

# **NSDS Certification Guidebook**

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This Certification Guidebook is designed to assist your organisation on the requirements for certification to the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS 2014) under the JAS-ANZ DES/SES (Disability Employment Services and Supported Employment Services). The focus of this document is to facilitate the delivery of NSDS certification across Australia.

## **1 Transition Requirements for DES/SES providers and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

The disability employment and supported employment services referred to in DES/SES Scheme are those that receive funding under the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986 for programs administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

In addition, employment services for people with disability incorporate any organisations offering employment services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013.

DES/SES providers with NDIS participants are now obligated to undertake a (re)certification or surveillance audit by an NDIS Approved Quality Auditor in accordance with the NDIS AQA Scheme. Objective evidence against the NDIS Practice Standards will be assessed (audited) by BSI for your conformity to these standards as per requirements for the NDIS AQA Scheme.

Separately, if there are participants also to be audited (assessed) under the DES/SES Scheme, then the services you are receiving will be audited for conformity with the NSDS.

Both the methodology and evidence for separate assessments will be documented.

An audit report will be sent to the NDIS Commission only in respect to NDIS Participants, and a separate audit report will be sent to DSS only in respect to DES/SES Participants.

Supported employment is transitioning to the NDIS. For supported employment service providers, the sampling methodology should apply to all outlets and sites:

- If the employee is being supported for employment under a NDIS plan, they should be considered as being within scope under the NDIS AQA Scheme, and
- If the employee is not under NDIS case-based funding, they should be considered as being within scope under the DES/SES Scheme

Note: The change to the DES-SES Scheme to allow for the possibility of NSDS and NDIS audit alignment is **only applicable for Australian Disability Enterprises, not Disability Employment Services (DES) or National Disability Advocacy Program providers.** Therefore, DES providers cannot apply for NSDS extensions.

## **2 Audit Cycle and Certification**

The following section outlines the steps that apply during the BSI certification process for new applicants for NSDS certification. BSI reserves the right to provide its clients and those that request quotations with marketing and technical information relating to standards, training and compliance services.

Certification to this standard is accredited to ISO17065:2012. This is a JAS-ANZ accredited scheme which is offered nationally. BSI is currently accredited to this scheme.

## 2.1 Initial Inquiry

BSI will respond to either verbal or written expressions of interest from new applicant organisations interested in NSDS certification. An advisory visit may be arranged to discuss your certification requirements and how BSI can help your organisation achieve them.

BSI will also, on request and receipt of a Request for Quotation, prepare a proposal tailoring our services to your organisation's needs.

## 2.2 Application for Certification and Assessment

Receipt of your organisation's Application form (or authorised acceptance of a valid BSI proposal), along with the accompanying payment of the non-refundable application fee (or invoicing instructions) together with this document forms the contract between your organisation and BSI.

Your requirements will be entered into our database and a Client Manager will be appointed to look after your certification or assessment requirements. The Client Manager will be your primary point of contact with BSI and is responsible for ensuring that our certification/assessment services are delivered to your organisation in the most effective manner possible.

## 2.3 Client Contact

As soon as practicable after receipt of your signed application/proposal, you will receive a welcome pack. A BSI Client Manager (or nominated representative) will contact your organisation. The Client Manager will seek to establish a working relationship between your organisation and BSI, and to confirm your certification requirements in terms of the certification or assessment services, standards or codes of practice, locations, and activities and/or products to be included in the scope of certification.

The Client Manager (or nominated representative) will seek to gain an appreciation of the structure of your organisation and the activities being conducted. In particular the Client Manager will:

- Seek an appreciation of the nature and scope of the organisation's activities, structure and location(s), including any activities for which confirmation is being excluded; and
- Determine the status of system documentation and implementation including organisational policies, objectives and targets.

If you are working with a consultant it is often useful for that person to be party to the communication process.

## 2.4 Gap Analysis (optional)

A Gap Analysis approach often proves an invaluable tool in determining system implementation, particularly for new systems that are still in the early stages of development. This one-off assessment includes the identification of gaps against the requirement of your nominated Standard/s. At the conclusion of the Gap Analysis you will receive a report which highlights any gaps as well as options for next steps on your path to certification. The results of a Gap Analysis are not directly linked to any subsequent Certification Audits.

## 2.5 Initial Audit (Stage 1 Audit)

In order to gain certification to the NSDS, your organisation is required to have an initial audit followed by a certification audit. An initial audit determines your *...making excellence a habit.*<sup>™</sup>

readiness for certification. BSI undertakes a review of your organisation's system documentation, including policy manuals, procedures and other relevant supporting documentation.

This step gives your organisation the opportunity to demonstrate that all documentation required by the relevant standard has been prepared, is controlled where necessary, and is monitored and updated as required.

The initial audit will be carried out by a qualified assessor and a Consumer Technical Expert (CTE). Stage 1 assessments may be carried out onsite or offsite. If the stage 1 audit is done onsite, the CTE shall be present for the duration of the visit. If you have multiple sites, a sampling plan is used to determine the sites that are required to be included in this audit.

The auditor and CTE will be in communication with you to plan and prepare for the different methods of consumer participation in the audit and evaluating the need for independent support for consumers.

Planning information shall include but not limited to client demographics, total consumer numbers per site and/or outlet as well as per service type/service group.

Your organisation will receive a written report which outlines the readiness for the Certification Audit. The findings from the initial audit must be satisfactorily addressed (closed out) prior to the certification audit.

## **2.6 Certification Audit (Stage 2 Audit)**

The Certification Audit is required to be conducted within four (4) months of the Initial Audit. If the Certification Audit is not conducted within this time the Initial Audit may need to be repeated.

The certification audit will be carried out by a qualified assessor and a Consumer Technical Expert (CTE). **Each site visited shall include a CTE or a CTE who is also a lead auditor or auditor.**

The objectives of the Stage 2 audit are:

- To confirm that your organisation is adhering to its policies, procedures & objectives and practices the principals of continuous improvement and conforms with all the requirements of the NSDS;
- To verify that appropriate procedures, controls and guidelines are in place, and roles and responsibilities are defined;
- To engage with consumers during the audit to collect, examine and analyse evidence with respect to the NSDS;
- To review consumer files, follow up issues with consumers

Your organisation will be advised of any non-conformances arising from this assessment at the closing meeting. All non-conformances are required to be closed out before certification can be recommended. The recommendation for certification made by the auditor is then reviewed by an independent qualified report reviewer and CTE to make the final certification decision.

Your certificate will be issued electronically.

## **2.7 Surveillance Audits**

Surveillance audits are carried out at 12 monthly intervals. Once certification is achieved, the date of the first surveillance audit will be within 12 months from the date of the last day of the on-site component of the certification or recertification audit. The second surveillance audit shall be

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conducted not more than 12 months after the last day of the first surveillance audit.

Exceptions to these maximum surveillance intervals apply if your organisation is required to complete a NDIS (re)certification or surveillance audit within 12 months of the planned date of the surveillance audit for the DES/SES Scheme. In such cases, the date of the subsequent surveillance audit may also be extended to coincide or otherwise operate in parallel with, audit activities for the NDIS AQA Scheme.

Note: The change to the DES-SES Scheme to allow for the possibility of NSDS and NDIS audit alignment is **only applicable for Australian Disability Enterprises, not Disability Employment Services (DES) or National Disability Advocacy Program providers.** Therefore, DES providers cannot apply for NSDS extensions

Surveillance audits will include NSDS 1, 3 and 6; and at least one other standard, chosen according to the results of the previous audit, complaints or significant change. The auditor will justify the choice of standard in the audit report.

When certification is extended based on the above conditions being applicable, surveillance activities will include an effective process confirming continual adherence to additional conditions of extension.

## **2.8 “Out of Cycle” assessment**

At times the Department may request an additional “out of cycle” assessment.

## **2.9 Re-Assessment Audits**

The re-assessment cycle for this program is three (3) yearly. Your reassessment audit must be conducted within three (3) years of the initial certification or last recertification. If it is not completed and processed within the required time frame, your certification will no longer be valid.

The re-assessment audit must take place three (3) months prior to the expiry date. Extensions on the re-certification dates are not permitted unless –

1. Your organisation is an Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) and is required to complete a NDIS (re)certification or surveillance audit in accordance with the NDIS AQA Scheme within 12 months from the date of the current expiry date of DES/SES (NSDS) certification

Note: The change to the DES-SES Scheme to allow for the possibility of NSDS and NDIS audit alignment is **only applicable for Australian Disability Enterprises, not Disability Employment Services (DES) or National Disability Advocacy Program providers.** Therefore, DES providers cannot apply for NSDS extensions.

2. In such cases, the DES/SES certification expiry can be extended by up to one month or ‘to within’ a one-month window of the planned final audit day (whether onsite or remote auditing is used) of the NDIS audit. (This is to allow alignment of both audits to occur concurrently).
3. The maximum period of extension is 12 months from the previous NSDS (DES/SES) certification expiry date
4. If BSI conducts the DES/SES Scheme audits in parallel with NDIS audits, your organisation is required to agree in writing to be subject to the additional DES/SES (NSDS) scheme audit activities if you are still providing services within scope of the scheme.
5. Your organisation must not have any open major nonconformities and/or notifiable issues, the nature of which are currently resulting in - or likely to result in - a service user(s) experiencing

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events defined as a 'reportable incident' under subsections 73Z(4) and 73Z(5) of the NDIS Act 2013.

The intention is that your organisation achieves certification, continued certification, or recertification under the DES/SES Scheme for those participants still covered under the scheme (if any remain), in addition to corresponding registration, continued registration, or re-registration from the NDIS Commission, as appropriate for those participants funded under the NDIS.

### **3 Reporting**

At the conclusion of the audit, the audit team will prepare a draft written report on the audit findings and the audit team leader will present these findings to your organisation's senior management at the closing meeting.

The audit report will include the following information;

- An executive summary of the overall findings (conclusions) on the effectiveness of your system in meeting the requirements of the standard
- Ratings of conformity against each standard in accordance with the rating scale and an adequate description of the main evidence and audit trails used to support the ratings of standards
- Service Types /NDIA registration groups within your organisation
- Ratings of the non-conformances
- Suggestions for continual improvement
- Positive finding areas
- Times allocated for the activity, number and type of interviews conducted with consumers

Non-conformances will be discussed with your team during the assessment and outlined at the closing meeting. Non-Conformances are categorised as Major, Minor and Observations.

Your organisation is required to review the draft audit report and provide a response to the BSI auditor within 10 working days in case any of changes. BSI will consider your response and present the final report to your organisation and the Department. In case of no response, the BSI auditor will consider the draft as the final audit report.

Your organisation will receive the draft and final reports (as applicable) even if the decision is not to certify.

If you are unclear regarding the meaning of anything in your report, please contact your Client Manager.

For parallel or sequential audits to the DES/SES scheme and the NDIS AQA Scheme, a separate audit report will be completed by the BSI auditor for each scheme and will be shared with the Department and the NDIS Commission, respectively.

### **4 Non-Conformances**

All non-conformances must be closed out before certification is granted or expiry of certification.

Specific audit findings are categorised as follows and are applicable during the certification and verification audit activities.

It is your organisation's responsibility to respond to the non-conformances detailed in your audit  
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report by the designated time frame. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of your certification.

This section covers requirements for NSDS certification under the DES/SES scheme, for information on NDIS non-conformances, please refer to the NDIS Guidebooks on the BSI website.

#### **4.1 Major Non-Conformances**

Major Non-conformances are audit findings that reveal that the integrity of the DES/SES scheme has been compromised and must be rectified before certification is granted. Where the major non-conformance does not place a person accessing the scheme at risk of significant harm BSI is required to close out or downgrade the non-conformance following an on-site visit within three (3) months. The corrective action plan is required to be sent to BSI within five (5) days of the assessment.

If your organisation is currently certified, failure to close out the major non-conformance within three (3) months of the date of issue, or take action sufficient to downgrade the major non-conformance to a minor non-conformance within this timeframe will result in automatic suspension of certification. If the major non-conformance is downgraded to a minor, that non-conformance is required to be closed out within a further three (3) months (maximum of six (6) months from the date of issue).

Major non-conformances are required to be closed out onsite in most instances. The auditor can request an offsite closeout which needs to be approved by BSI's General Manager – Compliance & Risk.

#### **4.2 Minor Non-Conformances**

Minor Non-conformances are audit findings that reveal an isolated incident of non-compliance that has no direct impact on the integrity of the product. Agreed proposed corrective action plans (CAPs) (detailing correction, cause identification and long term fix) must be received within fourteen (14) days of the non-conformance being identified.

Minor non-conformances are required to be closed out within six (6) months of the assessment. Failure to close minor non-conformances within six (6) months of the date of issue will result in a major non-conformance being raised.

#### **4.3 Observations**

These are comments, which may include praise, or comments that may be relevant for the next audit. Actions do not necessarily have to be taken for observations however; it is recommended that these have been considered as part of your continuous improvement process.

### **5 Certification Decision**

After non-conformances have been closed out, the findings and recommendations made in the audit report are subject to a technical review process prior to certification being granted. The Technical Reviewer is independent of the audit process. A CTE is included in the certification decision-making process. The CTE is not solely responsible for the certification decision.

### **6 Certificates**

Your certificate will be issued electronically.

Certification documentation within the BSI system identifies the inclusion of any women's refuge or residential service or out of home care unit. However, the physical certificate will not list these addresses.

When copies or elements of the certificate are used in tenders or offered to potential or existing customers, the certificate should be accompanied by the scope of certification document (if issued separately) as it is important for them to understand the scope of activities for which certification has been granted (see 'scope' below).

Incorrect use of the certificate can result in a customer being misled as to the extent of your organisation's certification.

All original certificates remain the property of BSI Group ANZ Pty Ltd and must be returned on request.

The reassessment cycle for this program is three (3) yearly.

### **6.1 Scope of Certification**

The scope of certification fully details the scope of your organisation's certification in terms of:

- Names and addresses of all locations covered by the certification;
- Achievement of certification to the relevant standard(s);
- Service Types/ NDIA registration groups for each location covered by the certification

Your organisation is required as part of the Terms & Conditions to ensure that BSI has been formally briefed in a timely manner when any variations occur. Delays in notifying BSI of changes to your organisation may compromise your organisation's certification status.

### **6.2 Refusal of Certification**

In the event that your organisation is unable to comply with the requirements of the relevant standard, BSI may refuse to grant certification. The decision to refuse certification, and the grounds for that decision, will be communicated to your organisation in writing.

### **6.3 Suspension or Refusal of Certification**

If your organisation's certification is suspended or refused, you are required to meet the following requirements for the period that you are suspended:

- Withdraw and cease to use any advertising or promotional material that promotes or advertises the fact that your organisation is certified;
- Ensure that all copies of certificates and scopes of certification are removed from areas of public display; and
- Cease to use the certification mark on stationery and other documents including media and packaging that are circulated to existing and potential clients, or in the public domain.

Your organisation is required to advise BSI in writing of the action taken with respect to the requirements listed above;

- BSI will advise your organisation in writing of the certification processes that will need to be completed to restore certification

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- During the period of suspension your organisation shall continue to pay all fees levied by BSI
- BSI is required to notify the Department within 10 working days about any service provider with a NDIS site which has its certification suspended or cancelled for any reason.
- For reinstatement of certification, a full on-site recertification audit is required which obtains adequate objective evidence that the open major nonconformity(s) or notifiable issue(s) is either:
- Effectively closed (if a nonconformity) or no longer present, or
  - If still open or otherwise present as a major non-conformity, your organisation has implemented effective mitigations in such a way that a service user(s) is unlikely to experience any events which could be defined as 'reportable incidents' under subsections 73Z(4) and 73Z(5) of the NDIS Act 2013 reducing the major non-conformity to a minor non-conformity.

#### **6.4 Withdrawal of Certification**

Your organisation is required to confirm to BSI in writing when it no longer has service users in scope of the DES/SES Scheme and does not intend to offer such services in future.

Your NSDS certification under the DES/SES scheme will be revoked and the Department will be advised within 5 days of the revocation.

BSI will withdraw your NSDS certification under the DES/SES scheme if the extended expiry date is reached without having undergone a DES/SES Scheme audit. BSI will inform your organisation of this decision as well as the Department within 5 days of the revocation.

## **7 Use of Logos**

You are entitled to use the appropriate BSI 'kitemark' accreditation mark whilst you maintain certification to this program with BSI. For a copy of the BSI "kitemark" logo, visit our website at <http://www.bsigroup.com/en-AU/Our-services/BSI-Assurance-Mark-Logos/>

Use of the logo is subject to Condition and Rules of its application which is stated in the [BSI Assurance Mark Guidelines](#)

Organisations that have been granted certification to the NSDS are also entitled to use the JAS-ANZ Accreditation Symbol. The rules for the use of this mark are governed by JAS-ANZ. The JAS-ANZ Accreditation Symbol is required to be used in conjunction with BSI Accreditation marks.

Specifications and use of the JAS-ANZ Accreditation Symbol are described in the [JAS-ANZ Mark Use Guidelines document](#).

## **8 Standard Owner Information**

The standard owner is the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

### **8.1 Notification to the Standard Owner**

BSI is required to advise the Department immediately if there is evidence that your organisation has put a person accessing its services at risk of significant harm.

BSI may be requested to provide further details relating to non-conformances raised at NSDS audits.

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## **9 Confidentiality**

BSI will treat all information in accordance with the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012.

## **10 Additional Process Requirements**

- Your organisation is required to keep a record of all known complaints relating to meeting the requirements of the NSDS. These records must be made available to the audit team and BSI when requested
- Your organisation is required to demonstrate that you have taken appropriate action to address these complaints through investigation and correct any deficiencies found. These actions must be documented
- Your organisation must ensure that consumers are offered information about the audit process and independent support to engage in the process prior to any consent being obtained
- Participation by consumers in audits is at all times voluntary and be based on the principal of informed consent
- Your organisation is required to make all necessary arrangements to allow the evaluation and surveillance activities to take place. This includes but is not limited to; Equipment, Product, Locations, Personnel and Sub-contractors
- Your organisation is required to complete the Client Details Form and return to your Client Services Officer prior to 28 days from the start of your audit
- Prior to your audit, the BSI auditor will contact you for a de-identified consumer list including all your consumers. Your organisation is required to provide this information in a timely manner

## **11 Additional Obligations**

Following certification, there are a number of managerial responsibilities which your organisation will need to observe to maintain your certification. These include:

- Continue compliance with the relevant standard(s) and scheme requirements at and the conditions of certification at all times;
- Comply with the BSI Standard Commercial Terms and Conditions and obligations as specified in this document as well as other guidance documentation that may be specifically provided from time-to-time;
- Implement appropriate changes as communicated by BSI in a time appropriate manner;
- Conduct regular internal reviews of your system, with appropriate documentation of such reviews and of any subsequent corrective actions;
- Advise BSI of any changes without delay to circumstances that may affect certification including significant changes in the structure (key responsibilities and management system), ownership and operations of your organisation to enable the impact of such changes on the certified ownership system to be evaluated;

Other examples of such changes include but are not limited to;

- Authorised Representative
  - Business name (Legal entity) and Trading Name (where applicable), ABN
  - Ownership
  - Key management responsibilities
  - Contact details
  - Location, site addresses
  - Business activity/ies, scope of certification
  - Number of employees, covering all shifts and sites
  - Major management system changes and capability information
  - Billing Details
- Notify BSI of any litigation or serious events or matters that relate to the scope of your certification

### **Observers**

From time to time BSI requires an Observer to be in attendance at an audit. This may be related to training of new staff and witness assessment of existing staff. It is a requirement of BSI's accreditation that your organisation allows these activities to occur.

Failure to allow this activity to occur may result in cancellation of your certification.

BSI will, at all times, ensure that the use of observers is kept to a minimum and your organisation will be advised prior to the assessment activity.

The Observer does not take an active part in an assessment.

## **12 Misleading Statements**

Your organisation is not permitted to use its certification in a manner that could bring BSI into disrepute. This includes making misleading or unauthorized statements. If you are unsure if a statement could be misleading you are advised to contact BSI prior to making the statement. Statements include but are not limited to the use of the logo on non-certified product, advertising (including your website) and internal communication.

If your organisation is required to provide copies of your certification documents these must be reproduced in its entirety. Failure to do so may be misleading to the recipient as to the scope of certification.

## **13 Complaints and Appeals**

BSI takes complaints relating to our service delivery seriously and all complaints will be investigated and the originator of a complaint will be advised of the outcomes, as appropriate.

BSI will also investigate legitimate documented complaints, relevant to operation of the system, from customers of your organization. Organizations shall, at all reasonable times, provide representatives of BSI with access to its premises and records for the purposes of investigating such complaints.

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If your organization's application for certification has been refused, or your organization's certificate has been suspended, cancelled, or reduced in scope, you may appeal against the decision to a Review Committee.

BSI shall include a CTE in each appeal hearing.

Should you wish to appeal the certification decision your organization is required, within 28 days of the disputed advice from BSI, lodge a notice of appeal with your Client Manager in writing to initiate this process.

If your organisation formally disagrees with the audit findings, BSI is required to notify the Department within 10 working days of learning of the disagreement if it has not been resolved within that time.

To raise a complaint or appeal against the service delivery by BSI or audit outcome please notify;

General Manager – Technical and Operations

Email: [technical.anz@bsigroup.com](mailto:technical.anz@bsigroup.com)

Phone: 02 8877 7100