

MEDIA RELEASE

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NDS welcomes extension of Invitation to Treat to all DEN providers

Employment Participation Minister Mark Arbib's decision today to extend an 'Invitation to treat' to all Disability Employment Network (DEN) providers will avoid the disruption entailed by a tender process. National Disability Services (NDS), which represents almost 700 non-government service providers across Australia, has welcomed the decision.

DEN providers support many workers with disability who require long-term ongoing support to maintain employment. These providers have also built up long-term relationships with local employers. A tender process would have risked severing some of these relationships with clients and employers, without a guarantee that a new provider could re-build them.

New features of the Disability Employment Services model announced today include:

- extending the Invitation to Treat to all Disability Employment Network Capped and Uncapped providers;
- extending the apprenticeship bonus fees to all apprenticeships; and
- introducing new provisions for circumstances where a job seeker loses their job as a result of the global financial crisis.

Disability Employment Service providers will have access to a newly established capacity building fund.

The proposed tender process will go ahead for Program A (vocational rehabilitation) and elements of the Employer Incentives Scheme including

- National Panel of Assessors to provide Supported Wage System assessments, Ongoing Support Assessment and Workplace Modifications assessments;
- National Disability Recruitment Coordinator; and
- JobAccess service.

Tenders for the new Disability Employment Services – Program A and the Employer Incentives Scheme opens today and close at 7.00pm (AEST) on 1 October 2009.

Successful tenderers will be announced in December. The new services will begin on 1 March 2010.

The performance management Star Rating system will also be revised.

NDS provided advice to Minister Arbib in July indicated that extending an Invitation to Treat to all DEN providers and revamping the performance management system, while not unanimously supported, would have strong support across the sector.

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