

Open tender for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

August 2006 - View from the Peak

As part of the new Welfare to Work reforms Vocational Rehabilitation Services will be opened up to private providers from mid 2007. Australian Government funded vocational rehabilitation services for up to 22 000 people will be offered to the market through an open tender process to be conducted later in 2006. Up to 50% of the new uncapped stream of vocational rehabilitation places and 20% of the existing capped places will be offered for two-year contracts running through to 30 June 2009.

As a specialist employment service, Vocational Rehabilitation Services help people who, because of a disability, injury or health condition, find getting into work difficult, by combining specialist rehabilitation services with employment assistance. Job seekers with a mental health disability made up 29.3 per cent of all new job seekers referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services providers in 2004–05, and 57.3% with a physical disability.

Over the next three years the government will inject an extra \$192 million for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide a new 'uncapped' stream for all eligible people with part-time work capacity. Job seekers referred to the uncapped stream will have been assessed as having work capacity of between 15 and 29 hours per week. This new uncapped stream will complement the capped or existing Vocational Rehabilitation Services programme which will continue to largely focus on people on income support who cannot work at least 15 hours a week in a job and so do not have a requirement to look for work.

DEWR has released an Industry Alert which provides potential tenderers with background information on Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This can be found at: www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/Purchasing and following the links.

Key dates and milestones for the purchase of Vocational Rehabilitation Services are:

- An Exposure Draft to be released in August 2006
- A Request for Tender to be released September 2006
- Contracts issued late March 2007 to commence 1 July 2007

Information sessions were held during July on the tender process but further enquiries can be made to the Employment Services Purchasing Hotline: 1300 733 514 or email: espurchasing@dewr.gov.au