

Employment Services 2020: Consultation report

Department of Jobs and Small Business

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1. Executive summary

The Australian Government's current employment service, jobactive, will continue to provide services to job seekers and employers until existing contracting arrangements cease in 2020. jobactive has been successful in placing over one million people into work. The current labour market is strong, with over 12.5 million Australians in work and 94 per cent of Australians who want work, being in employment¹.

Nevertheless, there are challenges to confront: almost half the people in jobactive have remained in the system for two years or more, while technological change is re-shaping the economy and the nature of work.

The Government sees the end of the jobactive contract period as an opportunity to consider what employment services arrangements will serve Australia best into the future. It has therefore established an Expert Advisory Panel and drawn on analysis and customer research to develop initial views on potential areas of reform.

These views are set out in a discussion paper, 'The Next Generation of Employment Services' (discussion paper). This paper was released for public comment and formed the basis for an intensive round of national consultations, which took place throughout July 2018. Nous Group (Nous) was engaged to facilitate these consultations which took the form of 23 stakeholder roundtables and community forums in all capitals and several regional centres. 540 stakeholders participated in total, representing employment service providers, employers, community service organisations, state and local government officials, job seekers, registered training organisations and peak bodies (see Figure 1). Several members of the Expert Advisory Panel also participated.

This paper distils the key themes from those consultations with a view to assisting the Expert Advisory Panel and the Department of Jobs and Small Business (the Department) in their further consideration of a new model for employment services in Australia.

Several proposals in the discussion paper received strong support. Most notably, stakeholders agreed that there should be greater capacity in the system to service the needs of job seekers who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or who face multiple barriers to employment. They appreciated the potential of online technologies to create that necessary capacity while also improving the customer experience (for employers and job seekers). There was also relatively strong support for improved assessment processes, and for a licensing system for employment service providers to replace current contract-based arrangements.

Based on surveys taken at the consultations, the below shows the areas of the discussion paper which stakeholders most strongly supported.

What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support?

1. The need to provide more intensive and tailored support for the most disadvantaged job seekers
2. An employment services model that focuses on the needs of the job seeker, with them at the centre of the employment service system
3. Better meeting the needs of the employer
4. Assessing job seekers to tailor support for their needs
5. Online services for job seekers who can self service, freeing up resources for those who need enhanced services

The discussions in different locations, involving different combinations of stakeholders, prompted new ideas about goals for the system, service delivery models, and approaches to assessment. It was evident that there is a great deal of interest in further consultations on proposed new arrangements as they take shape. There is also support for a carefully managed approach to implementation that allows for piloting of new approaches.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) – Labour Force, Australia

The box below shows which areas of the discussion paper stakeholders thought warranted further consideration.

What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further thought?

1. Ensuring online services match employers and job seekers' needs
2. Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs, with more emphasis on the assessment, as well as revisiting the needs of employers and job seekers
3. Targeted regional and local approaches to better address individual needs
4. Market design including a collaborative approach rather than competition among job service providers
5. Allowing for more time with job seekers

The key messages from stakeholders are summarised below.

A user centred service model should inform design of the new system: There was strong support for a quality service that puts job seeker and employer needs at the centre. Stakeholders felt that services should be responsive and well informed by a thorough understanding of needs.

Building trust will be fundamental to success: Stakeholders noted that job seekers would be unlikely to share data or use a digital service unless they trusted the system. Similarly, employers would need to be confident in the new arrangements that their needs would be both understood and met. The point was often made that success of the system would be largely contingent on the relationships fostered among all system users and service providers.

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach should be avoided: The consultations highlighted the great diversity within the job seeker community, among employers and between regions. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the need for flexibility in responding to that diversity.

Language is important and should evolve: The argument was made that any future arrangements should be built on an assumption that the vast majority of job seekers are motivated to find and keep work. Terms such as 'disadvantaged' needed to be used with caution, with a preference for more strengths-based language and approach. In a similar vein, stakeholders were often quick to remind that the definitions of 'employment' and of 'outcomes' ought to be given careful thought.

Better support for job seekers who face multiple barriers to employment: As noted above, there was strong support for this element of the discussion paper. This led, among other things, to consideration of the ways in which collaboration among providers could be encouraged within an environment of competition. It also provoked strong views about the extent to which disadvantaged job seekers could reasonably be expected to access services online. Indeed, there was a strong cautionary note that any shift to more digitally enabled services should not translate into a 'default' arrangement whereby people might be denied face-to-face services.

Building and maintaining the capability and continuity of employment service providers is key: Some stakeholders believed this should be one of the explicit goals of the new system. It was clear that staff capability and retention were prominent issues for many, as was concern about red tape. Such concerns translated into a desire for an outcomes-oriented system that allows for flexibility and innovation. In that context, providers expressed strong preference for a licensing model.

Online technology should be embraced and utilised, with caution: There were interesting conversations about different service delivery models, and some original ideas on how to best leverage technology. But unsurprisingly, there were reservations about privacy protections, a lack of access to the internet and the degree of digital literacy among some job seekers.

A more sophisticated and holistic assessment system can better identify the needs of job seekers: Most stakeholders saw potential in a more comprehensive assessment but there were differing views on the extent to which an online assessment tool, as opposed to a face-to-face assessment process, could identify the full

range of a job seeker interests and abilities. All agreed, however, that assessments needed to be strengths-based and broad enough to encompass the 'soft' skills that are of greatest interest to employers. There was also support for clear mechanisms to trigger re-assessments.

At the conclusion of each engagement, participants were asked what was the one thing that must be 'got right' in the new employment services model, and the most prominent responses appear below.

What is the one thing that is most important to get right in the new system?

1. A system that connects the right job seekers with the right employers
2. Correctly and appropriately assessing job seekers to individualise services
3. The provision of individualised support to best meet the needs of employers and job seekers
4. Holistic and culturally appropriate services to job seekers
5. Better support for disadvantaged job seekers in their transition from pre-employment to employment

Some – but not all – were asked also how much change they expected to see in the new set of arrangements. Most thought that there would be quite significant differences in approach in future. All recognised how high the stakes were to develop a system that would prove effective well into the future, and the complexity of the challenge to put in place something that meets such a diverse range of needs in an every-changing labour market.

The insights from these consultations, together with other responses to the discussion paper, will doubtless assist the Government in tackling this challenge.

Nous is pleased to have been involved and would like to express its gratitude to the stakeholders who participated in the consultations, and to the Department for their own involvement and logistical support.

2. Background

Nous was engaged by the Department to design and facilitate a series of public consultations over a three-week period to inform the development of the future employment services model. It is proposed that transition to the new model will occur at the conclusion of the current jobactive contracts in mid- 2020.

The objective of the consultations was to provide further context and detail on the proposals in the discussion paper, and to elicit views from a range of stakeholders to inform thinking by the Government and its Expert Advisory Panel on the future arrangements.

Twenty-three external and four internal consultations – comprising roundtables and community forums – were held in this three-week period. The consultations centred on the questions raised and ideas put forward in the discussion paper, every effort was made to encourage bold thinking, unconstrained by the proposals in the document. That said, the agenda for each session was very full, making it difficult in some cases to fully explore all issues in depth.

Over 500 external stakeholders in all major Australian capital cities and selected regional centres were consulted. Regional consultations were conducted in Murray Bridge, Townsville, Mandurah, Bendigo, Parramatta, Hunter Valley and Alice Springs. These provided helpful insight into differences and commonalities across geographic locations to be considered in the new service model.

Participants included employment service providers, employers, state and local government officials, community service organisations, job seekers, training providers and panel members (see Figure 1).

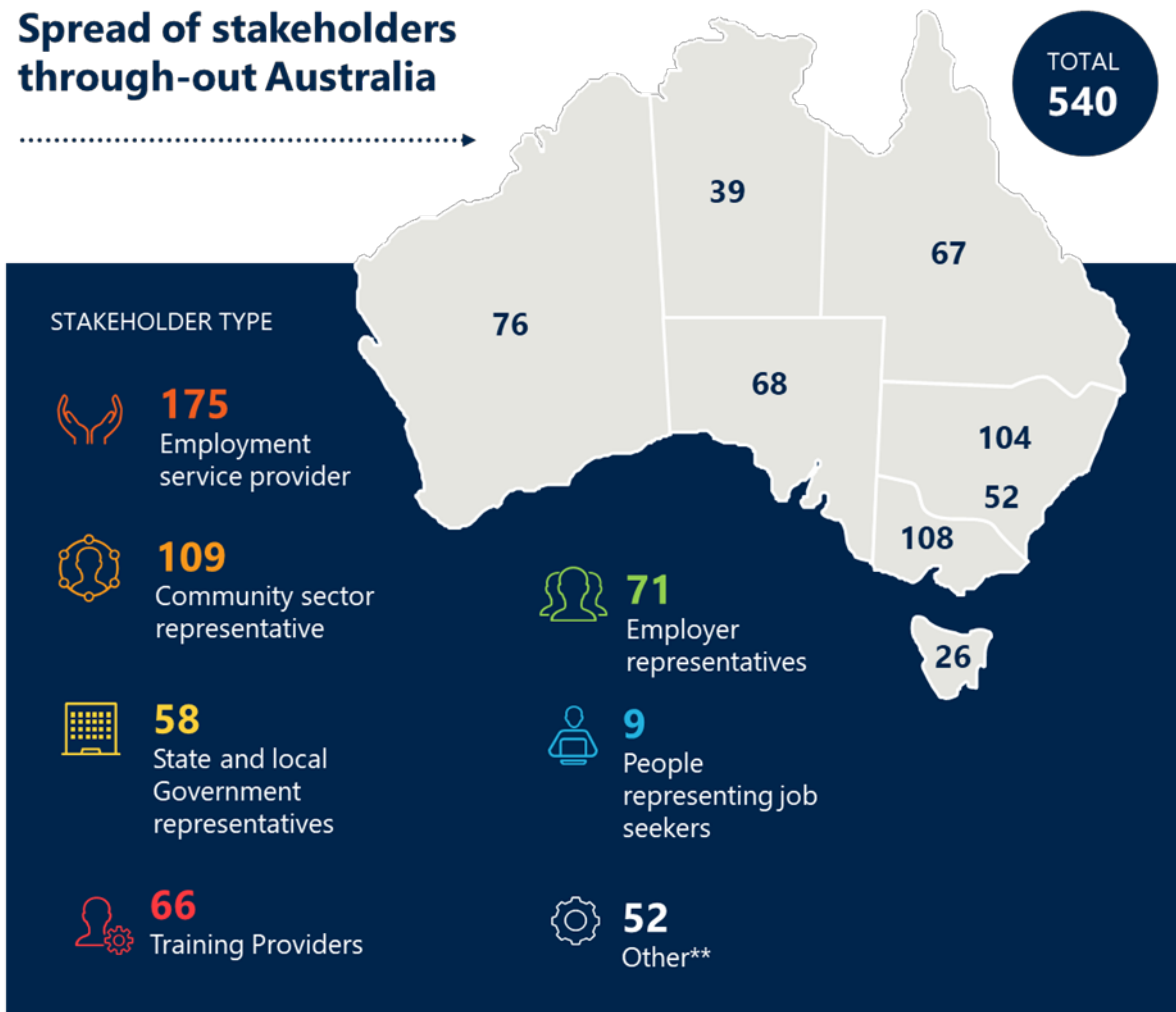
Representation reflects the challenges in securing participation by employers especially for a session that ran over several hours. Unsurprisingly, employment service providers were well represented. Note that some stakeholders may have identified with more than one category (e.g. an employer and a community service organisation) but they have not been double-counted in the figures. According to survey feedback (see Figure 1), stakeholders generally felt engaged and able to express their views, especially those in regional areas.

This consultation summary report aims to synthesise and consolidate the stakeholder commentary, drawing out key themes, ideas, issues and implications to inform design of the new system. It is structured in line with the discussion paper (see section 4) to enable easy cross-referencing.

Nous would like to express its gratitude to those who travelled far to participate in the consultations, dedicated a substantial amount of time, and offered valuable perspectives. We also acknowledge the professionalism, practical guidance and support of numerous departmental officials who managed complicated logistics and assisted with facilitation of small-group discussions and note-taking. Nous would like to extend our thanks to the members of the Panel who volunteered their time to attend the consultations and provide their input.

Figure 1 | Summary of consultation figures

Spread of stakeholders through-out Australia



** group comprises of representatives from health services, housing services, technology providers, Think Tanks / academia and panel members.

3. Aggregated stakeholder feedback

In an evaluation survey run at the end of each consultation, participants were asked two questions: 'What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support?' and 'What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further thought?'

Through data analysis² we have distilled the free text survey responses into the top five themes from approximately 300 responses. See below.

Figure 2 | Reactions to the discussion paper

What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support?

1. The need to provide more intensive and tailored support for the most disadvantaged job seekers
2. An employment services model that focuses on the needs of the job seeker, with them at the centre of the employment service system.
3. Better meeting the needs of the employer
4. Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs
5. Online services for job seekers who can self service, freeing up resources for those who need enhanced services

What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further thought?

1. Ensuring online services match employers and job seekers' needs
2. Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs, with more emphasis on the assessment, as well as revisiting the needs of employers and job seekers
3. Targeted regional and local approaches to better address individual needs
4. Market design including a collaborative approach rather than competition among job service providers
5. Allowing for more time with job seekers

In some consultations participants were asked, '**What is the one thing that is most important to get right in the new system?**' Using similar analysis as described above, the top five themes are set out below:

Figure 3 | Survey responses on the 'one thing to get right' in the new system

What is the one thing that is most important to get right in the new system?

1. A system that connects the right job seekers with the right employers
2. Correctly and appropriately assessing job seekers to individualise services
3. The provision of individualised support to best meet the needs of employers and job seekers
4. Holistic and culturally appropriate services to job seekers
5. Better support for disadvantaged job seekers in their transition from pre-employment to employment

² We used R as our analytics tool. It identifies what terms are most often used in each response, and then returns responses that are both representative of the whole set and dissimilar to each other. This is intended to draw out disparate views across a set of responses.

4. Consideration by discussion paper chapter

This section begins with a brief overview of cross-cutting themes before then considering the issues and proposals in each chapter of the discussion paper in turn. Unsurprisingly, many of the strong messages from stakeholders echoed findings from the Department's prior user research. While there was consensus in several areas, in other cases more diversity of views was evident.

A few themes emerged that point to the policy challenges associated with design of new arrangements. These are referenced below.

4.1. Cross-cutting themes

The following principles imbued much of the discussion across different aspects of the employment system design.

A user centred service model should inform design of the new system: there was strong support for a quality service that puts job seeker and employer needs at the centre. Stakeholders felt that services should be responsive and well informed by a thorough understanding of needs.

There was strong support also for ongoing consultations and a co-design process that involves providers, job seekers and other key stakeholders.

Building trust is fundamental to success: stakeholders noted that job seekers would be unlikely to share data or use a digital service unless they trusted the system. Similarly, employers would need to be confident in the new arrangements that their needs would be both understood and met. The point was often made that success of the system would be largely contingent on the relationships fostered among all system users and service providers.

A 'one-size-fits-all' approach should be avoided: There is great diversity within the job seeker community and among employers. Providers consistently identified the need for flexibility in responding to that diversity.

Language is important and should evolve: The argument was made that future arrangements should be built on an assumption that the vast majority of job seekers are motivated to find and keep work. Terms such as 'disadvantaged' needed to be used with caution, with a preference for more strengths-based language and approaches. In a similar vein, stakeholders were often quick to remind that the definitions of 'employment' and 'employment outcomes' ought to be given careful thought.

Better support for job seekers who face multiple barriers to employment: As noted above, there was strong support for this element of the discussion paper. This led, among other things, to consideration of the ways in which collaboration among providers could be encouraged within an environment of competition. It also provoked strong views about the extent to which disadvantaged job seekers could reasonably be expected to access services online. Indeed, there was a strong cautionary note that any shift to more digitally enabled services should not translate into a 'default' arrangement whereby people might be denied face-to-face services.

There were examples of divergent views that point to some key challenges for those involved in designing the new arrangements. These include:

Competition versus collaboration among providers: Many participants were reluctant to embrace full competition; providers because they feared losing business and community representatives because they were concerned that this drives a lowest-common-denominator approach. Despite these reservations there was acknowledgement that there needed to be a way of allowing new players into the market, albeit through a process which provided quality and took account of market share and size. All were keen on a system that promoted coordination and collaboration in the interests of securing satisfactory outcomes for job seekers and employers.

Actively supporting while building job seekers' own self-reliance: Much of the conversation centred on giving job seekers and employers choice, particularly around the kind of support they might need, what training would be useful and which range of services to access. However, there was also a view that job

seekers who faced a number of barriers needed intensive management. While this may be true in many instances, there was a risk that such reliance on intensive case management could entrench job seekers' dependency on face-to-face services.

Reducing red tape while keeping providers and job seekers accountable: There was overwhelming support for a future system that ensures minimal red tape and compliance obligations, notwithstanding the acknowledged need for a degree of accountability and mutual obligation. While no ideas were forthcoming on how to achieve the right balance, there was general support among providers for using benchmarking rather than star ratings to assess performance. Few proposals emerged either on ways to activate those job seekers who are genuinely recalcitrant. For example, there was limited exploration of the potential to more effectively leverage data to achieve both improved accountability and a reduced administrative burden.

Generalist and specialist capability: Views varied around whether generalist services could meet the needs of all or most job seekers, or whether a hub and spoke approach to accessing specialist services was more desirable. Providers tended to be more supportive of generalist services, while community groups favoured consideration of new models with brokers able to assist in navigating other services. Regional representatives were keen not to duplicate existing services but to build on available mechanisms. Several models for linking specialist and generalist services are canvassed in section 4.9.

Leveraging data while ensuring privacy: This may be more of a 'sleepers' issue, but there was a sense of ambivalence about the use of data, citing privacy and confidentiality concerns, as well as the risk of creating an unfair impression through 'profiling'. On the other hand, participants were keen to maximise the idea of 'collect once, use many times', in particular to avoid the job seeker having to repeat their story time and again.

4.2. The goals for future employment services

Consultation sessions generally opened with a review of the objectives set out in the discussion paper. Participants were asked to reflect on their own backgrounds and experience and generally responded strongly to the invitation to comment.

Stakeholders often used the session to outline their general views on future employment services arrangements, drawing heavily on their own perspectives as employers, providers and community groups or advocates. Discussion and responses were therefore wide ranging. Key themes were as follows:

1. There appeared to be appetite for significant reform
2. Stakeholders sought clarity on what was meant by 'employment outcomes'
3. There were mixed views on who might be eligible to access employment services
4. Many supported the inclusion of a goal to build an efficient and effective employment services industry.

Each is discussed in turn.

4.2.1 There appeared to be appetite for significant reform

Overall users of the system supported significant reform of the current jobactive model. However, some providers did not see a need for a major departure from current arrangements, and focused primarily on the question of red tape reduction. This view appeared to be motivated in part by wariness of the possible financial impact of a move to a new model.

While some observed that a better-quality service would work better for employers, most participants focused on the need for a system that aims, first and foremost, to assist individuals to attain and sustain long-term employment outcomes. Some suggested that this should in fact be the primary objective with all other goals being secondary.

4.2.2 Stakeholders sought clarity on what is meant by employment outcomes

The question often arose as to what was meant in the discussion paper by 'outcomes' for job seekers. Some suggestions were that an outcome should also include 'steps along the way' with potential definitions including job readiness (or engagement) rather than employment. Others suggested the desired outcome should be productive (if not paid) participation in the economy or society, or alternatively, financial stability.

"There is currently too much focus on the job outcomes and not enough on job readiness – this should be the most important goal. [the stated goal of] Maximising outcomes should be maximising long term outcomes, or we split outcomes into pre-employment and employment"

- Community services organisation, Canberra roundtable

In this context, there were proposals for an objective that reflected the desire for a user-centred system that enables, empowers and is trusted.

Several stakeholders argued that the goals were too high-level, with a few commenting that the draft goals were not markedly different from the goals that had underpinned the system over the past 2-3 decades. In this sense there was a query about whether they provided a clear-enough sense of the values and directions any new approach might embrace, including enabling, empowering and building trust with users and the wider community.

"As a provider we think of an outcome as a 4 or 12-week outcome, but I think we've forgotten what an outcome is for a job seeker [meaningful achievement for job seeker]"

- Employment service provider, Hobart roundtable

4.2.3 There were mixed views on who might be eligible to access employment services

There were also discussions of the focus of employment services and whether it should be for all job seekers or those on unemployment benefits. The case was made by some that a broader focus would serve to lift the brand association of job seekers with one of quality, equivalent in value to private recruitment agencies. Others were wary of broadening focus beyond existing job seekers who may be 'falling through the cracks' every day and needing more assistance.

Stakeholders were interested to understand further whether any new approach would compete with or leverage other job seeking platforms and services.

4.2.4 Many supported inclusion of a goal to build an efficient and effective employment services industry

It was suggested several times that there be an objective to develop a model that supports a capable employment services workforce and industry, so that both employers and job seekers can be appropriately supported. This encompassed the need for better mechanisms for the sector to strategically plan for future workforce needs and be responsive to the changing labour market.

On the latter point, it was proposed that the model include a stronger recognition of the more strategic shifts in the labour market – for example, the trend away from full-time, single career employment towards more flexible arrangements and self-employment. It was felt that the system needed to be flexible to adjust to these trends and to deliver interventions that would not just secure jobs in the short term, but would build job seeker capability and resilience to navigate a more challenging and dynamic labour market.

"Look at the concerns we have, a goal should be to make people excited to work in this industry because we put our heart and soul into getting these people into jobs and providing positive impact"

- Employment service provider, Canberra roundtable

4.2.5 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- A common observation was the need to temper the current suite of objectives with more empathetic and supportive language. It was suggested that the goals need to be written in such a way that better resonated with job seekers and employers as well as employment services consultants.
- Objectives should be specific about outcomes which speak more directly to different stakeholders, notably employers; and be clear about who the system is intended to support.

Other considerations

N/A

4.3. Helping disadvantaged Australians into work

Participants in the consultations discussed the theme of helping disadvantaged Australians in plenary, with reference to the discussion paper questions. In addition, further insight into how services for disadvantaged people could function in the future emerged from the persona-based group discussions.

These were centred on the following personas in the discussion paper, each of whom were based on individuals interviewed as part of the Department's preliminary consultation process: Dave, Brenda and Stephanie.

- 'Dave' represents a mid-40s male who has had a poor track record of employment but is motivated to find work in order to support his partner and their new baby.
- 'Brenda' is a young Indigenous woman living in a regional area who recently completed high school and is unclear about the career she wants to embark on.
- 'Stephanie' is a single mother of three seeking to re-enter the workforce after ten years' absence while maintaining flexibility to continue to fulfil her caring responsibilities.

As noted in section 3, the focus on providing intensive and tailored support for disadvantaged job seekers was by far the most strongly supported element of the discussion paper. Throughout the consultations, there was evident support particularly for the redirection of resources to lift the quality and intensity of face-to-face services for disadvantaged job seekers, and for initiatives to ensure those services were tailored to the individual and well-coordinated.

Four key themes emerged from the discussion on this chapter:

1. The future model will require a clear definition of 'disadvantage' in the labour market.
2. A strong emphasis on job readiness can help disadvantaged job seekers succeed.
3. Disadvantaged job seekers will benefit from tailored and integrated services that build on their strengths.
4. Enhanced service quality can be underpinned by reduced caseloads, service continuity and increased capability.

These themes are discussed in turn.

The future model will require a clear definition of 'disadvantage' in the labour market

Some participants noted the importance of maintaining a clear definition of 'disadvantage' in the labour market, so that there is clarity in the future system about how best to support job seekers who face multiple barriers to employment. Stakeholders saw the key factors contributing to disadvantage as being:

- long-term and intergenerational unemployment
- indigeneity
- location – e.g. in regional areas with thin labour markets
- age – with both young job seekers and mature age job seekers identified as being at risk of disadvantage
- health and mental health status
- housing status – particularly homelessness
- literacy – language and digital
- migrant status – particularly recent humanitarian entrants and those with English as an additional language
- justice system contact, including challenges associated with people released from prison and having a criminal record.

A number of stakeholders argued against the term “disadvantage/d” saying that it suggests a deficit mentality rather than a strengths-based model. No alternatives were proposed. However, on this point, one stakeholder proposed a model where ‘disadvantage’ could be defined relative to the local labour market. In such an approach, the level or nature of ‘disadvantage’ would be interpreted along the lines of ‘fitness for available jobs’ in the local area, creating a regional benchmark. The intent would not be to deny the need for basic language, literacy, life skills or other fundamental supports that long-term unemployed people might need. Rather the point would be to better target the service interventions and skills development needed to align with jobs that are actually in demand locally.

4.3.2 A strong emphasis on job readiness can help disadvantaged job seekers

Many stakeholders in most consultations supported the emphasis in the discussion paper on job readiness, with some seeing a distinct difference between services and supports to remove non-vocational barriers and those associated with job seeking. Indeed a few thought that services to support job readiness should be contractually separated from other employment services as a specialist service and as a precursor to job search activity. In this context, some participants made the point that many of the barriers to job readiness were outside the scope of employment services, such as homelessness and mental health.

“We’ve got an enormous challenge on our hands when it comes to disadvantage...we need to be really bold and really brave, because it involves real change. Two different employment services systems are necessary. Employment should be the long-term goal, but so much more comes before this”

- Community services organisation, Adelaide community forum

A frequent comment was that many disadvantaged job seekers lacked the ‘soft skills’ required to find and retain employment. One employer suggested the articulation of a clear list of basic skills and behaviours as a checklist for job seekers and service providers. Assurance that job seekers had these skills and behaviours would improve incentives for employers to participate in government-sponsored employment services.

Several stakeholders proposed that the new model incorporate gradual transition to work options for disadvantaged job seekers, rather than assuming an immediate shift to full- time employment. Proposals included:

- increased use of work experience, internships and apprenticeships
- job seekers starting with part time and/or casual work, building up and transitioning to longer term roles over time, particularly in regions and sectors with high rates of casualisation (e.g. hospitality)
- greater recognition of self-employment and entrepreneurship activity.

One participant proposed the introduction of a job guarantee – with the Commonwealth Government as the employer of last resort – in order to ensure that all job seekers gained work experience to support the development of job readiness skills and behaviours.

“Going from intergenerational unemployment to 30 hours a week is daunting – people need to transition to full-time employment over time”

- Employer, Darwin roundtable

4.3.3 Disadvantaged job seekers will benefit from tailored and integrated services that build on their strengths

There was strong support in all consultations for services that are tailored to the specific needs of disadvantaged job seekers, are integrated, easy to navigate, and reflect a strengths-based approach.

Person-centred tailored to the individual

As noted in section 3 many participants identified tailored services for disadvantaged job seekers as the most important thing to get right in the new system. All agreed that any future model should place the job seeker at the centre of the service system and treat disadvantaged job seekers as individuals with unique needs. With that in mind, stakeholders noted that employment service providers would, under a new model, need to: understand individuals' circumstances and aspirations; develop a plan for job seeker actions and supports; and identify, broker and in some cases provide the agreed services.

Several participants made the case for a focus on supporting job seekers to navigate a career path, rather than simply pursue a job. They observed that immediate achievement of an individual's aspirations was not always realistic, while a career path approach enabled a gradual build-up of skills and experience to ultimately position the person for success.

In many consultations, participants expressed support for approaches that enable flexible and tailored support to address the practical barriers to employment, including programs such as Transition to Work.

A few stakeholders made the point that some job seekers might never get work because of regional limitations and their own personal challenges. It was unclear what this meant for future employment services arrangements (as opposed to industry or regional development policies), but echoed earlier comments (in the discussion on goals) about the need to think broadly about social and economic participation.

Integrated services

Most consultations raised the value of coordinated or wrap-around services that support job seekers holistically. Two dimensions of such integration were identified:

- Creating a connected network of employment services, with incentives for collaboration between providers.
- Employment service providers linking job seekers to broader services to help them become job ready (e.g. allied health providers, housing organisations, training providers) including through use of the Employment Fund.

Service models that enable collaboration within a market setting are discussed in section 4.9.

Strengths-based approach

Many service providers and some job seeker representatives emphasised the importance of a strengths-based approach to supporting disadvantaged job seekers. Such an approach emphasises the identification of an individual's existing skills, experience, behaviours and aspirations, and the articulation of strategies to build on these. By contrast, a deficit model focusses on identifying challenges and strategies to overcome them.

A strengths-based approach would need to be reflected in the assessment tool, service planning, measures of progress, and in the incentives provided both to job seekers and service providers. For example, a points system that positively rewards job seekers for achieving interim outcomes could be introduced. This concept, and the issue of assessment, are discussed in sections 4.7 and 4.6 respectively.

A few stakeholders identified the need to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias that might arise – specifically the assumptions made about a job seeker's capability or level of motivation, which might have their root in ageist, racist or gender-based stereotypes. This implied a potential consideration in seeking to continually improve workforce capability in the employment services industry.

4.3.4 Enhanced service quality can be underpinned by reduced caseloads, service continuity and increased capability

Participants at most consultations agreed with the proposal in the discussion paper to reduce caseloads as a precondition for increasing service quality for disadvantaged job seekers. This would allow for a shift in emphasis from quantity to quality, including a significant increase in face-to-face support.

More face-to-face and personalised support

All participants supported the argument – frequently made – that there was a need to free-up capacity in the system to enable more tailored and intensive support to disadvantaged job seekers. In that context, most participants expressed the view that these job seekers would not be able to avail themselves of online services, due to a lack of access to technology or to low digital literacy.

While some acknowledged that a blended approach (digital and face-to-face services) could work, many cautioned against any assumptions that digital services would be effective for those facing multiple disadvantage. This revealed a tension between an argument to improve the ‘agency’ of all job seekers and a reluctance in some cases to relinquish some control or change the role of the employment consultant as a mediator for the job seeker.

“Technology is not helpful [to disadvantaged job seekers]. Most don't have access to online services or if they do they don't have data or credit. Disadvantage is more complex and job seekers with complex needs require personal support with a long term focus.”

- Social worker, Adelaide community forum

Several participants argued that the role of the employment consultant or case manager should be cast as one of ‘mentor’ or ‘coach’, to reflect a perceived need for a more proactive and supportive approach to the more disadvantaged cohort. One went further to say that there should be an ‘advocate’ for the job seeker who could assist that person to articulate needs and ensure that sufficient support was being provided.

“The discussion paper's focus on technology is concerning given job seeker disadvantage. A lot of disadvantaged job seekers have limited experience with and access to technology. In fact technology may be an additional barrier for job seekers”

- Registered training organisation, Adelaide community forum

Service provider capability and continuity

Stakeholders in many consultations identified the importance of trust and relationships in successful support, particularly to the most disadvantaged job seekers such as Indigenous people facing intergenerational unemployment, and people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues. These stakeholders highlighted the need for time and continuity of service personnel in developing relationships based on trust.

In this vein, many noted also the importance of attracting and retaining service personnel with distinct and well-developed capabilities to support different disadvantaged job seeker cohorts and at different stages. For example, the capabilities required to identify and broker services to support job readiness were different to those required to deliver those services, and different again to the capabilities required to provide job search and placement support services.

Post-placement support

Several participants identified the need for ongoing post-placement services to assist job seekers to stay in employment. There was strong agreement with the proposition that it is crucial for those with little or no experience of work to be actively supported in the first few weeks – at least through to receipt of the first pay – to ensure that they complete the transition successfully. Such support could take the form of check-ins with both the job seeker and the employer (ways in which technology can be leveraged for this purpose are explored in section 4.4).

“We see that if people have the support to get through the first one or two weeks, once they see their first couple pay checks it helps them to stick around”

-Employer, Murray Bridge

One participant suggested that the service model could continue through employment, and support individuals to progress from an entry-level position towards their longer-term career aspiration. This would also free up an entry-level position for another job seeker.

4.3.5 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- Be clear about definition of 'disadvantage' and explore alternative language for those who face multiple barriers to employment services.
- Related to this, future communication around the new model could include an articulation of the scale and scope of the cohort of disadvantaged job seekers that are likely to be the focus of employment services. This would help to manage expectations and avoid assumptions that the 'disadvantaged' cohort corresponds directly and only to those who are currently categorised as Stream C.

Other considerations

- There was no deep engagement with the changing nature of work, the labour market or the economy and how this might affect those who are already entrenched in unemployment. For example, there was frequent reference to 'entry-level jobs' with no acknowledgement given to the decline in absolute numbers of such jobs. The challenge will be to ensure that job seekers can gain equivalent work experience and relevant skills for the new types of 'entry level' jobs. .
- It may be worth calling out the potential tension within arguments put by CSOs in particular that, on the one hand, emphasise giving disadvantaged job seekers choice and agency, and on the other, promote intensive face-to-face support with a mentor, coach or advocate who can ensure that the job seeker is fully supported every step of the way. While there is a significant proportion of disadvantaged job seekers who do need one-on-one and ongoing assistance, it is nevertheless important for there to be a goal, while providing such intensive support, to help people become more self-determining.

4.4. Empowering job seekers and employers through online services

Issues in chapter 4 of the discussion paper were discussed in roundtable consultation again using the personas of Dave, Stephanie or Brenda. We also drew on two business archetypes in the discussion paper, which were developed through prior user engagement. These were:

- The Shop – a small regional business facing problems of high staff turnover
- The Kingstons – a large corporate enterprise with a national network and desire to engage people who could adapt to different roles in the business

Online services were discussed in table-based discussions in the community forums.

In all cases participants were encouraged to think broadly about how to leverage data and technology, rather than be bound by what might be thought of as 'online' services.

The majority of stakeholders across Australia welcomed the discussion paper's proposals of harnessing the potential of online platforms. However, discussion tended to focus on improving access to existing information and current processes. Many stakeholders expressed reservations about the utility of online services for job seekers who lacked digital literacy.

Across the consultations, discussion covered five broad themes:

1. Enhanced job matching will be a core feature of future online services.
2. A future online platform offers potential for a broad range of additional functionality.
3. Effective online services should be accessible and easy to use.
4. The way online and face-to-face services are combined will be crucial to success.
5. All job seekers who want to access online services should be able to.

4.4.1 Enhanced job matching will be a core feature of future online services

Job matching functionality

There was almost unanimous agreement across all stakeholders that the greatest value online job services can offer is matching employers with job seekers (and vice versa). Many employers explained that under the current system they receive a large volume of applicants, the majority of which are manifestly unsuitable. As such, they would value a job seeker search functionality that could serve as a filter that saves time in the search for appropriate candidates. Smaller and regional employers saw this as particularly important.

Service providers and job-seeker representatives also identified job matching functionality as a core feature of future online services. The online system could provide access to a broader pool of jobs, outside those they have previously considered, and filter them to match the profile and aspirations of job seekers.

In addition, participants in most consultations pointed to the potential of an online system to facilitate enhanced information sharing about employers and job seekers so that:

- Employers could develop a better understanding of the job seeker and their skills and experience.
- Job seekers could develop a better understanding of the nature of the work environment and job requirements.

A few employer representatives went further to suggest the creation of virtual workplace environments, allowing job seekers to immerse themselves in the workplace and better understand the requirements of the job before their first day.

In combination, these features of future online services would, it was felt, create an opportunity to significantly increase the efficiency of the employment services system for both employers and job seekers, by reducing the volume of applications with low probability of success. However, several participants noted

that this opportunity would only be realised if there were to be a change in job seeker incentives away from reaching a target for the number of job applications made within a certain period (see section 4.7).

Some participants noted a number of limitations with online job matching, including:

- The potential to exacerbate the 'residualisation' of disadvantaged job seekers and the long term unemployed. In other words, there was concern that any computer-based system might entrench the problems that certain job seekers faced to be properly considered for a role. One employer suggested that this could be countered by designing the system to flag potential employers' incentives (e.g. wage subsidies) alongside disadvantaged job seeker profiles in search reports.
- The importance of personal judgement to look beyond the online profile. For example, one large employer representative argued that online information could never entirely replace a jobactive consultant who personally knows an individual job seeker.

Employers often stated the need for this filter to include an assessment criterion of their needs, then match this to job seekers' profiles, who themselves have created a holistic profile, filled out upon entry into the system through the assessment stage.

Underlying requirements

In most consultations, participants identified the effective collection, use and management of data as an underlying requirement to deliver effective job matching functionality. They recognised the importance of getting quality data into the system, noting that this would require employers and jobseekers to provide detailed profiles, updated regularly. Several providers suggested that job seekers (particularly disadvantaged job seekers) would need support to tailor their online profiles to reflect strengths that could then be recognised by the search algorithm.

In terms of data use, participants identified two sets of issues:

1. **Data analytics.** Many participants were excited by the potential of sophisticated data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence to support job matching at an individual level and the analysis and management of trends across locations, cohorts and industries. However, there were very few specific ideas about how this would operate.
2. **Data sharing.** Several participants raised the potential for data to be shared across government agencies in order to gain a more holistic understanding of job seeker needs, particularly for disadvantaged cohorts. As the primary owner of job seeker data, the Department ideally could (with appropriate consent) link to other government data sets to better understand job seeker profiles and risks. Several participants also emphasised the importance of maintaining data centrally so that multiple service providers could easily access a job seeker's profile and history. This would help avoid issues that can sometimes arise where disadvantaged job seekers re-experience trauma through repeated assessment processes. Several participants pointed out that a higher degree of data linkage would require changes to privacy arrangements.

On the latter point many stakeholders said the new service model would need to both provide reassurance that the information would remain secure, and inform job seekers of the benefits of disclosure. A few stakeholders representing job seekers were hesitant about data sharing and providing private information to the system, specifically citing poor previous experiences with government driven digital platforms. However, the majority of participants agreed that effective use of data could deliver an improved user experience but must be carefully managed.

4.4.2 A future online platform offers potential for a broad range of additional functionality

Participants in all consultations identified a range of additional functionality that could be offered by an online platform.

Job-seeker support

Most ideas for additional functionality centred on support for job seekers. They fell into three areas, set out below.

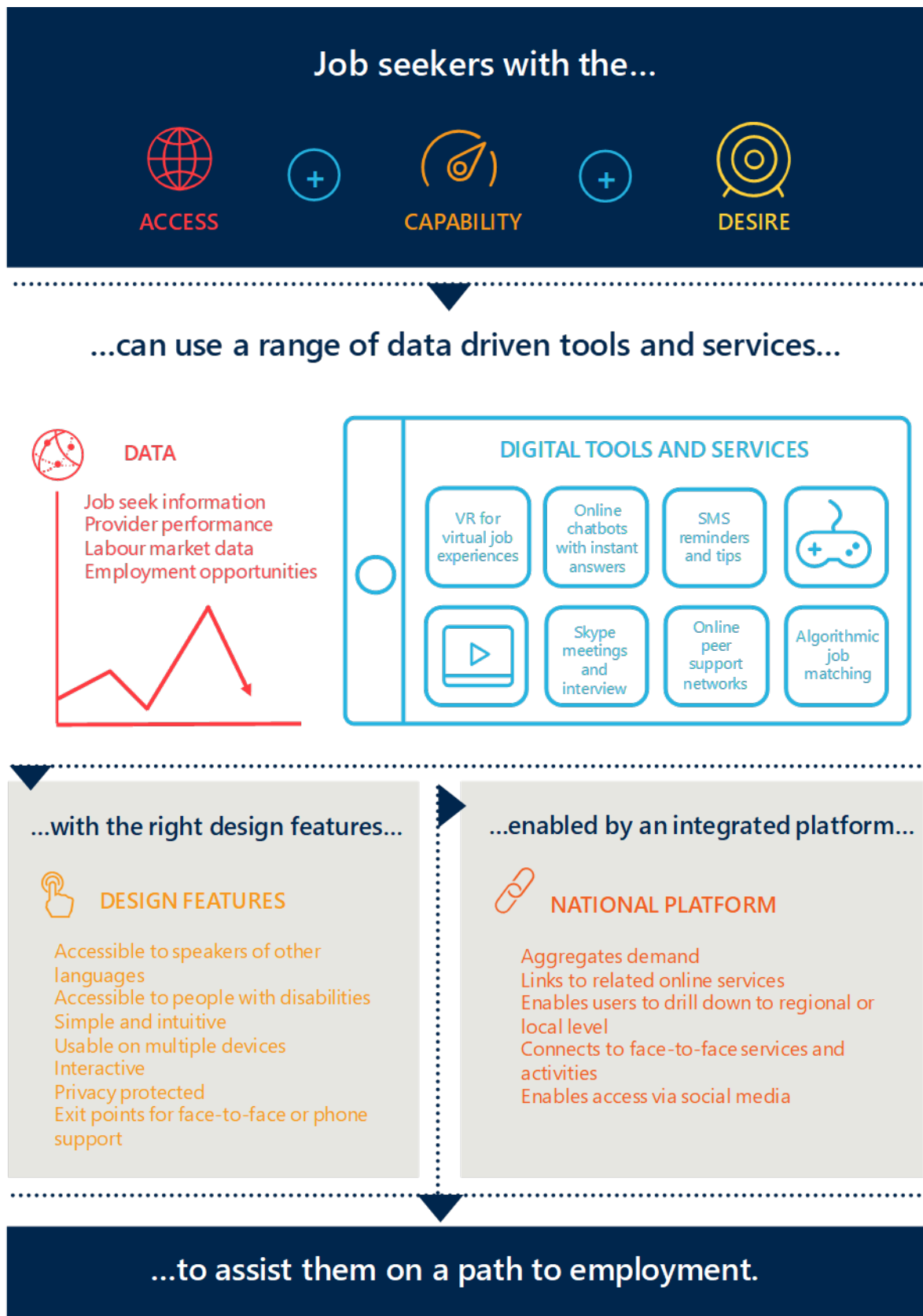
Figure 4 | Three broad ways to leverage technology to support job seekers

Support for successful job search	Support to build job readiness and vocational skills	Support to navigate the employment services system and online platform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile builder, enabling job seekers to easily create a profile and add to it over time, including their goals, interests, hours, qualifications, experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer connection such as career mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One stop shop to provide all information relevant to job seekers in one place, including information about entitlements, services and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV / resume builder, drawing on data from the jobseeker's profile and tailored to specific job opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to online training for vocational and non-vocational skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'How to' videos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview practice, potentially using a virtual interview environment (including virtual interviewers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial counselling advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chat bots/virtual assistants to aid navigation, answer common questions and provide an interactive and engaging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portal for feedback from employers after unsuccessful applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information about alternative forms of employment, such as the gig economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 support for troubleshooting and personalised support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information about region or industry specific career opportunities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to talk to a provider or case manager, using messaging, voice or video
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career plan development support 		

Several participants noted that the online platform should build on or provide links to existing tools, rather than involve creation of entirely new tools. A few participants highlighted the potential to connect a new online system with existing online job aggregators and recruitment firms, going beyond hyperlinks to system integration.

Figure 5 overleaf summarises the value that stakeholders thought could be derived from effectively leveraged technology, as well as the design considerations that government was encouraged to keep in mind.

Figure 5 | Value of leveraging technology



In regional consultations some stakeholders proposed innovative ideas for mobile applications to support job seekers. For example:

- When considering the needs of 'Stephanie' several participants in one discussion suggested an app on how to go about job-hunting for those who had been out of the workforce for some time.
- Those considering the needs of 'Dave' proposed an app that would allow him to track his own time, provide comments or questions to the provider and the employer and enable a quick check-in on his level of comfort and degree of support he was receiving. It could also offer encouragement and recognition for achievements.

Employer and provider support

Stakeholders also suggested functionality to support employers and providers. Many of these ideas were similar to those for job seekers – for example, an employer profile builder and a one-stop shop to navigate the employment services system. In addition, participants offered the following ideas:

- A separate employer portal and provider portal
- Information on potential incentives linked to individual job seekers where relevant
- Integration of job search functionality with the recruitment systems of larger employers
- Access to a common video communication platform for providers and employers, including to conduct interviews and case management discussions remotely.

Performance monitoring and incentives

Some stakeholders discussed the potential for a system that the Department and providers could use to track the progress of job seekers and incentivise them to remain 'activated' within the employment services system. Ideas include:

- Job seeker self-management (potentially on an 'opt-in' basis), enabling job seekers to record and track their own job seeking activity (training, applications etc.) against their job plans. For some this could involve automation of some aspects of the Targeted Compliance Framework, perhaps using a simple traffic light system to track progress against job plans and activation requirements
- System-generated flags for job seekers who had been wrongly assessed and/or who were at risk of non-compliance. Many stakeholders (particularly service providers) emphasised that in the first instance, this should be used to trigger additional contact and support rather than for punitive measures. For example, several stakeholders proposed that if a job seeker who had been assessed as requiring only online services did not actively use the system for a period, they should be contacted and/or re-assessed.

Platform-as-a-service

One of the bolder ideas to emerge was to re-conceive the system quite differently – not as one involving commissioning of a national network of employment service providers, but rather as a fully digitally enabled system that aggregates and defines demand, links information and available services, and commissions services in direct response to identified gaps and needs.

For example, a job seeker might access (independently or with help) a platform via any number of channels (including social media). They could look for jobs, training and related supports (again this could be a guided search) in the region. Some of the services might be accessible online – for example, a webinar on résumé writing or interview preparation. Other services might be face-to-face. Any tier of government and any valid organisation could place information on the site so that it is easily linked to and discoverable.

A combination of data analytics on site visits and usage, as well as self-assessment and questionnaire responses (what type of service/work are you looking for in your area?) would enable a picture to emerge of demand and service gaps. This information aggregated with other information nationally would then trigger a procurement process that is more targeted and responsive to actual need.

In this concept, government's role is first-and-foremost to build, curate and maintain the platform, while the commissioning function becomes a related, subordinate activity.

4.4.3 Effective online services should be accessible and easy to use

Many stakeholders across Australia emphasised the importance of an accessible and easy to use online system that is tailored to the needs and digital literacy of the user.

Physical access

Stakeholders in most consultations (particularly in regional areas or areas with high levels of disadvantage) discussed access to the online system. Ideas to maximise access included:

- Making the system accessible through a mobile and tablet friendly applications
- Working with telecommunications providers to ensure access to the system was excluded from data use caps
- Providing computers and other devices in Commonwealth Government and service providers shop fronts to enable people to access the system.

Several participants in regional areas raised the issue of internet speeds as an ongoing challenge.

Useability

Many participants highlighted the importance of a simple and user-friendly interface. Some suggested it be tailored to the needs and digital literacy of the user, so that larger employers and more digitally skilled job seekers could access advanced features and customise their experience.

The discussion around The Shop persona often emphasised the importance of building an interface that would work for small businesses, with key features and information being quickly accessible.

In conversations about job seeker needs, a few participants noted that alternative language formats would be required to cater to the needs of refugee and migrant populations.

One stakeholder offered a very specific suggestion on language: noting that "the quality of questions – even online – can establish or turn off trust in the system," she argued for the use of 'emotional intelligence' in the choice of language. Warmer and simpler language such as 'like', 'prefer', 'want', and 'feel' would be most effective. On a related point, she argued that any self-reporting should enable a free text opportunity to ask: 'what do you want to tell us?' Such questions were crucial to building a deeper understanding of the job seeker while offering a useful steer on how best to assist.

On a more general point, many stakeholders commented that job seekers, particularly those who were disadvantaged, might not know how to use a computer but would be comfortable using a smartphone.

Digital literacy

It was proposed that the model include digital literacy in job seeker capability assessments (see more in Section 4.6) with a few stakeholders suggesting that the initial stage of the assessment (pre-screening) be conducted online only. This would help determine the digital literacy skills (and identify access issues) of a job seeker. There was almost unanimous agreement that when delivering online services, if a person was determined digitally illiterate at assessment, they should receive support not only to access the system but to improve their skills. Further, milestones to improve digital skills could be incorporated into an agreed outcomes framework for the job seeker, related to their job plan.

4.4.4 The way online and face-to-face services are combined will be crucial to success

Some stakeholders cautioned that online services ought not to be viewed as a service in and of itself, separate from face-to-face services. There were particular concerns about imposing new systems and weakening personal connections – potentially resulting in inaccurate assessments, an inappropriate level of services and worse outcomes for the job seeker.

Noting that online only services would not be appropriate for all, many stakeholders said they would be

concerned if some job seekers were unable to access in-person services for at least 12 months (as suggested in the discussion paper). There were strong views that earlier intervention would be required for those unable to rely entirely on the online system for support. (This links with section 4.6 which outlines stakeholders' views on reassessment, including the potential for online triggers to intervene with in-person services should job seekers be struggling to self-manage.)

Consistent with this view, many stakeholders endorsed the notion of a blended model incorporating both face-to-face and online components. That said, many stakeholders stated that online services should be available for anyone that would wish to use them.

4.4.5 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- Re-think the language of 'online' as it invokes websites and desktop computers. It might be better to refer to 'digital tools and services'.
- Note the need for sensitivity in engaging with regions that might not be well served by broadband.
- Be careful to signal that the Government is not proposing a 'digital by default' system.

Other considerations

- There is a need to build more definition around the three types of service: fully digital, blended and fully face-to-face. In so doing, it might be worth giving more emphasis to the goal of helping people shift to a blended model.
- Digital tools are not well understood. The Government should not be held back in its ambition by the difficulty people are having with imagining a radically different range of offerings. It will be important to continue to push thinking beyond use of websites and apps. Note that it would be possible to introduce some of these tools now – that is, build on the current pilot of online servicing.
- For employers, the focus in discussions of this chapter was very much on job matching. It may be of value to push the thinking further on how data and digital technology can be more fully leveraged to their advantage.
- Related to this, the issue of integration with existing systems of large employers (and avoiding duplication) may be problematic and is perhaps worth exploring sooner rather than later.
- On the issue of data, there is a sense among providers of both potential and unease about the use of algorithms, which serves to highlight the need for reliable and accurate data to build trust and value into the system.

4.5 Better meeting the needs of employers

The questions in this chapter of the discussion paper were considered through the lenses of two archetypal businesses: The Shop and Kingstons. Apart from considering employer needs, stakeholders were asked for views on the distinct value proposition of the government-funded service. This was helpful in clarifying views on the extent to which employment services in the future should cater to all job seekers (regardless of whether they are in receipt of income support) and compete with private recruitment firms.

The key points to arise from this discussion were as follows:

1. Employers care most about filling positions quickly with appropriately-skilled candidates.
2. Employers welcome a productive relationship with providers.
3. Support to achieve sustained employment is more valued than financial incentives.
4. The type of support employers want can vary significantly.
5. There were mixed views about the value proposition of government funded employment services. Each

is discussed in turn.

4.5.1 Employers care most about filling positions quickly with appropriately-skilled candidates

The strong and consistent view about employer priorities was first and foremost that they want a candidate who is a good fit for the role in the business they are looking to fill. That meant a job seeker who was motivated to stay in work, had the necessary baseline skills and qualifications (e.g. a valid driver's licence), would turn up every day and put effort into doing well and learning. It is important to note that employers often cited the need for appropriately-skilled individuals for the role they were looking to fill, but the skills in questions were often behavioural skills, motivation and other 'soft skills'; most employers placed less value on technical ability. Employers also stressed the importance for the assessment and matching processes to include these characteristics. (This is discussed further in section 4.6.)

"Soft skills are more important than hard skills."

- Employer, Murray Bridge

Employers said they were prepared to show a new employee the ropes but became frustrated by poor, punctuality, attendance or attitudes to work. Most employers consulted were able to recount at least one experience in which job seeker placements produced disappointing results and additional costs to the business. Several larger employers remarked that they would prefer to spend more on private recruiters for a 'better-quality' candidate than to persist with a government-funded service that did not deliver 'good candidates'.

"There are only three questions I ask when assessing a job seeker. Will they show up? Will they have the right equipment? And will they work hard?"

- Employer, Brisbane

4.5.2 Employers welcome a productive relationship with providers

Employer representatives said it was very important for them to deal with a provider who understood their business and who showed:

- a commitment to helping develop their workforce
- willingness to maintain corporate knowledge about the business
- responsiveness to their needs, including for advice about employment incentives and compliance requirements
- ability to provide suitable candidates and to work with the employer to ensure the candidate settles in well.

Regardless of size, most employers preferred to have an ongoing relationship with a single provider, with a few large employers remarking that they did not like being approached by many different providers and new consultants. There was not unanimity on this point, however; a few noted that it was helpful for providers to approach the employer to make their services known, and for the employer to be able to exercise some choice. This implied support for some competition within a region.

"Employers want better relationships with us as providers. They need a trusted source"

- Employment service provider, Parramatta roundtable

In other contexts, the point was made that large corporates might have a number of providers with whom they dealt nationally. But at the regional level, typically a single provider was able to develop a relationship

with the local staff who could provide proactive and well-tailored support.

4.5.3 Support to achieve sustained employment is more valued than financial incentives

Most stakeholders acknowledged the value of financial incentives as a way of defraying the extra costs of engaging a job seeker who requires more training and support; they did not see the funding as a 'bonus' or supplement. That said, generally speaking, employers said they attached more value to the provision of someone who was right for the job and appropriate supports to be successful over the longer term.

For several employers, especially smaller employers, the 'red tape' associated with claiming any wage subsidy payment was too great a deterrent to participating in the schemes. For some others, wage subsidies would not sufficiently overcome the issues (and costs) associated with placing someone who was a poor fit, so unless the quality of the candidate could be confirmed, they were hesitant to seek a subsidy. On this point, one community service organisation in Sydney suggested that the wage subsidies be repurposed as funding to help a job seeker become job ready, potentially through better incentivising internships and training programs, rather than linking the subsidy to a job placement.

"Incentives will not compensate for a bad fit. We still need to serve customers"

- Employer, Parramatta

The point was made a few times that the award structure for apprentices was proving to be a significant deterrent for employers to take on people 21 or older. This was a major source of frustration for Group Training Organisations who were keen to place highly motivated older but unskilled, long-term unemployed job seekers into apprenticeship roles, but found that employers were not prepared to pay adult wages.

As noted in section 4.7.3, many stakeholders highlighted the importance of post-placement supports for those job seekers who need assistance with their transition into work. The idea of support for employers through this period was also mentioned, with the point being that employers could benefit from advice on how to help a new starter from a disadvantaged background to be successful.

In this context, it was noted that the current retention bonus is awarded at the 6-month mark. According to a few employers, this contributed to a short-term mentality, and did not work as an incentive to invest in the capability of the employee to develop into a long-term member of staff. One provider observed that employers often did not invest in job seeker development in the first six months (which is undoubtedly when it is most needed) because they were uncertain up to that point whether the job seeker was motivated to stay in the role.

"It is very hard to keep someone not right for the job for longer than six months. At six months you know the quality of the worker and to what extent they are worth investing in"

- Employment service provider, Maitland

For several employers, there were issues with newly placed job seekers arriving without a good-enough understanding of the environment in which they would be working or the requirements of the job. They were therefore supportive of internships, trials or workplace placements to enable both parties to test the fit. One stakeholder suggested a 'buy one, get two' model to encourage more work experience opportunities. In other words, if an employer agreed to take on one job seeker for a work experience placement, they would be offered a second one at no cost to them (and with the same supports from the employment service provider).

4.5.4 The type of support employers want can vary significantly

The use of the two employer archetypes highlighted some of the differences in needs of small and large employers and spoke to a bigger point about the degree of variety among employers and their priorities. (It

is worth noting in this context that there were several representatives of community services, training providers and other organisations who identified also as employers in the consultations.)

The capacity of the internal HR team was cited as a key determining factor in the relationship that an employer developed with a provider. Larger employers with in-house and dedicated HR capability were able to write their own position descriptions, for example, and more easily meet compliance requirements.

By contrast, small businesses were often run by an individual who is also the owner, manager, accountant and HR Department. While such employers were often motivated to employ locally, they were often put off by the 'red tape' required to place a job seeker.

“Employers need an individual who will get a job, perform in a job and stay in a job – it should be simple, but now they go to private recruiters because the public service is so complicated”

- Employment service provider, Melbourne

Stakeholders discussed small businesses' need for the system to provide assistance in understanding their workforce needs and finding them the right people to fill a job over a long term. This was especially an issue for regional businesses (like The Shop). Having an easy-to-use system, whether it be an in-person service or digital platform, was also important.

From the perspective of a larger employer, the key driver for engaging with the employment services system was to fulfil corporate social responsibility (CSR) and diversity targets. When discussing the support large employers need, conversation often centred around three key areas:

1. simple dealings with one point of contact
2. effective services to deliver high quality candidates for interview in a timely manner
3. an online system that can integrate easily with their own.

4.5.5 There were mixed views about the value proposition of government-funded services

There was general acceptance that the jobactive brand was neither well known nor well regarded among employers. The government-funded employment services have a small share of the market and needed to build a reputation as consistently offering high-quality and reliable candidates and services. Several stakeholders acknowledged that the stigma associated with jobactive's main clientele was a key barrier to promoting more interest and engagement by employers in the employment services system. For them, it was important that the providers be able to source the full range of candidates they may require.

However, a greater number of stakeholders, notably larger employers, thought that the distinct value of the government-funded providers was that they do work with clients who typically face more barriers. Indeed, the argument was put that providers' ability to work with employers to take on people from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds was their greatest competitive strength (other than their service being free-of-charge). Many employers – at least those represented in the consultations – saw the government-funded services as the most appropriate partner for meeting their CSR goals.

For smaller employers, they valued being able to use government-funded providers as a way to give back to their community (and keep people in the region) by making local hires. They also were typically not in a position to engage the services of a private recruitment firm due to the costs involved.

4.5.6 Issues and implications

Communications and future engagement

- Position government-backed providers of employment services as being particularly valuable partners for employers who are looking to meet their CSR and diversity goals. Make clear that this is where the focus will be in terms of promoting provider-employer relations.

- Ensure that all communications and engagement strategies take account of the variety of employers and corporate structures. This includes making a distinction between what services appeal to 'head office' and what is required by the regional operations.

Other considerations

- Explore options for making the apprenticeship scheme more flexible and accessible to older workers.

4.6 Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

Discussion on assessment arose in the context of support for a more personalised and strength-based approach to job seeker support, with groups adopting the Dave, Stephanie and Brenda personas invited consider what the assessment should cover. Most stakeholders saw potential in a more comprehensive assessment but there were differing views on the extent to which an assessment tool, as opposed to an assessment process, could identify the full range of a job seeker's interests and abilities.

Consistent with the views presented in the discussion paper, all stakeholders saw assessment as an important part of building a comprehensive understanding of job seekers, helping to determine the required intensity of support required and allows personalisation of individuals' pathways to work. Some employment service providers and RTOs identified job seeker assessment and the subsequent classification of the job seeker as one of the most important components that the new service model needed to 'get right'. This was echoed in the survey responses (see section 3).

While stakeholders did not explicitly discuss the two options presented in the discussion paper, the proposal for staggered assessment with initial pre-screening (option 2) was generally well received. Certainly, there was agreement that the JSCI was not sufficient, nor sufficiently sophisticated, to serve as the prime assessment tool. As noted by one participant, the JSCI is primarily a screening and a rationing tool, but a well-designed assessment process could be used more broadly. This participant³⁴ enumerated 10 separate purposes for assessment, which are set out in Figure 6 below.

³ Dr May Lam, Director, Research at Marist 180.

Figure 6 | Ways in which assessment processes can be conceptualised and used

1. **Screen job seekers to identify who should be referred** to a further, deeper assessment (e.g. ESAt).
2. **Allocate resources to job seekers** by assigning them to a category of service with entitlements up to a certain value or with services of a defined nature.
3. **Validate/test available information** on the job seeker, in which the job seeker is able to review and respond to what is known about that person (including data on work history and welfare supports as well as any online resumes/profiles). This can then serve as a form of self-assessment, grounded in independently- sourced data.
4. **Identify perceived obstacles to getting a job**, and what the job seeker thinks would help. What is getting in the way?
5. **Understand attitudes and motivations** through questions such as required weekly income, how far the job seeker would travel, how broad or narrow are their job goals, whether they would work for the award wage, how they would rather spend their time.
6. **Gauge likelihood of using different types of services**, including whether they prefer online, face-to-face, or drop-in interactions, and whether they would be good candidates for training, career counselling, financial counselling etc.
7. **Assess the job seeker's propensity to take advice and use information**, including understanding what would be important as a condition of using the support offered (e.g. transport might be a barrier). This includes understanding what would deter them as well.
8. **Consider the job seeker's propensity to change or benefit from activities** to enable a deep assessment of the opportunity costs of offering one service over another, or finer judgements about what will have the most impact at what stage in the journey. It also forces assumptions about 'what is likely to follow' to be surfaced and challenged as necessary.
9. **Eligibility for ancillary services** such as housing assistance, other programs or local trials.
10. **Probability of remaining unemployed given current conditions**, with reference to local labour market data that increasingly enables more accurate analysis of the types of jobs that could be available for the job seeker – not actually vacancies – but information on the extent to which relevant opportunities are likely to emerge. The goal is not to categorise someone as 'unemployable' but rather to focus on what other productive activities and skill development s/he could undertake, and to be better informed about potential pathways to emerging jobs in the region.

Most stakeholders recognised that the purpose of the JSCI was to sort job seekers into categories of support required (i.e. the 'rationing' function as described above in Figure 6), with several noting that many job seekers – particularly those recently released from prison – were mis-categorised into Stream A. They argued that assessment in the new employment services model ought to be geared towards developing a more well rounded picture of capabilities, interests and needs. A more detailed assessment process would improve job matching and therefore deliver more sustainable employment outcomes for job seekers (as well as more satisfied employers).

"Having the right assessment tool is key. When (the wrong) people go into Stream A ...like ex- offenders, there isn't much we can do to help them...These people will be cast aside by the employment service provider and end up back in prison"

- Government representative, Mandurah roundtable

The key insights to emerge from the discussion on assessment were as follows:

1. A strengths-based, forward looking assessment process would enable better understanding of a job seeker's needs and context.

2. Assessment should cover a wider range of skills, including digital literacy and 'soft' skills.
3. Views differed on the extent to which assessments could be completed online.
4. Clear mechanisms are needed to trigger an assessment or reassessment.

Each of these is considered below.

4.6.1 A strengths-based, forward looking assessment process would enable better understanding of a job seekers' needs and context

The majority of stakeholders recognised the importance of accurate and holistic assessment and its vital role in determining the individual needs and strengths of job seekers to provide tailored support. All types of stakeholders said the assessment should be forward-looking to not only inform the employment service provider of potentially suitable employment opportunities, but to provide insight into the job seeker's training and education needs. Providers argued that the quality of the assessment increased the likelihood of the job seeker attaining sustained employment.

Almost all stakeholders expressed a preference for a strengths-based approach to assessment, partly as a matter of principle, partly to improve job matching and pre-employment interventions, and partly to drive engagement by job seekers.

As explored further in section 4.7, an effective assessment tool also enables a more tailored activation framework, with incremental milestones of progress along a path to employment. Such an approach is consistent with the notion in the discussion paper of re-assessment, to ensure that an accurate view of a job seeker's capabilities and interests is maintained.

"The JSCI is sometimes mistaken to be an individual assessment tool. It isn't an assessment; it figures out which division they belong to. [Assessment in the new service model] needs to be personalised and strength-based"

- Employment service provider, Perth roundtable

"The current assessment is based on barriers and compliance – like do you have a driver's licence – rather than strengths of the job seekers"

- Employment service provider, Melbourne community forum

"Effective assessment is key to identifying risk factors and relative disadvantage, and identifying the solutions to address complex barriers"

- Employment service provider, Sydney roundtable

4.6.2 Assessment should cover a wider range of skills, including digital and 'soft' skills

Most stakeholders saw the potential to build on the JSCI instrument to capture a wider range of job seeker knowledge, experience and ability. While discussion rarely went into details on what specifically should be assessed, there was strong agreement among many stakeholders that it was important to capture 'soft' skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, as well as understanding of 'the basics' such as the need for punctuality and reliability. The majority of employers represented said these skills were often more important than work experience or technical ability.

This led to a brief discussion on the use of psychometric testing or similar diagnostic tools. Several stakeholders were quick to dismiss the value of such instruments. Rather, they saw face-to-face interviews as being the best vehicle for assessments (This is discussed further below).

“The information being collected is not the most effective in assessing job seekers. Asking them ‘what level of education do you have?’ does not capture the literacy or numeracy skills of a job seeker”

- Job service provider, Adelaide community forum

As noted earlier, many stakeholders identified the importance of assessing job seekers’ ability to use online services, given these were like to become more significant to service delivery. Some participants suggested to avoid ‘assessment saturation’, the initial classifying assessment could involve a digital literacy component.

4.6.3 Views differed on the extent to which assessments could be completed online

Most stakeholder groups felt that the delivery mechanism (digital or face-to-face) was imperative to extracting the right information. The issue of trust emerged again as an issue in this context, for it was an important factor in determining the honesty and detail of job seeker responses. It followed that any assessment process needed to be flexible enough to allow for varying relationships and levels of trust the job seeker has with the system.

While many stakeholders thought that job seekers were more likely to provide honest responses to an in-person assessment, some providers said that, in their experience, online assessment encouraged greater levels of honesty.

Some stakeholders said it was preferable to use online assessment to target enhanced services to those who need it most, in line with the suggestions in the discussion paper. By contrast, many expressed strong support for an initial face-to-face assessment for all job seekers. A few stakeholders stressed the importance of every job seeker receiving the initial assessment face-to-face by a trained professional given that, in their view, traits such as preferred working styles and interpersonal skills could not be detected through online assessments.

“There is a need to build trust with clients to better assess job seekers, there should be assurance that the information will be used appropriately. This could start with a phone call to build trust”

- Employment service provider, Adelaide community forum

4.6.4 Clear mechanisms are needed to trigger an assessment or reassessment

Many stakeholders highlighted the need to recognise that assessments are reflective of a point in time and represented where the job seeker fit into the prevailing labour market. It was largely agreed that reassessment should be factored into the design of the model so that there could be a timely and appropriate response to changes in job seekers’ needs and circumstances.

Most participants expressed the need for continued assessment, especially after job seekers reach important milestones (e.g. completion of training). This was particularly important for disadvantaged job seekers as they moved towards their goal of securing work. Reassessment triggered by changes in circumstances was mentioned by many employment service providers and RTOs as an effective method of driving job seeker motivation.

In line with the discussions around trust and a strengths-based approach, participants suggested the need to better understand triggers for assessment. It was suggested that reassessment should not result in withdrawal of benefits which would dis-incentivise clients; assessment needed to tie better into job seeker incentives and activation frameworks.

4.6.5 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- Emphasise an intent to enable a strengths-based and targeted approach to assessment.
- Commit to prototyping and testing new tools and processes with users through the development stage.

Other considerations

- As assessment takes on different forms and is introduced at different phases, further thought may be required on the credentials of those who are able to conduct the tests and interpret the results.

4.7 Incentives for job seekers to find work

Issues in this chapter were again discussed either through the lens of the job seeker personas (Dave, Brenda or Stephanie) or in table-based discussions in the community forums. In all cases the focus was very much on how to promote ongoing engagement in the employment services system and process. Participants were not forthcoming with any specific suggestions about how 'flexible activation' could be interpreted or applied.

The key points to emerge from these discussions were that, to keep job seekers motivated, there needed to be:

1. Good service culture underpinned by a personalised approach.
2. Activation frameworks with goals and milestones co-developed with the job seeker.
3. More support for job seekers when transitioning into work.
4. A reduced focus on compliance to promote greater responsibility and agency.

Each of these is considered below.

4.7.1 Good service culture underpinned by a personalised approach

Many stakeholders identified the removal of the current stigma around employment services, particularly the relationships job seekers maintain with service providers, as a key thing to get right in the new service system.

A few alluded to the negative connotations of Centrelink and jobactive and the fact that job seekers' bad experiences with providers can deter them from engaging with the employment services system. Most therefore saw the maintenance of a good service culture as a strong incentive for job seekers to stay positively engaged.

"More equity is required, removing stigma from engaging with services is important"

- Employment services provider, Brisbane

Features of a good service culture, as described by stakeholders, are summarised below.

Underpinning these themes was a shared desire for capacity in the system to offer a more personalised approach (as noted earlier). For some stakeholders, this implied a need for a single point of contact for a job seeker who could make the link to colleagues within the provider or to external partners. This idea was echoed by others who highlighted the need (where relevant) for a case manager to support the job seeker from entry to exit so as to maintain engagement and achieve better outcomes.

"Movement away from compliance and more focus on the first 12 months of unemployment may result in meaningful and sustainable work with mutual benefits for the job seeker and employer"

- Employment service provider, Hobart

Figure 7 | Good service culture

Features of a good service culture

'Good service culture' in this context meant slightly different things to different stakeholders, but common themes were:

- **Cultural appropriateness** – this is important issue particularly for Indigenous job seekers, but the issue of language barriers was also raised frequently by those representing the interests of refugee communities.
- **Meaningful interactions** – this refers to the notion that 'not every appointment needs to have an outcome'. In other words, several stakeholders observed that the goal needed to be; to build a trusting and honest relationship as a basis for then developing and executing a plan to secure employment (or self-employment). Other stakeholders framed this point in terms of the need to move away from process driven metrics (such as the minimum number of applications per week, or a focus on 12- and 26-week outcomes) and think instead of the arc of a job seeker's journey.
- **Empathetic and respectful providers** – the issue of language came up in this context. Some stakeholders said terms such as 'disadvantaged', 'work for the dole', 'long-term unemployed', 'demerits', 'non-compliance', and even 'incentives' can have deleterious effects on job seekers' motivation. One stakeholder argued that the term job seeker itself carried negative connotations (with 'candidate' potentially being a better alternative). More generally, there was strong support for an approach that aimed to build the esteem, confidence and agency of the job seeker.
- **Skilled and knowledgeable staff** – stakeholders commonly referred to specialist employment programs such as ParentsNext and Transition to Work and their personalised approach to activation as an effective way to manage and support job seekers. A key element was an understanding of the needs of the cohort being served. Other examples of this level of expertise were provided by a number of community organisations.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness** – most stakeholders advocate development of a tailored roadmap to employment that reflects needs and changing circumstances. This approach was strongly supported by all stakeholders across consultations. Job seeker agency (empowerment and self-determination.

4.7.2 Activation frameworks with goals and milestones co-developed with the job seeker

Consistent with proposals in the discussion paper, most stakeholders supported the notion of developing tailored job plans for job seekers. These would not only document the strategy for finding work but would be used as an instrument for job seeker accountability. The key would be to ensure that the job seeker was actively involved in developing the goals and progress milestones, so that there was a sense of ownership and commitment.

Many stakeholders, including providers, said the job plan should encompass work readiness steps such as interventions to improve stability, build foundational knowledge and skills, and develop confidence in communication. It should take account of individual circumstances such as caring responsibilities and be focused on preparing a job seeker for a career, rather than just a job. Activities in the plan could include volunteering, work placements and internships, while milestones might reflect engagement as well as outcomes.

A few stakeholders commented on the possibility of including a system whereby job seekers would be awarded credits for reaching milestones on their personal job plan, such as applying for a certain amount of jobs, attending provider meetings consistently, achieving a qualification or attending an interview.

"The focus should not be on jobs; it should be on careers... People leave jobs but stay in careers. Ask the job seeker what they want, and then work towards it"

Employment service provider, Perth community forum

These credit points could then be used towards work clothes, transport, haircuts or training and education programs to assist them in developing and increasing their job readiness.

Several stakeholders supported the discussion paper's idea of allowing the job seeker to determine the frequency of their provider appointments, and in time, alter this frequency in consultation with the provider.

With respect to activation, there would need to be a process (including for those who were self-managing their own access to online services) to flag who might need more intensive engagement.

Some stakeholders disagreed with the discussion paper's views of entering job seekers into an intensive support phase after 12-months of unemployment, arguing that 12-months was too long for even the most self-sufficient job seekers. There was no consensus on the period of time before an individual ought to be engaged intensively. However, it was assumed that with sufficient capacity in the system to properly assess, support and re-assess job seekers, this would minimise the number of people falling into long-term unemployment.

4.7.3 More support for job seekers when transitioning into work

Many participants in the consultations promoted the idea of better assistance for job seekers in their transition into work through post- placement follow-up and support. Ideas of how to do this included providing: mentoring services, access to support groups, networking opportunities and financial information sessions. On the latter, the point was made that newly-placed job seekers would benefit from education on how to make the most of their new income stream and start building towards longer-term goals.

Several commented that some post-placement supports could be delivered digitally or in person, depending on the circumstances. They envisaged a system whereby providers and employers could connect to check on the status of the newly placed job seeker, using technology to gain feedback on how they were settling in.

"Milestones and stepping stones to outcomes are key. Employability then employment"

- Employment service provider, Canberra roundtable

Many stakeholders urged patience in easing those whose transition to sustainable employment would be slower. This point was made in some cases with respect to Indigenous job seekers who had endured long-term unemployment and never engaged in full-time work. It arose also in the discussions about the impacts of intergenerational unemployment. These stakeholders suggested it would be helpful to allow the job seeker to start with part-time or casual work, shorter-term work placements or an internship, in order to build confidence in operating in new environments with new responsibilities.

A strong theme across the consultations was the need to remove disincentives to gain or remain in work. Several participants suggested that longer-term job seekers, once they were in a job, be allowed to retain their health care card for a period of time so that they could pay debts and get onto firmer financial footing. Others recommended a transitional benefit overlap period to act as an incentive to remain employed. This was in response to examples from a few employers of new employees turning down offers of additional hours due to the impact on their Centrelink benefits.

"We don't have the ability to secure long term employment as people don't want to do it as they'll lose Centrelink benefits"

- Employer, Murray Bridge

4.7.4 A reduced focus on compliance to promote greater responsibility and agency

A common theme through all consultations was the need to incentivise positive behaviour and participation rather than impose sanctions through a compliance-based approach to activation. Specifically, many

stakeholders advocated a move away from requirements for a minimum number of job applications per month.

No one argued with the principle that the job seeker needed to be held to account but there was broad support for the use of more 'carrots' than 'sticks'. The underlying premise for this was a shared view that the vast majority of job seekers were genuine in their desire to find employment – working for someone else or in their own business. The other oft-cited argument was that a punitive approach made it difficult to create the trust necessary for the system to work effectively.

Most stakeholders thought any activation framework that operated as a 'tick-box' system to be demotivating for job seekers. It would create an administrative burden for them and potentially perverse incentives. Employers commented that the current incentive structure meant that job seekers who were ill-suited to roles were submitting applications, just to remain compliant, while providers were referring candidates who were not a good fit.

As a corollary to the credit system mentioned above, there was some interest in continuing to use demerits as an accountability measure, but with some suggestions for a point-based rather than time-based approach. There was strong support for a system where the job seeker would agree, via the co-developed job plan, to actions and consequences of not meeting certain milestones.

“Job seekers need to be able to engage with service providers, undertake the necessary training and apply for positions that suit, without the fear of having their benefits being cut-off for non-compliance”

- Employment service provider, Murray Bridge

4.7.5 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- 'Activation' may not be the best term to convey the concept of mutual obligation; language of 'accountability' and 'consequences' would be more concrete and direct, and can be contextualised in a framework that sees more job seeker involvement in developing their own 'terms of engagement' against which they will be held to account.

Other considerations

- No ideas emerged on how to deal with the fully disengaged job seekers. Further thought may need to be given, therefore, to address the question of 'what to do when nothing else works'.

4.8 Targeted regional and local approaches

The questions posed in the discussion paper chapter on targeted regional and local approaches (Chapter 8) were discussed by self-selecting groups of stakeholders in each roundtable or forum, with their key insights shared with all participants.

Across all consultations, there was support for the discussion paper's recognition of regional variations and for place-based approaches that respond to local labour market challenges. Unsurprisingly, the strongest support came from participants in or representing regional areas. Most stakeholders agreed that there was a lot of service delivery and community support within small communities, but a need to overcome complexity through more joined-up delivery, perhaps underpinned by different funding and governance structures.

Four key themes emerged from the consultations:

1. Job seekers and communities in regions face their own challenges.
2. Place-based approaches are appealing.
3. Effective governance is needed to facilitate coordination.
4. Thin markets require a different approach.

These themes are discussed in turn. Note that several of the ideas that emerged in consideration of this chapter are explored in more detail in section 4.9.

4.8.1 Job seekers and communities in regions face their own challenges

In most regional consultations, participants emphasised that the key challenge for regions was not so much a lack of jobs (though this was an issue in some cases), but the lack of job seekers with skills aligned to employer needs. They recognised that thin markets existing in some regions and believed there was a stronger role for government to play in supporting more targeted and coordinated local solutions to help regional job seekers receive appropriate support.

In some regions, stakeholders (particularly employers) noted the high proportion of seasonal and/or casual and part-time work (e.g. in the hospitality, tourism and agriculture industries). These highly variable labour markets were often a feature of small centres which needed a different solution to metropolitan areas that operate with a different scale and scope. In these circumstances, several stakeholders argued, there needed to be better system recognition of part-time work and traineeships, and a stronger emphasis by providers on job readiness skills and training relevant to these industries.

In a few regional areas, some participants made the case for a more flexible approach to self-employment so that it was seen as a viable alternative to finding an employer for job seekers, particularly in thin markets.

Other specific challenges that arose across several regional consultations included:

- High concentrations of groups of disadvantaged cohorts in certain regions (e.g. of Aboriginal job seekers with inter-generational low labour market participation).
- Promoting and supporting small businesses (as the predominant form of business in many regional locations) to use the employment services system.
- Limited transport options undermining access to potential jobs.
- Limited access to fast and reliable internet to enable the use of online services in some regional areas.

“Regional communities face unique challenges ... These challenges should be reflected by jobactive incentives and NGO activities in the region. Often people in our region are capable of doing the work but may not have the opportunity to do so due to barriers such as travel”

- Registered training organisation, Townsville

“If you just drop a solution into Alice Springs, it doesn't matter how good it is, we won't touch it. We need to be involved in the creation and testing of regional models if it is to generate buy-in”

- Employer, Alice Springs

For the Northern Territory, the interface between mainstream employment services and the Community Development Programme was a key issue, particularly in places where job seekers frequently moved between locations (and employers) served by the different systems.

4.8.2 Place-based approaches are appealing

Most stakeholders saw particular value in place-based approaches within regional areas. The prime goal and benefit of regional approaches was collaboration among employers, local government and community organisations to address economic development and employment issues. For a few, the focus of such collaboration should extend to include job creation, industry and workforce development, while others saw it primarily as a means to connect services associated with job seekers, particularly those who faced a degree of disadvantage. This included, for example, effective coordination with State Government programs. Most saw value in tailoring employment services to the local labour market context – for example, through linkage to local industry-relevant training.

More broadly, stakeholders saw regional-level collaboration as a way to improve outcomes for job seekers and, in the words of participants, to unlocking “creativity, flexibility and innovation”. There was broad acceptance of the proposition that small regional centres had unique characteristics and requirements which could produce innovative delivery models.

The generation and use of region-specific data was seen by some as key to the success of place-based approaches. This would include labour market and employment services data provided by the Department and additional knowledge generated locally.

4.8.3 Effective governance is needed to facilitate coordination

Participants identified a need for local governance structures to underpin place-based approaches, with a focus on ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities. Most stakeholders thought such arrangements should not be limited to selected disadvantaged regions (as suggested in the discussion paper).

Several stakeholders argued that, at least in some regions, priority should be to build on existing mechanisms rather than designing something new. Some employer representatives argued that governance structures should be employer-led to ensure a focus on “where the jobs are”. Some service provider representatives suggested the inclusion of a collaboration incentive in the payment structure to support place-based approaches.

Several participants noted the importance of dedicated facilitation resources or intermediaries to drive a place-based approach. The facilitator could play a key role in bringing together a local strategy and

Working with others to support the delivery of that strategy. A few service provider representatives stressed the importance of the facilitator being independent from service providers and employers, so as to play a “neutral broker” role. Some expressed support for past arrangements such as Local Employment

Coordinators.

In other cases, stakeholders saw the employment services provider as playing a central, connecting and coordinating role.

Several regions that were included in the Regional Employment Trials program argued for the approach to be applied more broadly. Others cautioned against a one-size-fits-all model for local governance, noting that the main facilitator or coordinator might be different in each region, and that their capability and effectiveness could vary.

These issues of governance are considered further in section 4.9.

4.8.4 Thin markets require a different approach

Some stakeholders argued for a system that gave preference to regional providers when assigning market share, given the criticality of local relationships. Reference was made across several consults to the risks of having larger providers enter regional markets without established community and employer relationships.

Other participants pointed to the distinct challenges of operating in thin markets. One regional provider said, for example, "(profit) margins are so narrow here; we fight for every placement we can get". For this reason, there was strong support for carefully managing (and limiting) the number of providers in such regions.

The capacity to connect with other local service providers, and the need for more coherent and cohesive approaches to programs and services was also raised. This was a particular issue in some parts of the Indigenous community where CDP operates as opposed to jobactive.

4.8.5 Issues and Implications

Communications and future engagement

- It would be helpful to have a clearer definition on what is meant by 'regional' and specifically whether the reference is to non-metropolitan regions only.
- Ongoing engagement with local communities is critical to designing local solutions. Therefore, future engagements should seek to include more state and local government representatives.

Other considerations

- There may be opportunities to pilot, with state governments, some different place-based models drawing on past models with Local Employment Coordinators, Local Learning and Employment Networks and similar arrangements, as well as models from other sectors (e.g. Primary Healthcare Networks).

4.9 A service culture built on competition and quality

Participants in the group-based discussions on this chapter of the discussion paper (Chapter 9) were asked to consider, in particular, the ideas around moving to a licensing arrangement and a benchmarking system. Unsurprisingly, however, the conversations ranged widely across the issues of promoting flexibility, innovation, collaboration – all themes that emerged in the earlier debate on goals for the new employment services model. While these were rich and useful discussions, it meant there was limited opportunity to delve into the details of the future design of the employment services market.

There was little evidence of bold thinking on the topic. This reflects both the differences of views among providers about the extent of change that is desirable and the difficulties of conceiving of a new system that is not a variation on what has already been experienced.

That said, there were a number of clear messages to emerge, chief among which were the following:

1. A capped licensing system is preferred as a way to reduce red tape.
2. The level of competition should be 'just right'.
3. Several models for coordinating services were considered.
4. Stakeholders are attracted to a benchmarking system, with regional variations.
5. The system should be outcomes-driven and promote innovation.

Each is discussed in turn below.

4.9.1 A capped licensing system is preferred as a way to reduce red tape

Most providers were keen to understand more the commercial implications of a move to a licensing model, and understandably were concerned about the potential transition arrangements for current jobactive providers. Some were cautious about a licensing approach but their fears were allayed once the concept of a capped approach was explained. (Much of the concern about an uncapped system – or one that allowed too many providers to enter the market – stemmed from impressions that the licensing arrangements for Disability Employment Services had been too generous.)

Many saw a key advantage of the licensing model being the ability for high-performing providers to deliver services without having to re-tender every five years. One participant suggested that licences should be valid for 10 years.

Some stakeholders acknowledged the value under a licensing model of an ongoing assessment of performance, rather than a point-in-time decision on who might be suitable to deliver services in a particular region or regions.

All agreed that any licensing arrangement would need to be carefully managed, with a few highlighting the risk that it could become too prescriptive or conditional. On a related point, many providers advocated for a system that could endure over a longer term – one with minimal policy changes, in part so that trusting relationships could be built and sustained.

“The hand that smacks you can't be the hand that engages you”

- Unknown, Melbourne roundtable

Some stakeholders acknowledged that strong national regulation would be needed to underpin licensing arrangements, including consistent, quality, national standards. A few participants in one forum expressed interest in a regulatory model similar to the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH), which clearly separates policy and funding responsibilities from regulating against agreed standards. Some saw value in allowing the Department to focus on stewarding the system and have the regulatory function carried out independently, with the main argument in favour being that providers would not feel compromised in their ability to 'push back' on the regulator who is also their funder. But others found it

difficult to envisage a separation of the regulatory roles, seeing them as intrinsically linked. Stakeholders freely admitted they had not given the option much consideration.

On a separate note, a few participants expressed support for a job seeker ombudsman to address any grievances that could not be resolved without third party intervention. This was seen as one way to build trust and confidence in the system among job seekers. It could also serve to inject strong accountability in the system while allowing job seekers to lodge complaints without fear of retribution.

4.9.2 The level of competition should be 'just right'

Many providers accepted that competition brought benefits in terms of choice, innovation and quality of service provision, but there were some strong dissenting voices. For example, several regional representatives thought some locations would be better served by a single provider. A few others argued that competition conflicted fundamentally with the focus on job seeker outcomes by giving greater emphasis to efficiency concerns.

"Competition doesn't drive quality in human services. In practice, it gives providers an incentive to cream, and not assist the most disadvantaged job seekers"

- Community services organisation, Brisbane roundtable

All stakeholders saw a need for balanced approach, noting that too much competition risked:

- 'provider-shopping' by job seekers
- an inward focus by providers on their own viability rather than on serving their clients
- cherry picking by providers of the caseloads they want to build and maintain
- a lack of collaboration among providers to secure the best outcomes for job seekers
- a decline in quality of services within thin markets.

The challenge of promoting collaboration within a competitive environment (even if the competition was mild) featured in many of the conversations. Many noted the need to align incentives in contracts to broader outcomes. Examples were offered of the perverse incentives (under the current system) that see providers 'sitting' on vacancies when there are job seekers registered with other providers who are suited to the roles.

"Competition becomes bottom line. Providers need to collaborate, especially in thin markets if they want to drive outcomes"

- Employer, Alice Springs

4.9.3 Several models for coordinating services were considered

Views varied among stakeholders about whether there ought to be a network of specialist services or highly capable generalist providers. On balance, however, the vast majority recognised a need for specialist services in the market. The question then became one of 'What does referral and coordination look like?'

Across the consultations, providers generally gravitated towards the 'hub and spoke' approach set out in the discussion paper, whereby (as now) generalist services would be complemented by a network of specialist services structured around to specific job seeker cohorts or specific industry sectors. Generally speaking, community service organisations were inclined to describe a more integrated model, with generalist and specialist providers operating in a 'real-time' partnership.

In some cases, participants saw value in an intermediary to assist the job seeker in navigating the system, or to act as an advocate.

Two other models were discussed, but there was not the opportunity to define them in detail or properly test them. These were the 'specialist panel' and the 'commissioning broker' models. (It is worth noting that the latter one emerged from a discussion in Alice Springs and was influenced by the particular context and challenges of remote communities.) Each of these models is illustrated in Figure 8 overleaf.

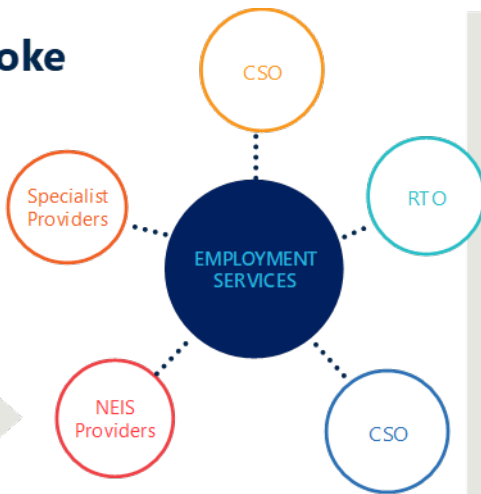
Stakeholders held differing views on which organisations would be best placed to play a service brokerage role. Some providers argued that it should be provided by generalist employment service providers as part of an integrated offer within the same organisation, whereas others argued it should be a separate stand-alone service to avoid conflicts of interest. Others suggested that it should depend on the individual. For example, in certain cases, community service organisations that were already known and trusted by a job seeker would be best placed to assist. Where possible, the individual job seeker could be given the choice.

A few stakeholders suggested the nature of the brokerage role change depending on the stage of support. During the pre-employment or job readiness stage, a service provider specialising in supporting the relevant job seeker cohort could take on this role, acting as an advocate for the job seeker (as per the second model in Figure 8). During the job search stage – that is once a job seeker was job ready – the brokerage role could be performed by an employment consultant in a generalist employment services provider, with the focus being on job search and selection process support.

Figure 8 | Models for coordinating services

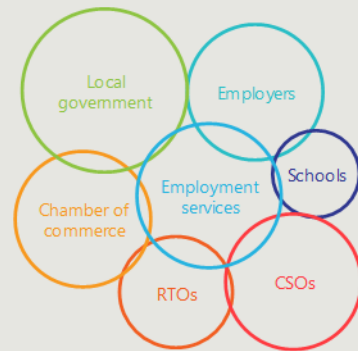
1. Hub and Spoke Coordination

A traditional model where the employment consultant connects the job seeker directly to the relevant services and support. This model assumes a competitive market with multiple overlapping 'hubs and spokes'.



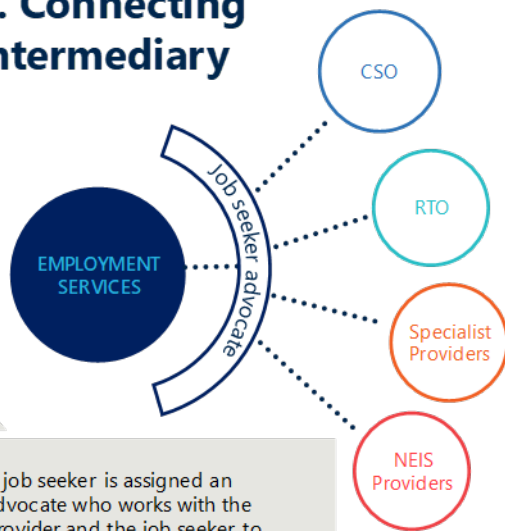
2. Adaptable Ecosystem

Employment services (one or more) are integrated into existing regional coordination mechanisms that are designed according to the local needs, priorities and circumstances.



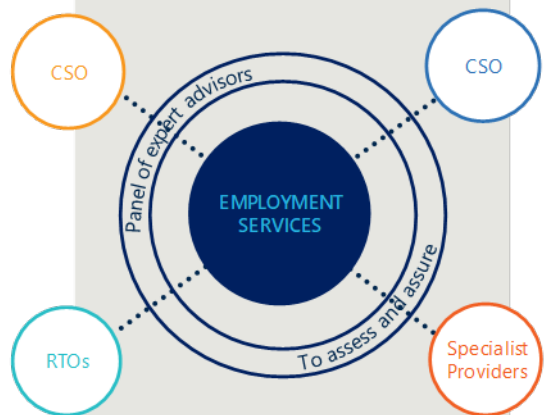
3. Connecting intermediary

A job seeker is assigned an advocate who works with the provider and the job seeker to devise and implement a job plan where intensive support is required. A separate process for recruiting/managing/regulating the intermediary would be required. This model assumes a competitive market.



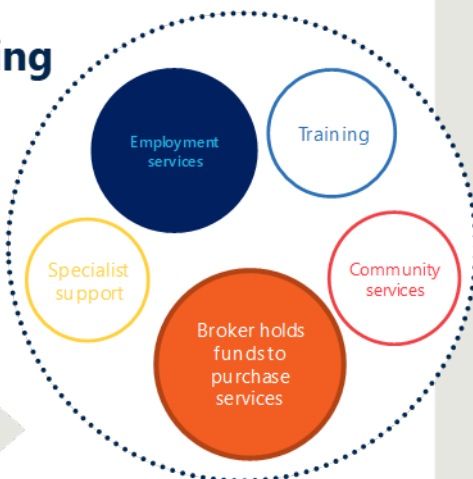
4. Specialist Panel

Providers have access to an established panel of experts as necessary to, for example, review job plans for VLTU job seekers, conduct independent detailed assessments, validate specialist service providers and refer. This would build capacity, provide assurance and deliver targeted advice including on the most appropriate interventions at critical junctures. The panel would be established via a separate tender process.



5. Commissioning Broker

A community model where a broker organisation is entrusted to commission services on behalf of the community to serve the employment-related needs of its people. In this case centralised commissioning is seen as more efficient.



KEY:
 CSO – Community Service Organisation
 RTO – Registered Training organisation
 NEIS – New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

4.9.4 Stakeholders are attracted to a benchmarking system, with regional variations

All providers supported a move to benchmarking provider performance rather than continue with a star rating system. The issues with the latter were that they were not seen to take account of the different labour market contexts and were designed so that there were always 'losers' in the system. A few argued also that it encouraged 'provider shopping'. Few employers said that star ratings were an important consideration for them in choosing which providers to work with. Nor were star ratings thought to be understood or used by job seekers to inform their choice.

"From an employer point of view, the star rating does not apply. It's all about the people"

- Employer, Canberra round

For many providers, support for benchmarking depended on how the system would operate. Some of the points raised were that the benchmarks would need to:

- align with government's strategic reform goals and measures of success
- be relative rather than absolute, particularly to account for regional variations
- focus on quality, potentially including a measure of provider staff turnover
- enable measurement of user (employer and job seeker) experience and satisfaction
- be linked in some way to a 'reward' (defined in terms of increased market share or other financial incentive).

"The current star rating means that even though you're a good provider if you're measured against great providers it means you may have a lower star rating but still provide good service. We should work with the existing providers to benchmark them and make them better before allowing new providers into the system"

- Employment service provider, Canberra roundtable

Some spoke approvingly of the benchmarks used in the Transition to Work and Parents Next. Again, the example of the NRSCH was mentioned in one consultation. In that system there are low barriers to entry but high-performance criteria. (Some noted that this could be a way of transitioning to a licensing model – i.e. through staggered entry based on performance against new standards.) The point was made that there might need to be tougher standards for larger providers given their influence on the system.

Several stakeholders were attracted to a 'trip advisor'-like ratings system to allow job seekers to review their provider, which would offer another input into assessments of provider performance.

"Benchmarks could encourage collaboration within a contestable market. All providers can be winners with a benchmark system, where with star ratings there will always be losers"

- Employment service provider, Brisbane roundtable

4.9.5 The system should be outcomes-driven and promote innovation

Most providers said current compliance requirements were creating a barrier to the maintenance of a genuine service culture centred on the needs of job seekers and employers. Consistent with earlier comments about the goals of the system (section 4.2) they all called for greater flexibility underpinned by a strong focus on outcomes rather than contract compliance.

It followed that the metrics to be used in any new model should incentivise achievement of those

outcomes. Funding should be aligned to these and to key enablers, such as professionalisation and capability development of the workforce.

Specific suggestions for outcome-related metrics included measuring engagement and employment outcomes, as well as sustainability of employment outcomes. In other words, stakeholders drew a connection between the idea of interim outcomes or milestones for the job seeker and the applicable measures for the provider. They also saw the opportunity to improve on the current 14 and 26-week measures which were seen as too crude.

“Job seeker satisfaction should be a part of the outcomes for providers. This could reduce misalignment between the best interest of the providers and job seekers. In the current system what is best for providers is not always best for job seekers”

- Community services organisation, Hobart roundtable

4.9.6 Issues and implications

Communications and future engagement

- Many providers do not understand the differences between licensing and a contract system so providing more concrete examples would be useful.
- There will always be a challenge in having providers as a group consider potential market design options. One way around this would be to apply ‘game theory’ and have proxies play the role of different providers to see how their behaviour manifests in response to different system settings.

Other considerations

- There is a fundamental market design challenge relating to the need to foster competition while incentivising collaboration.
- Separation of the regulatory function might build expertise in that area and build more trusting relationships between the government and providers.
- More thought could perhaps be given to designing the market with a more explicit focus on assisting job seekers into self-employment. This will require different capabilities and different measures of success. Given the way the gig economy is evolving, the NEIS program, which is limited in scale and ‘arm’s length’ from jobactive providers, may not be the best or only way of meeting this need into the future.

4.10 Transitioning to a future employment services model

This section synthesises outputs from discussions related to Chapter 10 of the discussion paper. Participants were asked to discuss their responses to the discussion paper questions and then shared their views with the wider group for further comment and feedback.

All stakeholders agreed with the propositions in the discussion paper that, for a smooth and successful transition to a new employment services model, there needed to be ongoing engagement and an 'agile' and collaborative approach to design and implementation. Some stakeholders sought a commitment to recognise and build on the strengths of the current system while many more promoted the need to learn lessons from the successes and failures of other related reforms.

Key messages that emerged from the discussion on this chapter were as follows:

1. Providers especially are anxious about the extent of change and the transition.
2. An iterative and user-focussed design process will build buy-in to a future model.
3. Staged implementation is strongly supported.

Each is discussed in turn.

4.10.1 Providers especially are anxious about the transition

Many, if not most stakeholders, welcomed the opportunity for substantive change to the system but were nevertheless concerned about its impact. All expressed a preference for a consultative, well-planned and staged approach to implementation. Providers especially were nervous about the transition, with many referencing experiences with other related government reforms (e.g. NDIS and Disability Employment Services) and previous employment service contracts that they considered had been rushed or inadequately planned.

A primary concern for providers was the risk to their commercial viability particularly the anticipated need to make new capital investments. Many providers noted that front-line staff supporting job seekers were the first to feel the negative effect of a rapid introduction of new processes and systems, and worried about consequential issues with staff productivity and retention.

In several consultations, stakeholders explicitly recommended that the transition to the future model be underpinned by a focus on preserving market stability and continuity. The most critical elements to this were:

- a design process that produces a proven approach
- clear and consistent communications
- sufficient time and resources to allow providers to prepare
- consideration of providers' business imperatives
- a focus on continuity of service.

"There needs to be adequate timeframes to establishing infrastructure and training for staff at the commencement of a new contract. Three months is not adequate, six months would be better"

- Employment service provider, Adelaide roundtable

Whether and how to transition existing quality providers was a key concern. There was a strong argument for all providers to go through a registration or licensing process, albeit over an extended period of, say, 2-3 years.

4.10.2 An iterative and user-focussed design process will build buy-in to a future model

Most stakeholders, particularly providers and community service organisations, supported an iterative and user-centred design process for the future employment services model. Many agreed that the new system should be developed through engagement with employment services consultants and job seekers. In this context, some commended the Government for commencing consultations relatively early.

There was similarly strong support for an 'agile' approach, involving prototyping, testing and iterating elements of the new model, particularly digital services. This experimental approach could include pilots of various scales. In one consultation, a group with a mix of stakeholder types noted that job seeker assessments and online services would be the two most important system components to get right, given the potential risk to the overall system, and therefore should be most subjected to testing and review.

Several stakeholders suggested that providers should be able to 'opt-in' to the process of testing and iteration, noting that it would potentially build confidence in the future model and allow providers to prepare for the transition earlier.

To enable genuine experimentation and innovation, there was a view that a risk-tolerant environment was necessary – ideally one where there could be bipartisan support for any new design. It was acknowledged that this would be very challenging, but stakeholders thought it important to allow small 'failures' – as long as risks to quality delivery were minimised – in the course of introducing substantive system-wide improvement.

"The new service model needs to be trialled and tested, made sure it appropriate for all regions and have a good understanding of what level of flexibility is needed"

- Employment service provider, Hobart roundtable

4.10.3 Staged implementation is strongly supported

There was a strong consensus support for the discussion paper's proposal for a staged approach to implementation. All stakeholders saw this as the best way to minimise risk and allow sufficient time to prepare, including to train staff on new systems.

While it was difficult to get into the detail of how staging might work in practice, three broad options emerged – to stage by:

- region
- cohort
- service element (notably, online services).

On balance, more stakeholders supported a region-by-region rollout. In all cases, however, there was a concern about likely productivity impacts. The point was made that every new contract period had seen significant drop in performance in the first six months as providers became familiar with new systems and rules.

Others pointed to the differentiated impacts of a new system on stakeholders and suggested that these be identified early to enable targeted, effective communication about the changes. On this question of messaging, a few participants urged the Government to think carefully before 'rebranding' the system, while others saw this as an opportunity to develop 'a slogan that everyone can get behind'.

For some stakeholders, it was too early to comment on the implementation approach when there were so many unknowns. Several suggested that this topic be revisited among providers and other stakeholders once there was a clearer view of the future model design.

4.10.4 Issues and implications

Communications and engagement

- Be cognisant of stakeholder 'reform fatigue' and scepticism regarding the reform process.

- Maintain a highly consultative approach throughout the design and implementation process.
- Engage again with stakeholders once the model is clearly defined to understand preferred approach to staging.
- Clearly and consistently communicate the reform objectives to build risk tolerance.

Other considerations

- The employer voice did not come through in discussions on this chapter. It is worth exploring further the potential implications for them.
- There is a question about what supports ought to be available to support good providers to rollover to the new model in the interests of continuity. Staggering registration would help, but there may be a role for government in providing some targeted resources to support transition.
- It will be important to avoid grandfather or pre-qualification arrangements that lack a robust checkpoint. A licensing arrangement will only work if the standards are high. It would be wrong for the lowest of the best-performing current providers to set the standard for the future. This is consistent with the principle of user-centred design and implementation.

Appendix A Summary of discussion paper chapters

Chapter 1 - Government employment services today

The Government is reviewing the design of the generalist employment service (jobactive).

Disability Employment Services, the Community Development Programme, Vocational Training and Employment Centres and programs run by state and territory governments are out of scope for this review.

Chapter 2 - The goals for future employment services

Jobs are changing as businesses seek high-skilled, flexible workers, with fewer low-skill opportunities available. The goals for future services are to:

- strengthen engagement of employers & job seekers
- enable effective activation
- encourage self-sufficiency and personal responsibility
- promote fairness and equity
- be responsive to a changing labour market
- maximise job seeker outcomes
- deliver efficiency and value for money.

Chapter 3 - Helping disadvantaged Australians into work

We must do more to support job seekers who face complex barriers to find work.

A future model could redirect more resources to assist job seekers who need help to overcome their barriers and prepare for, and find, jobs that last.

Chapter 4 - Empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services

Greater use of online technologies can provide an enhanced service for job seekers and employers.

An online service could provide business with a single point of contact to access a larger pool of labour and more sophisticated tools to filter and shortlist candidates to better suit their needs.

Chapter 5 - Better meeting the needs of employers

A future model could add value to businesses by making it easier to find, recruit and retain skilled people through a range of tailored services.

It would provide business with a single point of contact to access a larger pool of labour and more sophisticated tools to filter and shortlist candidates to make sure they meet their needs.

Chapter 6 - Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

Accurately assessing job seekers to determine their individual needs and strengths for finding work could support the future employment services model to work efficiently and effectively.

This allows for targeted and tailored services, the investment of resources in those job seekers who need it most, as well as improved matching of job seekers to employer needs.

Chapter 7 - Incentives for job seekers to find work

Activation will continue to be at the heart of the working-age income support system.

The majority of job seekers want to work and the activation process should reflect this, encouraging job seeker choice and individualised services that support sustainable jobs.

Chapter 8 - Targeted regional and local approaches

Place-based and regional approaches can be used to implement locally designed solutions that help job seekers prepare for and find work. The Regional Employment Trials program will test some of these approaches through a place-based solution.

Chapter 9 - A service culture built on competition and quality

To make sure enhanced services meet job seekers' needs and are delivered efficiently, the Government may engage a diverse network of expert providers across Australia.

A greater degree of competition could also be encouraged to drive the best possible services for job seekers, and it may be desirable to reduce barriers to entering the employment services market. This could involve transitioning to a licensing-based procurement model.

Chapter 10 - Transitioning to a future employment services model

Transformational change to employment services would affect job seekers, employers, employment services providers, complementary service providers and the income support sector. To allow for a smooth transition to this large-scale reform, the Government is proposing an ongoing process of consultation, a trial of new arrangements and an iterative roll out of some services.

Appendix B Discussion paper guiding questions

Chapter 2 – The goals for future employment services

- I. What other economic, social or labour market trends are likely to affect employment services in the future?
- II. Are there other goals that should be included?

Chapter 3 – Helping disadvantaged Australians into work

- I. What services should be available to job seekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market and how can they be delivered in a culturally competent way?
- II. What incentives might be useful to assist job seekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market to find work?
- III. Are enhanced services best delivered through a single unified service, or a model that includes specialist service provision directed at particular cohorts of job seekers, as well as a core service?
- IV. How could the quality of services job seekers receive from their employment services consultant be improved?

Chapter 4 – Empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services

- I. What online tools and assistance should be included to better meet the needs of particular user groups? Which are the most important features that are required?
- II. Is there a group of users that the online service should target?
- III. How can data be used to provide more personalised, effective services?
- IV. How should the online service interact with existing online job aggregators and recruitment firms?

Chapter 5 – Better meeting the needs of employers

- I. How can the Government raise awareness of employment services available to employers?
- II. How can future employment services add value to an employer's recruitment process?
- III. What functionality would employers expect or desire in an online employment service?
- IV. How should employment services providers work with employers to meet their needs?
- V. What incentives (financial or otherwise) would help employers overcome any perceived risks associated with hiring disadvantaged job seekers? How should these operate?

Chapter 6 – Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

- I. Which of the proposed options to assess job seekers (user profile or staggered assessment) would be most effective in directing them to assistance that meets their needs?
- II. Are there other options for accurately assessing job seekers needs that should be considered?
- III. What is the best approach to assessing a job seeker's digital literacy?
- IV. How can information be collected in a way that minimises burden on job seekers, providers and employers?

Chapter 7 – Incentives for job seekers to find work

- I. Which of the activation options (points-based or time-based) would best support job seekers

who largely self-service?

- II. Which of the activation options (points-based or time-based) would best support enhanced services participants?
- III. In addition to compliance actions for job seekers who do not meet requirements, could the activation framework also recognise job seekers who regularly exceed requirements? If so, how could this operate in practice?
- IV. What appropriate additional initiatives might be useful to support job seekers participating in social enterprises and other non-traditional forms of work?

Chapter 8 – Targeted regional and local approaches

- I. What strategies would help job seekers adapt to regional economic and labour market variations?
- II. How could local stakeholders be encouraged to identify priorities, engage with providers and implement local employment solutions?
- III. What strategies would improve labour market mobility from regions that have poor employment prospects?

Chapter 9 – A service culture build on competition and quality

- I. What level of contestability, competition and Government intervention in the market is desirable?
- II. Should provider performance be evaluated against set benchmarks, or compared with that of other providers? What factors should inform performance evaluation?
- III. Should the Government allocate market share among enhanced service providers? If so, how?
- IV. Should the Government transition to commissioning enhanced services providers through a licensing arrangement? If so, how?

Chapter 10 – Transitioning to a future employment services model

- I. How would an iterative approach to implementation help transition to a future employment services model?
- II. If we undertake an iterative approach, which aspects should be prioritised and sequenced first?

Appendix C Summary of consultations and Participants

Table 1 | Participant numbers by state

State/Territory	Number of participants
ACT	52
NSW	104
NT	39
QLD	67
SA	68
TAS	26
VIC	108
WA	76
Total	540

Table 2 | Participant numbers by stakeholder type

Stakeholder Group	Number of individuals who attended
Community Sector/Welfare provider	109
Employer	71
Health Services	10
Housing Services	10
Job seeker or people representing job seekers	9
Local/State Government/government	58
Panel member	17
Provider	175
Technology provider	7
Think Tanks/Academia	8
Training Provider	66
Total	540

Appendix D Evaluation survey questions

At the end of most consultations, participants were asked to fill out responses to an evaluation survey administered via web application Slido. The following evaluation survey questions (on a scale of 0-5) were asked:

- How well do you feel each topic was discussed today?
- Do you feel everyone had the opportunity to participate?
- How invested do you feel in the development of employment services moving forward? And the following three qualitative questions:
- What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support?
- What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further thought?
- Do you have any additional comments or recommendations to improve future consultations?

In some consultations, facilitators used Slido to ask either one or both of the following questions at the beginning of the roundtable or forum, to gain a better understanding of participant's views and allocate discussion time accordingly:

- What topic are you most excited to talk about today?
- What is the one thing that is most important to get right in the new system?

Appendix E Summary of consultation evaluation results

Figure 9 | Question 1: Do you feel everyone had the opportunity to participate?

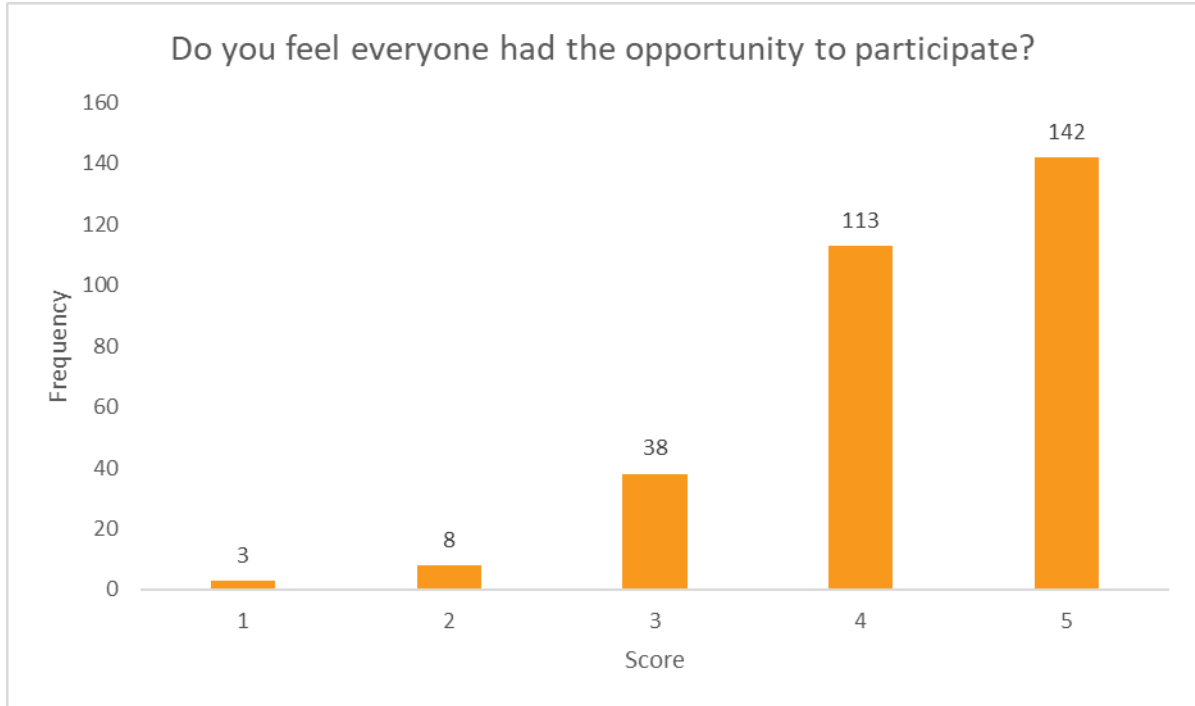


Figure 10 | Question 2: How invested do you feel in the development of employment services moving forward?

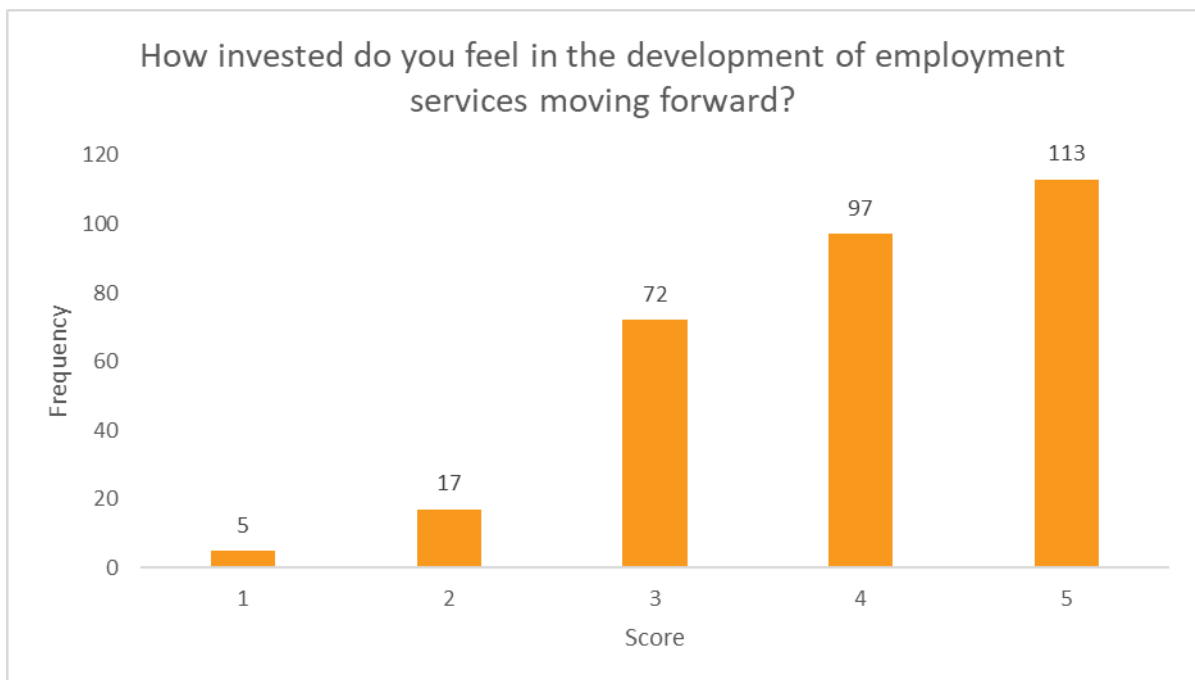
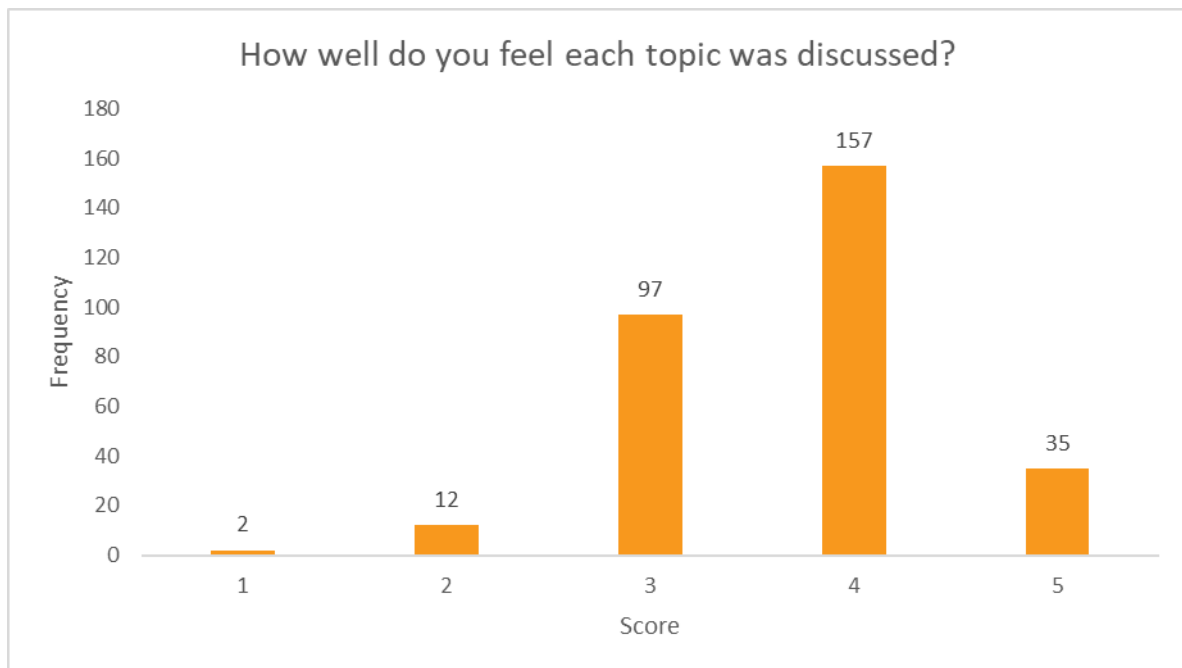


Figure 11 | Question 3: How well do you feel each topic was discussed?



Appendix F Facilitation Guide

Roundtable facilitator guide example

4.5 hours / 270 minutes (11am – 3.30pm)

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
Registration	-	-	-	-	Persona posters	Set up persona stations (there's no break to do this later) Participants are given a one-pager on the discussion paper
Welcome	-	11-11:05	Welcome to country, Introductions, objectives, and housekeeping	5 (5)	-	Welcome to country Note that we will cover all discussion paper chapters during the roundtable
Reform narrative	Reform narrative presentation (by Department)	11:05-11:20	-	15 (20)	-	-
Introductions	-	11:20 – 11:50	Go around table, and ask participants to speak for 1-2 minutes on: Who they are and the organisation they represent (Based on the discussion paper) What is the most important thing from your point of view to get right in the design of new	30 (50)	-	-

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
			employment services arrangements?			
Key issues for discussion	Plenary discussion	11:50 – 12:30	<p>Chapters 2 and 3</p> <p>Goals for future employment services (Ch 2) (10 mins)</p> <p>Helping disadvantaged Australians into work (Ch 3) (30 mins)</p> <p>For each chapter, the facilitator will:</p> <p>Present 1 slide summarizing key points from discussion paper</p> <p>Present 1 slide with the discussion paper questions</p> <p>Participants discuss responses to questions in plenary</p>	40 (90)	2 slides per chapter (1 summarising key points, 1 with discussion paper questions)	-
	Persona-based discussion	12:30 – 1:00	<p>Participants are assigned to one of five personas (each with a station in the room) (30 minutes each)</p> <p>A disadvantaged job seeker</p> <p>An 'able-to-self-manage' job seeker</p> <p>A small regional business</p> <p>A large company</p> <p>An employment service provider</p> <p>Ask each group to consider, from their different vantage points/lenses, the following 3 questions (first two are the same; the third one – which is in two</p>	30 (120)	<p>Personas printed out and posted at different 'stations'</p> <p>Flipcharts, textas</p> <p>Slide with the three questions</p>	Persona discussions at stations will be based on the three questions (put on flipcharts)

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
			<p>parts – is different for the two sets of personas):</p> <p>What should online services look like/deliver?</p> <p>What incentives will encourage your participation in the system?</p> <p>How will your needs best be met?</p> <p>For employer personas (x 2) specifically:</p> <p>How can employment services better engage with employers to meet their needs?</p> <p>What is the distinct value to employers of a government employment service?</p> <p>For job seeker personas (x 2) specifically:</p> <p>What does a good service culture look like for job seekers?</p> <p>How should their needs/capability be assessed?</p> <p>Provide questions for each station and write main notes in flip charts, and stick next to archetype</p>			
	Break to grab lunch	1:00 – 1:10	-	-	-	-
	Plenary discussion	1:10 – 1:55	Bring back to plenary and go through the questions from the relevant chapters as	45 (175)	Relevant questions for each chapter are on the	-

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
			per the slides (45 minutes)		slides	
	Small group discussion	1:55 – 2::25	Break into three groups; each group to speak to a different chapter Regional and local approaches (Ch 8) Service culture built on competition and quality (Ch 9) Transitioning to a future employment services model (Ch 10)	30 (205)	Printouts of the questions for each chapter – 1-2 for each group	-
	Plenary discussion	2:25 – 3:10	Bring back to plenary and go through the questions from the relevant chapters as per the slides	45 (250)	Questions for each chapter on the slides	-
Synthesis	-	3:10 – 3:15	Summarise discussion for the day	5 (255)	-	-
Final comment	-	3:15 – 3:25	On separate post its or Slido based on what you've heard today: What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support? What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further thought?	10 (265)	-	Use color-coded post its by stakeholder group (not relevant to Canberra)
Wrap up (by Department)	-	3:25 – 3:30	Department rep says thanks and farewell	5 (270)	-	Department staff member to also provide thanks

Community Forum facilitator guide example

Facilitation guide

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
Welcome	-	2:00-2:05	Acknowledgement of traditional owners, introductions, objectives, rules of engagement and housekeeping	5 (5)	See department speaking notes	Agree table set up and volunteer facilitators for group discussions before commencing Draw up table assignments on whiteboard Department to provide handouts of discussion paper chapter questions and key points
Reform narrative presentation	-	2:10-2:20	-	10 (15)	-	-
Vote on priorities (using Slido)	-	2:20-2:25	Ask participants on Slido "What topic are you most excited to talk about today"	5 (25)	Presenting laptop must have Slido switcher installed Prepare Slido poll in advance	-
Key issues for	Goal of future	2:25-	Present slides on goals and the Chapter 2	15 (40)	Goals on a slide	Allocate tables based

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
discussion	employment services	2:40	question and ask participants to spend a few minutes speaking to the person next to them. Return to plenary discussion to share views.		Question (anything you would change/add)	on Slido results while participants are talking to each other. Ideally draw up on whiteboard
	Group discussion #1	2:40-3:05	<p>Nous/DJSB to reorganize room set up to accommodate five groups of tables (some tables will need to be pushed together).</p> <p>Facilitator to introduce group discussion, including questions to be answered and 'plussing concept' and explain table assignments across the two sessions.</p> <p>Ask each group to allow 5 minutes on reflection and write down their key points/responses to each question on a post-it note. Use colour-coded post-it notes to designate which stakeholder group is putting forward the ideas.</p> <p>Put the post-it notes up on the flip chart. Volunteer facilitator to summarise what people have said.</p> <p>Volunteer facilitator then to ask for further comment and elaboration so we fully understand the perspectives being shared.</p> <p>Note that individuals may rotate between tables once or twice if they wish. The Volunteer facilitator and note-taker stays put.</p>	25 (65)	<p>Two slides (instructions for group activity)</p> <p>Handouts summarizing key points from each chapter provided to each participant</p> <p>Handouts summarizing discussion paper questions provided to each participant</p> <p>Flipcharts to note main findings (to be done by volunteer facilitator)</p> <p>Note colour-coded post its based on stakeholder groups (jobactive providers, community service providers, employers, RTOs, government)</p>	-

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
			<p>Participants joining new group can read post its and contribute as they please. Volunteer facilitators can summarise where the previous group got to. People are then invited to 'plus' on the ideas of offer different views.</p> <p>30 mins x 2 groups discussions (though second discussion will be shorter due to plussing).</p>			
	Group discussion #2	3:05-3:30	Repeat as per Group discussion #1 for other table assignments	25 (90)	-	At session end, reorganize flipcharts by chapter
	Break	3:30-3:40	-	10 (100)	-	-
	Key takeaways	3:40-4:40	Go through chapters 3 – 10 (with accompanying slides), asking wider group to make comments (based on their group discussion) with reference to discussion paper guiding questions	60 (160)	-	-
Panel member synthesis	-	4:40-4:45	Panel member to summarise discussion for the day	5 (165)	-	-
Final comment	-	4:45-4:55	<p>Using Slido, ask two questions:</p> <p>What is the one thing in the discussion paper that you most strongly support?</p> <p>What is the one thing in the discussion paper that should be reconsidered or given further</p>	10 (175)	-	-

Session	Sub-session	Time	Key points	Duration (minutes)	Resources	Facilitator notes/comments
			thought? Follow up with consult feedback survey (4 quick questions)			
Wrap-up (by Department)	-	4:55-5:00	Department rep says thanks and farewell (refer to online submission)	5 (180)	-	-