



# Engaging with Disability Employment Services

# Engaging with Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services (DES) help people with disability find meaningful employment and keep their job. DES also assists employers who are looking to hire a candidate with disability or who are wanting to support an existing employee with disability. DES is managed by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services and is delivered by a mix of for-profit and non-for-profit organisations known as 'DES providers.' DES services are free of charge for eligible jobseekers and employers.

## DES AS A PATHWAY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY:

Not all people with disability engage with DES providers when looking for work. However, there are currently between 140,000 and 160,000 people with disability that are looking for work with the assistance of DES providers. DES providers will help these jobseekers prepare for work by offering career advice, access to training and education, resume development, and interview preparation.

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DES tailors the service it provides to job seekers based on their individual needs and barriers into employment. Therefore, DES offers jobseekers with disability a holistic approach to finding suitable and sustainable employment. In addition to helping jobseekers with career development and job searching tasks, DES offers jobseekers assistance with their personal and living circumstances, as well as support for their mental and physical health. This ensures that external barriers to finding employment, such as a lack of disability management or other personal issues, are addressed before the jobseeker commences employment.

Once a jobseeker is ready to commence employment, a DES provider will help them to find a suitable role with an organisation that is 'disability confident'. A disability confident organisation is one that offers a supportive, positive, and inclusive work environment for everyone, including people with disability. DES providers can support your organisation to become more disability confident by helping you to diversify your workforce by creating a more accessible work environment and workplace culture.



**"Ruben first came to MatchWorks and was registered under our JobActive contract. As a trans man, the 'Rainbow Welcome Here' sticker at our front door provided a 'safe & welcoming' place for him to come to. Ruben was transitioning at the time and the first thing that I did as his Employment Consultant was to pay to have his birth certificate changed to his preferred name.**

**Ruben struggles with his mental health, and although I had tried to assist with various employment and training opportunities most fell through because of this. I could see that this was not the appropriate contract for him and that our DES (Disability Employment Service) model was. So, I encouraged him to seek the appropriate medical evidence to support this, to which he did. He now comes under the DES model and we can give him a more holistic, tailored approach to best suit his needs."**

Cristina, an Employment Consultant with Matchworks DES Mount Barker, SA.



**“I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for Mr Wolfgang. He didn’t just assist me to gain sustainable employment, he was more of a therapist. Long story short, 8 months ago I walked into MatchWorks Sunshine, thinking all I have to do is to attend my appointments so I can get paid every fortnight. For someone like me, and I also speak for my LGBTIQ+ brothers and sisters, we’re all so used to rejection from everyone in this society that it tends to stop us from becoming or doing something better with our lives, especially with getting employment.**

**Thankfully, there’s good people like Mr Wolfgang in this world that always look out for you. Like I said, he is not just an employment consultant, he’s a therapist. I was once someone with very low self-esteem, zero confidence, but thanks to him I’m now employed, and I’ve never been happier.”**

A client with MatchWorks DES Sunshine, VIC.



## **WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU WORK WITH A DES PROVIDER?**

When you hire an employee with disability through a DES provider, you can expect that they will be a good ‘job match’ for your organisation. The DES provider you work with should ensure that the candidate they present to you is ready to work with your organisation in a capacity that suits their needs as an employee, and your needs as an organisation. Both you and your new employee will be supported by the DES provider throughout the employment transition process. The DES provider will also make sure that your organisation is ‘disability confident’ and able to support your employee to reach their full potential.



**“I have a trans woman client who registered with MatchWorks late last year. She has a bachelor’s degree in accounting, however, after 15 years of looking for full time employment and making over 4000 job applications, she was unable to break into the industry that she studied for, taking whatever work she could get – most recently, courier work.**

**Business Development Consultant, Van, and I worked together to secure her a job with one of Van’s large employers in the city in their accounts department. She is nearing her 6 months being there. She fit in instantly making friends and her manager considers her, her right-hand girl!**

**She battles with depression and has been tested for autism recently too. For both these reasons I have weekly contact with her. She feels comfortable with me and feels free to share her concerns and stress and we talk through everything to try and resolve these issues. She loves her job and is so happy to finally be in the industry that she has always aimed to be in.”**

Amanda, an Employment Consultant with MatchWorks DES St Albans, VIC.

## **WHAT CAN A DES PROVIDER DO FOR MY ORGANISATION?**

- A DES provider can help you to support your employees with disability so that they can reach their full potential in your workplace.
- A DES provider can advertise your vacant positions to a large pool of people looking for work.
- A DES provider can match suitable jobseekers to your vacant positions by reviewing their resumes and conducting pre-screening interviews.
- A DES provider can make recommendations as to how to adjust a role in your organisation to make it more accessible for an employee with disability.

- A DES provider can conduct workplace assessments to make recommendations about how you can make your workplace more accessible.
- A DES provider can help you apply for Job Access funding to purchase specialised equipment or to make workplace modifications (see the 'Index of Access Needs' for more information).
- A DES provider can offer you a wage subsidy when you hire an employee with disability to cover some of the costs of their wage.

## WHAT CAN A DES PROVIDER DO FOR MY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITY?

- A DES provider can offer various support measures to your new employee with disability to help them to start their new role.
- A DES provider can provide your new employees with disability with work clothing, training and licences, and work equipment.
- A DES provider can help cover new employee's costs of travelling to and from work.
- A DES provider can provide your new employees with on-going support for up to a year after they have started in their role.
- A DES provider can provide your employees with disability with access to support services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, or psychological counselling.
- A DES provider can support an employee who acquires an injury or disability to fulfil the essential requirements of their role.

## HOW TO FIND A DES PROVIDER:

Whilst most DES providers offer service to all people with disability, there are some that offer specialised services which cater to a particular demographic group. There are DES providers which specialise in working with people who have specific disability types, such as psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities. Additionally, some DES providers specialise in working with people from different minority groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people, refugees, or LGBTI+ people. **MatchWorks** and **WorkingOUT** are DES providers who offer specialised services for members of the LGBTI+ community with disability.

You can see which DES providers are in your local area by clicking [here](#) to access Job Access' DES provider search engine.



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**“I had been unemployed for about a year, and MatchWorks was assisting me with looking for work. I was told by my Employment Consultant that there was a new focus group that was starting in MatchWorks Sunshine, specifically tailored for trans women, and that she thought it might be beneficial for me. She said that it was purely optional and not a requirement, but I thought it would be good to go along because I had not had much interaction with other trans women. It was a nice thought to be surrounded by other women who understood the issues that I faced day to day.**

**I went to every session there was available and found a lot of those sessions useful and learned a lot. One day, Wolfgang, who was an Employment Consultant and was running the sessions, approached me with a potential position within the company itself that he thought I would be suited for. I was reluctant at first because I knew nothing about working in employment, let alone the disability sector, but decided to give it a go.**

**It was quite the leap of faith, but I settled into the role. One of the things that I had specifically told my manager was that I wanted to continue doing work with the focus group, because it helped me so much and I wanted to give back. From then on, I co-hosted the sessions with Wolfgang, and we created some structure to the group, giving them the freedom to socialise, and to talk to them privately and assist them with their challenges individually. I found that having the lived experience myself and going through processes of changing my legal documentation, and being on treatments, really helped me to be able to assist the women in their own journeys.”**

Violette, an Employment Consultant with MatchWorks DES.

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## **STARTING A RELATIONSHIP WITH A DES PROVIDER:**

Once you find a DES provider that is best suited for your organisation's needs, it is time to develop a partnership that will serve to be mutually beneficial. After you approach a DES provider you would like to work with, you will be connected with their team who will help you fill your vacancies. You may work with a business development consultant, who acts as a representative of the DES provider to link businesses with DES employment consultants, and/or the DES employment consultants who work directly with jobseekers.

The DES staff will conduct some research about your industry and the specifications of the vacancies you would like to have filled. They will also spend some time with you to understand what your organisation does and what your workplace needs are. A member of DES staff may even visit you at your workplace to get a better understanding of how your organisation operates on a daily basis and what skills, knowledge, and attitude a candidate needs to be a good organisational fit.

After the DES staff have developed a good understanding of how your organisation operates, a DES staff member and a representative from your organisation should work together to create a good job match. The DES team will consider the experiences, skills, and interests of their pool of jobseekers and present you with a shortlist of candidates that may be a good fit for your organisation. To save time and resources, you can request that the DES team conduct a pre-screening interview with these candidates before you meet with them for a formal job interview.

Creating a good job match might involve some job customisation so that the role is accessible to a candidate with disability. This might involve making changes, such as modifying the workplace for accessibility, changing some duties of the role, or being flexible with an employee's roster. The DES team can help you to customise a job so that is accessible to a candidate with disability, whilst still meeting all the necessary requirements to successfully perform in that role. Although, not all people with disability will need customised jobs, it is good practice to be open minded towards those that do as employees with disability often bring unique insights and knowledge that other employees do not have. Additionally, by offering customised roles that play to the strengths of your employees, your organisation will likely benefit from an increase in productivity and workplace morale.

Once you have hired your new employee, the DES team will remain in contact with you and your employee to offer their on-going support. The on-going support that the DES team will offer you and your employee can be agreed upon through the development of an employment support plan. The employment support plan will outline what measures are



needed to support your new employee as they go through the induction, probation, and career development phases, and who is responsible for actioning them. The DES team will remain in contact with you for at least six months after you have hired your new employee to help you support them in the workplace. If your employee continues to need support after six months, the DES team will continue to support you and your employee throughout their employment with your organisation on an on-going basis.



**“I made contact with Days Eggs and spoke to the Operations Manager, Anne, way back in 2018. I told her I had a great kid who happened to be a trans man with extreme anxiety who just happened to have never worked before. I thought it was best to get it all out at once. I said to Anne, “what do you have to lose?” The rest really is history.**

**I kept in contact with Anne twice weekly to start. Tanner was working out so well that they had him working 10-hour days. I had to stop that and tell them if they wanted to keep him, they needed to pull the reigns in – they did. Anne always told me that every time she (or anyone) walked past him he always had a smile on his face (and that is true today, even after 2+ years).**

**Days Eggs offered Tanner a permanent job and Anne requested that I read all the documents to him so that he could understand what he was signing. Tanner has minimal understanding of these types of things & depends on me to help him. So, I guess that I am a conduit between Days Eggs and Tanner so that everything runs very smoothly.**

**Although Tanner is now looked after by our On-Going Support Consultant, we talk regularly. He knows that he can always come to me. I also touch base from time to time with Anne just to make sure that everything is on track.”**

Bessie, an Employment Consultant with MatchWorks DES Modbury, SA.