



Case Study - NESA

The Challenge – Recruit a new leader for a high-profile employment services peak body

Recruitment of a Chief Executive Officer

After 22 years of commitment and dedication to the employment services sector, NESA's iconic CEO Sally Sinclair announced that she would be stepping down from her role in mid-2023. As the peak body's Inaugural Chair in 1997, and having been appointed CEO in 2001, Sally represented NESA's members and the sector since the contracting out of Public Employment Services. Sally oversaw countless procurement cycles and proudly led the sector to deliver tangible outcomes for unemployed and disadvantaged participants across Australia.

Parkhouse Bell was approached by the NESA Board and asked to provide a competitive proposal for an executive search and selection campaign to find a suitably qualified CEO, to continue the important work of NESA at a time of significant sector change and reform. By representing NESA members as a single, unified voice, the new CEO would be required to engage directly with, and advocate to, governments through participation in relevant Task Force and Working Committees, influencing and shaping employment services policy and programs at a federal, state, and local level. In addition, the CEO would work collaboratively with the established NESA Board of Directors on the future direction of the organisation, and be accountable for refining, driving, and delivering on NESA's strategic objectives.

Our Managing Consultant spoke with both the Board Chair and outgoing CEO to discuss in detail NESA's requirements for a new leader. A Position Description and detailed Candidate Information Pack were prepared and presented to identified and interested candidates.

The search for candidates was carried out over a period of four weeks and although the position was concurrently advertised, the successful candidate was identified through Parkhouse Bell's market mapping exercise and confidential approach. The task of finding candidates with both employment services sector knowledge and strong policy, advocacy and stakeholder engagement skills was certainly challenging, with many candidates being strong in one of these areas, however, four candidates were selected for an initial interview, and two were subsequently invited to present on a sector / role relevant scenario.

Although both candidates presented extremely well and the Board was left with a difficult decision to make, the successful candidate was appointed, and will begin the challenge of leading NESA and the sector through the new program reforms aimed at helping people from all walks of life, particularly those with diverse and complex needs, to find sustainable long-term employment.