
ACTA Submission to the Shaping the future of employment services Discussion Paper

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Project Delivery Partners

**Workforce
Australia**
Local Jobs

 **Adelaide
University**



ACTA

Australian Community Transport Association

About ACTA

The Australian Community Transport Association (ACTA) is the national peak body representing community transport providers across Australia. Established in 2011, ACTA brings together organisations from every state and territory to provide a strong, coordinated national voice for the community transport sector. As a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, ACTA is committed to advancing equitable, sustainable and accessible transport systems that improve social inclusion, health, education and workforce participation. ACTA has a proven track record of leading national reform, including the development and trial of the National Community Transport Pricing Model (NCTPM) in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the University of South Australia (now Adelaide University) and 31 pilot organisations across Australia.

This submission is informed by ACTA's partnership with the Workforce Australia Local Jobs Program, Adelaide University and the Mid North and North West Country Local Jobs regions through the Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia Pilot Project. Through extensive research, stakeholder engagement, regional surveys, interviews and co-design with employers, employment service providers, governments and community organisations, the project has developed one of Australia's most comprehensive evidence bases on the relationship between transport and workforce participation. These findings, reinforced by collaboration with Local Jobs regions in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, demonstrate that transport, driver licensing and mobility are fundamental enablers of sustainable employment outcomes and should be recognised as core components of future employment services.

Executive Summary

The Australian Community Transport Association (ACTA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government's Shaping the Future of Employment Services consultation. ACTA strongly supports the Government's vision of an employment services system that is more personalised, place-based and responsive to the diverse barriers people face in obtaining and sustaining employment.

Australia's labour market continues to experience persistent workforce shortages despite historically high labour force participation. While employment opportunities exist across many regions, particularly in agriculture, health care, hospitality, manufacturing, mining and community services, many Australians remain unable to participate because they cannot physically access those opportunities. Transport disadvantage has become a significant structural barrier to workforce participation, particularly in regional, rural and outer metropolitan communities where private vehicle access is often essential and public transport is limited or unavailable.

ACTA's submission is informed by the **Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia Pilot Project**, delivered in partnership with Adelaide University and Workforce Australia Local Jobs. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, literature review, regional consultation, co-design workshops and a survey of **233 Regional South Australian residents experiencing transport-related barriers to employment**, the project identified six interconnected pathways that influence workforce participation: first-time licence attainment, licence retention and reinstatement, vehicle

access, passenger transport, transport-light employment pathways, and regional coordination.

The evidence demonstrates that transport disadvantage extends beyond the availability of public transport. Workforce participation depends on an interconnected mobility system in which obtaining and retaining a driver licence, accessing a reliable vehicle, affording transport costs, navigating digital services and connecting with local support services collectively determine whether an individual can obtain, commence and sustain employment. Evidence from the **Work Transit Alliance Research Project** and the **Perth South Driver Licence Workshop** confirms these findings are consistent across multiple Australian jurisdictions, indicating that transport barriers are systemic rather than region-specific.

ACTA is not proposing that employment services become transport providers. Rather, future employment services should recognise transport and mobility as fundamental workforce participation enablers by identifying barriers early, connecting participants to existing local supports, enabling flexible investment in mobility-related assistance where employment outcomes depend upon it, and strengthening collaboration between employment providers, community transport, licensing programs, employers and local partners.

Employment services should be designed to respond not only to participant capability, but also to the practical conditions that determine whether work is genuinely accessible. By embedding transport considerations within participant assessment, planning and regional service coordination, the proposed reforms have the opportunity to improve employment outcomes, reduce workforce shortages and strengthen regional economies.

A. Gaps in the current employment services system

A key issue identified through the **Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia Pilot Project** is that, despite the employment services system's focus on getting people job-ready and addressing barriers to employment, significant gaps remain in the support available to address transport-related barriers.

This is particularly evident in relation to **driver licence attainment, retention and reinstatement**. In many regional communities, holding a driver licence is not simply a matter of convenience; it can be a practical prerequisite for employment. Jobseekers may be otherwise work-ready but remain unable to accept or sustain employment because they cannot obtain a licence, complete the required supervised driving hours, access an appropriate vehicle, or resolve fines and debt that have contributed to licence suspension.

While employment services providers can currently allocate some funding towards driving instruction, stakeholders identified a need for **greater flexibility in how this assistance can be used**. For example, funding may support engagement with a professional driving instructor but may not provide sufficient flexibility to support lower-cost alternatives such as driver mentor programs, supervised driving initiatives, access to vehicles for supervised practice, or other locally designed licensing supports.

This lack of flexibility can mean that relatively low-cost interventions that could assist a greater number of jobseekers are missed. A more flexible approach would enable employment services providers to work with local organisations to determine the most

appropriate response to an individual's mobility barrier rather than being constrained to a limited set of predetermined supports.

Licence suspension due to **finances and debt** presents a further challenge. Participants may be willing and otherwise able to work but remain disconnected from employment because an unresolved licence suspension prevents them from travelling to workplaces, particularly where shifts occur outside public transport operating hours or employment is geographically dispersed. Addressing these barriers often requires coordination across employment services, licensing authorities, fines and debt systems, community organisations and other local services.

Future employment services should therefore provide greater flexibility for providers to invest in practical mobility interventions where there is a clear connection to an individual's ability to obtain or sustain employment.

B. A more integrated approach to mobility and employment

Therefore, the **Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia Pilot Project** is examining how a more coordinated model could:

- improve access to transport for employment, training and education, particularly in geographically dispersed regional labour markets;
- strengthen driver licensing pathways for young people and adults, reducing delays and structural barriers to licence attainment and reinstatement;
- address fines-related licence suspensions through practical, coordinated resolution pathways that support workforce re-engagement;
- demonstrate feasibility, effectiveness and value for money through structured pilot implementation and evaluation; and
- develop a transferable model that can be scaled across other regional communities in South Australia and adapted nationally where appropriate.

The emerging model focuses on three practical areas. These are:

- 1. Transport to employment and training:** Better aligning community and passenger transport services with employment corridors, workplaces, apprenticeships and training locations, including consideration of the times at which people actually need to travel.
- 2. Community licensing and driver education pathways:** Strengthening access to supervised driving, driver mentoring, testing capacity, vehicles and school-based or adult licensing support, recognising that professional driving instruction alone may not address all of the barriers involved in progressing from a learner permit to a full licence.
- 3. Fines and debt resolution pathways:** Developing practical mechanisms to help jobseekers navigate fines, debt and licence suspensions where these issues are directly restricting workforce participation and establishing referral pathways between employment services and the relevant agencies and support organisations.

The objective is not to create another standalone transport program, but to establish an **integrated model with clear governance, eligibility pathways, referral mechanisms and implementation settings** that connects existing services more effectively.

C. Benefits of addressing transport disadvantage through employment services reform.

Recognising mobility as an employment enabler would generate benefits beyond individual jobseekers.

- I. **For regional communities**, improved mobility can increase access to employment, apprenticeships, training and education; reduce long-term exclusion associated with licence suspension and transport disadvantage; strengthen youth workforce readiness and adult re-engagement; and improve economic participation and community stability.
- II. **For government**, a coordinated approach can strengthen regional workforce participation and reduce structural barriers to employment; improve alignment between transport, employment, education and justice systems; provide evidence to inform licensing reform, service commissioning and policy design; and demonstrate value for money through tested and scalable interventions. It can also support regional economic resilience in industries experiencing persistent workforce shortages.
- III. **For employers**, addressing transport barriers can expand the pool of work-ready candidates, improve the reliability of workforce attendance, reduce recruitment difficulties associated with transport constraints, and strengthen apprenticeship and training pathways in geographically dispersed labour markets.
- IV. **For community transport and other service providers**, stronger integration with the employment services system can create more sustainable commissioning pathways aligned with regional workforce strategies and improve coordination across transport, licensing, employment and community support services.

The Australian Government can better connect employment policy with the practical realities of regional labour markets by treating mobility as **workforce infrastructure rather than as a standalone transport issue**. More flexible, coordinated and place-based responses to transport, licensing and mobility barriers would support individual jobseekers accessing job opportunities and employment support services, while also helping employers access workers, strengthening regional labour markets and improving the effectiveness of public investment in employment services.

ACTA's Recommendations

Drawing on the evidence generated through the Using Transport in Regional Communities to Enable Workforce Participation in South Australia project, delivered in partnership with Adelaide University and Workforce Australia – Local Jobs, ACTA recommends that the future employment services system:

1. **Recognise workforce mobility as a core enabler of employment participation**, embedding transport and mobility considerations in participant assessment,

employment planning and service delivery, particularly in regional, rural and outer metropolitan communities.

2. **Identify transport and mobility barriers early through holistic participant assessment**, including driver licence status, licence suspension or reinstatement, access to a vehicle, transport affordability and availability, digital access, and the practical travel requirements of prospective employment.
3. **Reform employment assistance funding to provide greater flexibility for driver licensing and mobility interventions**. Review funding notionally allocated to professional driving instruction to allow it to be used for the support most appropriate to a participant's needs, including professional lessons, driver mentoring, supervised driving, vehicle access, licence testing and other practical licensing supports. This is particularly important where participants require supervised driving experience but only a small number of formal driving instructor lessons to become test-ready.
4. **Enable providers to pool funding for driver mentoring and licensing programs, including across multiple employment services providers**. Joint commissioning of local driver mentors, supervised driving programs and vehicles could reduce unnecessary reliance on professional driving instructors, alleviate instructor shortages and waiting periods, and enable available funding to support more jobseekers.
5. **Recognise driver licence attainment, retention and reinstatement as legitimate employment interventions** where licensing is a demonstrable barrier to obtaining or sustaining employment and allow these pathways to form part of participant employment plans.
6. **Strengthen pathways for resolving fines and debt-related licence suspensions**. The Australian Government should work with states and territories to strengthen Work and Development Permit or equivalent arrangements, and trial appropriate models in jurisdictions where these pathways are not currently available. Employment services providers should receive training and clear referral pathways to help eligible participants access these schemes and address licence-related barriers to employment.
7. **Enable employment services providers to commission locally appropriate transport solutions where existing public transport does not provide practical access to employment**, apprenticeships, training or education, including targeted point-to-point services connecting communities with employment locations.
8. **Build on existing community transport and regional transport capacity rather than creating parallel services**. Existing providers have fleets, operational infrastructure, technology, local knowledge and experience that can be leveraged to address workforce mobility gaps.
9. **Strengthen place-based workforce partnerships between employment services providers, Local Jobs, employers, community transport, education and training providers, licensing agencies, local government and community organisations**, with sufficient flexibility to design responses around local labour markets and transport conditions.
10. **Position employers as active partners in workforce mobility, encouraging practical responses such as flexible shift scheduling**, employer-supported transport and coordinated transport solutions, particularly in industries and locations experiencing persistent workforce shortages.
11. **Restructure national data collection on transport and mobility barriers**. Participant intake and assessment should systematically capture driver licence status, licence suspension and reinstatement, access to driver mentoring or supervised

driving, access to a reliable vehicle, and transport affordability and availability. Aggregated data should be used to quantify the extent to which these barriers affect employment participation across Australia and inform funding, commissioning and policy decisions.

12. Measure sustainable access to employment as part of employment outcomes.

Employment outcomes should consider whether participants can reliably and affordably travel to and retain employment, rather than treating job placement in isolation from transport accessibility.

13. Support locally designed and evaluated workforce mobility pilots, particularly in regional, rural and outer metropolitan communities, to test transport, licensing, driver mentoring and fines-resolution interventions. Successful approaches should inform future commissioning and national employment services policy.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- **Question 2 – What supports should each service stream provide?**

ACTA supports the proposed three-stream model, recognising that participants require different levels of assistance depending on their proximity to the labour market. However, streams should reflect not only employability, but also the complexity of the barriers preventing participants from accessing available work. In many regional communities, transport and driver licensing are significant barriers to employment.

Each stream should include an assessment of transport and driver licence status, with tailored support matched to the level of mobility and licensing barriers identified. This should include, where relevant, literacy and numeracy support, assistance to obtain a learner or provisional licence, driver mentoring and supervised driving, vehicle access, professional driving instruction, licence reinstatement, and support to address fines through Work and Development Permit or equivalent schemes.

For participants closest to employment, support should focus on rapid job matching and timely resolution of practical mobility barriers. Many participants may require only limited intervention, such as a small number of driving lessons, licence testing support or connection to available transport to enable them to accept employment.

Participants requiring more targeted assistance should receive integrated support to address more significant mobility barriers, including driver mentoring, supervised driving, vehicle access, licence attainment or reinstatement, affordable transport and connection with community transport services. ACTA's regional survey found that 54 per cent of respondents did not hold a valid driver licence, 42 per cent lacked access to even a shared vehicle, and 52 per cent identified fuel assistance as the most useful support to improve vehicle access. These findings demonstrate that employment readiness can be constrained by mobility, not simply employability or motivation.

Participants experiencing multiple or complex barriers should receive intensive, coordinated support addressing the underlying barriers to becoming lawfully and sustainably mobile. This may require combining licensing, literacy and numeracy, driver mentoring, fines resolution, vehicle access and transport support as part of a participant's employment pathway.

For these participants, employment services should also act as a coordinator and connector within the local service ecosystem, working with Local Jobs partnerships, community

transport providers, licensing authorities, employers, local government and community organisations. This would support more personalised and place-based employment services while making better use of existing regional capability.

- **Question 3 – What factors should inform the design of a new assessment and triage process?**

The success of the future employment services system will depend on accurately identifying the barriers that prevent people from obtaining and sustaining employment. ACTA supports a more holistic assessment process that considers the participant's individual circumstances.

Assessment should move beyond traditional measures of employability and identify barriers that directly affect workforce participation, including transport, driver licensing, vehicle access and affordability. Evidence from the South Australian pilot demonstrates that transport disadvantage is rarely caused by a single issue.

Instead, participants often experience multiple, interconnected barriers across the licensing pathway, access to a suitable vehicle, the affordability of ongoing travel, and the availability of public or community transport. For example, 68 per cent of respondents identified the cost of professional driving lessons and testing as the primary reason for delayed licence attainment, while 49 per cent reported having no public transport available to reach work or training opportunities. Transport and driver licence barriers should be specifically assessed during initial participant triage, with a clear, tailored and appropriately resourced pathway developed to address identified barriers to employment.

Assessment should also recognise that barriers vary significantly between regions. In many metropolitan locations, public transport provides a viable alternative to private vehicle ownership. In regional Australia, dispersed employment centres, long travel distances and shift-based industries frequently make private mobility a prerequisite for workforce participation. This reinforces the importance of place-based assessment that reflects local labour market conditions rather than applying nationally uniform assumptions.

ACTA also considers that assessment should identify existing strengths and community supports that can be leveraged to improve employment outcomes. Local Jobs initiatives have demonstrated the value of understanding the broader regional ecosystem, including available transport providers, licensing programs, employers, education providers and community organisations. A more holistic triage process will allow employment service providers to develop realistic pathways to work while connecting participants with existing local services at an earlier stage.

- **Question 4 – What information should be collected to better identify barriers and allocate participants to the right service?**

The information collected through the assessment process should provide a comprehensive understanding of the participant's capacity to access employment rather than focusing solely on work history or qualifications.

There is a clear need to strengthen data collection on driver licence and mobility barriers at initial participant assessment. This should capture whether a participant holds a current licence; whether it is suspended and the reason for suspension; whether they require support to attain their learner's or provisional's driver licence; access to a vehicle and driver mentor; literacy and numeracy barriers; and the specific support required to attain,

retain or reinstate a driver licence. This data should directly inform the participant's employment plan and the resources allocated to address identified barriers.

ACTA recommends that assessment explicitly considers workforce mobility by collecting information on driver licence status, licence eligibility, licence suspension or reinstatement requirements, access to a reliable vehicle, transport affordability, availability of public or community transport, distance between home and likely employment locations, digital capability, internet connectivity and capacity to participate in transport-light work where appropriate.

This information is critical because holding a licence does not necessarily equate to workforce mobility. ACTA's survey found that 42 per cent of respondents did not have access to a shared vehicle, despite many holding a licence, while 58 per cent reported no public transport near where they lived and 33 per cent had no community transport available nearby. Conversely, 78 per cent indicated they would consider working partly or fully from home if suitable opportunities existed, highlighting the importance of understanding both physical and digital access to employment.

Assessment should also capture information about regional service availability. In many communities, barriers arise not because services do not exist, but because participants are unaware of them or referral pathways are fragmented. Understanding what support is already available through Local Jobs, community transport providers, driver mentoring programs, local government or community organisations will enable employment providers to connect participants with existing solutions rather than duplicating services.

Collecting this information will support more accurate service allocation, improve Employment Goal Plans and strengthen regional workforce planning by providing better data on the practical barriers affecting employment participation.

- **Question 5 – What circumstances should trigger movement between service streams?**

Movement between service streams should reflect meaningful changes in a participant's circumstances rather than fixed review periods alone. Employment pathways are dynamic, and the level of support required may increase or decrease as barriers emerge or are resolved. For participants facing driver licence attainment or reinstatement barriers, stream allocation should be based on the level and type of support required, ensuring participants are placed in the stream best equipped to provide tailored assistance to achieve or reinstate their licence.

Changes in transport and mobility should be recognised as legitimate triggers for reassessment, as they can significantly alter a participant's capacity to engage in employment. For example, obtaining a driver licence, reinstating a suspended licence or gaining access to a reliable vehicle may substantially improve a participant's readiness for employment. Conversely, losing a licence, experiencing a vehicle breakdown, facing increased transport costs or the withdrawal of local transport services may create new barriers requiring additional support.

Evidence gathered through ACTA's South Australian project demonstrates that workforce mobility is not static. Licence status, vehicle access, transport affordability and service availability can change over time and have an immediate impact on employment outcomes. Similarly, changes in health, caring responsibilities, housing, digital capability or regional

labour market conditions may warrant reassessment to ensure participants continue to receive support that reflects their current circumstances.

A responsive system that enables movement between service streams as barriers change will better support sustainable employment outcomes and ensure participants receive the right level of assistance at the right time.

- **Question 6 – What should be included in the Employment Goal Plan?**

The Employment Goal Plan should translate assessment into a practical pathway towards sustainable employment. It should identify the actions, resources and partnerships required to overcome barriers to workforce participation.

Where mobility barriers are identified, the plan should clearly map the pathway towards driver licence attainment, driver licence reattainment, or access to a suitable and sustainable transport option. Actions may include literacy and numeracy support, obtaining Ls or Ps, supervised driving hours, driver mentoring, professional driving instruction, vehicle access, licence reinstatement, fines resolution, community transport or other locally appropriate transport solutions.

The plan should identify what support is required, who will provide it, how it will be resourced and when it will be delivered, with progress reviewed as circumstances change.

Importantly, the plan should also map the participant's transition from support to independence, avoiding a sudden support cliff once assistance ends. For example, temporary fuel assistance may help someone start a job, but the plan should establish how they will sustainably meet those costs once the subsidy ends, through budgeting, savings, cost-sharing, carpooling or other appropriate arrangements.

The objective should be clear: address the immediate mobility barrier while building a sustainable pathway to independently access and retain employment.

- **Question 13 – What qualifications, skills and experience should frontline staff have across each stream?**

The success of the proposed employment services model will depend on frontline staff having the capability to identify and address the practical and interconnected barriers preventing workforce participation. Alongside vocational guidance and case management, staff need strong local knowledge, service-brokering skills and an understanding of the regional labour markets they serve.

Frontline staff should have practical knowledge of driver licence attainment and reattainment pathways, the supports available within each service stream, relevant local and state-based services, and transport options available within their region. This knowledge is critical to identifying the right support and connecting participants with it quickly.

As participants move into more intensive streams, staff capability should extend to systems navigation, partnership development and place-based problem solving. ACTA's South Australian research found that 54 per cent of respondents did not hold a valid driver licence, 42 per cent lacked access to even a shared vehicle, and 68 per cent identified the cost of licence attainment as a significant barrier to employment. These are not transport issues in

isolation; they are workforce participation barriers that frontline staff must be equipped to recognise and address.

Employment consultants should not be expected to become transport or licensing specialists. They should, however, understand how mobility affects employment pathways and know how to connect participants with driver mentoring and licensing programs, community transport providers, licensing authorities, fines and financial support, Local Jobs initiatives, education providers and employers.

The experience of Workforce Australia Local Jobs demonstrates the value of practitioners understanding both the participant and the local service ecosystem. Frontline staff therefore need strong local knowledge, relationship-building and service-brokering capability to coordinate practical solutions across organisations rather than attempting to resolve every barrier themselves.

- **Question 14 – How should the future service better support diverse cohorts and improve linkages to other services?**

The Discussion Paper rightly recognises that participants experience different barriers to employment and require tailored responses. ACTA supports this direction but considers that achieving genuinely personalised employment services will require stronger integration between employment services and the broader network of organisations that influence workforce participation.

Transport and driver licensing demonstrate why this integration is critical. Employment services cannot independently resolve barriers such as driver licence attainment or reattainment, vehicle access, transport affordability or the absence of suitable transport options. These barriers often intersect with financial hardship, literacy and numeracy challenges, housing insecurity, digital exclusion and limited access to services.

Future employment services should therefore have the knowledge, systems, resources and local partnerships required to identify and address transport and driver licence barriers. This means moving beyond referrals towards coordinated pathways with licensing authorities, driver mentoring programs, community transport providers, Local Jobs, employers, education providers, local government and community services.

ACTA's pilot project demonstrates the value of bringing these organisations together to identify barriers and develop practical, place-based solutions. Participants benefit most when services operate as a connected local system, with clear pathways and responsibilities, rather than as separate programs.

Integration should also recognise changing employment models. ACTA's research found that 78 per cent of respondents would consider remote or hybrid work where suitable opportunities existed. While this will not replace physical mobility for many jobs, stronger links

with digital inclusion initiatives, education providers and employers can expand employment options for participants facing significant transport barriers.

- **Question 15 – How can a nationally consistent service remain responsive to local labour market conditions?**

A nationally consistent employment services system must be able to effectively identify and address the barriers to employment experienced by people in its caseloads. National consistency should mean consistency in outcomes, principles and participant experience—not uniformity of service delivery.

Transport demonstrates why local responsiveness is essential. In metropolitan areas, participants may have access to multiple transport options and nearby employment. In regional and remote communities, employment is often dispersed, public transport is limited, shift work is common and access to a driver licence and vehicle can be critical. ACTA's South Australian survey found that 58 per cent of respondents had no public transport near where they lived, while 68 per cent indicated that better coordinated public or community transport would improve their ability to secure and remain in employment.

Future employment services should therefore establish nationally consistent expectations for identifying and addressing employment barriers, while allowing solutions to be designed and coordinated locally.

The Local Jobs Network provides an effective mechanism for this local coordination, connecting employment providers with employers, community organisations, education providers, transport operators and government agencies. However, particularly in regional and remote areas, Local Jobs staff are spread across large geographic areas and require sufficient resources to perform this role effectively.

There is an opportunity to strengthen and resource the Local Jobs Network as a key local coordination and information function within the national system. This could include maintaining an up-to-date information system that connects national, state and local information on available services, programs, transport options, licensing supports and referral pathways that employment providers can readily access.

Local Jobs is well positioned to perform this function because of its local knowledge, networks and understanding of regional labour markets. However, this role must be properly resourced and cannot simply be added to existing workloads.

- **Question 16 – How should provider payment arrangements encourage quality service delivery and participant outcomes?**

Provider payment arrangements should reward sustainable employment outcomes and progress in addressing major barriers to workforce participation, rather than focusing primarily on short-term job placements.

ACTA supports introducing a specific outcome or incentive payment for providers that successfully support a participant to attain or reattain a driver licence where licensing has been identified as a barrier to employment. Licence attainment or reattainment can fundamentally change a participant's access to employment, particularly in regional and remote communities, and should be recognised as a significant employment outcome.

The payment model should also recognise meaningful progress towards this outcome. This could include milestone payments for obtaining a learner licence, completing required supervised driving and professional instruction, addressing barriers to licence reinstatement, and successfully obtaining or reinstating a provisional or full licence.

Providers should have sufficient funding flexibility to invest in the supports required to achieve these outcomes, including literacy and numeracy support, professional driving instruction, driver mentoring, supervised driving, vehicle access, licence testing and fines-resolution pathways. Participants may be job-ready and motivated but remain unable to accept employment because they cannot lawfully or practically travel to work.

Payment arrangements should also reward collaboration and sustainable outcomes. Providers that effectively coordinate with Local Jobs, employers, community transport providers, licensing services and other local organisations to resolve barriers and achieve sustained employment outcomes should be recognised within the performance framework.

The funding model should ultimately incentivise providers to resolve the barriers preventing employment, not simply achieve the quickest placement.

- **Question 18 – What commissioning approaches will best increase provider diversity, capability and local responsiveness?**

Future commissioning should move beyond purchasing individual employment services and invest in the regional ecosystems that enable workforce participation. Commissioning models should reward collaboration, local capability and sustainable outcomes alongside individual provider performance.

Regional labour markets differ significantly across Australia. Commissioning should therefore enable specialist and locally embedded organisations, including community transport providers, Local Jobs partnerships, social enterprises, local government, education providers and industry to contribute their expertise to addressing barriers to employment.

ACTA's project demonstrated that many solutions to workforce mobility barriers already exist within regional communities but are fragmented across different organisations and funding streams. The Local Jobs Program demonstrates the value of having a locally embedded coordination function that can bring providers, employers and community organisations together, identify systemic barriers and develop practical place-based responses.

Commissioning should also provide flexibility to pool or coordinate funding across providers where a shared solution can address a common barrier. This is particularly relevant to transport and driver licensing, where jointly commissioned driver mentoring, community transport or other mobility solutions may achieve greater reach and value than individual providers purchasing support separately.

Finally, longer-term and flexible commissioning arrangements should reward collaboration, innovation and demonstrated outcomes. This will enable providers and regional partners to invest in sustainable solutions while maintaining nationally consistent expectations and locally responsive delivery.