



As the provider of specialist employment preparation and support services for 30 years, I thank you for the invitation to comment on the current services, and to include recommendations and program benefits.

### Personal Support Programme (PSP):

PSP is a very successful program, utilising specialist staff with high level intervention skills.

#### **1/ Employment versus Pre-employment program**

PSP was originally designed for people with significant barriers to employment, to engage them and support them to address these barriers. The current program has been developed to have a greater focus on the back end of the service (employment outcomes), which we believe has some significant impacts on participants:

- Greater push by staff to “gloss over” some significant issues to gain outcomes
- Greater risk to employers by placing people into work that pose risks
- Reduced longevity of employment as issues re-arise and support networks are underdeveloped
- The loss of support systems for people with greatest need (mental health) as they transition to an “Employment Service” – PSP is not able to access complimentary employment support programs (Traineeships etc)

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- PSP is provided with the same opportunities for complimentary services and initiatives as other employment services (including incentives for employers, traineeship preparation, NEIS for people with a disability etc)
- A jobseeker account system operates for specialist training and support especially for rehabilitation, mental health support and on the job assistance/training.
- PSP services are rewarded with outcome payments at more appropriate milestones – sustained rehab program (drug and alcohol), sustained mental health support program – actual social and engagement outcomes.

- Participants who have developed trusted relationships with PSP providers, can transition into training and employment preparation, with their provider – currently the need to move to a new agency is a dis-incentive for participants. This could trigger (ISCA) Intensive Support funds that would be used by the Job Network provider when referred.
- The PSP services are able to be rolled over for a further 12 month period for participants who require additional time – this would be triggered following a review of progress and report by the provider. It is better to build on the current engagement than to lose participation through inappropriate timelines.

## **2/ Balance of responsibility Centrelink versus Providers**

The PSP program already has key elements of engagement with participants, who are subject to the employment regulations for attendance. It is a disincentive for participants to have an additional requirement to attend Centrelink for meetings, when this is a compliance matter, not an intervention that moves them forward in addressing barriers.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- PSP participants are exempt from these reporting requirements due to their high vulnerability status

## **3/ Participation Reports**

PSP currently submits a participation report to Centrelink for non attendance. This practice is purported to be a tool for engaging participants. It is actually a punishment as a high percentage of participants have significant barriers impeding their abilities to comply, and the majority of PR's are overturned for this reason. The process then becomes an administration burden for staff, and an ineffective method of maintaining engagement.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- For vulnerable participants (DPS and PSP), an incentive program is introduced in the form of credits, when engagement has not been disrupted for a period of time (13 weeks and 26 weeks). These credits could be managed as the Work For The Dole are currently, although extending the scope of purchasing work related and training related items, would be of greater benefit to these participants.

## **4/ Administration**

PSP case managers are currently required to complete a huge amount of administration. This is time consuming and means that staff spend less time

with participants. The current EA 3000 system requires providers to navigate (click the mouse) over 30 times to put in a contact note, and it takes over 18 clicks to put an appointment in the EA3000 calendar. These actions are essential elements of the program, and require navigation between numerous screens as well.

A recent study of the administration time required under the DEN program is 45% of the staff members time, and the requirements are very similar to PSP. This impacts on the amount of effective time that staff can spend with participants. This also raises issues about the skill set for staff, with such a high demand on efficient IT systems skills.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- The EA3000 framework be simplified to reduce the need to access multiple screens and multiple tasks associated with each individual participant OR a payment for administration is added to the funding allocation, so that this can be factored into service delivery.