

7 Assisting people with intellectual disability

In the 1990s people with intellectual disability were the largest disability group in specialist employment programmes, making up more than 50 per cent of people in employment services administered under the *Disability Services Act*. Supported employment was, and remains, the predominant service model for this group though, even in 1998, some 40 per cent were in open employment services (FaCS 1999). In recent years the specialist employment programmes have expanded to target a larger and more diverse job seeker population with the result that intellectual disability now accounts for a much smaller share of the caseload, despite a relatively stable number of participants with intellectual disability over time. Intellectual disability currently accounts for less than one per cent of DMS and around 12 per cent of ESS participants. Most are people with mild intellectual disability.

People with moderate to severe intellectual disability usually enter the programme with a minimum eight hour employment benchmark. This means that a job of eight hours per week that meets the conditions for payment will attract a Job Placement Fee for the service provider and Outcome Fees if the job lasts. Research and practice in the field has shown that with the right level and type of support, people with significant intellectual disability can achieve more substantial employment. In the lead-up to DES some stakeholders were concerned that the new funding model would make it difficult for providers to deliver the intensive assistance required. Evidence on the cost of servicing people with higher levels of intellectual disability helped to inform a trial of an additional loading on DES fees “to help school leavers and other job seekers with moderate intellectual disability secure sustainable and substantive work in the open labour market” (Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio Budget Statements 2010-11, p. 116). The Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading trial commenced on 1 July 2010, initially for a two year period and subsequently extended for a further year.

The trial allowed DES providers to claim a 70 per cent loading on the first two Service Fees for eligible participants and on Job Placement, 13 Week and 26 Week Full Employment Outcome fees where a participant was employed for at least 15 hours per week. A critical design feature is the incentive for providers to pursue more substantial employment for people with moderate intellectual disability, in most cases, well above a participant’s employment benchmark hours.

Eligibility was based on the presence of moderate intellectual disability, defined as:

- an assessed Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of 60 or less; or
- classified by a registered psychologist, using a recognised assessment tool, as having moderate intellectual disability.³⁴

A participant with moderate intellectual disability may be eligible for the loading irrespective of whether intellectual disability was the primary or secondary disability. In pre-policy modelling the department estimated that around 540 new DES participants would be eligible for the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading in the two-year trial period, in addition to those who transitioned from DEN.

34. Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading Guidelines v1.3.

As at 30 June 2012, 672 DES participants were identified as eligible for the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading. Approximately \$2.4 million was expended in the first two years of the trial, with the loading on Outcome Fees accounting for 59 per cent of expenditure.

The department evaluated the trial to address three key questions:

- Did providers who achieved outcomes of 15 or more hours per week in DEN for participants with moderate intellectual disability maintain or improve the level of those outcomes with the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading (under DES)?
- Did similar or higher numbers of participants with moderate intellectual disability secure jobs of 15 or more hours per week under DES than in DEN?
- Did participants in jobs of 15 hours or more per week remain employed at that level for 26 weeks at the same or higher rate as before?

Expert advice on the guidelines for substantiating moderate intellectual disability was obtained from the Centre for Disability Studies in the Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney³⁵. The Centre conducted interviews with key stakeholders to gain their insights into the design and implementation of the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading.

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the 70 per cent Loading by comparing levels of substantial employment for people with moderate intellectual disability in DEN and DES. However, moderate intellectual disability was not identified generally in DEN and because of this the exercise reduced to an evaluation of outcomes recorded by just one provider that specialised in moderate intellectual disability in both DEN and DES.³⁶ A 15-month reference period was used to measure employment outcomes so that the evaluation could report before 30 June 2012 when the trial was originally due to end.

7.1 Characteristics of participants with moderate intellectual disability

Participants with moderate intellectual disability were identified in the department's Employment Services System by a data flag introduced on 3 September 2010. DES providers could set the flag to indicate participant's eligibility (IQ≤60) when they held the required documentary evidence. The number of flagged records fluctuated in 2011 as flags were set and then validated by the department. In a first round of programme assurance activity in 2011 the department identified more than 250 cases that required detailed audit; 179 flags were removed. The programme-assured caseload of 580 Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading eligible participants as at 31 December 2011 was used for the evaluation.

This 580 member caseload was broadly in line with the pre-policy estimate of 540. Delivering specialist services to such a small participant population presents a challenge, particularly noting that fewer than 200 of these participants lived in regional or remote areas throughout Australia. Participants with moderate intellectual disability are younger on average and have lower levels of

35. Expert Assessment of Working Definitions of Moderate Intellectual Disability, Request for Quotation number 26570, 2011.

36. The moderate intellectual disability flag did not exist in DEN. The closest indicator of moderate intellectual disability among DEN participants, 'Low IQ' recorded in Centrelink data, was incorrectly populated prior to June 2010. This removed the option of using DEN data for valid program level comparisons.

educational attainment than the wider DES population with intellectual disability (Table 7.1). More than 80 per cent received the Disability Support Pension; a further 11 per cent did not receive government income support.

Just under half of participants with moderate intellectual disability during the trial period entered DES via direct registration, mostly at ESS Funding Level 2 (Table 7.2). If a DES participant with moderate intellectual disability achieves a 26 Week Outcome they are very likely to go on to receive Ongoing Support from their DES provider. In December 2011 over 70 per cent of participants with moderate intellectual disability were in the Employment Assistance or Post-Placement Support phase of their period of service. Of those in Ongoing Support, 65 per cent were in High Ongoing Support, demonstrating the high and ongoing support needs of this group.

Employment benchmarks for this group were clustered in the eight to 14 hours per week bandwidth. Less than 10 per cent had an employment benchmark of 15 or more hours, compared with almost 20 per cent of all participants with intellectual disability and over 70 per cent of all DES participants.

At the time, five DES providers specialised in intellectual disability, including Jobsupport Incorporated which specialised in employment assistance for people with IQ 60 or lower. Participants with moderate intellectual disability were more likely to be with specialist providers but over 50 per cent were registered with generalist providers. Any comparison of outcomes for participants with moderate intellectual disability was essentially a comparison of Jobsupport with 'the rest', purely by weight of numbers.

Table 7.1: Comparative profile of participants with intellectual disability, as at 31 December 2011

	Moderate ID ^(a) No	Moderate ID ^(a) Per cent	All ID No.	All ID Per cent	DES active caseload No.	DES active caseload Per cent
Age group						
<20	153	26.4	2,713	23.3	14,319	12.1
20–24	236	40.7	3,177	27.2	13,548	11.4
25–34	105	18.1	3,068	26.3	20,963	17.7
35–49	66	11.4	2,128	18.2	38,612	32.5
50+	20	3.4	581	5.0	31,324	26.4
Total	580	100.0	11,667	100.0	118,766	100.0
Gender						
Male	324	55.9	7,231	62.0	69,956	58.9
Female	256	44.1	4,435	38.0	48,808	41.1
IQ<55^(b)	263	45.3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Primary disability						
Intellectual	500	86.2	8,304	71.2	8,304	7.0
Learning	53	9.1	1,848	15.8	13,933	11.7
Other ^(c)	27	4.7	1,356	11.6	86,186	72.6
Unknown	—	—	159	1.4	10,343	8.7
Remoteness^(d)						
Major City	405	69.8	6,982	59.8	72,910	61.4
Inner Regional	85	14.7	2,525	21.6	27,379	23.1
Outer Regional	66	11.4	1,801	15.4	15,562	13.1
Remote/Very Remote	24	4.1	355	3.0	2,850	2.4
Educational attainment						
Less than Year 10	265	45.7	3,109	26.6	19,040	16.0
Year 10	74	12.8	2,455	21.0	32,232	27.1
Year 12	64	11.0	1,296	11.1	15,982	13.5
Certificate or degree	56	9.7	1,397	12.0	36,491	30.7
Unknown	121	20.9	3,410	29.2	15,021	12.6
Income support type						
Disability Support Pension Newstart Allowance or Youth Allowance(other/student)	472	81.4	7,612	65.2	28,509	24.0
Parenting Payment	n.p.	n.p.	59	0.5	5,077	4.3
Other benefit	n.p.	n.p.	42	0.4	1,096	0.9
Not on benefit	65	11.2	2,107	18.1	23,449	19.7

n.p. Cell size less than 5.

n.a. Not available due to data limitations.

(a) Participants with the Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading flag who were participating in DES on 31 December 2011 (excluding suspensions).

(b) Intellectual Disability recorded as a medical condition in a Centrelink customer's Job Capacity Assessment report was displayed as 'IQ is less than 55' in the Centrelink IT system even if the customer's IQ score was 55 or higher. The issue was resolved in the June 2010 Release for any JCA reports accepted after 20 June 2010. No change was made to existing customer records where a condition of 'IQ is less than 55' had been incorrectly displayed on the Medical Conditions screen. IQ<55 data for DEN participants and participants registered in the first four months of DES are unreliable.

(c) Includes physical, psychiatric, and sensory disabilities.

(d) Excludes missing values.

Source: Administrative data.

Table 7.2: Programme characteristics of participants with intellectual disability, 31 December 2011

	Moderate ID ^(a) No.	Moderate ID ^(a) Per cent	All ID ^(b) No.	All ID ^(b) Per cent	DES active caseload No.	DES active caseload Per cent
Referral pathway						
Referred participant	322	55.5	7,892	67.6	97,340	82.0
Direct registration	258	44.5	3,775	32.4	21,426	18.0
Total	580	100.0	11,667	100.0	118,766	100.0
Programme/Funding Level						
DMS	n.p.	n.p.	536	4.6	53,890	45.4
ESS FL 1	51	8.8	1,554	13.3	28,508	24.0
ESS FL 2	366	63.1	5,849	50.1	23,396	19.7
Flexible Ongoing Support	10	1.7	777	6.7	3,956	3.3
Moderate Ongoing Support	46	7.9	1,618	13.9	5,598	4.7
High Ongoing Support	104	17.9	1,272	10.9	2,603	2.2
Job in Jeopardy	n.p.	n.p.	61	0.5	815	0.7
DES Eligible School Leaver						
Full-time student	59	10.2	1,035	8.9	6,666	5.6
12 months post-school	12	2.1	119	1.0	656	0.6
Transition to Work	42	7.2	155	1.3	468	0.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>1,309</i>	<i>11.2</i>	<i>7,790</i>	<i>6.6</i>
Employment benchmark hours						
Zero–7	7	1.2	106	0.9	340	0.3
8–14	522	90.0	9,369	80.3	41,987	35.4
15–29	38	6.6	1,425	12.2	47,075	39.6
30+	13	2.2	767	6.6	29,364	24.7
Provider type						
Generalist	315	54.3	7,246	62.1	89,919	75.7
Specialist Intellectual Disability	142	24.5	481	4.1	556	0.5
Specialist Autism and Asperger's	—	—	19	0.2	188	0.2
Specialist Acquired Brain Injury	—	—	—	—	42	<0.1
Other Specialist	123	21.2	3,921	33.6	28,061	23.6

n.p. Cell size less than 5.

(a) Participants with Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading flag who were participating in DES on 31 December 2011 (excluding suspensions).

(b) Primary or other disability of intellectual disability.

Source: Administrative data.

7.2 Effectiveness of the Loading

Participants with moderate intellectual disability recorded higher job placement and outcome rates than participants with intellectual disability in general, under either DES or DEN. Considering all jobs, 69 per cent of the Moderate ID Loading group obtained a job and 43 per cent achieved a 26 Week Outcome. Corresponding figures for the wider intellectual disability group in DES over the same period were: 54 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively (Table 7.3).

Outcome rates for participants with moderate intellectual disability were reasonably consistent across funding levels. The ESS Funding Level 1 group performed slightly better on job placements and the ESS Funding Level 2 group slightly better on 26 Week Outcomes, noting that the Funding Level 1 comparison group comprised just 26 participants.

Table 7.3: Intellectual disability comparison groups, all employment outcomes within 15 months from commencement date^(a)

Group	Group size	Job Placements	Per cent	13 Week Outcomes	Per cent	26 Week Outcomes	Per cent
<i>Moderate ID Loading</i>	150	104	69.3	86	57.3	64	42.7
ESS Funding Lvl 1	26	19	73.1	15	57.7	10	38.5
ESS Funding Lvl 2	120	82	68.3	68	56.7	52	43.3
Other	4	3	75.0	3	75.0	2	50.0
<i>DES-ID</i>	2,368	1,286	54.3	1,037	43.8	706	29.8
DMS	136	63	46.3	49	36.0	30	22.1
ESS Funding Lvl 1	633	342	54.0	290	45.8	200	31.6
ESS Funding Lvl 2	1,569	859	54.7	676	43.1	455	29.0
Other	30	22	73.3	22	73.3	21	70.0
<i>DEN-2008 (ID)</i>	1,410	771	54.7	531	37.7	400	28.4
<i>DEN-2009 (ID)</i>	1,611	864	53.6	583	36.2	367	22.8

(a) **Moderate ID Loading:** 150 participants with moderate intellectual disability, including 50 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DES-ID:** 2368 DES participants with intellectual disability of any severity who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DEN-2008:** 1410 DEN participants with intellectual disability (any severity), including 21 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2008. **DEN-2009:** 1611 DEN participants with intellectual disability, including 38 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2009. All were followed for 15 months.

- (b) Includes job placements and outcomes irrespective of weekly hours worked. Placements and outcomes achieved by MIDL participants are counted irrespective of whether the MIDL loading was claimed/paid, i.e. data are based on MIDL flag only.
- (c) Job Placement figures for DEN were measured by counting participants who had one or both of a DEN 4 Week Milestone or a recorded employment history during the relevant period.
- (d) Includes full and pathway/intermediate outcomes.

Notes:

- Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading - Other includes participants in DMS and Job in Jeopardy programmes; DES-ID Other includes Job in Jeopardy and participants whose funding level could not be determined from the administrative data.
- ESS=DES Employment Support Service (broadly equivalent to DEN); DMS=DES Disability Management Service.
- ID=Intellectual disability of any severity.
- Each comparison group includes newly commenced participants who commenced between 1 April and 30 September of the reference year.
- Outcome numbers include outcomes (Job Placements, 13 and 26 Week Outcomes) achieved by 31 December of the year following the reference year, e.g. for commencements between 1 April and 30 September 2010 outcomes claimed by 31 December 2011 are counted.
- Both full and pathway/intermediate outcomes were counted.

Source: Administrative data.

Analysis revealed a strong provider effect with Jobsupport responsible for markedly higher outcomes for participants with moderate intellectual disability (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Intellectual disability comparison groups, all employment outcomes recorded by Jobsupport and other providers

Group	Provider	Group size	Job Placement	Per cent	13 Week Outcome	Per cent	26 Week Outcome	Per cent
Mod. ID Loading	Jobsupport	50	46	92.0	43	86.0	38	76.0
	Other	100	58	58.0	43	43.0	26	26.0
Mod. ID Loading—ESS FL2	Jobsupport	48	44	91.7	41	85.4	36	75.0
	Other	72	38	52.8	27	37.5	16	22.2
DES ID	Jobsupport	54	50	92.6	47	87.0	42	77.8
	Other	2,314	1,236	53.4	990	42.8	664	28.7
DES-ID—ESS FL2	Jobsupport	51	47	92.2	44	86.3	39	76.5
	Other	1,518	812	53.5	632	41.6	416	27.4
DEN-2008	Jobsupport ^(d)	21	16	76.2	12	57.1	11	52.4
	Other	1,389	755	54.4	519	37.4	389	28.0
DEN-2009	Jobsupport ^(d)	38	34	89.5	30	78.9	26	68.4
	Other	1,573	830	52.8	553	35.2	341	21.7

(a) **Moderate ID Loading:** 150 participants with moderate intellectual disability, including 50 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DES-ID:** 2368 DES participants with intellectual disability of any severity who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DEN-2008:** 1410 DEN participants with intellectual disability (any severity), including 21 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2008. **DEN-2009:** 1611 DEN participants with intellectual disability, including 38 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2009. All were followed for 15 months.

(b) Placements and outcomes achieved by participants flagged as moderate intellectual disability are counted irrespective of whether the 70 per cent loading was claimed/paid in the reference period, i.e. data are based on the MIDL flag.

(c) Includes full and pathway/intermediate outcomes.

(d) Jobsupport calculated slightly different figures from its own database. DEN-2008: Group size=21; 17 Job Placements (81.0%); 14 13-Week Outcomes (66.7%); 13 26-Week Outcomes (61.9%). DEN-2009: Group size=39; 35 Job Placements (89.7%); 31 13-Week Outcomes (79.5%); 31 26-Week Outcomes (79.5%).

Notes:

1. Mod. ID Loading=Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading.
2. ESS=DES Employment Support Service (broadly equivalent to DEN); DES-ID=DES participants with intellectual disability of any severity; FL=Funding Level.
3. Each comparison group includes newly commenced participants who commenced between 1 April and 30 September of the reference year.
4. Outcome numbers include outcomes (Job Placements, 13 and 26 Week Outcomes) achieved by 31 December of the year following the reference year, e.g. for commencements between 1 April and 30 September 2010 outcomes claimed by 31 December 2011 were counted.
5. Includes full and pathway/intermediate outcomes.

Source: Administrative data.

Outcome rates for Jobsupport clients under DES with the Moderate ID Loading were higher than under DEN which may be partly attributable to difficult labour market conditions in the period immediately after the 2008 global financial crisis. Outcome rates of other providers were relatively unchanged between DEN and DES. The contrast was most pronounced for jobs of at least 15 hours per week (Table 7.5).

- Jobsupport accounted for 33 per cent of the participants in the Moderate ID Loading group, 59 per cent of jobs of 15 or more hours and 72 per cent of corresponding 26 Week Outcomes achieved by this group.
- Over 90 per cent of jobs obtained by participants with moderate intellectual disability in Jobsupport were jobs of 15 or more hours per week; 80 per cent achieved a 26 Week Outcome within the reference period. In contrast, half of the jobs achieved by participants with moderate intellectual disability with other providers were jobs of 15 or more hours per week and less than half of these went on to achieve a 26 Week Outcome within the reference period.
- By 31 December 2011, 68 per cent of the Moderate ID Loading group with Jobsupport had achieved a 26 Week Outcome in a job of 15 hours or more per week, compared with 13 per cent of Moderate ID Loading participants registered with other providers.

Outcome rates were similar between DEN and DES, except in the case of Jobsupport. For jobs of 15 hours or more per week, 26 Week Outcome rates for all other providers were:

- 15 and nine per cent for intellectual disability in DEN in 2008 and 2009, respectively³⁷
- 14 per cent for intellectual disability in DES
- 13 per cent for the Moderate ID Loading group.

In contrast, Jobsupport demonstrated substantially improved outcomes for participants under DES with the Moderate ID Loading. 26 Week Outcome rates for jobs of 15 hours or more were:

- 67 per cent for intellectual disability and 68 for the Moderate ID Loading group, compared with
- 52 per cent (in 2008) and 47 per cent (in 2009) for Jobsupport under DEN.

37. Lower outcome across the board in 2009 may have been related to the transition to DES in March 2010.

Table 7.5: Intellectual disability comparison groups, outcomes associated with jobs of 15 hours or more recorded by Jobsupport and other providers

Group	Provider	Group size	Jobs	Per cent of jobs	Per cent of group	26 Week Outcomes	Per cent 26 Week	Per cent of group
Mod. ID Loading	Jobsupport	50	42	91.3	84.0	34	89.5	68.0
	Other	100	29	50.0	29.0	13	50.0	13.0
Mod. ID Loading ESS FL2	Jobsupport	48	41	93.2	85.4	33	91.7	68.8
	Other	72	21	55.3	29.2	8	50.0	11.1
DES-ID	Jobsupport	54	44	88.0	81.5	36	85.7	66.7
	Other	2,314	603	48.8	26.1	322	48.5	13.9
DES-ID ESS FL2	Jobsupport	51	43	91.5	84.3	35	89.7	68.6
	Other	1,518	388	47.8	25.6	199	47.8	13.1
DEN-2008	Jobsupport ^(d)	21	15	93.8	71.4	11	100.0	52.4
	Other	1,389	353	46.8	25.4	211	54.2	15.2
DEN-2009	Jobsupport ^(d)	38	20	58.8	52.6	18	69.2	47.4
	Other	1,573	273	32.9	17.4	143	41.9	9.1

(a) **Moderate ID Loading:** 150 participants with moderate intellectual disability, including 50 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DES-ID:** 2368 DES participants with intellectual disability of any severity who commenced in DES between 1 April and 30 September 2010. **DEN-2008:** 1410 DEN participants with intellectual disability (any severity), including 21 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2008. **DEN-2009:** 1611 DEN participants with intellectual disability, including 38 Jobsupport clients, who commenced in DEN between 1 April and 30 September 2009. All were followed for 15 months.

(b) Placements and outcomes achieved by MIDL participants are counted irrespective of whether the MIDL loading was claimed/paid, i.e. data are based on MIDL flag only.

(c) Both full and pathway/intermediate outcomes are counted, however most of the outcomes are full outcomes.

(d) Jobsupport calculated slightly different figures from its own database. DEN ID-1: Group size=21; 16 Job Placements (76.2%); 14 13-Week Outcomes (66.7%); 13 26-Week Outcomes (61.9%). DEN ID-2: Group size=39; 33 Job Placements (84.6%); 25 13-Week Outcomes (64.1%); 25 26-Week Outcomes (64.1%).

Notes:

1. Mod. ID. Loading=Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading.
2. ESS=DES Employment Support Service (broadly equivalent to DEN).
3. ID=Intellectual disability of any severity.
4. Each comparison group includes newly commenced participants who commenced between 1 April and 30 September of the reference year.
5. Outcome numbers include outcomes (Job Placements, 13 and 26 Week Outcomes) achieved by 31 December of the year following the reference year, e.g. for commencements between 1 April and 30 September 2010 outcomes claimed by 31 December 2011 are counted.
6. Both full and pathway/intermediate outcomes are counted.

Source: Administrative data.

Informants to the review by the Centre for Disability Studies acknowledged the need for staff to have special competencies if they are to help people with significant intellectual disability achieve and maintain substantial employment in the open labour market. Most of the providers interviewed said they used a 'place and train' model and while they identified a range of strategies considered to be good practice, the review found that only Jobsupport had a systematic staff training programme to ensure competencies in job carving, job matching and on-the-job training and support. Peak organisations recognised that few DES providers had the specialist skill sets and competencies required to support participants with moderate intellectual disability and the consultations highlighted the need for specialist services to help these participants achieve and maintain substantial employment. Jobsupport delivered a highly structured programme of job search, task analysis and specialist instruction, job customisation and written employer support agreements. Specialist training for staff and staff mentoring are the backbone of the service for people with higher levels of intellectual disability.

7.3 Cost effectiveness

The Moderate Intellectual Disability Loading was about a level of resourcing to achieve above minimum outcomes for a group of participants with very high support needs and while there was clear evidence of this being achieved, results were variable. This is reflected in very different levels of expenditure per 26 Week Outcome across the comparison groups in the evaluation (Table 7.6).

On a per participant basis, expenditure over the first 15 months of service was higher for Jobsupport than for other providers. A Jobsupport client in DEN attracted roughly double the amount, per participant, of participants with intellectual disability registered with other DEN providers, for example, around \$20,000 per participant in Jobsupport compared with \$10,000 per participant with other providers in the DEN-2008 group). Under DES with the Moderate ID Loading, Jobsupport's specialist service cost government an average of \$29,000 per participant in the first 15 months of service compared with \$11,000 per participant with intellectual disability serviced by other providers. For Jobsupport, maintenance funding per client fell under the DES with the Moderate ID Loading relative to the DEN contract and funding in the Employment Assistance and Post-Placement Support phases rose. In other words, the 70 per cent loading together with the DES funding model redistributed payments towards the front end of a period of service. On a per participant basis, Jobsupport looked an expensive service for intellectual disability but the picture was different on a per outcome basis.

For the selected group of participants with moderate intellectual disability in the evaluation, government paid Jobsupport an average of \$40,000 per 26 Week Outcome, exclusive of any additional fees paid later for these participants. For other providers the figure was closer to \$48,000. The fact that most of Jobsupport's 26 Week Outcomes were for jobs of 15 hours or more per week—90 per cent compared with 50 per cent for other providers—added an extra dimension to the relative cost effectiveness of Jobsupport for participants with moderate intellectual disability.

For DES participants with intellectual disability more generally, Jobsupport and other providers were equally cost effective on a per outcome basis (\$37,000 to \$38,000), though it is important to remember that almost all of Jobsupport clients are people with moderate intellectual disability, whereas 95 per cent of participants with intellectual disability registered with other providers have mild intellectual disability. In other words, comparing Jobsupport and other providers' expenditures

per outcome is not an entirely fair comparison. DEN comparison groups suffered the same difficulty, since Jobsupport has always focussed on participants with higher levels of intellectual disability (and this was compounded by small numbers in the 2008 and 2009 DEN groups).

Since the Jobsupport client base provided the only consistently composed group of participants with moderate intellectual disability, any attempt to draw conclusions about the cost effectiveness of the trial was necessarily restricted to an examination of expenditure per outcome for Jobsupport clients before and during the trial period. The 2008 DEN group faced difficult labour market conditions in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis, a further factor to be considered when making comparisons. The 2009 DEN group recorded a 90 per cent job placement rate, comparable to Jobsupport's placement rate of 92 per cent in the trial period. The comparative analysis of expenditure was therefore based on the DEN-2009 group, the larger of the two DEN groups in Jobsupport and more representative of long-term trends.

Under DES with the 70 per cent loading \$40,000 per 26 Week Outcome for Jobsupport was around 18 per cent higher than in DEN (\$34,000). Allowing for inflation the price of a 26 Week Outcome in the trial period was higher, but not 70 per cent higher. Factor in the much higher rate of substantial employment achieved by Jobsupport clients with the 70 per cent loading and the increase in expenditure over a four year period was perhaps reasonable.

Expenditure calculated over 15 months was sufficient for comparison purposes but it is important to note that some payments fall after the first 15 months of service and evaluation estimates might not have captured all of the costs incurred by every participant. Moreover, different methods for calculating cost per outcome can produce different estimates. Costs vary according to the sample that is selected—the composition of a group of participants used in a costing study— and whether expenditure is calculated from longitudinal data (following each participant over time) or cross-sectional data (calculated across a sample of participants regardless of where each person is up to in their period of service). For example, cross-sectional data on an Innovation Fund Project covering the period 1 March 2010 to 6 January 2012 estimated a national average cost per 26 Week Full Outcome for intellectual disability of \$56,904. By comparison, Jobsupport's cost per 26 Week Full Outcome over the same period, calculated the same way, was \$35,143. While these amounts differ from the evaluation estimates the superior cost effectiveness of a specialist service for moderate intellectual disability is evident in both sets of figures.

At both Funding Levels of DES-ESS, Jobsupport outcomes were less expensive than outcomes achieved by other providers for participants with intellectual disability overall and for moderate intellectual disability in particular. The 70 per cent Moderate ID Loading shifted funding to the Employment Assistance and Post Placement Support phases to better reflect the intensive up-front service delivery needed for people with moderate intellectual disability to achieve substantial employment. The timing of the evaluation made it difficult to ascertain if 70 per cent was the 'right' level of loading, taking into account the funding implications of the DES Ongoing Support model.

Table 7.6: Programme expenditure per participant and per outcome, by comparison group (\$)

Comparison group	Provider	Per participant	Per 26 Week Outcome
Mod. ID Loading	Jobsupport	30,111	39,620
	Other	12,359	47,534
Mod. ID Loading ESS FL1	Jobsupport	19,252	19,252
	Other	9,459	28,377
Mod. ID Loading ESS FL2	Jobsupport	30,564	40,752
	Other	13,697	61,637
DES-ID	Jobsupport	29,487	37,912
	Other	10,754	37,476
DES-ID ESS FL1	Jobsupport	19,252	19,252
	Other	7,619	24,282
DES-ID ESS FL2	Jobsupport	30,239	39,543
	Other	12,450	45,430
DEN-2008	Jobsupport	19,580	37,380
	Other	9,521	33,998
DEN-2009	Jobsupport	23,018	33,641
	Other	9,832	45,353

Note: Includes Service Fees, Outcome Fees and Ongoing Support (or Maintenance) Fees that were approved in the first 15 months of service for each member of the comparison groups used for evaluation. Excludes any fees for these participants that fell outside the reference period. Fees paid for other participants on the providers' caseloads at the same time who were not selected into the comparison groups were excluded.

Source: Administrative data.

7.4 Appropriateness of a fee loading for participants with moderate intellectual disability

A trial of this nature operating within a programme built on the principle of case-based funding inevitably raises the question: why moderate intellectual disability? Analogies can certainly be found in other sectors, most notably in education where an explicit link is made between the level of resourcing and severity of intellectual disability in the form of recommended minimum student-teacher ratios in school classrooms. However, to address the question in the present context we need to examine issues related specifically to employment.

The disparity in labour force outcomes between people with disability and other Australians is particularly stark for those with intellectual disability. Unemployment of around 16 per cent is double the unemployment rate of people with disability in general and only 41 per cent of people with intellectual disability in 2009 participated in the labour force (ABS 2012a). Just one in five had completed Year 12 or equivalent education. Those who do gain employment tend to have short working lives, with retirement commonly occurring by the age of 35 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008).

Deinstitutionalisation in the late twentieth century brought hopes of participation in education and employment for people with disability hitherto excluded from community life. Access to formal

education began to open up in the 1970s with the opening of the first special class in an Australian high school in 1982. At around the same time a philosophy of presumptive employability, a strengths-based approach which presumes the person with disability is employable given the right supports, took hold. Specialist employment support models were evolving, particularly in the United States (see for example, Wehman et al. 1999). Here in Australia the *Disability Services Act 1986* laid the foundations for a specialist service system to support access to the open labour market for people along the disability spectrum.

As well as enabling legislation and policy initiatives, employment support technology has played a central role in advancement and demonstrations of open employment services for people with significant intellectual disability began to appear in the mid to late 1980s. Wehman *et al* (1999) outlined eight strategies necessary for people with significant intellectual disability to succeed in open employment:

- specialist job coach
- instructional strategies specifically designed for people with intellectual disability, for example, prompt sequences, positive reinforcement, task analysis and modification
- compensatory strategies
- natural employer workplace supports
- assistive technology
- workplace modifications
- long term support
- community supports.

Three elements are said to characterise high quality services for this group: high expectations, person-centred goals, and collaboration between service providers (Grigal *et al.*, 2011). Along with specialist practical supports there must be a strong conviction that people with significant intellectual disability can succeed in open employment.

The importance of job customisation is also emphasised because people with more severe intellectual disability are rarely able to fill advertised vacancies:

“This approach is designed to result in employment where job tasks are carved from an existing job, or created to match the skills and accommodation needs of the job seeker so that the employer’s operation is helped in a specific way. Thus, the individual has a ‘customised’ job description that did not exist prior to the negotiation process, along with other negotiated conditions of work, such as productivity expectations or work schedules.” (Luecking 2011: 262)

Job customisation requires a much deeper level of interaction between disability employment initiatives and employers. This is employer engagement at a local, often personal, level.

“Employers cited the value of competent disability employment professionals who helped identify operational improvements as a key reason for hiring and retaining employees with intellectual disability and multiple disabilities, in spite of the fact that their employment was contingent on significant customization of job duties and conditions of work...Continuing campaigns to ‘raise employer awareness’ will have limited effect on actual employer hiring behaviour without simultaneous improvements in connecting employers to actual applicants with intellectual disability.” (Luecking 2011: 265)

The notion of becoming 'work ready' through a period of employment assistance does not translate as easily for this group as for other job seekers. A person with significant intellectual disability can, with considerable intervention, become ready to perform a specific set of tasks in a given workplace but their lack of adaptive behaviours means that readiness for one job does not confer readiness for similar jobs and work environments.

There is no doubt that this is a group of job seekers with exceptionally high needs, who face considerable odds in the open labour market. What appears to set them apart is the body of evidence of their potential to succeed given the *right type of service*. From the available literature it is clear that outcomes are driven by positive conviction and specialist know-how and gives a strong sense that this is very high cost servicing. Most importantly, the literature confirms that in spite of a poor overall track record of employment for people with significant intellectual disability the technology to achieve much better outcomes for this group does exist.

The guidelines in theory and practice

A cut-off score IQ 60 (range 55–65) for moderate intellectual disability was confirmed as in line with the American Psychiatric Association (2000) ranges. The Centre for Disability Studies advised that a cut-off score of IQ 60 is appropriate for targeting people with moderate or higher intellectual disability and recommended that the guidelines be refined to assist providers to correctly interpret IQ scores expressed in different formats. This can be a single score or percentile range, most commonly expressed as 5 approximation points either side of the full scale IQ score gained on the instrument used. The Centre encourages the use of adaptive behaviour or support needs assessment in conjunction with IQ, especially for situations where an IQ score may be queried. Therefore, support was given for the current guideline that allows a person to be classified by a registered psychologist using a recognised assessment tool, as an alternative to IQ ≤ 60 .

7.5 Key findings and recommendations

The administrative data and design of the Moderate ID Loading trial did not fully support evaluation. Evaluation questions could be answered only in respect of Jobsupport because participants with moderate intellectual disability could not be identified in DEN administrative data, other than those in Jobsupport. Comparative analysis relied largely on the outcomes of Jobsupport clients and these results did not reflect the performance of the broader field of providers at the time.

Did those providers that were achieving outcomes of 15 or more hours per week in DEN for participants with moderate intellectual disability maintain or improve the level of those outcomes?

Under DES with the Moderate ID Loading, employment outcomes of 15 or more hours per week improved for people with moderate intellectual disability who were registered with Jobsupport:

- 68 per cent achieved a 26 Week Outcome for a job of 15 or more hours, compared with 52 per cent of the DEN-2008 and 47 per cent of the DEN-2009 Jobsupport comparison groups.

This result should not be used to infer that outcomes for people with moderate intellectual disability improved across the board because of the specialist nature of the Jobsupport service.

Did similar or higher numbers of participants with moderate intellectual disability secure jobs of 15 or more hours per week under DES [with the Moderate ID Loading] than was achieved in DEN?

Under DES with the Moderate ID Loading, Jobsupport well exceeded its DEN placement rate for jobs of 15 hours or more per week for people with moderate intellectual disability.

- 84 per cent of the Jobsupport group in DES achieved a job of 15 or more hours, compared with 71 per cent of the DEN-2008 and 53 per cent of the DEN-2009 Jobsupport comparison groups.
- More people with moderate intellectual disability registered with Jobsupport so that more jobs of 15 or more hours were achieved both in absolute and relative terms. The 70 per cent loading may have placed a part in higher registrations.

Considering all participants with intellectual disability, the rate of 15+ hour job placements achieved by all other providers combined was maintained but not improved between DEN and DES-ESS.

Did participants in jobs of 15 hours or more per week remain employed at that level for 26 weeks at the same or higher rate as before?

Around two-thirds (66 per cent) of 15+ hour jobs achieved by the Moderate ID Loading group were maintained for at least six months, compared with 55 per cent for the DES intellectual disability comparison group and between 55 and 60 per cent for the DEN comparison groups. Jobsupport was a stand-out performer: more than 80 per cent of Jobsupport participants with moderate intellectual disability who achieved a job of 15 or more hours kept the job for at least six months. This was within the range of results that Jobsupport achieved under DEN. Jobsupport's result was strongly reflected in the overall conversion rate of 66 per cent for the Moderate ID Loading group. The evaluation concluded that the additional fee loading had benefited Jobsupport clients and would benefit clients of any other provider that offered similar specialist support.

The trial highlighted an uneven field of service delivery for the target group and the evaluation found little evidence that an additional loading can deliver better outcomes in the absence of technical competency. A number of informants argued that the additional fee loading should be extended to minimum eight hour per week jobs; however, this would be inconsistent with the policy intent of the loading and research that says if expectations are raised, outcomes will follow, given the right type of support. That one provider can assist 68 per cent of participants with moderate intellectual disability into lasting jobs of 15 hours per week indicates that government should not lower its expectations. The DES funding model pays for outcomes at employment benchmark hours; the Moderate ID Loading paid for a higher level of service to achieve a higher quality outcome.

In the specific case of Jobsupport, DES with the Moderate ID Loading was more cost effective than the DEN funding model on a per outcome basis because more outcomes were achieved. While cost effectiveness was demonstrated *where the required level of service was delivered* and a 70 per cent loading was evidently sufficient to deliver more substantial employment for participants with moderate intellectual disability, the evaluation could not say whether a lower loading might have produced similar results.

The evaluation recommended incorporating into the DES funding model an additional fee loading on specified employment outcome fees, retaining the requirement of employment for 15 or more

hours per week and removing the loading on the first two Service Fees to further strengthen the outcomes focus.

7.6 Policy response

A policy response was announced in the 2013 Budget. Under the new Supporting Australians with an Intellectual Disability programme, DES providers receive an additional 88 per cent loading on Job Placement and Outcome Fees when they place a job seeker with moderate intellectual disability in employment above their assessed minimum hours per week for 13 weeks, and another fee for a placement of longer than 26 weeks. Providers will be able to claim up to an additional \$12,971 on top of standard Job Placement and Outcome Fees for supporting a highly disadvantaged person with moderate intellectual disability to stay in a job that lasts at least 26 weeks. More than 700 Australians with intellectual disability are expected to benefit from the \$5.5 million programme.