

To the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

COMMENTS ON EMPLOYMENTS SERVICES

Commerce Queensland supports the Rudd Government's aim for all Australians to be economically and socially included and that a key way to achieve this goal is through jobs. As the peak employer association in Queensland, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the current range of employment services, particularly in light of the crucial staffing shortages occurring in this State.

The Federal Government has previously funded an Employment Service Model focused on placing job seekers with employers looking for staff. This model has previously worked well because there was a sufficient supply of job seekers however, our State's strong economic growth has placed huge demands on this supply and the shrinking pool of job seekers has high levels of disadvantage.

Current job seekers, particularly Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, returning carers to work, aged workers, the long-term unemployed or females in non-traditional work areas, have a number of associated problems such as very poor literacy and numeracy skills, unacceptable social behaviour and a welfare dependency attitude. These clients need a different level of support to what has been used in the past if they are to secure and keep a job - the ultimate and best outcome for the job seeker, the employer and the Federal Government.

Due to the intense associated problems of today's group of job seekers, Employment Services cannot be expected to find solutions in isolation from other stakeholder groups. Queensland's large geographical area and widely dispersed population requires funding to be allocated not to individual services but to regional areas who through a representative group of stakeholders, will determine the most effective solutions to recruitment and retention issues.

It is essential that Employment Services work collaboratively with other services to prepare current job seekers to be work ready. We need a demand driven system based on employer driven regional workforce models and not the current supply driven model of training. This preparation and training to be work ready requires a collaborative effort between all the parties - training providers, employment services, job seekers and employers therefore funding models should be based on this collaborative arrangement and not on individual services.

After placement with an employer (paid or non-paid), sufficient funding is required to provide daily support for both the client and employer. This level of support would be phased out as the client becomes self sufficient and productive in the job ie: organize own transport, be on time and interact socially. The current system of checking in on the client is not sufficient with this identified group of job seekers.

Commerce Queensland with its extensive network of regional offices and strong affiliations with Local Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other industry specific associations looks forward to working with the Federal Government to build a more suitable approach based on this State's requirements.