' placements as the driving force in the move to a self-servicing model. Some providers argued that statistics showed that 'found own employment' job seekers required a similar level of servicing to job seekers who were placed in a brokered position and hence, there was a concern that role of the provider was being underplayed.

- It was noted that the efficacy of self-servicing was predicated on the success of the assessment tools used to stream job seekers. Many stakeholders expressed concern that highly disadvantaged job seekers could be incorrectly streamed into self-servicing.

5. Empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services

Summary Findings

Positives

- There was support from most stakeholders for improving online services for job seekers and employers, for efficiency, increased user choice, better tailoring of support and services, and enhanced personal responsibility.

- From a providers' perspective it was hoped that more online services would enable them to release staff from onerous administrative tasks to allow them to focus on frontline delivery for those most in need.

Deficits and pressure points

- Although there was much enthusiasm for online services, particularly those that tailored services to individual circumstances and needs, there was acknowledged concern about the amount of data and technology required to build an efficient and effective system.

- Other concerns related to the accuracy of individual-level data, particularly if it was drawn from elsewhere, and the security of data (in terms of who had access to personalised individual data, what happens to the individual data when a job seeker leaves employment services and so forth).

- There were also notable concerns about the quality of vacancies in job matching, insofar as the quality of job matching will only be as good as the source of the jobs data.

- Restricted access to IT was also commonly raised for job seekers, particularly use of older devices with limited functionality/memory, and the cost of data/roaming services, and many not having access to computers.

- Many stakeholders were concerned about the ability of some user groups to engage with online services without significant support, and/or the offer of alternative face-to-face services.

- Low digital literacy was commonly acknowledged as an inhibitor to the take-up of online services.

- Organisations and individuals from regional areas highlighted patchy connectivity to online services, and costly broadband.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Providers were supportive of the move to increased online services (seeing it as logical progression given digital progress and public expectations) and were engaged with each concept canvassed in the discussion paper.

- Providers saw the value of digital servicing in replacing high cost and low value administrative transactions to allow the redirection of resources to tailoring support and interventions to those most in need.

- However, providers were concerned about low levels of digital literacy among a large proportion of their caseload, and that this may restrict or deny access (reverting to a reliance on face-to-face delivery, with associated resourcing implications)

- Providers were also concerned about the adequacy of different online platforms and services, in their efficiency, their content (accuracy and completeness), their usability (for job seekers) and their ability to communicate with each other to share data effectively and appropriately.

Job Seekers:

- Job seekers were particular concerned with the online tools and accessibility including being able to access services on older models of smart phones, and the potential prohibitive cost of data roaming charges.

- Job seekers also raised concerns about online job adverts duplicated across multiple websites, as well as concerns that the quality of the jobs advertised were often poor.

- Job seekers also commonly highlighted the need for online services and apps to be easy to use, fully functional and to be reliable – a common frustration was poor quality current online service offerings related to job search, and job seekers finding current online services and apps difficult to use.

- Job seekers and individuals also commonly highlighted the lack of jobs as being the fundamental problem, which online services would not be able to address.

Peak bodies:

- Peak bodies were concerned about access and connectivity of digital services (particularly in rural areas), as well as digital literacy of the cohorts they represented (notably, people with disability and from non-English speaking backgrounds).

Community service organisations

- Community service organisations' comments were primarily around user groups for online services, with concerns around poor connectivity, affordability and access for those out of work (including those experiencing homelessness).

- Community services also identified the importance of face-to-face support for young people, alongside online servicing.

- Digital literacy was also a concern for community service organisations, notably for older people and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

- Community service organisations noted frustrations around the use of existing government services, particularly MyGov.

Employers:

- Employers made very few comments on the online servicing theme of the Discussion Paper.

- Employers were largely concerned with the online tools available to them as well as how online tools could reduce their administrative burden.

Figure 7   Proportion of stakeholders concerned with online service delivery, within each stakeholder group
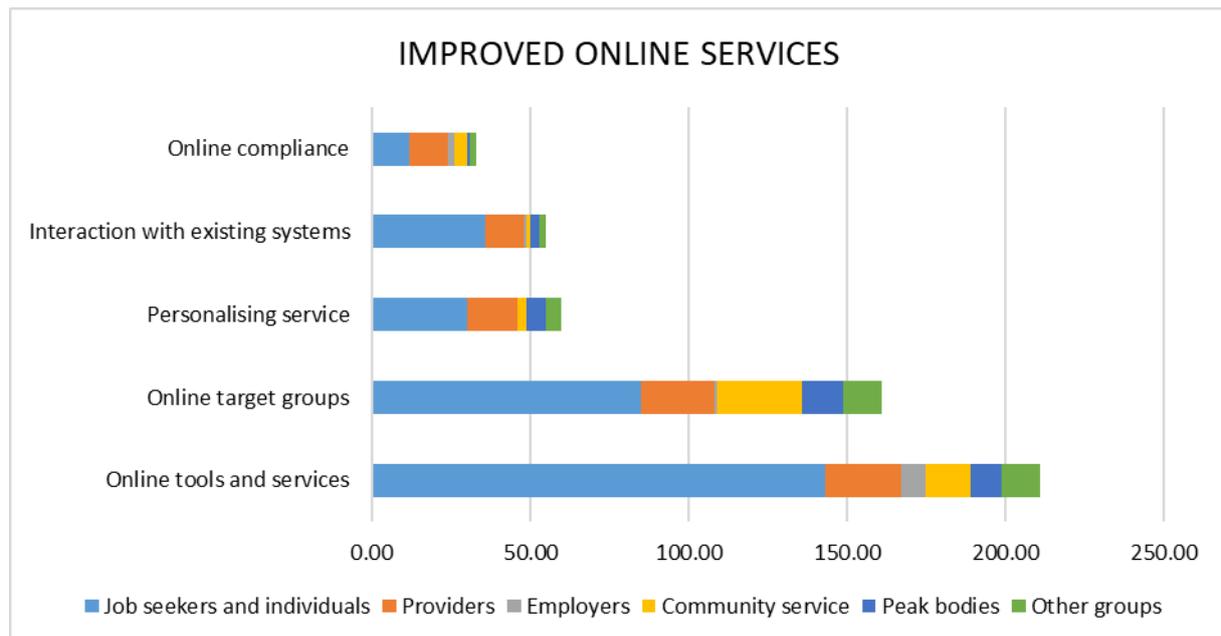
5.1.   Overall topic salience and interest

Figure 7 shows that 'online services' was a highly salient topic of discussion across all stakeholder groups. Providers were particularly engaged with each concept canvassed in the discussion paper (notably how processes could be streamlined), while job seekers were particular concerned with the online tools and accessibility (including affordability). Employers were largely concerned with the online tools available to them as well as how online tools could reduce their administrative burden.

The most popular sub-topics included in submissions were as follows:

- online tools and services (discussed in 210 submissions)

- online service target groups and accessibility (discussed in 160 submissions)

- using data to personalise services (discussed in 60 submissions).

5.2.   Online tools and services

What online tools and assistance should be included to better meet the needs of particular user groups, including job seekers and potential employers? Which are the most important features required?

There was a general view that there was considerable potential for the use of online services available through jobactive, and that the benefits of these would include increased user choice, better tailoring of support and services, and enhanced personal responsibility. Further, from a providers' perspective, it was hoped that improved online services would enable them to release staff from onerous administrative tasks to allow them to focus on frontline service delivery, and to provide more intensive and personalised support for those who need it.

- Stakeholders required services to be simple, convenient and personalised, and designed to complement rather than replace face-to-face services, with an expressed need for the continuation of face to face servicing of job seekers. This latter point was emphasised by providers, who highlighted the large proportion of their cohorts who had low levels of digital literacy, or limited access to technology (for example, no internet service and/or using old phones with limited or obsolete smart phone functionality).

- The primary suggestion for meeting job seekers' and employers' needs was online matching of job seekers to vacancies; online mapping of skill sets to local labour markets was also suggested, along with the identification of training opportunities to help gain those skills.

- Provider submissions also suggested online access to job seeker services (for both the job seeker and their provider) including ability to view and amend job plans, update and amend a CV, identify (and amend) goals, and develop and manage a career plan or pathway.

- For providers, the automation of some of the compliance monitoring activities that providers are required to undertake was recommended (for example monitoring of job search/application activities, work preparation activities) as well as job seekers being able to submit their job search activities to employment consultants online rather than by paper.

- The provision of online support was also commonly raised, including peer to peer support as well as access to support for job seekers from providers (that is, outside of appointments and office visits).

- The use of the jobactive app was mentioned, and continuation encouraged (it was mentioned by several job seekers that the app is poorly supported, with other apps more favourably received, such as 'Seek' and 'Found').

- Other suggestions (mainly given by providers) included:

  o a CV builder app or tool, allowing for the storage of different versions of a CV, and assistance/example text; relatedly, provision of online education about how online filtering systems for CVs work

  o a database of available job seekers that can be viewed across programs and services, and by employers

  o online strengths-based assessments for job seekers, to support both them and their consultant in identifying areas of strengths, where there may be gaps and how these can be addressed or accommodated

  o provision of job search hints, video résumés, videos on interview skills and job applications, and mock interviews via video conferencing (these ideas were also suggested by job seekers)

  o online appointment booking for job seekers to see a specialist, e.g. labour market sector expert, interview preparation, careers counsellor

  o job seekers mentioned being able to commence an application for support, for example, requesting a fuel card, or interview clothing, which would then save time for both the job seeker and the consultant at the appointment.

5.3. Online service target groups

Is there a group of users that online services should target?

Comments in the submissions received primarily related to the user groups that online services would *not* be suitable for, rather than identifying any user groups that should be targeted. Cohorts of job seekers that were identified (mostly by providers) as not being suitable for online services, or needing significant support, included:

- job seekers, often in financial hardship (limited access to technology, mobile phones/devices or phone/internet credit). This was one of the most common issues raised by individual job seekers as a barrier to online usage/servicing ('*the biggest barrier is poverty')*

- those with poor literacy and numeracy skills

- those with low digital literacy or digital competency (which may include those with high non-digital literacy and numeracy competency)

- newly arrived humanitarian migrants or refugees

- those already geographically isolated (including poor digital connectivity), or socially isolated, who have a need for more social interaction rather than less

- disadvantaged Indigenous job seekers, particularly those living in rural/remote areas

- job seekers very disadvantaged or with high needs, including those experiencing homelessness or mental health issues

- people with poor English reading and writing skills (including those for whom English is a second language)

- older job seekers with restricted dexterity and cognitive processing abilities.

- some job seekers themselves noted that their competence and confidence in using apps and online services was low.

5.3.1. Accessibility of online services

Notably, there was limited support for the move towards online servicing from job seekers. Providers and many other stakeholder groups were more supportive, seeing it as logical 'next step', providing an opportunity for improvements and efficiencies to the employment service system, but with reservations about the ability of many of the cohorts they serviced to engage effectively with online servicing.

There were repeated concerns from the submissions about difficulties for job seekers in accessing online services due to limited access to the internet, or to suitable devices (all driven by affordability, or lack thereof). Online services were often seen as synonymous with apps.

Common issues raised by both job seekers and other stakeholders (through their observations of, and work with, job seekers) included:

- the cost of data usage on a mobile phone being prohibitive for many; there was a common suggestion that data for job services should not be counted in a user's data cap and/or that

usage of such services should be free (or expenditure approved through the Employment Fund, for example, for prepaid Wi-Fi/data access)

- systems need to be able to run on older devices. Older generation phones used by many job seekers may not have smartphone functionality, or may have older platforms which some apps do not run on

- Apps need to take up minimal memory as cheap smart phones often have very limited storage

- the functionality and usability of existing online services (commonly raised by job seekers in particular), and a demand for more stability (particularly problematic when data roaming charges are applied, which could then be costly when waiting for services to load, or services dropped out).

One solution, offered by a peak body, was to offer a tiered service, with enhanced support (combining online and face to face servicing) to those most disadvantaged, and standard digital access to those able to self-service independently. If job seekers remain in the service, they will move through to enhanced servicing.

5.4. Using data to personalise services

How can data be used to provide more personalised, effective services?

The consultation identified relatively few responses to this issue, and most of those were from jobactive providers. The common suggestion was that the online portal should be tailored for individual job seekers, allowing them to access and update their own information through a secure system (available at all times and any location), and to be able to access job matching services. Other suggestions included:

- use of 'big data' analytics to help providers and others identify what cohorts respond best to what supports, and at what point in their servicing

- use of a points reward system for activities completed online, to help build motivation levels among job seekers (for example, rewarding progress in relation to distance travelled) and to help providers identify appropriate targeted interventions for job seekers in their caseload

- tailoring job notifications to job seekers' profiles, and other tailored messaging (for example, 'people who looked at this job also looked at these jobs……')

- using the individual data to facilitate a personal profile picture, which could then be shared with prospective employers

- utilising insights to tailor career information and job vacancies by location, sector, trade and role

- creating a more personalised service for job seekers through the identification of their preferences for mode of contact, type of roles sought, individual strengths, wider barriers to work and so forth.

5.5. Interaction with existing online systems

How should the online service interact with existing online job aggregators and recruitment firms?

- There were concerns about poor connectivity and interactions between MyGov and the jobactive job seeker app (and some confusion on the part of individual responses related to difficulties in interacting with different security codes and login details).

- As noted elsewhere, job matching services that match profiles to existing vacancies using a job aggregation system were welcomed by job seekers in particular.

- It was noted by job seekers that there were multiple websites advertising jobs, which can make it very challenging for the job seeker to know which ones they should be using and ensuring that they aren't at risk of missing out on opportunities.

- Seek was commonly mentioned by job seekers as often used and user-friendly; a greater concern was the overall lack of suitable and sufficient job vacancies for job seekers.

A priority was identified in ensuring that investment was only in tools that do not replicate what is already commercially available, and is informed by developments and usage in other countries.

6.   Better meeting the needs of employers

<div>

Summary Findings

Positives

- Wage subsidies generally well-received: most stakeholders recognised that the current wage subsidies provided an incentive for employers to take on a disadvantaged job seeker. Providers were particularly encouraging of the continued use of wage subsidies. Other stakeholders, such as peak bodies and community services, suggested tweaking subsidies to offer more diverse incentives, such as offering training to employers and job seekers.

- Online system shows some promise: despite scepticism regarding the proposed online system, stakeholders indicated that, if done well, it could reduce burden on employers.

Deficits and pressure points

- Providers are not aware of employer needs: there was some discussion among stakeholders that providers have little awareness of labour market trends and the needs of employers. This was linked to an overemphasis on compliance and activation in jobactive. Employers, peak bodies, and community services were particularly likely to highlight this.

- Employers are being approached too often: employers were reportedly frustrated by being approached by multiple providers seeking placements for their job seekers. This often resulted in fatigue with the employment services system and dissatisfaction with quality of applicants. Most stakeholder groups were aware that this was a problem for employers.

- Current administrative requirements are burdensome for employers: having to provide wage slips as evidence or needing to confirm job seeker attendance were highlighted as burdensome activities. This was sometimes seen to offset the monetary incentive offered. Due to their role in coordinating evidence, providers were particularly aware of this issue.

- Negative image of jobactive harming job seekers: some job seekers reported that they were discriminated against by employers due to the widely held negative perception of jobactive. Again, most stakeholders were aware that this was an issue. Job seekers in particular expressed frustration, indicating that involvement in employment services stigmatised them.

- Proposed changes risk caseload fragmentation: there was some indication that proposed changes (such as self-servicing or specialist providers) could risk 'fragmentation' of provider caseloads, subsequently decreasing the calibre of job seekers on offer for employers. Unsurprisingly, providers were the stakeholder group most likely to comment on this.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Providers expressed concern that employers held negative attitudes towards employment services. It was theorised that this stemmed from being contacted by multiple providers for a single position, and the perception that those on jobactive caseloads are not work ready.

- Some providers highlighted a preference to develop advertising campaigns alongside the Department. Focusing on employment services as a 'social good' was deemed preferable.

</div>

- Many providers indicated that, at present, employment services could be a hindrance as much as a help for employer recruitment. Factors such as being inundated by multiple providers, receiving poor quality applicants, and administrative burden were highlighted.

- Providers were not convinced of the efficacy of having an online recruitment system available to employers, and further to this, were unsure if employers wanted this either. Providers tended to comment on the need for building strong face-to-face relationships with employers, and were concerned that an online system would result in more administrative burden on employers, and increase the risk of poor job seeker matches.

- Most respondents indicated that providers needed to work with employers more flexibly, tailoring support to the individual needs of the employer they were working with. Suggestions such as adapting to existing employer recruitment processes were common.

- Providers favoured the concept of having a single point of contact for employer engagement within a single region. It was reasoned that this would reduce much of the burden on providers (i.e. brokering) and help employers to avoid repeated contacts.

- Providers strongly supported wage subsidies, and encouraged their continued use. Many providers suggested incentives be expanded to other disadvantaged cohorts (such as CALD job seekers) and to include things beyond a direct payment (such as providing relevant training or assistance to employers). Nonetheless, it was noted by many providers that there needed to be a reduction in administrative burden for wage subsidies.

Job seekers:

- Many job seekers expressed frustration at the way they were perceived by employers. Respondents noted that employers had high expectations regarding the skills and experience of candidates, and felt that this was not commensurate to their actual abilities.

- There was concern among job seekers that their association with employment services would be perceived as a stigma when approaching employers via a jobactive provider.

- Most job seekers proposed that providers needed to better match job seekers with available jobs, so as to prevent misalignment between job seeker and employer needs. Offering training to supplement placements was also suggested as a means by which to combat the skill gap evident between actual job seeker skills and employer expectations.

- Job seekers were mixed with regards to opinions on wage subsidies. Some job seekers encouraged the use of incentives to support disadvantaged cohorts, whereas other job seekers appeared wary that wage subsidies were open to being misused by employers.

Peak bodies:

- Peak body respondents echoed the sentiments of providers, highlighting that employment services tended to have a poor reputation among employers. The main reasons highlighted were poor quality applicants and learning to navigate a 'piecemeal' system.

- This cohort highlighted a need for deeper engagement among providers, employers, and job seekers. Respondents suggested that providers should work closely with employers to understand their needs, while simultaneously educating employers on the nature of the jobactive caseload and what to expect from the service. Peak bodies suggested that face-to-face engagement (e.g. on-site visits) were preferable to online or telephone brokering.

Community service organisations:

- These organisations tended to highlight a need for careful alignment between the skills of job seekers and the needs of employers. Some respondents advocated for increased education/training, whereas others suggested educating employers on the benefits of workforce diversity, providing post-placement support and training to ease this process.

- Much like peak bodies, community service organisations advocated for delivering personalised, tailored services to employers, adopting a demand-driven servicing model.

- Community service organisations noted that incentives should be more flexible, so that they could be tailored to the needs of employers. Suggestions included funding cultural diversity training, incentivising on-the-job supervision, and any other workplace training.

Employers:

- Though employer submissions were comparatively sparse, comments from respondents alluded to dissatisfaction with how they were being treated by providers. Employers highlighted that employment services were confusing and difficult to navigate, and their needs were not being adequately addressed (e.g. post-placement support, poor communication with providers, and difficulty organising a placement in the first place).

- A few employers highlighted a need for flexibility with online servicing systems. This included things such as tailoring advertisements and selection criteria, and accessibility.

- Employers stated that providers needed to focus on understanding their needs. Providers were criticised for not adequately understanding the requirements and type of work conducted by many employers, leading to poorly matched job seekers being put forward.

Key recommendations

- Employers need a single point of contact for setting up work placements. Consider implementing a specialist work broker in each region that can work across providers.

- Job matching services that consider the needs of employers and job seekers.

- Shift the role of providers to focus more on developing work readiness and servicing job seekers, as opposed to incentivising work placements (as is the case in jobactive).

- Simplify the administrative process for employers. This could include linking the online employer servicing system with other systems, such as the ATO for evidence purposes.

- Offer novel incentives to employers (i.e. not just monetary incentives). Employers could benefit from training on workplace diversity and extended post-placement support.

- Develop advertising that aims to promote the skills and abilities of job seekers. Focus messaging on jobactive as a social good, as opposed to a free employment service.

6.1. Overall topic salience and interest

As indicated by Figure 8, meeting the needs of employers was a frequently discussed topic, with more than half of all respondents mentioning this in their consultation submission. Provider submissions contained the most information on this topic, whereas job seekers had the least to say. Even so, around half of all job seekers addressed this theme in their submission.

The three most frequently discussed themes under 'meeting employer needs' were:

- how employment service providers should work with employers (discussed in 144 submissions)

- employer awareness and perception of employment services (discussed in 87 submissions)

- added value for employer recruitment AND incentivising employers (discussed in 87 submissions).

This suggests that most of the feedback focused on how providers should be working with employers to improve work placements. This stemmed from a range of stakeholder groups, including providers, job seekers, and other organisations (such as those in the community service sector). The other themes included in this section contained a reasonably even spread of responses. Considered as a whole, this might suggest that most stakeholders were interested in first addressing current deficits in employer servicing, before discussing proposed future changes (e.g. online servicing for employers).

6.2. Employer awareness and perception of government employment services

How can the Government raise awareness of employment services available to employers?

- Most stakeholders indicated that employers had a negative perception of employment services. Numerous factors were cited as the main reasons for this, including employers having bad experiences with providers, the quantity of unsuitable applications, and views that providers would put forth clients they wanted to place ahead of suitable candidates.

- There was some suggestion that job seekers become stereotyped through involvement with employment providers. Job seekers stressed the importance of providers attempting to break down these stereotypes, for example, by highlighting the benefits of workplace diversity.

- Similarly, some stakeholders indicated that the Department needed to focus on advertising jobactive as a service that promotes social good, rather than a free employment service. This would also include a greater focus on promoting various success stories in the media. Providers in particular suggested that they were happy to work with the Department on this.

- Due to the perceived stereotyping of job seekers, some respondents suggested changing the jobactive branding. It was reasoned that 'jobactive' may carry negative connotations (i.e. links to compliance – 'activating' someone to search for work). Nonetheless, some respondents were cautious about change, noting that employers were confused by the terminology of employment services, and changes to branding would confuse them further.

- Job seekers noted that some responsibility rested with employers. Many job seekers highlighted that employers expected too much for entry level positions. There was an apparent need to advertise the benefits of employing someone from a jobactive caseload.

- In particular, some job seekers from older age categories (aged 45 years and older) noted that there was evidence of ageism among employers. Some respondents indicated that they had been out of the workforce for many years, and suggested subsidising on-the-job training.

6.3. Added value for employers' recruitment

How can future employment services add value to an employer's recruitment process?

- Some form of job matching was the number one suggestion as to how employment services could better meet the needs of employers. Introducing a job matching tool could help to streamline employer recruitment by allowing them access to the most suitable candidates.

- It was noted by many stakeholders that employers appeared dissatisfied by the level of administration required of them under the current jobactive contract (e.g. time taken providing evidence to providers, wage subsidies, onerous recruitment process, etc). Any job matching system would need to significantly reduce these administrative requirements.

- Some concerns were raised about how job matching services could be implemented. It was noted that small businesses often do not have the resources to access them, and large organisations often have existing recruitment processes they are unlikely to deviate from.

- Current compliance requirements were seen to create additional burden on employers' recruitment. For example, job seekers needing to apply for a set number of jobs and accept the first available offer results in employers receiving unsuitable applicants. Although this was raised by a variety of job seekers, those in regional areas were frustrated that they were being made to apply to unsuitable jobs, due to lack of available work in their local area. Instead, supporting targeted training of job seekers to meet employer needs was favoured.

- Another prominent suggestion was for providers to develop a better understanding of the local labour market and tailor services to help employers fill particular knowledge/skill gaps.

6.4. Employers' expectations for online services

What functionality would employers expect or desire in an online employment service?

- Similar to section 6.3. above, respondents commonly discussed the introduction of an online job matching tool to help streamline the recruitment process for employers. It was noted that there would be an expectation from employers that this would reduce administrative burden.

- It was suggested that employers would expect an online service to allow them to advertise positions, filter job seekers by particular strengths and skillsets, allow for in-built screening tools, and seamlessly integrate with the existing recruitment processes used by employers.

- Respondents stressed the need for flexibility. Employers will need access to the service whenever needed, and will require the ability to customise their advertisements sufficiently.

- Many respondents highlighted that there needed to be the assurance of face-to-face support and liaison available if required. It cannot be assumed that all employers are digitally literate or have the resources for online recruitment. Some workplaces also have difficulties with connectivity to online services, particularly for those operating in outdoor environments.

- There was concern that smaller businesses would be disadvantaged by the introduction of online systems (e.g. do not have the resources to put in to monitoring online applications).

- A couple of respondents suggested that online employment systems could link with existing systems (such as the ATO) to reduce compliance demands on employers. Such a system would be able to monitor job seeker engagement without seeking evidence from employers.

6.5. How ESPs should work with employers

How should employment service providers work with employers to meet their needs?

- There was a strong belief among most stakeholders (particularly employers) that there was a need for employment services to collaborate closely with employers, providing tailored services, and with employment service providers operating as a strategic partner for employers. It was highlighted that providers need to better understand employer needs. Employers stated frustration at the level of service they were receiving from providers.

- Some providers noted the importance of using employer-led models for recruitment of job seekers. For example, providers understanding the skillsets and qualifications required by employers (or in-demand industries) and subsequently upskilling job seekers to match this.

- There was support from providers for having a single point of contact for communication between employers and Employment Service Providers, based on geographies or labour market segments. This would prevent employers being approached by multiple providers.

- Some stakeholders expressed preference for a brokerage model, to streamline employers' access to a broad pool of candidates. It was reasoned that having a broader and more diverse caseload of job seekers would improve the ability of providers to satisfy employers.

- There was an expressed need to optimize the process of matching the most suitable job seekers to available positions. Taking into consideration the particular needs of employers was highlighted as being crucial in leading this matching process.

- It was acknowledged that 'full-service' recruitment services remained integral for employers (for example, offering services such as an early engagement to identify employer needs, and how best to place a job seeker, through to post-placement support).

- Stakeholders recognised the importance of a service based on labour market demand: taking employers' current and future labour hire needs into consideration.

- To facilitate job matching services, it was suggested that development of job seekers' skills should be aligned with skills that are in demand by employers. Employers' training requirements can be used as a guideline for investments to upskill jobseekers.

- Some stakeholders suggested that job matching could be facilitated by providing employers with access to online profiles of available candidates for them to review.

- Some stakeholders highlighted a need to support and train employers in their interactions with disadvantaged job seekers, improving employers' understanding of the barriers faced by jobseekers (and practical assistance for dealing with these barriers).

- The need to provide job seekers with mentoring assistance was highlighted, both during employment as post placement support, and in collaboration with employers. One suggestion was to provide support trough 'mentoring officers' (for larger employers).

- In addition, some respondents expressed a need for further assistance to be provided to employers dealing with job seekers from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In particular, stakeholders (mainly those from peak bodies and community service organisations) highlighted that employers could benefit from workplace diversity training.

- Stakeholders repeatedly highlighted a need to reduce excessive regulation (red tape) and ease the administrative burden on employers to provide verification for employment/evidence collection. There was some support to embrace automation/data-matching as a technological solution to reduce this admin burden for employers.

6.6. Incentivising employers

What incentives would help employers overcome any perceived risks associated with hiring disadvantaged job seekers? How should these operate?

- Most providers were generally supportive of wage subsidies, recognising that they were effective in encouraging some employers to engage with employment services. Many stakeholders also encouraged the use of incentives for work trials and on-the-job training.

- There was some concern (particularly among job seekers) that wage subsidies were open to being abused by employers (e.g. cycling through job seekers only to obtain the incentives). It was suggested that any future use of wage subsidies should carefully guard against misuse.

- Some stakeholders also noted that wage subsidies, although attractive propositions for employers, introduced too much administrative burden to be of any real benefit. It was suggested that online tracking and links to the ATO could simplify this process in some way.

- A subgroup of respondents was wary of an overemphasis on financial incentives, instead believing that employment services should promote the notion of 'corporate social responsibility.' This could be implemented alongside initiatives such as offering workplace diversity training to employers who take on a disadvantaged job seeker, or by channelling more funding into post-placement support, or by up-skilling job seekers for certain tasks. Community service organisations and peak bodies were particularly fond of this suggestion.

- There was some suggestion of offering tax breaks to organisations that employed disadvantaged job seekers over a long-term period (i.e. offering a financial incentive, but less focused on the short term). Others recommended introducing certain legislative requirements for employers on Government contracts to hire disadvantaged job seekers.

- Some mature aged job seekers suggested having paid work trials or subsidised on-the-job training for employers, to encourage organisations to provide them with an opportunity.

7. Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

Summary Findings

Most comments for this theme were from employment service providers and individuals (including job seekers).

Positives

- Stakeholder comments (mostly from providers) suggest overwhelming support for staggered assessments with initial screening for all, and full screening where needed, or at a later date for those identified as more self-sufficient.

- Progressive assessments were seen as important by providers to track progress and amend plans for job seekers, also allowing for the development of trust and rapport over time between job seekers and consultants.

Deficits and pressure points

- Comments, primarily from providers and from other organisations representing job seekers, suggest there is general dissatisfaction with the efficacy of the current Job Seeker Classification Instrument.

- Relatedly, there were widespread concerns expressed in the submissions that those in need of help are not correctly identified through the existing streaming process, and hence not appropriately supported.

- Job seekers commonly expressed frustration with assessment processes, suggesting that the best way to assess their needs was to **'ask them'** directly what support they need to enable them to find, and retain, employment.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- There was a widespread recognition among providers of the need to identify which job seekers needed the most support, to enable targeting of resources and efforts.

- There was widespread support from providers for staggered assessment of job seekers. This was for two main reasons: firstly, because barriers and needs emerged over time as rapport developed and parties were better able to identify strengths and gaps, and secondly, as individual job seekers progressed, and barriers were addressed over time through the support and training received.

- There was an overwhelming concern that many of the current Stream A cohort were far from job ready, and should be in a different stream.

Job Seekers:

- The main issue raised by job seekers was the need to be listened to, to be asked what they need, what skills they have, what would help them to find work.

</div>

- Job seekers overwhelmingly indicated the need for more conversations with consultants, who have the time to get to know them, to actively listen to them, to discuss assessment results and to generally 'care' about the job seeker.

- Job seekers expressed frustration with the current short, passive appointments, which provided little opportunity for engagement or discussion, and were conducted in environments that were not conducive to open dialogue.

Peak bodies:

- Peak bodies were primarily concerned about the current streaming process, with a general view that it did not accurately identify those in need of intensive support.

- There was a particular concern from Indigenous representatives that an assessment process by phone was culturally inappropriate, and that the identification and disclosure of barriers was problematic.

- Staggered assessments were supported by peak bodies (where comment was provided on this).

- Peak bodies also demonstrated support for a flexible, holistic and strengths-based assessment process.

Community service organisations:

- Community service organisations raised similar issues to peak bodies and providers – the need for a holistic assessment was emphasised, as well a focus on strengths-based assessment.

- Concerns about disclosure (or lack thereof) of barriers among job seekers, as well as the presence of multiple and complex barrier (for example, mental health, trauma, caring for children with disability and elderly parents) were raised.

- Organisations representing migrants and refugees identified the need to recognise the impact of trauma and torture in any assessment process.

Employers:

- There were no substantial comments from employers on the assessment of job seekers.

Key recommendations

- There was widespread support for a more holistic assessment of job seekers, beyond the current assessment process. This would enable a fuller understanding of circumstances, strengths, areas of support and overall goals and aspirations.

- Assessment of 'distance travelled' as well as outcomes achieved was supported, to recognise the barriers some job seekers have, and progress made to minimising or addressing these barriers.

- There was some suggestion of independent assessment centres as entry points for job seekers, which would then allow specialist employment consultants to focus on support (and away from assessment, monitoring and compliance).

- Assessment of digital literacy was felt to be best done through practical assessments and observation, as well as the establishment of factors such as having an active email address, creating and saving a document (such as a CV), being able to communicate effectively through text and email and being able to use MyGov without support.
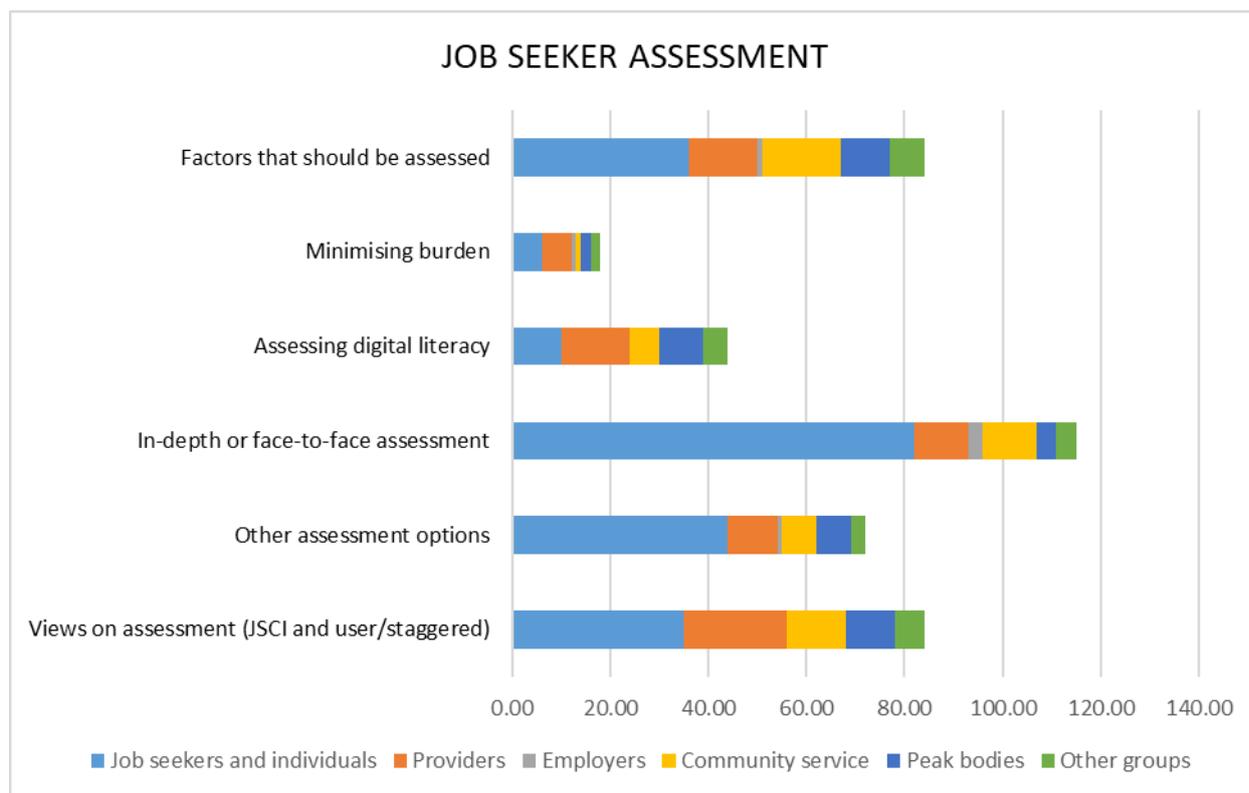
7.1.   Overall topic salience and interest

Figure 9 indicates that 'job seeker assessment' was a topic raised in around half of all submissions across all stakeholder groups. Job seekers and Providers were unsurprisingly particularly concerned with the methods of assessment and what should be included in these assessments.

The most popular sub-topics included in submissions were as follows:

- in-depth or face-to-face assessment (discussed in 115 transcripts)

- views on user profile versus staggered assessment (discussed in 84 submissions)

- factors that should be assessed (discussed in 84 submissions).

7.2.   Views on user profile and staggered assessments

Which of the proposed options to assess job seekers (user profile or staggered assessment) would be most effective in directing them to assistance that meets their needs?

- Stakeholder feedback (primarily providers and organisations representing job seekers) suggests that there is overwhelming support for staggered assessment, with an initial screening process identifying those with strong attachment to the labour market (very recent employment) as not needing to go through full assessment process.

- There was some preference for a full assessment at the six-month stage (or ongoing) to better identify barriers and enhanced service requirements, with others suggesting that the first assessment should be risk-based (i.e. identifying those at risk of longer term unemployment) and then followed by strengths/needs-based assessment at a later point.

- Progressive assessments were seen by providers as important to track progress and amend plans for job seekers – it was noted that job seekers often have an optimistic view of their ability to find work at the beginning (and hence may understate their barriers), which can be eroded over time.

- Relatedly, providers commonly indicated that progressive assessments will facilitate a more open dialogue as job seekers feel more comfortable over time in sharing their situation and circumstances with their consultant. By expanding the assessment process over a period of time, there is more time for employment consultants to get to know their caseload, build rapport and establish trust (which may in turn facilitate greater disclosure of barriers, circumstances, etc).

- The assessment process itself (i.e. the JSCI) should be redeveloped to be more sophisticated, and improved for accuracy to allow this staggered assessment process to work

- Where staggered assessments were not supported, this appeared to be related to concerns about the adequacy of the current assessment process *per se* (for example, inaccurate streaming, concerns that it is a passive process for job seekers, and concerns about the large volume of current Stream As that are some considerable way from being job ready, or were already long term unemployed), and concerns that the staggered assessment process would become onerous for all stakeholders.

7.2.1. Other assessment options and tools

Are there other options for accurately assessing job seekers' needs that should be considered?

- There was widespread support (across different groups of stakeholders) for any assessment to take a wider view of an individual, to understand their circumstances, strengths, and support needs. Mentions of an holistic assessment were common, as well as putting individuals' capabilities and potential at the centre of any assessment process.

- There was also general support for a strengths-based approach, and a move away from a deficit approach.

- From the individual responses, it was evident that there is a need for more active engagement in the assessment process rather than them being a passive participant. Individual job seekers commonly suggested that the best way of doing this was through asking job seekers themselves what support they need, what interventions might help them, what training gaps they have, and so forth (noting a common response from individuals to this question was to simply '*ask'*). Examples cited around giving job seekers '*agency'* in this process, which was indicated to be lacking in the current assessment process.

- A gap raised by a few individuals was the provision of assessment and tools around career development to support job seekers in identifying a career pathway and appropriate resources and support to progress in that pathway.

- There was also a common view among providers that assessment should not rely solely on self-assessment (that is, self-reporting of barriers), but that there also needs to be skills testing and the assessment of transferable skills (it was suggested that this could be automated through a digital platform).

- There was considerable support (typically, but not solely, from providers) for the inclusion of a 'distance travelled' tool or assessment to show progress and allow for progression from a high stream to a lower stream, and to demonstrate job seeker progression towards employment.

- Some suggested assessment tools identified in the submissions were:

  o Q-testing as an assessment tool to predict who will be successful in employment, but noted as complex and lengthy

  o Esher House, which categorises people according to the Stages of Change model using a psychological assessment of work readiness (already used by some employment service providers)

  o Employment Readiness Scale, an online assessment tool that also measures change over time

  o Being Work Ready Guide from the Business Council.

- Within this theme, there was a relatively frequent mention across a number of submissions of the term 'assessor' as someone doing the job seeker assessment, amid related discussions about a specific independent specialist role or an assessment body in undertaking the function of job seeker assessment. This was seen to have the potential for allowing consultants to focus more on the subsequent development of tailored supports and services.

7.2.2. Other assessment criteria

- There was a strong sense in responses for the need for a more holistic assessment of job seekers. There were many commonly raised areas, across many stakeholder groups, that stakeholders felt should be considered in any job seeker assessment:

  o listening to individual to find out about their personality (a few suggested personality profiling/assessment) and what their interests are

  o exploring people's aspirations and goals, particularly in relation to what industry they would like to work in

  o what skills people have (including a self-assessment, but not as the sole source of information), and what skills they *would like to* have

  o job seekers' connections to networks and communities, capacity to carry out job search (identified particularly for migrants/refugees, but also for other vulnerable groups including those with caring responsibilities), social engagement/participation and a situational analysis

  o self-determination and self-esteem

  o mental and physical fitness for work (highlighted as particularly pertinent for survivors of trauma)

  o language and literacy

- o drug and alcohol problems

- o financial problems, including being in extreme poverty

- o training needs assessment, at an early stage to identify what training could be done to help the job seeker find alternative employment

- o social outcomes (possibly linked to provider payments and performance).

- Other noteworthy suggestions included:

  - o assessments of refugees need to be trauma-informed, undertaken by those with appropriate training and skills. Relatedly, there should be recognition of torture/trauma history and its impact on job seekers

  - o a review of the ESAt to ensure that those in need are referred to the service best able to support them.

- A common view was that the JSCI assessment process, and resultant streaming, was inaccurate, and that there was an increasingly narrow difference in disadvantage between the different streams (and that any fall in unemployment would result in a further narrowing of characteristics and demographics of job seekers between different streams, as the more job ready move into employment).

- Whilst motivation was raised as an important factor (and one that could be observed/assessed through face to face engagement), there was also concern about the difficulty of making an assessment of motivation (with an implicit assumption that job seekers lack motivation).

- Staff skills in conducting the assessments were highlighted as critical – there was a suggestion of observations of consultants as they speak with job seekers to assess their support needs, and to have trained 'assessors' in this role.

- There was also a common suggestion of having less focus on compliance frameworks and outcomes (examples provided of jobactive providers completing 'tick box' exercises with job seekers rather than focusing on job readiness skills and addressing needs).

7.2.3. Individual face-to-face assessments

- Whilst there was support for a move to online assessments in the overall process, there was also a commonly held view that a thorough and robust assessment needed to be conducted face-to-face individually. Reasons for this (related to the criteria identified in 7.2.2 above) included:

  - o being able to incorporate informal observations for example, by consultants, trainers to better identify poor literacy, low digital competency, resilience, motivation and so forth

  - o there being a reluctance or difficulties with disclosure of barriers among some groups (for example, newly arrived refugees, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders), suggesting face to face engagement with trained and experienced assessors would better identify these barriers.

  - o the need to provide an environment in which job seekers can freely discuss their circumstances and goals without being fearful or under threat of non-compliance

  - o the need to enable the active participation of the job seeker in the process so that they fully engage in the process and understand it.

- There was a suggestion from peak bodies and community organisations of an independent assessment centre, for entry points to job seekers, staffed by expert assessors/case managers who would do the JSCI, develop a career plan, provide career counselling, referral to appropriate providers and triage for other services.

7.3. Assessing job seekers' digital literacy

What's the best approach to assessing a job seeker's digital literacy?

- A common view was that digital literacy should include being able to type, use of a mouse, use of tabs and hyperlinks, create an email account, understanding how to create and save a document, creating safe passwords, uploading/downloading documents, and how to search for information on the internet.

- Comments and suggestions on the assessment of job seekers' digital literacy came primarily from provides and peak bodies, and included the following:

  o determining whether a job seeker has an email address and whether they use it regularly. An assessment of usage could include sending and receiving of an email between a consultant and a job seeker

  o Reviewing in an assessment whether a job seeker is able to send/receive text messages and if so what kind of language/grammar they used (and providing feedback)

  o Assessing access to digital platforms through determining ownership of/access to a smartphone or other device

  o observing a practical demonstration of digital literacy – for example a standard digital literacy test being conducted (face to face) by consultants with assessment skills who can observe the responses (and any difficulties) as well as them being recorded

  o Reviewing a job seeker's typed CV or job application

  o Whether a job seeker needs help with accessing MyGov.

- Two tools were suggested for the assessment of digital literacy: ECDL Foundation's Digital Literacy Survey, and NorthStar Digital Literary Assessment.

7.4. Minimising burden

How can information be collected in a way that minimises burden on job seekers, providers and employers?

Comments about minimising burden were not extensive, but primarily focused around efficiency, avoidance of the duplication of effort (centralising and utilising the data already held), and being able to share information (for example payroll data between ATO and Centrelink) to avoid additional burdens on employers and/or newly placed employees.

8.   Activation and incentives

Summary Findings

Positives

- Offering rewards or incentives to job seekers was encouraged: stakeholders highlighted the need to balance reward and punishment. The offer of a reward can be more motivating for people who may not respond to compliance, particularly when the reward has great value. Providers were particularly likely to comment on this idea, supporting its implementation.

- Support for social enterprises and programs such as NEIS: respondents encouraged the use of social enterprises as a first step into work. The value of entrepreneurial skills, and the role of NEIS in developing this skillset in job seekers, was also acknowledged. Community service organisations and peak bodies emphasised this in their submissions.

- Some benefits to time/point-based models recognised: it was noted that these approaches could be an improvement on the current approach, allowing greater flexibility in service. Providers (and some peak bodies) discussed this more frequently in their submissions.

Deficits and pressure points

- jobactive was widely criticised as an overly punitive contract: this was highlighted by all stakeholder groups. Job seekers emphasised the negative impact compliance had on their confidence, whereas providers noted its impact on their ability to effectively service clients.

- Compliance leads to additional administration: providers indicated that frontline staff spend a majority of time dealing with administrative work created by enacting compliance. Employers expressed frustration at the amount of admin work required by them. This particular issue was frequently raised by providers, due to the impact it has on their staff.

- Compliance negatively impacts the most disadvantaged job seekers: people experiencing homelessness or mental health issues or caring for young children can be severely impacted by having their payments cut off. It can also interfere with other obligations. Community service organisations and peak bodies were particularly aware of this.

- Compliance is not conducive to quality outcomes: most stakeholder groups indicated that the 'work first' model encouraged by the jobactive contract (versus a human capital development approach) often leads to poor quality employment outcomes. For example, job seekers are made to apply for unsuitable roles and accept the first job they are offered.

- Proposed models do not address underlying concerns: it was noted that the points-based and time-based approaches do not address the underlying problems of compliance. Namely, job seekers are still being made to complete tasks to comply with the service. This was mentioned by a few respondents (both providers and peak body representatives).

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Nearly all providers supported a points-based approach over a time-based approach, particularly for a self-servicing cohort of job seekers. It was reasoned that points were more conducive to promoting agency/control for job seekers, affording an element of flexibility within the compliance framework. The potential for matching points to the goals and needs of job seekers was consistently raised. Many providers noted that time-based requirements would work better for an enhanced services model, as is the case in TtW.

- Providers were encouraged by the Department's proposal to recognise job seekers who exceed their mutual obligation requirements. This was seen to be necessary to counterbalance current punitive measures. Some suggested rewards included employment fund credit (to be used on training, transport) and compliance-free periods.

- Most providers recognised the benefits of social enterprise and entrepreneurial skills (as fostered through NEIS) although recognised current limitations with these opportunities. It was highlighted that more funding and support was required to make this sustainable.

- Although most providers recognised a need for compliance, they emphasised that jobactive relied too heavily on this as an activation measure. In particular, providers were likely to stress the impact compliance had on staff (in relation to administrative work).

Job seekers:

- Job seekers were unlikely to comment on activation beyond criticising jobactive compliance. Job seekers described jobactive as 'punitive' and 'tick and flick,' emphasising that consultants were often more interested in compliance than helping them find work.

Peak bodies:

- This cohort echoed the sentiment of providers, highlighting that a points-based system would be most effective for self-servicing, and time-based would work well for enhanced.

- Most peak bodies supported use of NEIS and social enterprise. In particular, respondents encouraged improving access to these services for more marginalised job seekers.

- Peak body respondents criticised jobactive compliance requirements under the pretence that activities job seekers were made to do often pushed them further away from employment, due to being unsuitable for their individual needs and employment goals. Some peak bodies also highlighted that compliance requirements created difficulty for some job seekers who had competing demands through involvement in other programs.

Community service organisations:

- Respondents from this cohort were particularly likely to encourage the use of NEIS and social enterprise as alternative forms of employment for job seekers. Like peak bodies, the potential for marginalised job seekers to benefit from these initiatives was highlighted.

- Community service organisations tended to emphasise the potential harm compliance requirements (and the associated punishments for not meeting these requirements) could inflict on marginalised job seekers. For example, cutting off payments was seen to be an extreme measure for refugee job seekers who did not understand their requirements, as well as parents who needed the income to be able to effectively support their children.

Employers:

- Although the data available from employers is relatively thin compared to other stakeholder groups, there was some evidence that the main concern from this cohort related to the impact jobactive compliance had on their business needs. A few employers commented that job search requirements caused them to receive a large quantity of unsuitable applications from job seekers, which appeared to be a major frustration. One respondent commented that employment services would not be able to meet business needs unless while providers continue to be more preoccupied with compliance needs.

Key recommendations:

- Allow greater flexibility in compliance requirements, and tailor this to the type of servicing (i.e. self-servicing versus enhanced services). For example, a points-based model may be more effective for self-serviced job seekers, and time-based for the enhanced services.

- Introduce a range of rewards to recognise the effort put in by some job seekers. This could include things such as 'credits' (e.g. training credits, childcare credits, etc.), compliance free periods, and the ability to 'bank' points to use at a later date.

- Continue funding NEIS and encourage the use of social enterprises as a first step.

- Relax compliance to ease the burden on frontline staff, job seekers, and employers. Allow a more flexible, person-centred approach to compliance, offering discretion to providers.

Figure 10   Proportions of submissions concerned with activation and incentives, within each stakeholder group
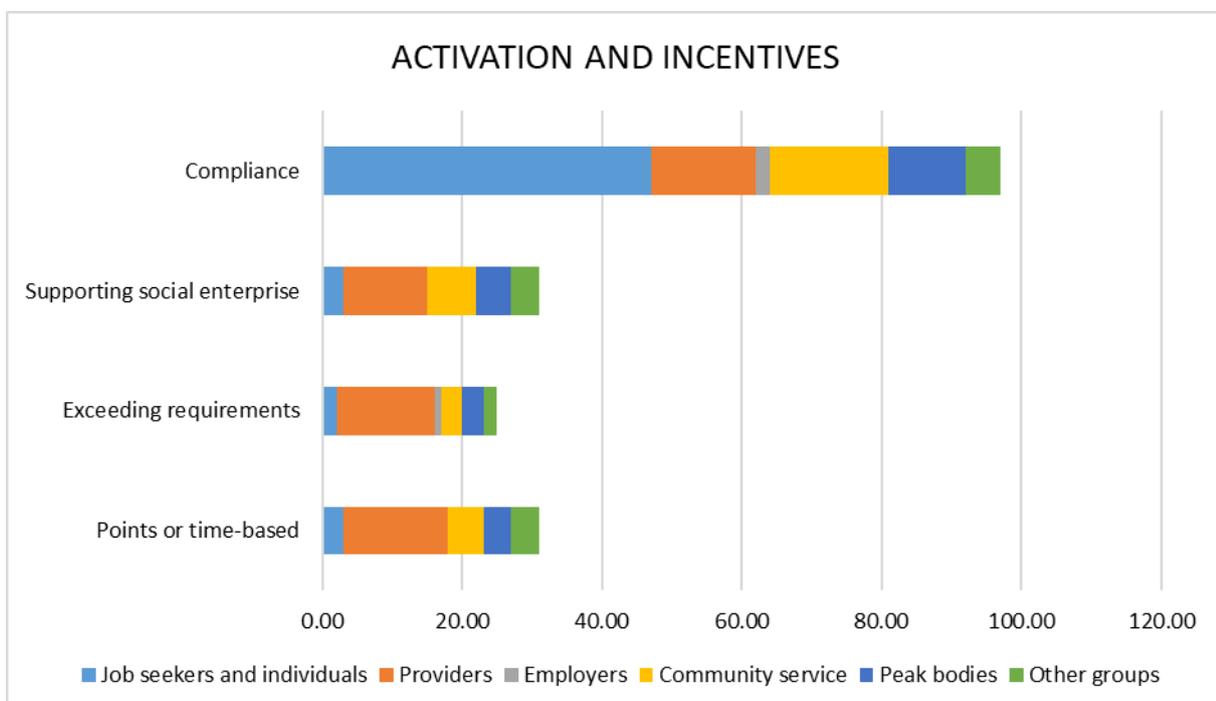
8.1.   Overall topic salience and interest

As indicated by Figure 10 the 'activation and incentives' theme was not as widely discussed compared to some of the other consultation topics. Job seekers and 'individual' respondents were particularly reticent to include information pertaining to this in their submission. On the other hand, providers and 'other' stakeholder groups were comparatively more likely to make comment on this topic.

The top sub-topics discussed in this section were:

- compliance system (97 submissions)

- views on points-based versus time-based activation (31 submissions)

- supporting social enterprise (31 submissions).

This indicates that compliance was significantly more popular than the other topics available for discussion in the 'activation' section. Job seekers in particular were more likely to comment on compliance compared to any of the other topics, perhaps reflective of their discontent with the 'punitive' jobactive contract. Alternatively, providers and other stakeholders were more likely to have a higher-level understanding of the jobactive contract, and this may have been why they were more likely to comment on some other sub-topics, such as the points-based versus time-based element. Nonetheless, compliance was still the most commonly discussed topic among these stakeholders.

8.2.   Views on points based or time-based activation options

Which of the activation options (points-based or time-based) would best support job seekers who largely self-service?

- The merits of both a points-based and time-based activation framework were acknowledged by respondents, although there was generally more support for a points-based model. Points-based activation was favoured due to the notion of 'gamification', providing a degree of agency and control to job seekers, the potential for points to be targeted to the goals of the individual, and the potential to 'weight' points based on labour market characteristics.

- There was some concern that time-based approaches would encourage 'time wasting.' For example, some job seekers could spend more time than necessary on certain requirements.

- That being said, some stakeholders thought that both activation options were viable – with points-based most appropriate for self-servicing, and time-based for the enhanced services.

- Support for time-based activation was premised on the success of this approach in TtW. Consequently, it was reasoned that disadvantaged cohorts would benefit from this approach.

- Nonetheless, there was still concern evident among some stakeholders that neither approach would address the underlying issues with compliance in jobactive. In other words, job seekers are still being coerced to do things for the sake of fulfilling a set of obligations.

- There was also some concern that both approaches would invite more intrusive monitoring of job seekers. It was questioned by some stakeholders whether this would be beneficial.

8.3. Recognition of job seekers who exceed activation requirements

How could the activation framework also recognise job seekers who regularly exceed requirements?

- The suggestion of introducing rewards for job seekers who exceed activation requirements was received positively by most stakeholders. It was generally noted that jobactive focused heavily on punishment, and a rewards mechanism was needed to provide balance for this. There was scant evidence that this suggestion related directly to disadvantaged job seekers (enhanced services). Rather, it was suggested that this could be applied to all job seekers.

- A range of suggestions were made as to what these rewards could contain, including: certain financial incentives, or 'credits,' (e.g. training credits, transport credits, child-care credits), allowing a 'compliance free' period equal to the degree requirements were exceeded by, allowing job seekers to 'bank' excess points and use them at their discretion when personal circumstances meant that they were unable to fulfil their requirements in a subsequent period of servicing, and increased access to (and agency over) the employment fund.

8.4. Supporting social enterprise

What appropriate additional initiatives might be useful to support job seekers participating in social enterprises and other non-traditional forms of work?

- One social enterprise submitted a response to the discussion paper. This respondent detailed that, despite most of their workforce consisting of Stream C job seekers, 100% were able to achieve 26-week outcomes, highlighting the potential benefit of social enterprises.

- Social enterprises were viewed by most respondents as a "stepping stone" to employment, helping job seekers develop vocational and non-vocational skills in a supportive workplace.

- 'Seed funding' and wage subsidies were encouraged to promote social enterprise growth.

- Some respondents also discussed self-employment and entrepreneurship alongside social enterprise, as non-traditional forms of employment. Instilling the skills needed to be successful in starting a business was encouraged, particularly via further support for NEIS.

- There was some suggestion that a program similar to NEIS could be created for social enterprises. This would involve encouraging job seekers to start their own social enterprises.

- Social enterprises and NEIS were compared favourably to Work for the Dole. Whereas Work for the Dole was seen to be punitive and its ability to develop useful work readiness skills was questioned, NEIS and the development of entrepreneurial skills was encouraged.

8.5. Compliance system

- jobactive was widely viewed as an overly 'punitive' contract. Job seekers expressed frustration that providers seemed more interest in 'ticking off' compliance requirements than listening to their needs, whereas providers noted dissatisfaction with the rigid requirements placed on them by the jobactive contract (with regards to funding and flexibility of servicing).

- Providers noted that monitoring compliance created a great deal of administrative burden, most of which falls on the shoulders of frontline staff. It was highlighted that this had an impact on the high degree of staff turnover (three times the national average), and consequently, the overall quality of the service that consultants delivered.

- Compliance requirements were seen to be demotivating for job seekers. For example, applying for 20 jobs a month can lead to repeated rejections from employers, and programs such as Work for the Dole can result in job seekers undertaking menial tasks.

- Although it was a point raised by most job seekers, the requirement to search for 20 jobs a month presented unique difficulties for respondents living in regional locations. Regional job seekers expressed that there were not enough jobs available to apply for in their area.

- Applying for 20 jobs a month was seen to negatively impact the perception of employment services among employers, for example, due to the large number of unsuitable applications.

- Stakeholders noted that some disadvantaged job seekers often have difficulty meeting their obligations, and compliance should only be a last resort option. Compliance was seen to have negative outcomes, e.g. for parents of young children, homeless people, etc.

- It was noted that many job seekers often have competing demands, conflicting with their jobactive obligations. For example, job seekers involved with AMEP, job seekers currently studying or involved in casual work, and those involved with other state/local initiatives. As such, compliance may be pushing these job seekers further away from gaining employment.

- Stakeholders favoured an individualised, person-centred approach to servicing, with more discretion given to providers on compliance. It was noted that the money saved via abolishing compliance requirements could be re-directed into the employment fund.

9.   Regional and local approaches

<div style="border:1px solid">

Summary Findings

Positives

- Consideration of "place-based solutions" was encouraged: most stakeholders were encouraged by the added emphasis on "place-based solutions" in the discussion paper.

Deficits and pressure points

- Current Relocation Assistance too restrictive: requirements such as needing to move more than 90-minutes away and be long-term unemployed are preventing some job seekers access. This was a point that was raised by providers, as well as peak body respondents.

- Lack of access to education/training in regional areas: some job seekers need to travel long distances for TAFE, and have limited courses on offer in their local region. This was highlighted as one potential reason for the observed skill shortages in some regional areas.

- jobactive does not allow for flexibility in provider funding: smaller local providers were seen to be "squeezed out" by larger competitors due to the "one size fits all" jobactive model. Local providers need more access to flexible funding to drive innovative approaches.

- Employment services do not adequately intersect with other sectors: it was noted that successful local approaches require input from a diverse intersection of stakeholders. Obtaining advice across Government, private, and community services was encouraged by a range of stakeholders, including providers, peak bodies, and community organisations.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Providers were particularly likely to comment on the importance of engaging a range of stakeholders within local communities, intersecting across a variety of sectors. Providers indicated that they needed flexibility within the contract to adequately tailor local solutions.

- Unsurprisingly, providers tended to focus their comments on 'engaging local providers' as opposed to 'engaging local employers.' Again, this tended to relate to a desire for increased flexibility and funding, allowing providers to adapt their servicing as needed.

- Most providers were sceptical of encouraging geographical mobility, highlighting that moving job seekers away from established social support networks would be detrimental.

Job seekers:

- Most job seekers pushed back against the suggestion that locals needed assistance to develop skills to find and keep a job. Rather, respondents highlighted that there often were not enough jobs available in their local area, so that no amount of up-skilling would help them to find work. Respondents highlighted a need to first stimulate local labour markets.

- Job seekers expressed a desire to have their voices heard. Respondents commented that locals were often well aware of challenges in local areas, and would be best placed to communicate this information when designing local solutions. Community forums were suggested, as well as engaging with local groups, such as local Chamber of Commerce.

</div>

- Job seekers expressed frustration that employers may seek to fill vacancies with workers outside of the region rather than working with local people. Discourse primarily centred around the notion that employers needed to give local job seekers more of a chance, rather than looking to attract skilled workers from outside of the region. There was some suggestion that providers needed to communicate better with local employers, creating dialogue around skill shortages, and subsequently training job seekers to fill these gaps.

Peak bodies:

- Much like providers, peak bodies seemed wary of encouraging geographical mobility, recognising the strain this could place on job seekers both financially and socially.

- Many peak bodies encouraged engagement with local organisations already established within communities. These respondents highlighted that local organisations/peak bodies were often well-placed to be able to offer support and services to local job seekers.

Community service organisations:

- These organisations tended to emphasise the need for local collaboration, highlighting that providers needed to engage local organisations and local government to design adequate local approaches. Community organisations indicated that job seekers faced a range of barriers in some localities, and these barriers need to be holistically addressed.

Employers:

- Though feedback was scarce, employers tended to highlight a need for local employers to communicate and work together, sharing their local experiences and insights. There was some suggestion that it would help to analyse labour market trends and business needs.

Key recommendations

- Encourage local engagement across Government, private, and community sectors.

- Focus on upskilling job seekers (through greater access to education and training) and allowing more funding to put towards work trials and incentivising local employers. Ensure that the training delivered to job seekers is in line with identified local skills shortages.

- Provide more financial and social support for job seekers to relocate. Consider removing restrictive requirements in place for the current Relocation Assistance that is offered.

- Have flexible funding arrangements for regional providers, encouraging greater use of the employment fund for innovative solutions and funding for education/social outcomes.

- Require regional providers to demonstrate local knowledge at the tender stage.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACHES
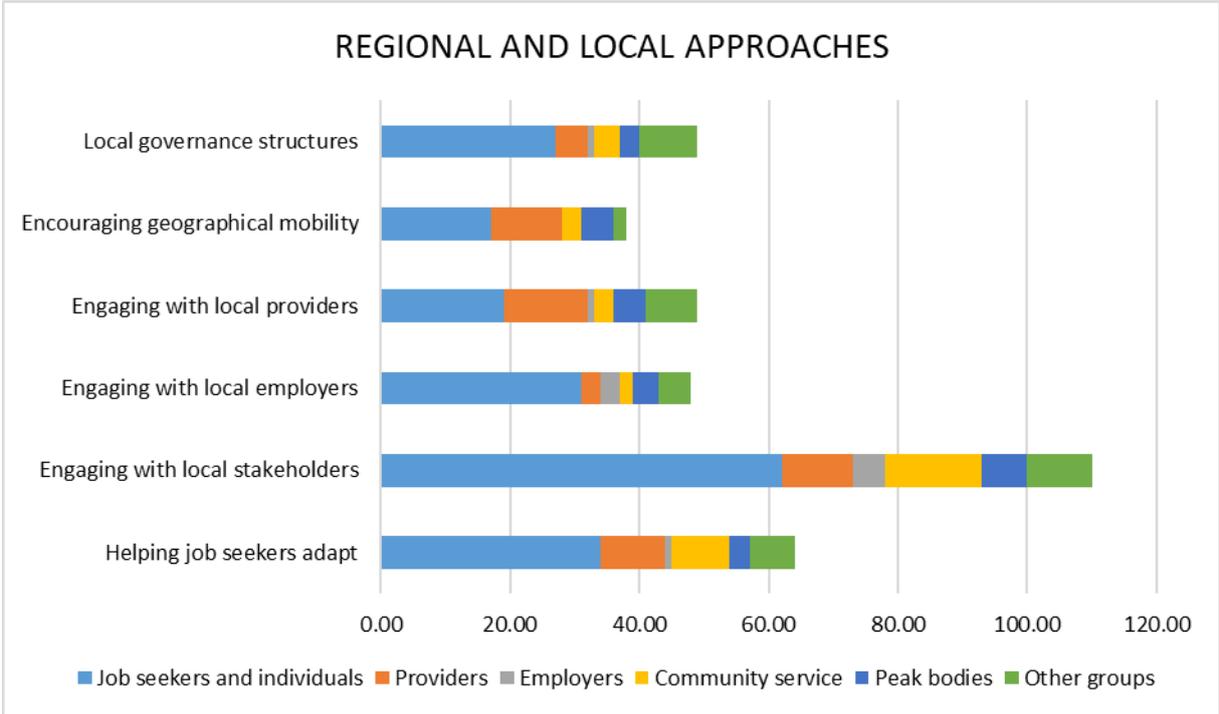
9.1. Overall topic salience and interest

Around half of all respondents raised the issue of local employment solutions in their submission. Most of this was driven by providers and 'other' stakeholders (see Figure 11); job seeker made few comments on this specific topic. This group includes community service organisations, of which evidently offer an important perspective on working with local communities.

The most commonly discussed topics in this section were:

- engaging with local stakeholders (110 submissions)
- helping job seekers to adapt to local labour markets (64 submissions)
- governance structures – how to implement local solutions (49 submissions).

Most respondents focused on engaging with local stakeholders (which included providers and employers) but had notably less feedback relating to solutions that targeted job seekers (such as helping them to adapt to local labour markets and encouraging geographical mobility). This may indicate that the solution to local labour market problems is seen to be outside of job seekers' remit, instead depending on collaboration in a local community between various stakeholders (such as providers and employers). Further, many respondents supported local collaboration, but were less clear as to how to implement these solutions (thus, the lower number of responses to this theme).

9.2. Job seeker adaptation

What strategies would help job seekers adapt to regional economic and labour market variations?

- Some respondents talked about the importance of small scale community responses. Suggestions included looking to build on social enterprises (including offering seed funding to social enterprises), and proposing some other community-based structure which aimed to tackle shared issues and barriers (such as transport, childcare, portfolio working, incubating start-ups, and literacy training). One cited example of good practice was offered as Men's Sheds, which were highlighted as being venues for informal skill sharing and the development of informal networks of labour supply and work readiness. These were viewed as key components to encourage labour market adaptation.

- Several comments discussed gathering intelligence (including analysis of ABS data), and actively providing information to job seekers about where local opportunities existed. In some cases, respondents talked about offering short courses to address local skill shortages, so that job seeker skills were augmented to meet market demand in their local area. This was sometimes referred to as 'strategic augmentation', or 'skills building.'

- Some stakeholders also discussed issues relating to greater flexibility from job seekers to meet labour market needs. This included preparing job seekers in some local markets for the likelihood that they may fill a series of short term roles, engage in some form of portfolio working or job stacking (having more than one role at any one time), and reducing the stigma associated with some forms of flexible employment, such as contract working and labour hire. The need for transferrable skills was emphasised as a result.

- Some respondents also sought a different model in which job seekers operated. For example, seeking a less adversarial (obligation and sanction) model, and moving towards something which addressed job seeker needs and aspirations. Some respondents encouraged a more intensive service tailored to the needs of local job seekers, whereas others suggested more radical shifts, for example, a move towards a different income support model, such as Basic Income, for regional markets.

9.3. Labour market mobility

What strategies would improve labour market mobility from regions that have poor employment prospects?

- Many comments highlighted that there was a need among job seekers and their families for more support, not just to move, but to help them settle after a move to a new location. It was suggested that support should address issues such as housing, education, health, age care, and support in building social networks. It was argued that, if this was not addressed, many job seekers, and particularly those who are long term unemployed and have diminished social networks, would be dissuaded from relocating.

- Many comments addressed financial aspects of relocation, including concerns that job seekers often do not have the money to fund the costs of relocation. It was reasoned that support would be required up front, to address immediate costs, such as acquiring housing in the new location, removal costs and travel. One comment suggested that the current Relocation Assistance is avoided by providers because of the associated administrative burden, whilst another talked of restrictions which were unhelpful, such as a 90 minute travel

time to be eligible for the assistance (instead, suggesting a scaled approach based on the distance moved) or a requirement for 12 months of unemployment, which excluded candidates who might otherwise be most suitable (and willing) for relocation.

- Some stakeholders highlighted that job seekers considering relocation need the ability to move between job providers, and to access services outside of their geographic region, so that they can explore opportunities, and so that they have greater agency and control.

- Support with fuel costs, public transport costs, and the acquisition of licenses may be important for job seekers in making either relocation, or travel to another area, viable.

- Some comments supported the concept of trial visits, such as 'look and see' or 'try before you move' options, which allowed the job seeker and their family the opportunity to consider whether a new location was viable before committing to a permanent move.

9.4. Engaging local stakeholders

How could local stakeholders be encouraged to identify priorities, engage with providers and implement local employment solutions?

- Most stakeholders agreed that collaboration with local communities was important. This included providers and employers (detailed in proceeding sections), as well as community organisations, and key figures in the local community (those with strong local knowledge).

- One Aboriginal peak body respondent indicated that involving Aboriginal communities in decision making processes would prove to be an empowering experience for this cohort.

- Having a wide array of local organisations to collaborate with was emphasised by some respondents. Collaboration between government, private, and community sectors was emphasised. In particular, local councils and community services were noted in responses.

- Community forums were encouraged in order to give locals a chance to provide input into local solutions. The need to develop strategies 'with' as opposed to 'for' locals was noted.

- 'Place-based solutions' were strongly favoured over the jobactive 'one size fits all' model.

- Some respondents noted that there needed to be strategies to stimulate local economies. Some regional stakeholders indicated that the quantity of jobs for job seekers to access was not sufficient. Encouraging locally owned business was seen to be an important solution to this, with the suggestion of increased Government funding for these organisations.

- There was some concern about access to training in regional communities. For example, some respondents noted having difficulty accessing TAFE due to large travel times. Encouraging training providers to target these communities was encouraged in responses.

9.4.1. Employer focus

- A key suggestion raised by a number of stakeholders (particularly stakeholders from a regional area) related to encouraging discussion among regional employers to highlight the major skill gaps in their local community. It was reasoned that providers could then upskill job seekers to address these local skill shortages by providing access to relevant training

- Regional stakeholders suggested that organisations could be incentivised to operate out of regional communities. Investing more in regional centres, as opposed to the current emphasis on expanding metropolitan regions (i.e. the capital cities) was encouraged. One example given was offering tax breaks to organisations located in regional areas.

- Some respondents commented on the need to encourage regional employers to give local job seekers more of a chance. This included suggestions pertaining to work trials (for which employers were incentivized) to encourage employers to provide opportunities for locals.

9.4.2. Provider focus

- Many stakeholders highlighted a need for collaboration among regional providers. Competition was seen to be detrimental in some areas where the labour market is spread thin. It was suggested that the Department could offer a collaboration incentive to providers.

- It was recognised that developing strong local networks was important for providers. The focus on rigid compliance in jobactive was seen to detract from provider ability to do this.

- Some stakeholders suggested that having local knowledge should be a prerequisite to be contracted in a particular region. This could be implemented as part of the employment services tender process, whereby providers would be required to demonstrate local competence. It was noted that small, local providers are being squeezed out of the market.

- Provider funding was a popular topic of discussion, with a range of suggestions raised. Some stakeholders suggested increasing access to the employment fund for regional employers so that this could be invested in funding work trials and incentivising local business. Other respondents suggested having funding contingent upon local labour market data, providing payment for educational and social outcomes, and encouraging innovation.

- Some respondents suggested that providers needed more access to education and training. This was pertinent for regional job seekers with fewer options available in their community.

9.5. Governance structures (how to implement solutions)

- Increasing funding to support local communities (through things such as ensuring providers have enough funding to support regional job seekers, and subsidising local business) was seen to be the main role of Government in assisting the implementation of local solutions. It was reasoned that local labour markets would improve if increased funding was available. This was seen to be particularly important for struggling regional and rural economies.

- There was also suggestion from some respondents that Government should be more inclusive of local providers and organisations when tendering services in regional locations. A few respondents expressed that providers should need to prove local competency in regional areas before being awarded a contract to deliver employment services. This was seen to be favourable as opposed to having national organisations delivering local services.

- Engaging local government was suggested by a few respondents. Stakeholders expressed frustration that Government policy suited to urban areas was being applied in regional locations. It was suggested that local council would be more in tune with local needs. Leveraging existing local structures and governance as much as possible was preferred.

- A few respondents suggested that having 'local area/region coordinators' would be helpful. It would be the role of coordinators to advocate for local approaches for regional communities.

10. Market competition and service quality

<table>
<tr><td>

Summary Findings

Positives

- Most stakeholders who commented on this topic supported some level of competition, but with a preference for a moderately flexible market, through capping of service providers in areas, or by specialisation.

- Competition was felt to be healthy for user choice and innovation.

- There was some support for a licencing arrangement but also a general view that more information was needed on how this would be operationalised.

Deficits and pressure points

- There was widespread concern about a crowded market place for providers.

- Having too many providers was highlighted by providers as not beneficial for employers, eroding service quality levels.

- Multiple providers also risks instability for job seekers, a potential dilution of service, and a lack of collaboration (and sharing of effective practice) due to competition for outcomes

- There were concerns that job seekers were not able to exercise agency and control, and thus choice was limited for them.

- It was suggested that the funding model is currently too focussed on placements as outcomes, with insufficient recognition of 'distance travelled'.

Main points, by stakeholder group

Providers:

- Providers, unsurprisingly, gave the most substantial comments on this issue, with almost all providing views.

- Competition was generally welcomed, accepting that there needs to be an appropriate balance of providers to market share (amid concerns that in some areas there are too many providers for the caseload – Disability Employment Services given as an example).

- Providers supported transparent benchmarking to encourage providers to work co-operatively.

Job Seekers:

- Job seekers did not provide any substantial comments on this issue.

Peak bodies:

- Peak bodies were mixed in their views, but demonstrated concern for competition, in that it limits diversity and innovation, potentially undermining place-based solutions.

- Some peak bodies indicated a preference for not-for-profit providers, or public employment services, as providing the best environment for job seekers.

</td></tr>
</table>

Community service organisations:

- Community service organisations were also mixed in their views on competition and contestability. Whilst there was some support for a moderately flexible market and choice, there was concern about competition driving down quality, and restricting collaboration at a local level (which was felt to best meet the needs of disadvantaged groups).

- There was support for community-based 'grass roots' collaboration.

- There was some concern about the increased 'marketisation' of human services.

- Community organisation stakeholders also highlighted the importance of outcomes such as increased resilience, 'distance travelled' and social connectedness being recognised.

Employers:

- Employers did not provide any substantial comments on this issue.

Key recommendations

- Some level of agreed market share for providers was suggested to deliver a degree of confidence and certainty to providers, allowing them to deliver high quality services.

- That said, a careful balance was suggested to ensure that growth of the best performers was not inhibited – one suggestion was to cap providers and caseloads in a region.

- Should a licensee approach be adopted, there would need to be support for new providers, and/or small specialist providers, to allow them to grow their expertise in the market.

- It was suggested that future funding models need to better recognise and reward distance travelled by job seekers, as well as better adapt to the changing nature of the labour market (increased fragmentation, the gig economy and portfolio working).
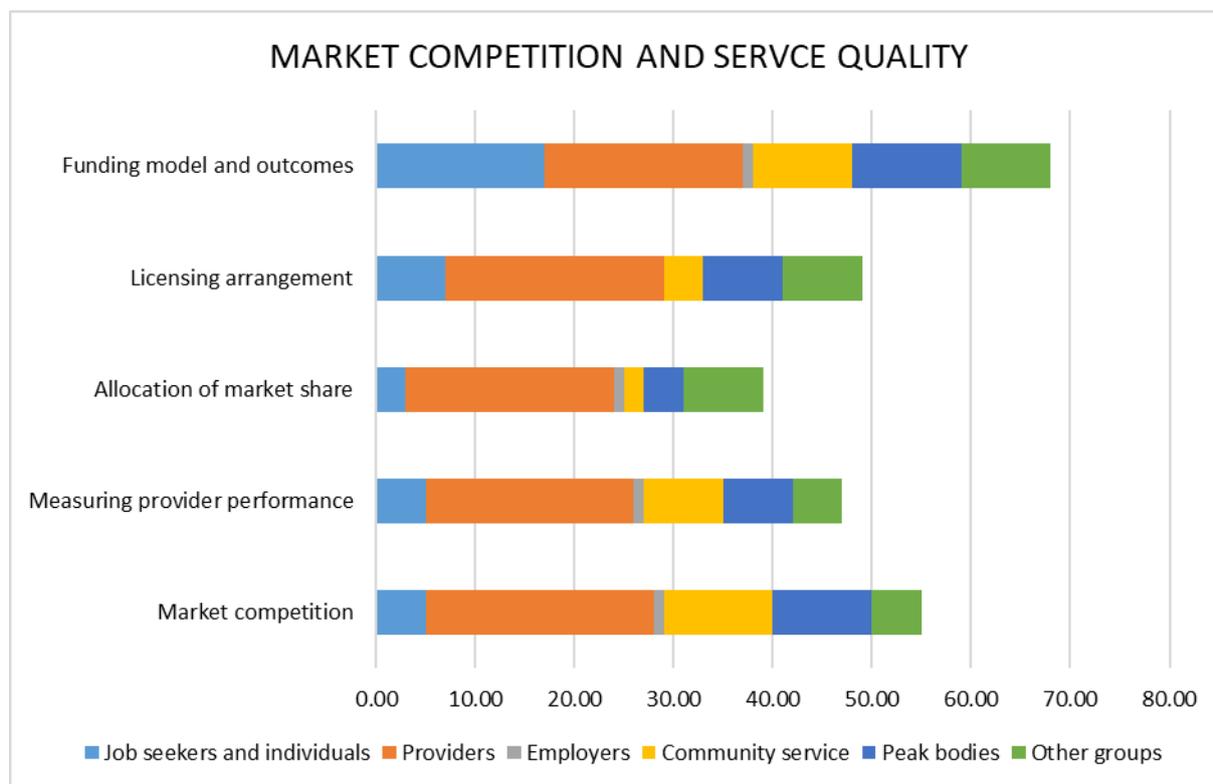
10.1. Overall topic salience and interest

Figure 12 shows that 'market competition and service quality' topics were highly salient for providers with almost all discussing the issues in their submissions. The topics were less salient for job seekers and individuals (they have been removed from the Figure above due to very low numbers). Around half of 'other stakeholders' provided comment on some aspect of the topic (mostly from peak bodies and community service organisations).

The most popular sub-topics included in submissions were as follows:

- funding model and outcomes (discussed in 68 submissions)

- market competition (discussed in 55 submissions)

- licensing arrangements (discussed in 49 submissions).

10.2. Market competition

What level of contestability, competition and Government intervention in the market is desirable?

- Most stakeholders noted that there was a need for some level of competition in the provision of employment services. However, these contributors were reluctant to support a highly flexible and competitive market, instead favouring the 'moderately flexible market'. This option would result in the number of providers being capped per employment region.

- Support for competition stemmed from the need to drive user choice and innovation. Nonetheless, some contributors pointed out that too much competition resulted in the

standardisation of services to comply with Government regulations, as observed in jobactive, plus the possible driving down of service quality.

- There was suggestion that competition would only benefit the most work ready job seekers. A few stakeholders noted that competition worked best in 'transactional' markets and was not suited for the employment or human services context. There was concern that the most disadvantaged job seekers would not be able to effectively exercise agency and control.

- Other detrimental effects of a highly competitive market noted include: poor service for employers (being approached too often and providers not being able to offer suitable candidates due to a fragmented caseload), instability for job seekers (due to the potential for provider turnover), and smaller specialist providers being pushed out of local markets.

- Some stakeholders expressed preference for greater collaboration and believed that increased competition prohibited this. Collaboration was said to promote information sharing and best practice among providers. Jobactive was seen to prohibit collaboration, due to the focus on compliance requirements, and outcome payments not recognising collaboration.

- Although the need for competition and a contestable market was recognised, some stakeholders expressed concern that the cost of entering the market was prohibitive, especially for smaller providers. To achieve a desired balance of competition, reducing barriers to entry was recommended.

- There was some concern about providers operating for-profit in this market, but others indicated the market should be open to all (e.g. TAFEs, local community groups, nfps, local government, and for profit).

- There was a common suggestion, related to market competition and provider performance, for a regulator body or panel, or a statutory authority/ombudsman for the sector. This, it was suggested, would be an independent monitoring and compliance body that could have a number of roles including:

  o dispute and complaint resolution

  o monitoring and evaluation of performance

  o oversight of service delivery and reporting requirements

  o monitoring of funding to ensure independent integrity.

10.3. Enhanced service providers - allocation of market share

- In line with the overarching preference for a 'moderately flexible market,' most stakeholders recognised that there would be a need for some degree of market share for providers. Most suggested that market share should be based on a range of factors, such as provider performance and characteristics of the local labour market in a region (e.g. population, caseload needs, etc).

- Contributors in support of market share highlighted that it was needed to deliver a degree of certainty and confidence to providers. This would, in turn, promote innovation and a willingness for providers to focus on investing funds into the job seekers on their caseload, as well as encouraging new providers to the marketplace.

- Similarly, there was some concern that a lack of market share could lead to some providers using undesirable tactics to attract job seekers, and re-directing their spending to advertising.

- Conversely, some providers were of the belief that overly rigid market share would prohibit the growth of the best performers. It was noted that there was a need to reward providers capable of producing the best outcomes, and job seekers deserved a choice in their service.

- To reconcile concerns over rigid market share versus a lack of market share, it was suggested that there could be a portion of the market that was capped, and a portion that was uncapped and which providers would be able to compete for. An alternate suggestion was capping the number of providers in a region and allowing competition for job seekers.

10.4. Licensing arrangements

Licencing is a method of purchasing services where organisations are issued with a licence to deliver services if they meet specified service criteria.

Should the Government transition to commissioning enhanced services providers through a licencing arrangement? If so, how?

Most comments here originated from providers and peak bodies.

- It was evident from some submissions (notably, providers) that this is a model which requires more information and consideration before being able to give an informed view.

- There was some support for a licencing arrangement, but not to the detriment of existing providers. It was suggested that some high performing providers (based on Star ratings) could have automatic entry to licencing/become an accredited licensee (e.g. in existing and/or new areas).

- Some support for licencing for enhanced or specialist services, including as part of a 'panel' of enhanced service providers who meet a set of minimum criteria (including accreditation requirement, industry experience/commitment, financial viability). Two submissions (both provider-related) suggested that if a provider was ISO accredited then the need for a full Departmental Quality Assurance Framework assessment should be reviewed.

- Support for licencing period to have long tenure or in perpetuity (subject to review) to allow for investment and development.

- There was a need for regular auditing of licences (either DJSB or independent regulatory body or authority). The importance of an independent sector regulator was also commonly suggested to regulate compliance in the new model (noted in Section 10.2).

- There was concern raised about the risk of new providers in the market place finding it difficult to succeed in an outcomes-based payment model, and whether this then puts at risk the continuity of service for job seekers. Relatedly, there was a concern that new entrants in a 'rapid market entry' environment may negatively impact on service quality for job seekers (suggesting a historic comparison to the VET sector).

- There was a concern from community service organisations and peak bodies that a licencing model may disadvantage small, specialist organisations, who may not be able to manage the resource investment required.

- Providers noted that the process for transitioning to a licencing model should not be an overly administratively complex or burdensome process.

- A cap on licences (to reflect local need) would be recommended so that the market place remains viable.

- There was some concern that a move to a licencing model would not address the shortfalls of the current employment services model (lack of choice for the job seeker, including of for-profit providers, greater fragmentation of services related to employment, social services and other related programs).

- There was support from providers for transparent benchmarking for provider performance – collaboration, employment outcomes, cultural competency, post-52-week outcomes, etc.

- It was noted that lessons may be learnt from the DES experience, and Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (both reportedly over-contracted in some market places).

- A few mentioned activity-based funding approaches (as in health) – seen as an effective commissioning model that does not necessarily favour the lowest price.

10.5. Funding model and outcomes

- There was some concern from providers, peak bodies and community services alike, that the current funding focuses on speed to place in employment – not on upskilling, or on achieving social or capacity-building outcomes (e.g. sustained self-esteem, social engagement, participation in learning activities, etc.) or improvements in job readiness or employability. Relatedly, there is support for a human capital approach over and above a work-first approach, with a funding model that reflects this.

- There was also suggestion that greater consideration be given to implementing education outcome payments, if they are linked to labour market demand (possibly weighted towards job seekers with higher educational disadvantage, including Indigenous, youth and mature jobseeker cohorts).

- A further suggestion was to offer outcomes for providers who help a job seeker to move from a high stream to a low stream.

- In recognition of the changes in the labour market, with growth of atypical employment, casualisation, entrepreneurship and the gig economy (e.g. Uber), outcome funding needs to be able to adapt.

- The funding system should reflect the value of short-term/casual work/multiple placements in terms of increasing skills and employability (many noting 13/26-week outcomes are not feasible in many locations or sectors due to the fragmented labour market).

- There is a need for an improved formula to achieve outcomes based on cumulative hours (an example provided was cumulative weeks over a 12-month period).

- Funding could also be linked to demonstrable collaboration. This was highlighted in submissions as a key component of delivering services to meet local need.

- Funding could be shifted to allow greater investment upfront for those hardest to help, including wider use of the Employment Fund, progress payments for those most distanced from the labour market, or sustainability payments for long term (i.e. beyond 26 weeks) employment (and associated benefit savings).

- There was also a suggested need for a greater recognition of the range of organisations and service providers that may have contributed to an 'outcome' and enhanced upfront service payments to recognise the amount of investment required for many job seekers.

- There was some support for contract extensions (period of 7 years typically mentioned, as suggested in the Productivity Commission's report).

- Notably, there were many examples of providers not being able to claim outcomes (for numerous reasons) despite placements/outcomes being achieved.

- There were some comments from a small number of providers about the regression model currently used for the Star Ratings of jobactive providers. The comments received related to:

  o some frustration about multiple changes to the regression model for Star Ratings throughout the lifetime of jobactive, which had caused uncertainty. In addition, changes from 1 Jan 2018 were said to have impacted negatively on the performance of providers in Victoria and New South Wales (reducing performance with the new model)

  o suggestion of a benchmarking system, which could take into account regression for areas, so that providers were not only judged by comparison with others (and thus may then become more open to sharing good practice)

  o the need for transparency and consistency in any model (with some criticism of multiple changes)

  o the use of regression analysis to measure the impact of the intervention (i.e. jobactive) on outcomes

  o taking into consideration when a job seeker commences employment quicker than a regression model predicted.

Attachment A Issues raised in submissions from each stakeholder group

Please note: The figures displayed in this table are based off the 484 individual **records** received from respondents (as opposed to 454 unique submissions).

This is due to the additional 30 records being coded in NVivo, which counts each individual record separately. As such, NVivo cannot distinguish when a theme is raised by the same respondent across multiple records.

Theme	Issue	Job Seekers	Providers	Employers	Individual	Comm. Services	Peak Bodies	Training	Govt.	Other	Total
CASE FOR CHANGE AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE GOALS	Goals identified	4/188	16/29	2/15	1/164	10/42	4/26	1/4	1/7	5/9	**44/484**
	Caseload	8/188	15/29	1/15	7/164	13/42	11/26	2/4	2/7	3/9	**62/484**
	Service delivery	33/188	9/29	1/15	25/164	8/42	8/26	2/4	0/7	5/9	**91/484**
	Labour market changes	29/188	20/29	3/15	23/164	14/42	12/26	1/4	2/7	2/9	**106/484**
HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK	Education and training	71/188	9/29	5/15	71/164	14/42	12/26	3/4	3/7	4/9	**192/484**
	Work experience	32/188	9/29	0/15	25/164	11/42	6/26	2/4	1/7	2/9	**88/484**
	Work for the Dole	25/188	2/29	2/15	16/164	3/42	3/26	1/4	1/7	2/9	**55/484**
	General living assistance	16/188	5/29	0/15	13/164	8/42	2/26	2/4	0/7	2/9	**48/484**
	Help with housing	2/188	3/29	0/15	5/164	2/42	1/26	0/4	1/7	0/9	**14/484**
	Help with transport	11/188	1/29	1/15	12/164	3/42	2/26	2/4	2/7	2/9	**36/484**
	Help with health	18/188	4/29	0/15	19/164	3/42	3/26	1/4	0/7	3/9	**51/484**
	Matching services to goals/needs	51/188	19/29	2/15	37/164	27/42	16/26	2/4	3/7	6/9	**163/484**
	Other services needed	54/188	19/29	5/15	55/164	30/42	15/26	3/4	6/7	7/9	**194/484**
	Incentives to support disadvantaged job seekers	8/188	16/29	2/15	5/164	12/42	8/26	2/4	3/7	3/9	**59/484**
	Comments on provider funding	7/188	12/29	1/15	8/164	7/42	3/26	2/4	2/7	3/9	**45/484**
	Improving service from consultants	58/188	19/29	2/15	46/164	24/42	12/26	2/4	3/7	5/9	**171/484**
	Views on self-servicing	5/188	22/29	1/15	7/164	12/42	9/26	2/4	3/7	3/9	**64/484**
	Delivery models for enhanced services	26/188	25/29	4/15	24/164	27/42	16/26	3/4	4/7	6/9	**135/484**
IMPROVED ONLINE SERVICES	Online tools and services	80/188	24/29	8/15	63/164	14/42	10/26	2/4	5/7	5/9	**211/484**
	Online service target groups	39/188	23/29	1/15	46/164	27/42	13/26	3/4	3/7	6/9	**161/484**
	Data to personalise services	15/188	16/29	0/15	15/164	3/42	6/26	1/4	1/7	3/9	**60/484**
	Interaction with existing online systems	18/188	12/29	1/15	18/164	1/42	3/26	1/4	0/7	1/9	**55/484**
	Views on online compliance	5/188	12/29	2/15	7/164	4/42	1/26	0/4	0/7	2/9	**33/484**
MEETING NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS	Employer awareness of employment services	25/188	13/29	5/15	24/164	7/42	9/26	2/4	0/7	2/9	**87/484**
	Added value for employer recruitment	25/188	15/29	5/15	21/164	9/42	7/26	1/4	3/7	1/9	**87/484**
	How providers work with employers	36/188	19/29	5/15	51/164	16/42	9/26	2/4	3/7	4/9	**145/484**
	Incentivising employers	16/188	18/29	4/15	24/164	10/42	7/26	1/4	2/7	4/9	**86/484**

Theme	Issue	Job Seekers	Providers	Employers	Individual	Comm. Services	Peak Bodies	Training	Govt.	Other	Total
JOB SEEKER ASSESSMENT	Views on assessment (JSCI and user or staggered)	14/188	21/29	0/15	21/164	12/42	10/26	1/4	1/7	4/9	**84/484**
	Other assessment options	23/188	10/29	1/15	21/164	7/42	7/26	1/4	1/7	1/9	**72/484**
	In-depth or face-to-face assessment	42/188	11/29	3/15	40/164	11/42	4/26	0/4	2/7	2/9	**115/484**
	Assessing digital literacy	5/188	14/29	0/15	5/164	6/42	9/26	2/4	1/7	2/9	**44/484**
	Minimising burden	2/188	6/29	1/15	4/164	1/42	2/26	1/4	0/7	1/9	**18/484**
	Factors that should be assessed	20/188	14/29	1/15	16/164	16/42	10/26	2/4	2/7	3/9	**84/484**
ACTIVATION AND INCENTIVES	Points-based or time-based	1/188	15/29	0/15	2/164	5/42	4/26	0/4	1/7	3/9	**31/484**
	Recognition of exceeding requirements	1/188	14/29	1/15	1/164	3/42	3/26	1/4	0/7	1/9	**25/484**
	Supporting social enterprise	1/188	12/29	0/15	2/164	7/42	5/26	2/4	1/7	1/9	**31/484**
	Compliance	22/188	15/29	2/15	25/164	17/42	11/26	1/4	1/7	3/9	**97/484**
REGIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACHES	Helping job seekers adapt	19/188	10/29	1/15	15/164	9/42	3/26	2/4	1/7	4/9	**64/484**
	Engaging with local stakeholders	28/188	11/29	5/15	34/164	15/42	7/26	2/4	3/7	5/9	**110/484**
	Employer focus	18/188	3/29	3/15	13/164	2/42	4/26	2/4	2/7	1/9	**48/484**
	Provider focus	8/188	13/29	1/15	11/164	3/42	5/26	1/4	3/7	4/9	**49/484**
	Encouraging geographical mobility	12/188	11/29	0/15	5/164	3/42	5/26	0/4	0/7	2/9	**38/484**
	Local governance structures	8/188	5/29	1/15	19/164	4/42	3/26	0/4	4/7	5/9	**49/484**
MARKET COMPETITION AND SERVICE QUALITY	Market competition	0/188	23/29	1/15	5/164	11/42	10/26	1/4	1/7	3/9	**52/484**
	Measuring provider performance	3/188	21/29	1/15	2/164	8/42	7/26	1/4	1/7	3/9	**47/484**
	Allocation of market share	0/188	21/29	1/15	3/164	2/42	4/26	1/4	3/7	4/9	**39/484**
	Licensing arrangement	3/188	22/29	0/15	4/164	4/42	8/26	1/4	1/7	6/9	**49/484**
	Funding model and outcomes	6/188	20/29	1/15	11/164	10/42	11/26	1/4	1/7	7/9	**68/484**
TRANSITIONING TO THE NEW CONTRACT	Iterative approach	0/188	17/29	0/15	1/164	3/42	5/26	1/4	1/7	3/9	**31/484**
	Prioritising changes	0/188	8/29	0/15	1/164	0/42	3/26	0/4	0/7	1/9	**13/484**
	Impact of change	0/188	10/29	0/15	0/164	3/42	3/26	0/4	0/7	0/9	**16/484**

Attachment B Sentiment table for issues raised by each stakeholder group

Please note: This table shows the number of times a respondent raised a negative comment (red text) compared to the number of times a positive comment (green text) was raised for each theme.

It is important to note that a negative comment does not always suggest that a respondent is against a particular suggestion. Rather, it often suggests that they are dissatisfied with the current state of servicing under jobactive. Responses were not coded as positive or negative because they were either for or against an issue. Instead, responses were coded based on the underlying tone of the message that was being expressed. For example, one respondent could support improving a particular service, and phrase this by talking positively of the suggested improvements, whereas another could do so by being highly critical of the current state of servicing (i.e. responding in a negative tone).

The purpose of this table is not to provide a robust quantitative overview regarding the sentiment of the issues raised (which is not possible given the nature of this exercise and would only be possible with a representative survey of the populations of interest), but instead, should serve as a useful guide to identify the themes that attracted the most negative/positive feedback. It is recommended that this table be viewed in conjunction with the main body of the report. In other words, this table shows the **quantity** of negative/positive remarks, whereas the report reveals **the specific contents** of these remarks.

For example, there are 23 negative comments directed at 'improving servicing from employment consultants.' When this is checked against "Section 4 – Helping People into Work," in the body of the report, this figure seems to suggest that respondents often talked negatively of the servicing they received from their employment consultants under the jobactive contract and would in fact support improving the quality of service from employment consultants for the future.

Theme	Issue	Job Seekers	Providers	Employers	Individual	Comm. Services	Peak Bodies	Training	Govt.	Other	Total
HELPING PEOPLE INTO WORK	Education and training	18/1	0/0	1/0	13/0	3/0	3/0	1/0	1/0	0/0	**40/1**
	Work experience	4/0	0/0	0/0	2/1	3/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**10/2**
	Work for the Dole	10/0	1/0	2/0	7/0	2/0	2/0	1/0	0/0	1/0	**26/0**
	General living assistance	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**2/0**
	Help with housing	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**1/0**
	Help with transport	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**2/0**
	Help with health	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**2/0**
	Matching services to goals/needs	7/1	4/0	1/0	2/0	6/0	3/0	1/0	0/0	2/0	**26/1**
	Other services needed	14/2	4/2	0/0	1/1	8/1	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**27/6**
	Incentives to support disadvantaged job seekers	4/0	2/0	0/0	1/0	2/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	**11/0**
	Comments on provider funding	5/0	1/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	**10/0**
	Improving service from consultants	23/1	1/0	0/0	18/1	2/0	5/0	0/0	1/0	1/0	**51/2**
	Views on self-servicing	1/0	13/1	1/0	2/0	2/0	4/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	**25/4**
	Delivery models for enhanced services	5/2	2/0	0/0	3/1	1/1	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**12/4**
IMPROVED ONLINE SERVICES	Online tools and services	22/2	9/12	0/1	19/3	3/5	2/4	0/0	1/1	3/1	**59/29**
	Online service target groups	13/3	9/1	0/0	15/0	9/0	6/2	1/0	1/1	0/0	**54/7**
	Data to personalise services	4/1	5/2	0/0	1/2	0/0	0/2	0/0	0/0	1/0	**11/7**
	Interaction with existing online systems	7/0	1/0	0/0	4/1	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**13/1**
	Views on online compliance	0/0	2/2	0/0	0/2	1/1	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	**5/5**
MEETING NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS	Employer awareness of employment services	5/0	3/0	1/0	3/0	2/0	6/2	0/0	0/0	1/0	**21/2**

Theme	Issue	Job Seekers	Providers	Employers	Individual	Comm. Services	Peak Bodies	Training	Govt.	Other	Total
	Added value for employer recruitment	4/0	8/0	3/0	4/0	2/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**23/0**
	Employer expectations for online	0/0	3/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**6/0**
	How providers work with employers	4/0	2/2	2/0	7/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**16/2**
	Incentivising employers	5/0	2/0	1/1	5/0	0/1	3/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	**17/2**
JOB SEEKER ASSESSMENT	Views on assessment (JSCI and user or staggered)	4/0	10/0	0/0	7/1	6/0	6/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	**35/1**
	Other assessment options	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**3/0**
	In-depth or face-to-face assessment	3/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**5/0**
	Assessing digital literacy	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**1/0**
	Minimising burden	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	**3/0**
	Factors that should be assessed	2/0	1/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	1/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	**6/0**
ACTIVATION AND INCENTIVES	Points-based or time-based	0/0	2/1	0/0	0/0	0/2	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**3/3**
	Recognition of exceeding requirements	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**1/0**
	Supporting social enterprise	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/1	0/0	0/0	0/0	**1/2**
	Compliance	9/0	11/0	1/0	12/1	11/0	8/0	1/0	0/0	2/0	**55/1**
REGIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACHES	Helping job seekers adapt	4/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**7/0**
	Engaging with local stakeholders	1/0	1/0	0/0	2/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**5/0**
	Employer focus	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**3/0**
	Provider focus	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**1/0**
	Encouraging geographical mobility	2/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**5/0**
	Local governance structures	0/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**3/0**
MARKET COMPETITION AND SERVICE QUALITY	Market competition	0/0	7/1	0/0	1/0	2/0	3/0	0/0	1/0	1/0	**15/1**
	Measuring provider performance	0/0	4/2	1/0	1/1	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	**7/3**
	Allocation of market share	0/0	2/1	0/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	**5/1**
	Licensing arrangement	0/0	6/2	0/0	1/0	1/0	2/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	**12/2**
	Funding model and outcomes	0/0	9/0	1/0	4/0	3/0	6/0	1/0	0/0	4/1	**28/1**

Attachment C Overview of word frequency

Please note: These word clouds display the top 100 terms mentioned by various cohorts throughout the consultation process. These word clouds provide a cursory indication of the terms and themes most commonly referenced by respondents collectively throughout their submissions. The size of the words depicted indicates the relative frequency with which these terms were present in submissions.

It should be noted that word clouds do not provide an indication of the context within which these terms were mentioned. As such, on the basis of these word clouds alone, it cannot be determined why certain terms were used, or what themes respondents were commenting on when using these terms.

Figure 1. The top 100 terms raised in all submissions from job seekers

Figure 1 suggests that "employment" and "jobs" were the most frequently used terms by job seekers. This cohort also frequently made use of terms relating to training and education, assessment, compliance, disadvantage, literacy, online services, cultural diversity, and local communities.

Figure 2. The top 100 terms raised in all submissions from Employment Service Providers

Figure 2 indicates that "employment" and "service" were the most commonly used words by providers. Other words that were frequently used by providers related to themes such as assessment, activation, outcomes, the servicing model, the labour market, funding, and online services.

Figure 3. The top 100 terms raised in submissions from all other stakeholders

access activities apps assessment assist australian barriers benefits business candidates capacity career change choice clients community complex compliance consultants csjc cultural data delivery design development digital disability disadvantaged discussion diverse dole education effective employees employment enhanced evidence experience financial flexibility funding-level future government health homelessness incentives income individual industry intensive jobactive jobs jobseekers labour language literacy local market migrant model mutual network obligation online opportunities outcomes payments people platform programs providers qualifications quality readiness recognition refugee regional requirements research resources sector services skills staff support sustainable system targeted technology training transport unemployed unemployment vocational volunteering wage work workers workforce young

Figure 3 suggests that "employment", "jobs", and "services" were terms frequently used by all other stakeholders. There is substantial overlap with terms commonly used by job seekers and providers, including words such as 'disadvantaged', 'people', 'community', 'training', 'assessment', and 'online.'

Attachment D Top 10 Issues Raised in each Stakeholder Group

The graphs depict the top issues raised for various cohorts of respondents (individuals/job seekers, providers, community services, peak bodies, and employers). The figures on the horizontal axis depict the total number of submissions in which a particular theme was raised by respondents. *Please note:* these graphs do not indicate whether a respondent agreed or disagreed with a particular theme or suggestion, but rather, they depict which themes generated the most discussion.

It should also be noted that these graphs do not provide a robust statistical indication of differences present between cohorts. This would only be possible if more in-depth analysis (such as controlling for confounding variables) was undertaken with a large, representative sample of respondents. Any differences observed between groups should be interpreted with caution. This data should serve to highlight areas of **potential** difference, that may be of interest for further investigation.

For example, the first graph demonstrates that 'service delivery' was the top theme commented on by job seekers and individuals, with comments on this topic present in 143 consultation submissions. This was followed closely by 'education and training' which was mentioned in 142 submissions by job seekers and individuals.

TOP ISSUES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND JOB SEEKERS

Issue	Count
Service delivery	143
Education and training	142
Matching services to goals and needs	109
Other services needed	104
Improving service from consultants	88
Online tools and services	87
Online target groups	85
How providers should work with employers	82
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	62
Engaging with local stakeholders	58

TOP ISSUES FOR PROVIDERS

Issue	Value
Delivery models for enhanced services	25
Online tools and services	24
Market competition	23
Online target groups	23
Views on self-servicing	22
Licensing arrangements	22
Views on JSCI assessment	21
Measuring provider performance	21
Allocation of market share	21
Labour market changes	20
Funding model and outcomes	20

TOP ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

Issue	Value
Other services needed	30
Online target groups	27
Delivery models for enhanced services	27
Matching services to goals and needs	27
Improving service from consultants	24
Compliance	17
Factors that should be assessed	16
How providers should work with employers	16
Labour market changes	14
Education and training	14
Online tools and services	14

TOP ISSUES FOR PEAK BODIES

Issue	Value
Matching services to goals and needs	16
Delivery models for enhanced services	16
Other services needed	15
Online service target groups	13
Labour market changes	12
Education and training	12
Improving service from consultants	12
Caseload issues	11
Compliance	11
Funding model and outcomes	11
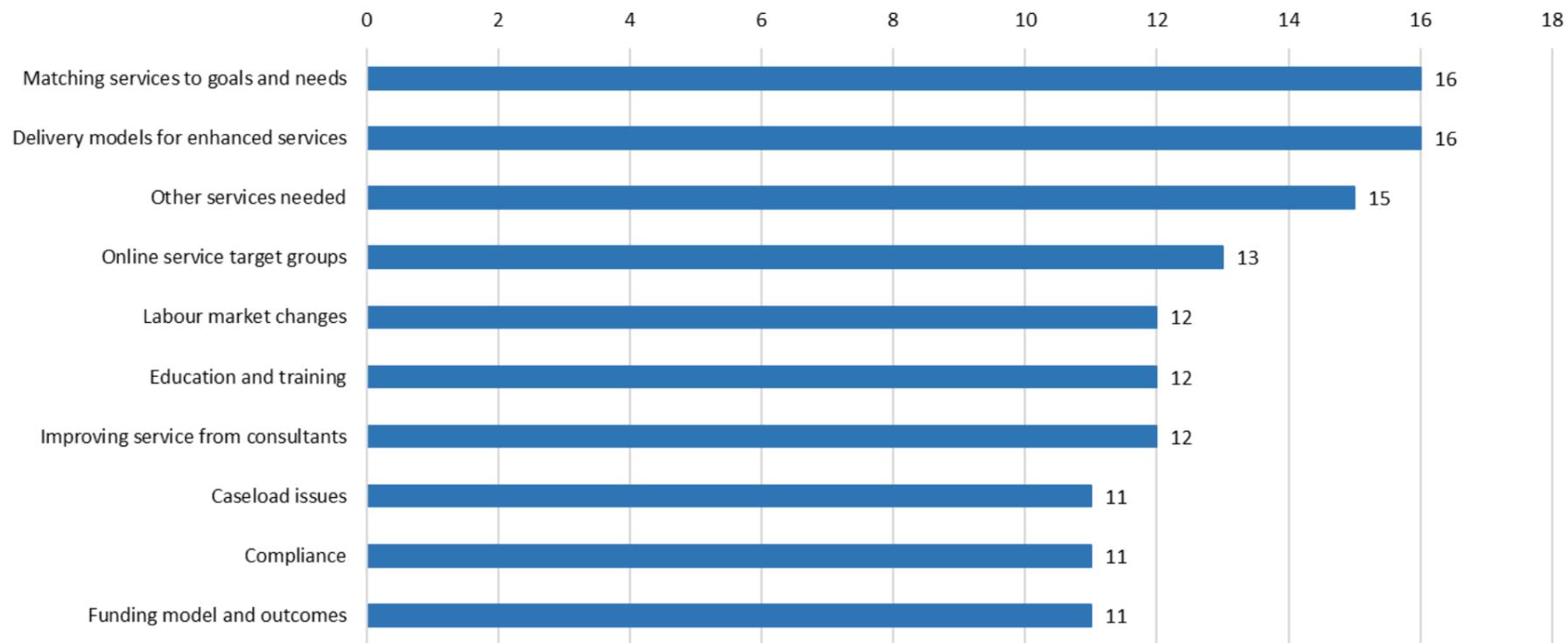
TOP ISSUES FOR EMPLOYERS

Issue	Value
Online tools and services	8
Education and training	5
Other services needed	5
Employer awareness of employment services	5
Added value for employers recruitment	5
How providers work with employers	5
Engaging with local stakeholders	5
Delivery models for enhanced services	4
Employer expectations for online services	4
Incentivising employers	4

Attachment E Top Issues Raised by Demographic

These graphs depict the top issues raised for respondents, split by demographic characteristics of interest (gender, age, Indigenous status, and geography). The figures on the horizontal axis depict the total number of submissions in which a theme was raised by respondents from a particular cohort. Please note: these graphs do not indicate whether a respondent agreed or disagreed with a particular theme or suggestion, but rather, they depict which themes generated the most discussion.

It should also be noted that these graphs do not provide a robust statistical indication of differences present between cohorts. This would only be possible if more in-depth analysis (such as controlling for confounding variables) was undertaken with a large, representative sample of respondents. Any differences observed between groups should be interpreted with caution. This data should serve to highlight areas of potential difference, that may be of interest further investigation.

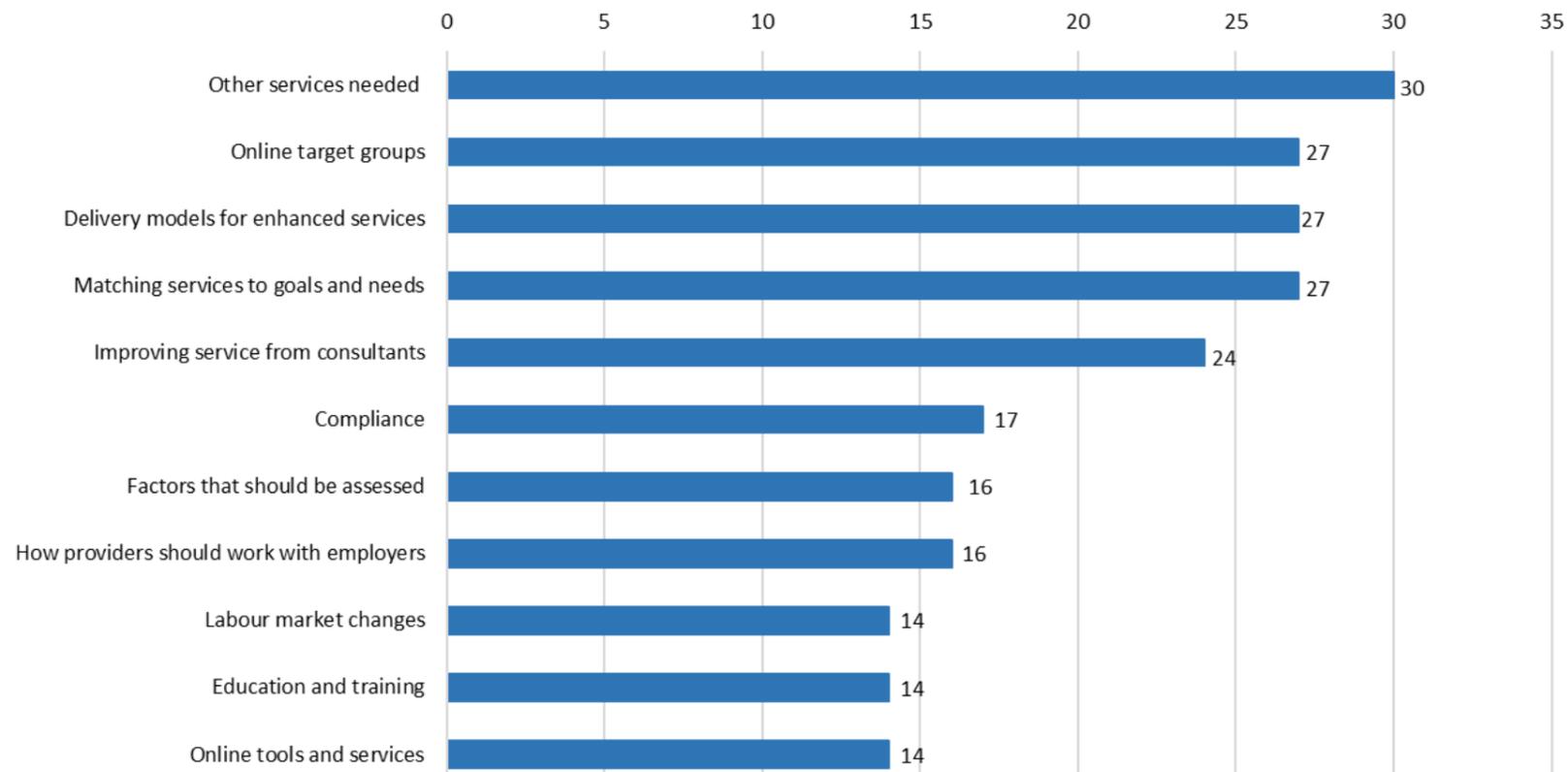For example, the graphs for younger and older respondents indicates that "online service target groups" was the fourth most discussed topic for respondents over 45 years of age (mentioned in 56 submissions), whereas it was the tenth most discussed theme by younger respondents (mentioned in 24 submissions). When interpreted alongside the findings in the main body of the report, this might suggest that accessing online services was more of concern for older respondents.

TOP ISSUES FOR MALE RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Online tools and services	65
Education and training	54
Services needed for job seekers	38
How should ESPs work with employers	38
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	35
Improving the quality of service from consultants	34
Online service target groups	31
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	29
Service delivery	27
Engaging with local stakeholders	24

TOP ISSUES FOR FEMALE RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Education and training	83
Online tools and services	70
Services needed for job seekers	59
Improving the quality of service from consultants	57
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	48
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	48
Online service target groups	47
How should ESPs work with employers	39
Work experience (inc. internships and volunterring)	37
Engaging with local stakeholders	33

TOP ISSUES FOR YOUNGER RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Education and training	56
Online tools and services	55
Services needed for job seekers	47
Improving the quality of service from consultants	32
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	31
How should ESPs work with employers	27
Engaging with local stakeholders	27
Work experience (inc. internships and volunterring)	25
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	25
Online service target groups	24

TOP ISSUES FOR OLDER RESPONDENTS (45+)

Issue	Value
Education and training	83
Online tools and services	81
Improving the quality of service from consultants	62
Online service target groups	56
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	53
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	53
How should ESPs work with employers	51
Services needed for job seekers	50
Labour market changes	38
Service delivery	37

TOP ISSUES FOR METRO RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Improving the quality of service from consultants	78
Online tools and services	77
Education and training	74
Services needed for job seekers	68
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	57
How should ESPs work with employers	54
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	52
Engaging with local stakeholders	45
Online service target groups	44
Delivery models for enhanced services	31

TOP ISSUES FOR REGIONAL RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Education and training	81
Online tools and services	81
Services needed for job seekers	61
Online service target groups	55
How should ESPs work with employers	48
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	45
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	42
Improving the quality of service from consultants	41
Engaging with local stakeholders	39
Service delivery	37

TOP ISSUES RAISED BY ATSI RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Improving the quality of service from consultants	6
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	5
Online service target groups	5
Factors that should be assessed	5
Services needed for job seekers	4
Education and training	4
Delivery models for enhanced services	4
Online tools and services	4
Incentivising employers	3
Views on assessment (inc. JSCI and user or staggered approach)	3

TOP ISSUES FOR NON-ATSI RESPONDENTS

Issue	Value
Education and training	132
Online tools and services	132
Services needed for job seekers	93
Improving the quality of service from consultants	90
Matching services to goals and needs of job seeker	79
How should ESPs work with employers	77
In-depth or face-to-face assessment	76
Online service target groups	74
Engaging with local stakeholders	56
Work experience (inc. internships and volunterring)	55