

## What is Vocational Rehabilitation Service - Fixed Place Stream?

### Context:

Vocational Rehabilitation Service providers are specialist employment services and one of the Commonwealth funded Providers Australian Government Employment Services (PAGES). VRS' work is focused on people with disabilities, injuries and conditions who are finding it difficult to gain work. Whilst VRS has been delivered for many decades by the Commonwealth government, since July 2007 there are a number of new providers offering Vocational Rehabilitation Services including a number of ACE members, who have a strong background in DEN services.

### Definition:

VRS offers job seekers help to understand, compensate for or manage injury or disability, or the limitations or restrictions imposed by injury or disability. The service helps job seekers build work capacity and/or develop new work strategies to avoid re-injury. VRS provides a comprehensive service that combines vocational rehabilitation with specialist employment assistance.

### Who can access Fixed Placed VRS<sup>1</sup>?

Job seekers are referred to a fixed place when they:

- are on a non activity tested income support payment or do not have participation requirements; or
- are not on income support; or
- have a future work capacity of 8-14 hours per week; or
- have previously completed a programme in the demand driven stream and have an assessed current work capacity of <15 hours a week; or
- have 30+ current and future work capacity and are activity tested.

Services offered to people in the fixed place stream are offered for a period up to 2 years.

Fixed place job seekers may only be commenced in VRS where there is an available fixed place in a VRS provider's fixed place allocation. (This will determine the status of the service in the JCA diary).

VRS job seekers are on payments such as Newstart, Youth Allowance or Parenting Payment with full time participation requirements, or Pre-May 2005 DSP with no participation requirement, or current DSP or occasionally (less than 10% of the caseload) no payment at all.

### What services are provided to eligible job seekers<sup>2</sup>?

The work in VRS is focused on the individual needs of the job seeker and can include, but is not limited to:

- assessment of the impact a job seeker's injury, disability or health condition is having on the job seeker's ability to gain or sustain sustainable employment;

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, VRS Secure Site. Accessed 27 July 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, VRS Secure Site. Accessed 27 July 2007.

- identifying and delivering vocational rehabilitation interventions and strategies to manage injury, disability or a health condition, in order to achieve a safe return to work, including interventions designed to improve endurance;
- vocational counselling and planning to identify a safe, suitable and sustainable job goal;
- counselling on disability issues;
- training and work trials;
- job search and job placement assistance; and
- assistance with job design, workplace assessments and modifications.

## Key Differences to other Providers of Australian Government Employment Services:

**Job Network** is focused on assisting people who do not have a need for specialist intervention or whose conditions, whether permanent or temporary are undiagnosed. VRS focuses on people with established disabilities, injuries and conditions requiring specialist intervention.

**Capped DEN** job seekers share some characteristics with VRS clients as both groups of job seekers may share many of the same conditions. The difference is Vocational Rehabilitation job seekers are assisted into work **after** specialist intervention by allied health professionals. This intervention aims to assist the job seeker to understand, compensate for and/or manage their disability. Whilst some DEN providers may provide similar interventions e.g. vocational counselling, the level of specialist focus in Vocational Rehabilitation may be enhanced by the skill base of the professional discipline. Another distinguishing feature is that Capped DEN clients will generally have **permanent disability** whereas VRS clients may not have a permanent disability. In DEN, the job seeker's capabilities are predominately known and the Capped DEN's prime focus is on finding the appropriate job match.

**Uncapped DEN** job seekers again share some of the characteristics of Capped DEN and VRS job seekers. Uncapped DEN job seekers have differing current and future work capacity to Fixed Place VRS job seekers, namely a current and future capacity of 15-29 hours or a current capacity of 15-29 hours and a future capacity of 30 plus hours. This compares with the hours mentioned above, which are either higher or lower than the hours in Uncapped DEN..

Uncapped DEN job seekers will require ongoing support in the job (but for less than two years). The clearest distinguishing feature is that VRS clients will require more intensive specialist intervention, prior to commencing job search. This intervention aims to build capacity to the level recommended by the JCA assessment. Again, some DEN providers will provide some aspects of similar interventions e.g. vocational counselling, however the degree of analysis in Vocational Rehabilitation may be enhanced by the skill base of the professional discipline.

**Personal Support Program** supports people to **become job ready**. It focuses on their non employment related barriers to gaining work.

**Disability Supported Employment** or **Business Services** (some of which were formerly referred to as 'sheltered workshops') provide employment opportunities and support to people **in their own business workplace**, work crews and/or contract labour arrangements. Support is generally provided for **more than 24 months** and can be ongoing for as long as the person remains employed by the service. Generally the workers in Business Services are paid **productivity** based wages that may or may not be based on the Supported Wage System.

### Process:

Fixed Place VRS referrals are actioned **after the JCA assessment report is electronically submitted**. Only then can an appointment be arranged.

Note: VRS providers are required to perform certain eligibility checks prior to accepting the referral. For example, they need to verify that the person fulfils age and residency requirements.

### Further Information:

For further information about the content of this document, please contact ACE on 03 8676 0353 or [info@acenational.org.au](mailto:info@acenational.org.au).