

**National Employment Services Association
28 May 2026**

NESA welcomes employment services reform direction, urges careful implementation

The National Employment Services Association (NESA) has welcomed the Federal Government's proposed reforms to Australia's employment services system, describing the announcement as an important opportunity to build a more flexible, responsive and person-centred system that better supports both jobseekers and employers.

NESA Chief Executive Officer, Kathryn Mandla, said the reform direction outlined by the Hon. Amanda Rishworth reflected many of the longstanding concerns raised by employment services providers about the need to move away from overly rigid and compliance-driven settings.

"The reform agenda announced by the Minister represents a significant opportunity to reshape the system so it can better support people into sustainable employment, while also responding more effectively to the needs of employers and local communities," Ms Mandla said.

"Providers across Australia are already delivering outcomes every day, supporting people facing complex barriers into work, helping employers fill vacancies, and building pathways to long-term participation.

"The discussion paper released as part of the consultation on these reforms recognises what providers have been saying for some time, that the current system has become overly compliance-focused, highly prescribed and too often one-size-fits-all."

"Importantly, providers do not design those settings, they deliver services within the framework established by legally binding government contracts, compliance requirements and performance measures."

Ms Mandla said the proposed focus on more tailored support, stronger connections with employers, and greater flexibility for frontline services warranted serious consideration through the consultation process.

"There is broad recognition across the sector that employment services need to evolve to better reflect the complexity of people's circumstances and the realities of today's labour market," she said.

"We support a stronger focus on building participant capability, personalised support and sustained employment outcomes, rather than simply short-term transactional measures."

However, NESA cautioned that the success of reform would ultimately depend on the detail of implementation and ensuring continuity and stability for jobseekers, employers and providers.

"Reform of this scale must be carefully designed, staged and funded appropriately," Ms Mandla said.

"There is a real risk that if implementation moves too quickly, or if new models become overly centralised or prescriptive, we simply replace one rigid system with another.



“It is also critical that reforms do not disrupt services for vulnerable Australians who rely on consistent, trusted support over time.”

Ms Mandla said the expertise and capability of existing employment services providers should remain central to the reform process.

“Providers are deeply embedded in local communities and labour markets. They have built relationships with employers and developed significant frontline expertise over many years. That capability should be recognised as a critical asset in designing the future system.”

NESA said it looked forward to engaging constructively with Government, employers, community organisations and people with lived experience through the next phase of consultation.

“The best employment services system will be one that is collaborative, practical and focused on achieving sustainable outcomes for people, employers and communities,” Ms Mandla said.

“Employment services providers are a critical part of the solution with service quality satisfaction rates by jobseekers around the 80% mark. With the right system settings, they can deliver even stronger outcomes and positive experiences for Australians seeking work and the employers looking to hire them.”

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