



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

Evaluation of Broome Employment Services Model

Early insights report
December 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

The Yawuru people are the traditional owners of the lands and waters in and around Rubibi (the town of Broome) from Bangarangara to the yalimban (south) to Wirrjinmirr (Willie Creek) to the guniyan (north), and banu (east) covering Roebuck Plains and Thangoo pastoral leases, in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges the Yawuru people as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters surrounding Rubibi. We pay our respects to Yawuru people, culture and Elders past, present and emerging. We also extend our respects to First Nations people who travel to Rubibi to live, learn or work.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges diversity and respectfully uses the terms 'Indigenous' and 'First Nations people' interchangeably throughout this document.



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The document must be attributed as the *Evaluation of Broome Employment Services Model: early insights report*.

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Executive Summary

The Broome Employment Services model (the Broome model) is a place-based employment services model with the aim of addressing the needs of the local Broome community. The early insights evaluation findings identified positive experiences and outcomes, as well as systemic challenges for the standard Workforce Australia model in the Broome context.

The insights in the report reflect feedback from May to August 2024 and captures people's experiences at that time. Stakeholder feedback reflected the impact of the new Broome model and provider and longer-term experiences interacting with previous providers and past employment service models. Additional field work is planned for 2025 to follow up on these initial findings and examine how people's experiences have changed as the new approach has matured.

Participants generally had positive experiences and felt comfortable and safe with the new provider delivering the Broome model. The Broome model was seen as appropriate for participants who were more work ready and had fewer and less complex barriers to employment. Participants with more complex barriers felt that the Broome model could not meet their needs. This was particularly evident where a participant had housing issues and service capacity constraints in this area impeded their ability to even plan for employment. Overall, the more work ready participants progressed to their goals and employment, while some participants further from being work ready reported positive impacts on their wellbeing.

The engagement of a Liaison Officer and transport initiatives using a bus for outreach servicing using the Capability and Capacity Building Fund received positive feedback.

Many participants with complex needs reported barriers in completing the assessments processes, such as delays with Employment Services Assessments (ESAt). This meant that some participants were, in the view of many stakeholders, referred to employment services that were not appropriate to their needs.

Other challenges raised included misalignment of the Broome employment region boundary with the way of life in the region; challenge many participants had accessing digital, phone and mail delivery communications; and the need for more intensive case management.

Not unexpectedly, employers had limited awareness of changes to employment services and many of their insights related to previous employment service models and providers. As the Broome Employment Service matures there is anticipation that it will increase employer engagement and supports for employers.

The embedded Australian Public Service (APS) model is seen as effective in building the capability and capacity of the Broome provider. Community organisations had limited awareness of the Broome model and the presence of APS officers although new referrals from the Broome provider to other support services were noted.

Coordination of local services by the embedded APS staff require time to build relationships and trust in the community. As the role develops it is expected that initial concerns around potential duplication in service coordination will reduce and links with community organisations will continue to build.

The insights from this initial field work will inform the next round of field work and the longer-term evaluation of the Broome Evaluation Service model.

Background

The region

The town of Broome is located in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia (Figure 1). The region covered by the Shire of Broome is diverse and includes 84 Aboriginal communities [1]. The Yawuru people are the traditional owners and native title holders of the lands and waters in and around Rubibi (the town of Broome) and have occupied and managed the lands and seas since the Bugarrigarra (the time before time) [2].

Figure 1: The Kimberley region



Source: Development Western Australia (WA), Kimberley Vernacular – Overview [3].

In 1883 the town of Broome was gazetted following European discovery and settlement. Soon after, missions, reserves and stations were established in and around Broome, where Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated [4]: *‘Within the Kimberly more than half of the Indigenous population are descendants of the stolen generation with a significant number unaware or in denial’* [5]. For first generation Stolen Generations, this involved the removal from family, language, culture and Country and impacts on the mother [5]. Generations following *‘carry pain and suffering through intergenerational trauma, cultural separation, social disadvantage, loss of identity, and inability to access cultural healing’* [5].

Since the late 1800s there was strong immigration to the region for its marine and land-based resources, including pearling, agriculture, mineral and oil and gas [1]. As a result, the Broome region has a diversity in population and cultures.

Today, the communities in the region are committed to an inclusive economy and to enable First Nations people to become active participants in the region. For Yawuru people this is symbolised through ‘mabu liyan’ (good spirit) *‘which is a holistic understanding of positive wellbeing that incorporates personal, social and environmental aspects that contribute to a good life* [6].

A total of 84 Aboriginal communities are located within the Shire of Broome, of which 78 are classified as remote.¹

Employment in Broome

In the 2021 Census, the Broome Local Government Area² had a population of 16,959 people. First Nations people made up 28.6% of people in Broome (compared to 3.3% in Western Australia)[7].

Broome is a regional centre for the Kimberley region, providing access to services for the wider region. As a regional centre, about half of all employment in the Kimberley region is in Broome [8]. In the June 2024 quarter, Broome had a labour force of 9,587 with an unemployment rate of 4.0%, compared to 4.1% nationally [9].

As a popular tourism destination, particularly in the dry season (generally May to October), the local economy has a strong seasonal component in some industries, while many other industries are less impacted by the tourism season.

Broome’s largest employing industries relate to the services sector, Health Care and Social Assistance (20.3%) and Education and Training (12.5%); Accommodation and Food service (9.5%), Public Administration and Safety (9.1%) and Retail Trade (8.8%) [7]. There is a heavy reliance on government funded industries.

While employers reported that they often recruited through informal methods, 12% of online job advertisements were for skill level 5, requiring a Certificate I or secondary education; 26% were for skill level 4, requiring a Certificate II or III; 25% were for skill level 3, requiring a Certificate III or IV; and 37% were for skill level 1 and 2, requiring an advanced diploma, diploma or bachelor degree or higher [10].

The Broader Indigenous employment rate in Australia stands at around 55% compared to 75% for non-indigenous Australians³. In Broome lower employment outcomes are exacerbated by systematic issues such as poor experiences with the education system, limited access to targeted training programs and experiences of workplace discrimination. Employment opportunities are limited due to the region’s remote nature, leading to a ‘thin labour market’ where job availability is scarce.

¹ [Economic-Development-Strategy-21 \(1\).pdf](#)

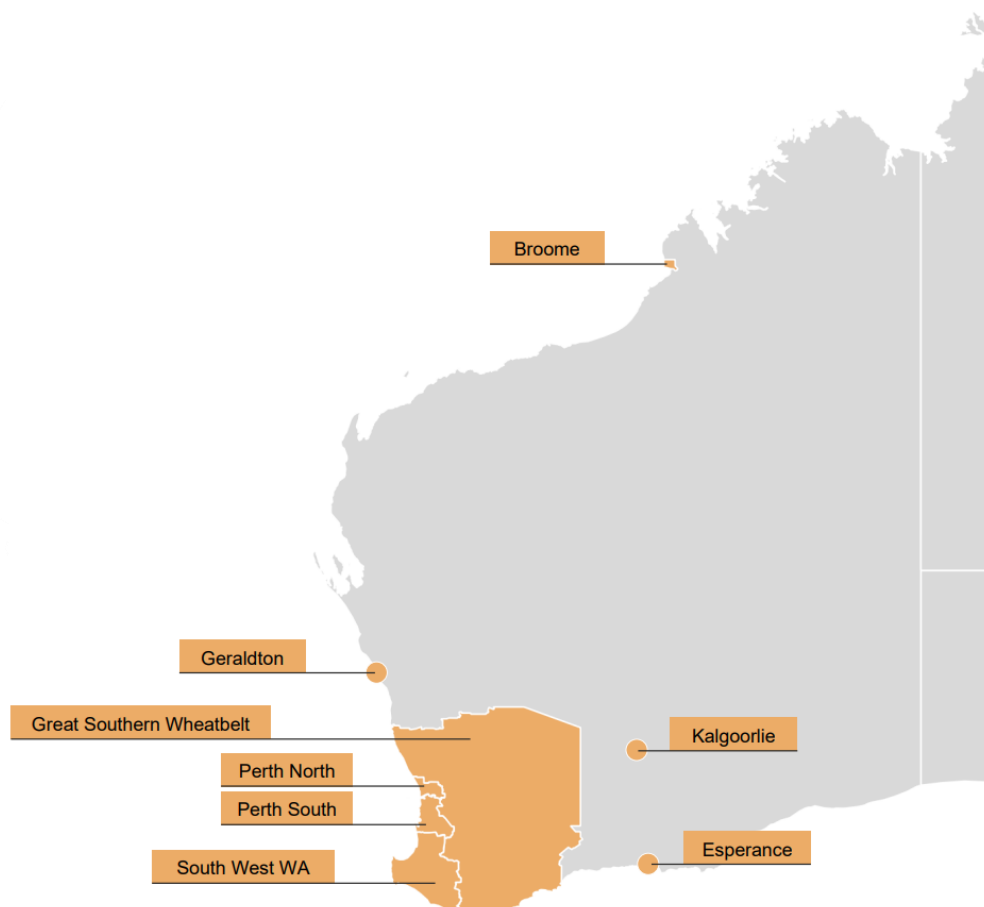
² The Broome Local Government Area (as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) is the best available data that covers a similar, but not identical area to the Broome Employment Region (as defined by the department).

³ [Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Australia | OECD](#)

Employment services in Broome

Employment Regions are used by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the department) for the management of mainstream employment services programs, including the Broome Employment Region. Employment Regions do not cover the whole of Australia, with most remote areas located outside of the employment region structure. These remote areas are serviced by remote employment and community development services, currently the Community Development Program (CDP), administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency. Figure 2 shows the Employment Regions in Western Australia, including the Broome employment region located in northern Western Australia.

Figure 2: Employment Regions in Western Australia



Source: Jobs and Skills Australia, Employment Regions Maps [11].

The employment services needs of the local Broome community are unique and complex, largely impacting First Nations people in a thin labour market.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes key employment and education outcomes to enable First Nations people to achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. To enable progress, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap was built around four Priority Reform Areas to change the way governments work with First Nations communities. As part of Priority Reform 2, parties committed to building formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap [12]. Governments committed

to building strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors and organisations in line with the strong sector elements [12].

The Broome Employment Services model is intended to contribute to the Priority Reform Areas as outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Broome Employment Services model

In the 2023-24 Budget, the Government allocated a budget of \$5.6 million over 5 years to trial a new Broome Employment Services (the Broome Model). While funded for 5 years initially the contract would be awarded from 1 November 2023 to 30 June 2025. In the 2024-25 Budget, the Government announced the extension of the Service to 30 June 2027.

A new provider (Broome provider), Job Pathways, was awarded the contract to deliver the Broome model. Job Pathways was an organisation with experience in service delivery to First Nations people in the Kimberley region.

Specific changes from the Broome model compared with the Workforce Australia employment service model included:

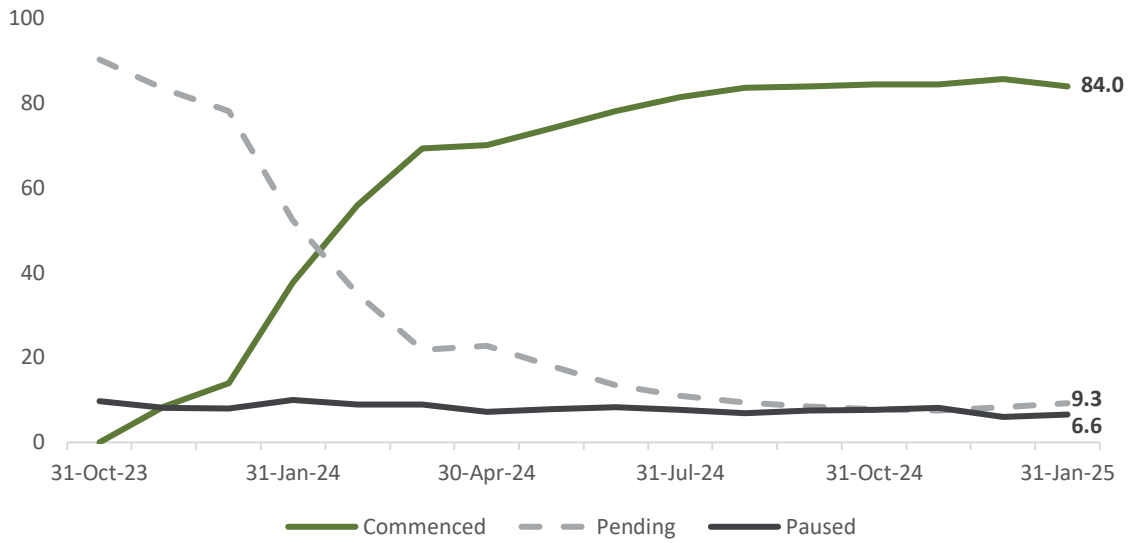
- For APS personnel to work alongside the employment service provider to build capacity and capability, and advocate locally to improve participants experience in accessing employment and other support services.
- a new payment structure with additional outcomes payments at 8 and 18-weeks.
- upfront capital for the Broome provider via Capability and Capacity Building Fund.

Supporting this change was a new performance framework for the Service to be developed to reflect the objectives of the Broome Employment Services Deed.

The Broome Employment Service caseload

Since the service commenced in November 2023 to 31 January 2025 there have been 1229 commencements, from a total of 1803 referrals. There were 716 individuals referred at the beginning of November 2023 to the new provider, as the previous provider handed in their contract and their caseload moved to the Broome Model. It took around 3 months for most of these referrals to commence as shown in Figure 3 including caseload at end of month (percent), October 2023 - January 2025

Figure 3. Percentage of caseload at end of month, referred, commenced, paused, October 2023 - January 2025



In relation to the 1229 commencements Table 1 outlines key demographic and employment servicing of the commenced caseload.

Table 1: Characteristics of Broome Employment Service (BES) and Workforce Australia Service (WAS) participants (commenced periods of assistance), For BES October 2023 – January 2025, for WAS July 2022 - January 2025

Characteristic	BES (number)	BES (percent)	WAS (percent)
Income support type			
JobSeeker Payment	927	75.4	76.8
Youth Allowance	135	11.0	9.3
Parenting Payment	137	11.1	7.4
Disability Support Pension	<5	0.1	0.0
Carer Payment	0	0.0	0.2
Other Allowance	0	0.0	0.6
Non-Allowee	29	2.4	5.7
Registration group			
Under 12 months	308	25.1	38.5
12 – 23 months	151	12.3	16.7
24 – 59 months	295	24.0	28.0
60+ months	475	38.6	16.8
Gender			
Male	704	57.3	52.1
Female	525	42.7	47.8
Not stated	0	0.0	0.0
Age			
Under 22	140	11.4	10.0
22 – 29	282	22.9	20.4
30 - 39	327	26.6	22.4
40 – 49	247	20.1	20.8
50+	233	19.0	26.4
Indigenous	1069	87.0	16.1
CALD	16	1.3	20.2
Refugee	<5	0.1	5.8
English proficiency			
Good	1041	84.7	86.5
Mixed	141	11.5	6.7
Poor	46	3.7	6.6
Unknown	<5	0.1	0.2
Person with a disability	186	15.1	26.1
Parent	186	15.1	16.3
Homeless	317	25.8	12.1
Ex-offender	307	25.0	15.4
Education level			
None	<5	0.1	0.8
Years 1-9	138	11.2	10.0
Years 10-11	464	37.8	27.2

Completed Secondary School	123	10.0	16.1
Trade or TAFE	475	38.6	36.0
University	27	2.2	9.7
Unknown	<5	0.1	0.2
Mode of transport			
Public transport	162	13.2	33.2
Own transport	286	23.3	49.9
Other private transport	335	27.3	11.0
No transport	445	36.2	5.6
Unknown	<5	0.1	0.3
Recency of work experience			
Not in the labour force	280	22.8	32.4
Not working but looking for work	488	39.7	21.6
Paid full-time work (30 hours+)	235	19.1	22.1
Paid regular part-time work 8 to 30 hours	88	7.2	15.7
Paid part-time work less than 8 hours	21	1.7	1.4
Paid seasonal/irregular work	41	3.3	3.0
Unpaid work (including voluntary work)	75	6.1	3.6
Unknown	<5	0.1	0.2
JSCI score level			
Moderate	806	65.3	81.9
High	390	31.7	17.7
Unknown	36	2.9	0.5

Source: The department's administrative data.

Base: Periods of assistance (n=1229) for participants commenced in BES between 31 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. Characteristics are as at the participant's first commencement date in the period of assistance.

Table 1 shows the caseload faces significant barriers to employment. The Broome Employment service caseload is predominantly First Nations and also has close to two times or more the following characteristics compared with the broader Workforce Australia caseload:

- Homelessness
- Ex-offenders
- More than 5 years unemployed
- No access to transport
- JSCI categorised as High

Objectives of The Broome Employment Service Model

The Broome Employment Service aims to:

- Maintain service continuity to around 700, mainly First Nations, participants on the caseload in Broome.
- Trial a new approach to employment services that could be more sustainable and better suited to the unique local context and complex needs of the Broome caseload.
- Build capability and capacity of the Broome provider.
- Build the capability of the APS to deliver and complement employment services.
- Contribute to several Priority Reform Areas outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This early insights report explores participant, provider and community perceptions of the Broome model, the embedded APS staff, the additional upfront capital. Qualitative research in 2025 and 2026 will examine perceptions of the payment structure and performance.

Requirements from Evaluation Strategy

The *Broome Employment Services Evaluation Strategy* outlines how The Broome Employment Service Model will be evaluated against its objectives and intended outcomes over the period of November 2023 to 30 June 2025. This report provides early insights into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Broome model.

Qualitative data was collected through interviews with 54 stakeholders from, predominantly, July and August 2024, but consultation commenced from May 2024. The stakeholders included participants, employers, community organisations, provider staff and departmental staff. Further detail on the methodology is in Attachment A.

The qualitative data was thematically analysed at the completion of the fieldwork to identify key themes raised by stakeholders and to value the diverse individual experiences of stakeholders. A First Nations lens was applied to the analysis of the data through the involvement of staff from the department's First Nations Employee Network and through local cultural guidance.

Key early insights

The key early insights are presented below as they relate to the key evaluation questions (KEQ).

KEQ1. Is the Broome service model appropriate in meeting and responding to community needs and expectations?

Appropriateness of the Broome model and new Provider for participants with different job readiness and barriers

The Broome model was largely appropriate for participants who were more job ready and those who had fewer barriers to employment. For these participants, the Broome provider was generally able to meet their needs and provided support with résumés, access to identity documents (IDs), training, wellbeing, finding and staying in work.

There was a view among many stakeholders that the Broome model and Broome provider was an improvement on historical employment servicing, tailored to participants' needs and capacity. This included individualised services, tailored mutual obligation requirements, the use of the Employment Fund and the initiatives under the capability and capacity fund.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

Provider staff reported that the Broome model's new approach to individualised support for participants to achieve their goals was providing participants with more options to meet their mutual obligation requirements as opposed to a 'work-first' approach which places a greater emphasis on job search.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Participants with complex barriers felt that Broome model and Broome provider was not able to meet their needs. This finding was also supported by provider staff. Usually, Broome provider staff only supported participants with complex barriers with their wellbeing and advice and assistance with access to other support services. Several participants indicated that the Broome provider was unable to help them progress towards work given their circumstances. In part this doesn't relate to the Broome provider, but broader government servicing of the Broome community with participants reporting barriers including medical and mental health conditions, housing, and lack of caring responsibility supports. Some of these participants did report that the support the Broome provider offered did help their wellbeing.

s 47F(1)

s 47F(1)

Participant (male)

Stakeholders felt that many participants with complex needs should not have been referred to the Broome provider, reporting challenges with the assessments processes, such as delays with Employment Services Assessments (ESAt).

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Provider staff reported that many participants were unaware of what support the Broome model could provide. The Broome model has a strong focus on providing individualised servicing, by improving participants' awareness of supports available and linking these supports to participants' needs and circumstances.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Stakeholders reported the majority of participants' needs related to supports outside the direct remit of employment services, particularly housing and health services. While the effectiveness of these other support services was out of scope of this evaluation, the majority of stakeholders raised concerns that, due to service capacity constraints, participants often found it difficult to access other support services.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Participants generally reported that they felt safe and comfortable participating in The Broome Employment Service. They felt the Broome provider staff understood their circumstances, including cultural obligations. Participants reported that the key to this was having local First Nations staff and staff who had strong connections to the community.

s 47F(1)

Participant (male)

Assessments processes

Many stakeholders raised concerns about referral pathways for participants to access the appropriate employment services programs, such as Workforce Australia Online, The Broome Employment Service or Disability Employment Services. The absence of sufficient in person supports to complete the relevant assessments or tools to be referred to the appropriate service does not meet the needs of the community. Many participants' Job Seeker Snapshots were not accurate due to:

- difficulty understanding what was being asked by participants
- shame and a lack of rapport with the over-the-phone staff conducting the assessment
- automated completions not reflecting participants' circumstances.

Assessments often did not reflect participants' circumstances as Job Seeker Snapshots were often not accurate due to a lack of face-to-face support to complete (initially) and participants' lack of understanding and shame to respond accurately. There was also significant difficulty to access ESAts and the required medical evidence. This was due to there being no in person ESAt assessor in Broome, a large national backlog in processing ESAts, and a lack of access to specialist medical services in Broome.

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

Participants and provider staff felt that some participants were not referred to the most appropriate service that could meet their needs and referral to the Broome Employment Service was regarded as inappropriate for participants whose needs were unlikely to be able to be met.

Physical Location

The physical location of the Broome provider, particularly relative to other services in town, was raised by some stakeholders as challenging for participants to access. Limited access to transport and the local weather conditions in Broome was not always conducive to walking or

cycling, a key means of travel. Stakeholders noted concerns that Services Australia would soon be relocating further away from the Service's site.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma

Community organisations described the impacts of colonisation and the associated trauma on many participants in the region. The compounding nature of this trauma, as stakeholders described it, meant that it was sometimes difficult to address one problem in isolation and that any service should provide holistic supports. One community organisation felt that where trauma and other matters were affecting participants strongly, these needed to be addressed in the first instance before participants could prepare for and find work.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

Communication and engagement methods with participants

To communicate with participants, the Workforce Australia based system relies on participants having access to a phone, email or street mail delivery. Many participants in the Broome model lack reliable access to a phone or email, and there was no street mail delivery in Broome. The Broome provider experienced significant challenges in contacting participants, particularly for commencement in the Broome Employment Service, appointment reminders and missed appointment notifications.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Community Liaison Officers, funded through the Capability and Capacity Building Fund, were critical to locating participants using local knowledge of a participants' potential whereabouts. Often the Broome provider had to rely on participants' income support payments being suspended for the participant to re-engage with the Broome Employment Service. While effective, these approaches were resource intensive, reduced the quality of servicing participants received and sometimes impacted participants' wellbeing.

The Broome Employment Service Models resourcing

The Capability and Capacity Building Fund was valued for funding initiatives that met community's needs. This included funding for the bus for an outreach service for transporting participants and for Community Liaison Officer roles. A challenge in the longer-term is that the Capability and Capacity Building Fund is time limited.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Some stakeholders reported that staffing levels were insufficient to enable intensive servicing for participants with complex needs. Stakeholders often recognised that this was a challenge of funding for the Broome provider.

KEQ2. What are the experiences of and satisfaction with Broome model and provider among participants, employers and the broader community?

Participant servicing

Participants generally had positive experiences and felt comfortable and safe with Broome provider. Services were tailored for different levels of work-readiness and barriers, though participants with complex barriers received limited servicing. Participants received supports relating to résumés, IDs, training, accessing other support services, and finding and keeping a job.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

Many participants did not attend their appointment at the scheduled time and relied on income support payment suspension notifications as a reminder. Participants valued the flexibility and ease of rescheduling missed appointments with no impact on their income support payment. Participants valued the ability to ‘walk-in’ after receiving missed appointment notifications. There was a trade-off between this flexibility and consistent quality of service, where participants who walked in after missing their appointment often received a shorter and more ‘tick-the-box’ service due to resource constraints.

Provider staff reported that some participants viewed participation in the Broome model as a requirement to receive their income support payment rather than a support pathway to reaching their goals and finding employment. Participants’ personal responsibility and self-determination could be strengthened by having a better understanding of how their requirements align with their pathway to achieving their goals.

Support finding work

The Broome provider was still building up its experience in assisting participants into work. Some participants reported that they were capable of contacting employers and completing job applications on their own. One participant reported that sometimes when their confidence was low, the Broome provider would provide support with this process.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

Some participants thought the Broome provider could provide more hands-on assistance applying for jobs and updating résumés. A couple of participants were uncertain if the Broome provider assisted for roles that participants had selected. Not knowing if the Broome provider had followed through and acted on participants’ instructions was frustrating for one participant who considered themselves work ready.

s 47F(1)

Participant (male)

Alternatively, another participant indicated that they would proactively engage with the Broome provider and ask for assistance if they were looking to change their job.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

Provider staff reported that in some instances participants expected them to find them a job and that often provider staff would have to work with the participant to understand their pathway to work and the steps required to achieve it.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Several participants thought that the Broome provider could be engaging with employers more to help participants find work. A couple of participants indicated that CDP providers engaged with employers more actively than the Broome provider and that this engagement had previously helped them get a job. This was also supported by some employers. Note it is important to acknowledge that this is 8 months since awarding the contract to the Broome provider in a new market for them.

s 47F(1)

Participant (male)

Community engagement and services

Embedded APS staff have established relationships with some community organisations and made efforts to build trust. Community organisations and departmental staff recognised that this would take a lot more time and that it was a necessary step to facilitating local partnerships and coordinating local services.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

There was mixed awareness of the Broome Model and Broome provider among community organisations. The Broome provider had targeted engagement and referrals with other support services, including training providers, Services Australia and support services for résumés. The Broome provider was making efforts to build relationships in the community, but this was at times limited by staffing resource constraints

Employer servicing

Employers were generally not aware of changes to the Broome model and the Broome provider. Employers could not recall if they had engaged with the employment service, or whether recent recruits had been participants of The Broome Employment Service. This lack of recognition reflects the issue that there were many related services in the region that delivered similar services.

s 47F(1)

Employer

s 47F(1)

Employer

Some employers had bad experiences with historical employment services, particularly poor screening and inappropriate matching of participants to their business, unreliable participants, and a lack of post-placement support. Employers were confused by competing services and supports in the region.

Employers who had recruited through the Broome provider had mixed experiences. One employer reported only some of the participants they employed were suitable for their business, with the right supports in place. Most employers were open to using the Broome provider in the future on the condition that strong screening of participants for suitability, and ongoing support was provided.

Employers acknowledged that flexibility in the workplace was critical for First Nations people to meet their cultural obligations and for the most part supported a potential employee's rights.

Some First Nations or larger employers, were able to flexibly support participants. Smaller employers or those where positions were critical could struggle if staff were regularly unavailable- particularly without notice.

Assistance to understand how to support their employees from the caseload, particularly how to support employees with cultural obligations require consistent resourcing for post-placement support by The Broome Employment Service.

s 47F(1)

Employer

In light of the impact of cultural obligations on staff attendance there was a preference by employers for casual employment using a pool of staff rather than permanent employment.

s 47F(1)

Employer

Post-Placement Support

There was evidence that the Broome provider was providing post-placement support to support participants to stay in work. The Broome provider also provided participants financial support for expenses relating to work including transport to interviews, work, and appointments, clothing and Personal Protective Equipment.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

The Broome provider supported participants transition into work by transporting them to their workplace for the first week of employment. Provider staff reported that this ensured participants felt comfortable and built participant's confidence to attend work on their own. The Service focused on following up with participants who had not attended scheduled work to support them sustain work.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Many participants felt more comfortable talking to provider staff than their employer. In these instances, provider staff acted as a go-between to help lines of communication between participants and employers and support more difficult discussions.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

One provider staff member suggested that a dedicated post-placement team could ensure staffing resources were not being redirected to other pressure points in the Service.

s 47F(1)

*Provider staff***KEQ3. What are the impacts and outcomes of the service on participants, employers and among the broader community?**

Quantifying the impacts and outcome of the service within its first 8 months of delivery is difficult due to the short timeframe. Quantifiable impacts and outcomes will be examined in detail in the final evaluation report.

Qualitative research does find participants and other stakeholders liked employment servicing they are receiving and feedback suggests the service has supported more job ready participants improve their work-readiness and find and access work.

External constraints constrain the capacity of the service to deliver outcomes. Examples include lack of identification documentation for some First Nations people, lack of access to medical assessments to support referral to the most appropriate employment service, lack of transport for participants and employment service boundaries affecting service continuity.

Improving work-readiness**Identity documentation**

One of the most common barriers raised across stakeholder groups was participants' access to IDs. Many supports required 100 points of identification, such as birth certificates, driver's licences, passports, bank statements, utility bills and more.

The lack of IDs and supporting materials by many individuals in the region was a barrier to accessing:

- income support payments
- the Service
- other support services and training
- pre-employment checks (for example police clearances)
- employment.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

It was common for some participants to frequently transfer between employment services and CDPs and some participants stored their IDs with their CDP provider.

Support towards work-readiness

Participants made progress towards their goals and employment. Participants also reported that participating in the Broome model improved their confidence and motivation in life, to engage in the Broome provider, and to find work. One participant explained that the Broome Model and Broome provider's flexibility in applying it, given their difficult circumstance made them more enthusiastic to participate and put in more effort.

s 47F(1)

Participant (male)

Many participants obtained ID documents, drivers' licence, workplace relevant tickets and resume writing support from the service. A small number of participants completed or were in the process of completing training.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

The more job ready participants were generally confident that the Broome provider could help them achieve their employment and training goals. Participants reported positive views about the Broome model and Broome provider was seeing more community members access and engage with the Broome provider. Some participants reported that they could see the impact of the new Model in the community, including that more young people were motivated and in jobs and training. Community organisations reported that participants' positive engagements with the Broome model had a flow on effect to their services and that the Broome provider had a positive impact on the wellbeing of the community.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Transport assistance

Participants and provider staff reported that the Broome provider was assisting with transport for participants to attend:

- provider appointments
- other support services and training
- work (particularly in the first week of employment).

This was key to engaging and supporting participants.

s 47F(1)

Participant (female)

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Duplication of services

Stakeholders described the landscape of community organisations working in the region, particularly in employment, training and social services as being complex. There were many different services operating in Broome, including Commonwealth and State Government and non-government funded, that deliver employment, training and social services. This was complicated by the nature of many of the funding arrangements being short-term. It was common for programs to be time limited and the organisation who delivered the services was often changing. For employers there was confusion on the different services and the various service providers.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

Many of these services did not collaborate and communicate effectively, even if they were working in the same area and with the same participants. Many community organisations felt that information could be shared more effectively and collaboration could be improved.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

s 47F(1)

*Departmental staff***Employment Region boundary policy**

The employment region boundaries continued to hinder the effective and efficient delivery of employment services to participants. This was because there was a misalignment with the way of life in the region where participants frequently moved across the boundary, for reasons including to attend to cultural obligations in community, to access services in Broome, or due to changes in personal circumstances. This meant servicing was challenging for the Broome provider, affecting their ability to achieve outcomes. It was time and resource intensive to attempt to contact and commence these participants (often multiple times due to transience) and it interrupted servicing and progress for participants. Many participants were often not in the Service for long enough to be commenced or receive servicing, and often participants would have to start working towards a goal from scratch when they returned to the Service.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Some community organisations felt that the Broome Employment Region should receive remote employment services for consistency with the broader Kimberley region. It is worth noting that during the collaboration on evaluation design, there were opposing views on the appropriateness of a community development focused employment service for Broome given that about half of all employment in the Kimberley region was in Broome.

s 47F(1)

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

KEQ4 To what extent has the embedded APS personnel model built the capability and capacity of the Broome provider and the APS to deliver and complement employment services and coordinate services?

Awareness of the Broome model and Broome provider

Building capacity is a priority in the Government’s Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2 – Building the Community-Controlled Sector.

Departmental staff considered that the community was gaining awareness of a new approach to employment services but that they were not necessarily aware of the Broome model and provider.

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

Community organisations had mixed and, in many cases, limited awareness of the embedded APS staff in the Broome model. Some community organisations reported that they were aware of the individual departmental staff members but that they were not clear on their role.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

Capability and capacity building of the Broome provider

Provider staff valued the capability and capacity building support provided by the embedded APS staff. Embedded APS staff provided support in strategic direction, servicing strategies, timely support with complex administration and IT challenges. Embedded APS staff also supported participants with complex needs to navigate government services. APS staff also supported the capability and capacity of the new provider, particularly as it was a relatively small organisation new to the region.

s 47F(1)

Provider staff

Coordinating local services

Embedded APS staff have established relationships with some community organisations and made efforts to build trust. A key challenge is overcoming historical mistrust in government. Community organisations and departmental staff recognised that this would take time and is necessary for local partnerships and coordinating local services.

Community members who were more aware of the embedded APS staff had engaged with these staff members and valued both their efforts and having direct communication with Government.

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

The embedded APS staff engaged with community organisations through taskforces and committees relating to strategic workforce and training matters, as well as informal engagements.

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

s 47F(1)

Departmental staff

This was supported by the community organisations who reported engagement with the embedded APS staff. These community organisations reported working with the embedded APS staff on taskforces and committees for strategic workforce and training matters and keeping informed of employment servicing arrangements.

s 47F(1)

Community organisation

Learnings of the embedded APS model

Some stakeholders felt the service coordination role of the embedded APS staff duplicated other existing departmental functions, such as the role of the Government Employment Facilitator and Local Jobs Taskforce. Given this and the lack of awareness of the embedded APS staff role, it may be beneficial to clearly communicate the role of the embedded APS staff in service coordination to community stakeholders.

There were benefits from the presence of the embedded APS staff on the ground in Broome for other programs administered by the department and improved first-hand awareness and learnings of the operations of the employment services system.

Stakeholders felt that the success of an embedded APS model would largely come down to having the right people in place. They described this as either First Nations staff or staff with extensive cultural experience creating pathways for local people to be included in the Broome model.

KEQ5. What are the drivers of and the extent to which community stakeholders are engaged in the consultation process for future servicing arrangements?

Purpose

The department conducted consultations with key stakeholders in Broome to find ways to improve and deliver employment services that better meet the needs and expectations of people in Broome.

The objectives were:

- to gain an understanding of experiences, needs and expectations of clients, employers and the community in Broome.
- to get local insights on:
 - what is working well
 - what could be done better to improve outcomes for clients, employers and the community.
- To engage with local stakeholders to identify key elements that will contribute to making meaningful, long-term improvements in the service for the Broome community.

All consultations were designed and delivered in a way that:

- empowers all participants to have their say
- treats all participants respectfully
- is accessible (for example, for people with disability)
- culturally safe for everyone who attends.

The consultation for future servicing in Broome was collected between 3 June 2024 and 31 August 2024 through:

- observational studies of the process (5 sessions, with multiple participants)
- an evaluation survey for participants of the process (11 participants completed)
- a document review.

Notes taken from the observational studies were analysed for common themes and the evaluation survey data included both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Documents reviewed compared the intent and conduct of the consultation process to principles of consultation and the objectives of the consultation process. The small number of respondents to the evaluation survey and the makeup of respondents was skewed to employers.

Due to the small number of observational studies and evaluation survey responses, the results are reported at the aggregate level for all participants.

Care should be taken in interpreting the findings.

The extent of participation in the consultation

There was strong participation by stakeholders in the consultation, with 61 participants and individual community members, 11 employers and three provider staff having participated.

The facilitators engaged participants and employers through departmental records of engagement with the Service. The facilitators also engaged participants and individual community members through proactive outreach and promotion of the consultation process, including to other organisations who engage similar stakeholders to refer individuals to the consultation process.

Community organisations were not consulted during the reference period for the evaluation.

The reasons for participation in the consultation

Respondents to the evaluation survey mostly reported that they took part in the consultation to help employment services meet the needs of their community, to make employment services better for future participants and employers, and to make it easier to get help from employment services. Some evaluation survey respondents reported they took part in the consultation to share their experiences with employment services and help it work better with other services. The reasons reported in the evaluation survey for participation in the consultation was influenced by the makeup of respondents.

Most evaluation survey respondents reported they felt 'neutral' about whether the consultation met their expectations. A few evaluation survey respondents felt it 'somewhat' or to a 'large extent' met their expectations. A couple of evaluation survey respondents reported that they were glad the consultation process was happening and that they hoped it would bring improvements to employment services.

s 47F(1)

Consultation participant

Experience with the consultation process

Facilitators of the consultation process described that their approach was to have informal and comfortable discussions. It was apparent from the observational studies that having different facilitators for the different stakeholder groups made it easier and more comfortable for participants to engage in the consultation.

Most evaluation survey respondents felt they 'very much' or 'somewhat' understood the discussion of the consultation and that it was easy to share their views. Observational studies of the consultation process and the document review identified that the facilitators used language in the discussions that was appropriate to the participant, for example, language that was easily understood by participants and employers including conducting and interpreting consultations in 13 local languages.

Most evaluation survey respondents also felt that they were listened to and that what they said was respected. Some respondents further elaborated on their experience, indicating they had positive experiences with the consultation process because they trusted the facilitator and that the facilitator was informative and respectful.

s 47F(1)

Consultation participant

Participants were generally able to share their views, with the information flow of the discussions mostly from the participant to the facilitator. There were some instances identified where facilitators provided leading questions and prompts to participants.

One evaluation survey respondent reported that having a comfortable venue, surrounded by people they knew and trusting the facilitator made it a good experience. Another evaluation survey respondent reported that flexibility on the time and place to meet made it easy to participate in the consultation.

s 47F(1)

Consultation participant

While comfortable and informal venues were key to engaging participants and individual community members, there was a need for some formality and private spaces for discussions to take place privately. Some consultation venues were not sufficiently private and some participants were less engaged when other people were around.

While most evaluation survey respondents felt the purpose of the consultation was made clear to them, some evaluation survey respondents reported 'neutral' and one felt s 47F(1). A couple of evaluation survey respondents further elaborated that they were not aware that they had taken part in a consultation. Observational studies of the consultation process confirmed that due to the informal nature of the consultation process, some participants were not clearly informed that discussions were for the purpose of consultation for consideration of future servicing arrangements.

s 47F(1)

Consultation participant

There were mixed views from evaluation survey respondents on whether what they shared was recorded or written down. While some reported it was, others were less clear and reported 'not at all' or 'don't know'. The document review revealed that participants' views were mostly recorded.

Overall, the majority of evaluation survey respondents reported a 'good' or 'excellent' experience with the consultation process. One person reported an 'average' experience and one 'did not know' how they felt about the consultation.

Future direction of Broome Employment Services model evaluation

Learnings from the first round of qualitative research will be applied to future research. The next rounds of qualitative research, scheduled for the dry season 2025, will explore with stakeholders any gaps from the initial qualitative field research and further explore emerging insights. For example, any changes to program settings or operations as reported through the BES Working Group will be incorporated, issues around barriers to engagement and employment and a further examination of awareness of the Service.

A one-page poster is also planned for distribution to community outlining what the community told 'us' about the Broome Employment Services Model.

A final report is planned for June 2026.

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Attachment A

Early insights evaluation approach

The approach for this early insights evaluation comprised of four stages as outlined below.

Community collaboration on the evaluation design

The Evaluation Strategy was developed with input from local community stakeholder collaborations and consultation with departmental staff. The Evaluation Strategy reflects insights gathered on the intent of the services, the measures of success and the data collection methods that are culturally appropriate. The Evaluation Strategy provides further detail for the community collaboration on the evaluation design.

Ethics approval

Ethics approval to undertake the qualitative research project, which informed the early insights evaluation, was provided by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Human Research Ethics Committee on 19 July 2024.

Data collection and fieldwork

For this early insights report, the data collected was primarily qualitative.⁴

The data was collected through individual face-to-face⁵ interviews and some small group discussions.

Interviews were conducted with 54 stakeholders, mostly in Broome between 22 July and 9 August 2024 and some departmental staff in August 2024. The sampling approach and a breakdown of interviews conducted by stakeholder group is in Table 1 and Table 2 provides a breakdown of their characteristics.

Table 2: Sampling approach and breakdown of stakeholders interviewed for the assessment of the Service.

Stakeholder group	Sampling approach	Interviews conducted
Participants	Random sample based on departmental records and purposive sample of 'walk-in' participants	24
Employers	Random sample based on departmental records of engagement with the Service	s 47F(1)
Community organisations	Purposive sample based on engagement with the Service and common areas of servicing	12

⁴ This early insights report uses qualitative evidence to explore the key evaluation questions. Many of the impacts and outcomes, as outlined in the Evaluation Strategy, will be considered as part of the quantitative analysis of the final evaluation report of the Service.

⁵ A small number of virtual interviews were conducted with employers and departmental staff.

Stakeholder group	Sampling approach	Interviews conducted
Provider staff	Purposive sample based on a cross section of roles in the Broome service	s 47F(1)
Departmental staff	Purposive sample based on engagement with the Broome service.	s 47F(1)
Total		s 47F(1)

Notes:

1. Community organisations included employment, training and social services providers and government organisations operating in Broome.
2. A number of community organisations were also employers who had engaged with the Service. Where appropriate, discussions with these community organisations covered employer topics.

Table 1: Qualitative research participant characteristics

Characteristic	Clients
Age	
Under 35	s 47F(1)
35-44	
45-54	
55 and older	
Gender	
Female	12
Male	12
First Nations	
Yes	20
No	s 47F(1)
Connection to Broome	
Born in Broome	s 47F(1)
Lived in Broome for less than 5 years	
Lived in Broome for more than 5 years	11
Income support payment type	
Jobseeker	18
Other	s 47F(1)

Characteristic	Clients
Employment history No prior, or sporadic, employment Recent, sustained employment Long break from employment	s 47F(1)
Employment status Employed Unemployed	s 47F(1) 20
Total	s 47F(1)

Analysis and reporting

Interview transcripts and interview notes were thematically analysed at the completion of the fieldwork to identify key common themes raised by stakeholders and to value the diverse individual experiences of stakeholders. Staff from the department's First Nations Employee Network applied a First Nations lens to the analysis of the data. Where appropriate, local cultural guidance was sought from the Job Pathways Indigenous Advisory Group.

Quotes have been included in this report to illustrate the findings. To protect the identity of stakeholders the quotes have been de-identified. Quotes have been attributed to stakeholder groups and by gender for participants.

The key early insights are presented in the following sections:

- participants in the research
- stakeholders' experiences with servicing, including participant servicing, the broader community engagement, and employer servicing
- operational conditions for the Broome provider and the settings of the Broome model
- impacts and outcomes of the Broome model, including unintended outcomes and learnings.

Finally, the report discusses the key early insights as they relate to the KEQ and concludes with early insights learnings and future research activities.

Scope and limitations

The scope of this early insights evaluation was the Service between 1 January 2024 to 31 August 2024.

While other programs, such as the CDP and Local Jobs program were determined to be out of scope for the evaluation, views and experiences about these programs shared during the fieldwork by stakeholders have been incorporated to provide context.

The Service commenced on 1 November 2023 in a limited capacity due to a shorter than planned transition period. As a result, the transition phase for the Broome provider was

extended to the end of March 2024. The extended transition phase meant that some stakeholders had limited engagement with the Service at the time of the research fieldwork.

It should also be noted that the Service model shares many common features with the Workforce Australia Services model. This early insights evaluation explored the unique features of the Service model and any common features with Workforce Australia Services where the local context uniquely effected its operations, as raised by research participants⁶.

⁶ The Workforce Australia Employment Services Evaluation will assess the core operations and impact of the Workforce Australia Employment Services model.