

How to make the most of the Supported Wage System

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Origins of the SWS

- Ronalds Report (1990/91)-alternative to sheltered employment
- AIRC Test Case –ACTU/ACCI agreement:
SWS Model Clause vs. Slow Workers Permits
- July 1994: SWS begins operation

SWS Objectives

- To increase integrated open employment opportunities for people with more significant disabilities
- To ensure a fair and objective assessment process that would generate equitable wage outcomes for workers with disability and their employer

Some SWS Usage Statistics

Year	Total Number of DES Clients in work	SWS Workers assisted	SWS/DES client ratio
1997-1998	27,671	2,188 (DS Census)	7.9%
1998-1999	28,670	2,602	9.0%
1999-2000	31,380	2,672	8.5%
2000-2001	33,380	2,796 (2,820 AR)	8.2% (8.5%)
2001-2002	34,598	2,838 (3,900 AR)	8.2% (11.3%)
2002-2003	35,582	3,119 (3,010 AR)	8.7% (8.5%)
2003-2004	36,815	2,878 (3,425 AR)	7.8% (9.3%)
2004-2005	36,263	3,964 (3,425 AR)	10.9% (9.4%)
2005-2006	31,597	2,845 (4,890 AR)	9.0% (15.5%)
2006-2007	50,229	5609* (5,100 AR)	11.2% (10.2%)

Major Achievements of SWS

- Affirmative Action IR measure
- Standardised Wage Assessment Methodology
- Better Wage Outcomes than Sheltered Workshops

Using the SWS as a Marketing Tool?

- Job Re-design for People with More Significant Disabilities
- Two Entry Points – Initial 13-16 week trial or Job at Risk
- Other options – Work Experience/ Wage Subsidy
- Last resort approach

Useful Job Access Resources

- “How to support jobseekers unable to work at full productivity”
- “Applying for the Supported Wage System: a step by step process for an employer or Australian Government employment service provider”
- “Overview of the Supported Wage System: How to use the Supported Wage System”
- “Workplace Relations and the SWS”

www.jobaccess.gov.au + Search

Shortcomings of the SWS

- 2006 Tender –lack of consultation & failure to address 2001 Evaluation recommendations
- New fees structure vs. Adequate time
- Assessor nomination ended
- Cumbersome contractualism
- Selection, training, performance & monitoring of SWS assessors

SWS Shortcomings (cont.)

- 2007 SWS goes on line.....
- Poor IT design, increased admin. time

Reasonable Expectations-the SWS assessor/DEN provider relationship

- Assessor/ DEN contact
- Involvement in Assessment Process
- The Question of Competence
- Where's the paperwork?

SWS Assessor/DEN contact

- Reviews vs. New Assessments: 10 -13 weeks
- Early introduction & initial discussions
 - client, job and workplace information
 - involvement in assessment process
 - scheduling of assessment

SWS Assessor/DEN contact

- *“90% of applications for a SWS assessment are submitted by DEN members. Where a provider has lodged the application, that provider should be the first point of contact for assessors, as they will be able to provide critical information required to complete the assessment.....The more information that assessors can obtain from the employment service provider, the less the assessor will disrupt the workplace” (DEEWR Oct 2008)*

SWS assessor/DEN contact

“The role of the employment service provider is to provide support to the employee, and to assist the assessor by providing all the information relevant to the wage assessment. The employment service provider does not have a role in the actual wage assessment process, but may continue to provide ongoing support to the employee”

(DEEWR SWS Employer Fact Sheet)

Involvement in Assessment Process

- Initial meeting (new assessments)
- Client introductions on-site
- Support & advocacy
- Use of DEN/ADE timing & observations
(the question of historical production data)
- Performance feedback
- Wage negotiations & agreement sign-up

The SWS Assessment Process

- Negotiation/Assessment/Negotiation
- Agreement on duties & tasks to be assessed, time per duty weightings, unit of measurements, quality standards
- Agreement on comparative performance benchmarks for each task
- Conduct assessment
- Negotiate the wage agreement

Assessor Competence

- Credentials – mandatory qualifications and 2 years relevant experience
- SWS Performance Management KPIs

BUT

- Inadequate DEEWR training
- Non-existent DEEWR monitoring

Assessor Competence (cont.)

- Examples of assessor incompetence
 - no initial DEN liaison
 - poor assessments (too quick, poor job analysis, inadequate unit of measurement, inaccurate recordings, “rounding for supervision” abused, lack of clarity)
 - insensitive interactions on-site
 - failure to send DEN copies of paperwork

Paperwork

- Copy of Agreement & Assessment Report
- Quality Audit –Disability Service Standard 9
- SWS Efficiency KPI 2.1 (c): “SWS Assessment Reports are lodged within 7 Business Days”
- SWS Guidelines (p13): “The assessor always provides a copy of the Wage Assessment Agreement to the workplace parties (e.g. the worker, employer, union representative if party to the Agreement and the DEN if required)

Appeals & Complaints

- IR issues – award/ EBA grievance procedures
- SWS assessor – complaints procedure/ register
- DEEWR SWS Guidelines?
- The importance of DEN feedback to assessors & DEEWR Supported Wage Management Unit
- Active boycotts of SWS assessors

Future Directions

- 2009 Tender –same mistakes & more:
 - qualifications restrictions/training
 - marrying SWS& Ongoing Support Assessments
 - time limitations (5-9 hours max)
 - removal of travel allowances for assessors
 - unsatisfactory KPIs
- Long-term effects on quality?