

Transition to Work (TTW)

Consultation Paper Responses – WDEA Works June 2021

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About WDEA Works

WDEA Works (WDEA) is a community focused, not-for-profit organization that has been delivering Employment Services, Disability Employment Services & Social Enterprise programs for over 30 years in regional Victoria and the South East of South Australia. WDEA currently operates across four regions currently and then ESA's delivering quality services to participants with a mission to achievable sustainable employment outcomes for the most vulnerable members of the communities in which we operate.

WDEA has always enjoyed a productive two-way relationship of open communication with the Department and appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback relating to Transition to Work as per the consultation paper.

Introduction

As a longstanding and high performing provider of Employment Services in Australia, WDEA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the TTW consultation paper and hopes that it provides some additional insight into the proposed TTW contract.

WDEA appreciates that Youth Unemployment is a significant issue within the community and believes that TTW has and can continue to be a major factor in the improvement in this area.

WDEA believes in a person-centered approach that promotes participant choice and a holistic service delivery method to achieve sustainable outcomes. These outcomes may not necessarily be related to employment but other areas such as training, emotional support, vocational & non vocational empowerment.

WDEA is supportive of the core elements to be retained and the enhancement proposed but have added our responses/feedback in the areas below.

Chapter 4 – Assessment, Referral & Eligibility

4.1 What primary risk factors that contribute to young people disengaging from work or education should be used to determine eligibility for Transition to Work services?

- Mental Health/ Anxiety and Depression
- Homelessness
- Addiction
- Family relationship breakdown
- Identifying as Indigenous
- Lack access to regular transport
- Lived experience of Domestic Violence in the household
- Identity ie LGBTQI+, cultural (we have a number of participants transitioning at the present time)
- Grief/loss

- Lack of understanding for unique learning styles
- Level of Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital capability
- Gaming – false sense of reality, energy sapping
- Out of home care system
- Lack of cultural and/or psychological safety

Chapter 5 - Maximum Duration of Service for Participants

5.1 What characteristics should be used to determine whether a young person has complex, non-vocational barriers and requires the maximum of 24 months of servicing?

- Addiction
- Mental Health/Depression
- Age
- Period of time elapsed since last education outcome
- Period of time elapsed since last employment outcome
- Longest period of employment
- Housing stability
- Access to transport
- Level of basic needs being met (food, shelter, safety, clothing, health, wellbeing)
- Identity ie LGBTQI+, cultural (we have a number of participants transitioning at the present time)
- Parent of a child older than 6
- Level of progression over past 18 months

5.2 In addition to extending the maximum duration of service, are there any other changes needed to support Transition to Work providers in effectively servicing an increased number of young people with complex, non-vocational barriers?

- No response

5.3 What circumstances in a young persons' life should determine whether they are transferred to online services or to an Enhanced Services provider at the end of their service period in Transition to Work?

- Completion of a certificate level course
- Achievement of a 26 Week outcome
- Choice – self determined

- The number and classification of unresolved non-vocational barriers
- Personal capacity

Chapter 6 – Improving Attendance at the Initial Appointment

6.1 Would a mechanism that helps facilitate commencement of young people in the service be desirable?

- Yes, 100% agree that some form of compliance measure is introduced but only for engagement purposes.

6.2 What is your preferred approach to achieving commencement and why?

- WDEA prefer a compliance model but only for initial engagement. This puts the onus back on the participant to engage with the TTW service
- Consider telephone engagement strategy for initial appointment. Many young people have severe anxiety going out in the world, lack of access to transport, lack of motivation, etc. Engaging and introducing the service via phone removes many of the engagement barriers, commences the rapport building.
- Participants ability to book their own times

Chapter 7 – Performance Framework

7.1 What elements should the Department use to measure achievement of Education Outcomes?

- Completion of the course

7.2 How should the Department seek to ensure job seekers and employers are receiving quality of service from Transition to Work providers?

- Performance monitoring of providers
- Feedback surveys for jobseekers & employers

7.3 Are there any other meaningful measures that could be included in the Provider Performance Framework?

- Comparative Star Ratings model

7.4 What improvements could be made to the current review and allocation of the Funded Places process?

- No response

7.5 What factors should the Department account for when determining Funded Places?

- Geography
- Youth unemployment rates
- Labour market size and unemployment rates

7.6 How might performance be benchmarked in the new model?

- Comparative Star Ratings model based on the 3 KPI as listed in the discussion paper

Chapter 8 – Youth Advisory Sessions

8.1 Is there anything that the Department should change or improve in the way that Youth Advisory Sessions are currently running?

- No response

Chapter 9 – Other Service Settings to Improve Outcomes

9.1 Is there anything in the Transition to Work program that should change in order to have the right balance between ensuring national service standards are maintained, while also allowing providers the flexibility needed to enable local collaboration and engagement in their communities?

- Enhanced performance framework as proposed

9.2 What role can the Transition to Work service play in ensuring that young people are engaged in the design and delivery of policy and services?

- Development of focus groups
- Feedback platforms via the TTW provider

9.3 Is there anything in the current service settings that might be seen as limiting youth engagement?

- No response

9.4 What do you think constitutes best practice with regard to supporting the mental health of participants in an employment service and how do we improve the ability of the service to deliver to this standard?

- Person centered approach
- Individual, tailored services
- Funding for work related professional services for mental health
- Psychological safety – build rapport quickly, privacy, capacity building
- Best practice: Listening to and understanding participant in a safe environment while creating positive change through communication, exploring participant's experience and their thoughts/emotions and ensuring their basic needs are being met. We can deliver through looking at what they are disconnected from, setting goals and assisting participants to learn new skills and behaviours to manage a balanced life.

9.5 What are appropriate servicing strategies or principles in situations where there are longer waitlists for specialist services, in contrast to locations where there are readily available specialist mental health services?

- A linkage between TTW providers and NESM providers to utilise TTW funding where the NESM providers is utilising Professional Services
- Provide alternative interventions and support whilst waiting to access specialist services, on-line resources, telehealth services, Head Space, GP
- Maintain engagement
- Ensuring participants have access to Online Employment Services Counsellor/Social Worker to explore their situation and funding is readily available for private specialist services. For example, psychiatrists/psychologists/occupational therapists/physiotherapists so they don't need to go on public waiting list which can be 2 year wait.

9.6 What are the features of a service that acknowledges the significant mental health challenge across the youth caseload and embeds appropriate responses into the default service offer, including by addressing particular issues such as disclosure and stigma?

- Privacy, Safety, Flexibility, manage expectations, collaborative, wrap around service delivery
- Skill building, identification of target specialist interventions ie psychological services, substance abuse, cognitive behaviour therapist, etc
- Building individuals capacity to identify what works best for them in employment to support a healthy mental wellbeing
- Smaller caseload's and individual specialist support including online/phone appointments to help address barriers relevant to youth including social anxiety, gaming/lack of sleep, depression, LBGQTQIA, homelessness, transport. Addressing factors and building skills that impact their situation including their environment, behaviours, capabilities, values and beliefs, and identity

Conclusion

We hope that the above responses contribute positively to the consultation paper and discussion moving forward to the new TTW model commencing July 2022. We look forward to the release of the exposure draft and would make ourselves available to discuss any of the issues contained in our response and thank the Department for the opportunity to participate in the consultation.