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An investigation has been launched into a video showing a job agent blaming an unemployed man for not being able to find work. Credit: Getty

Australia

'It's your fault': Job agent caught on camera blaming jobseeker for unemployment

WISE Employment and the Department of Social Services have launched investigations into the alleged conduct shown in the video.

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By Eden Gillespie

Source: SBS

A job agent has been captured on camera telling an unemployed man that it's his own fault that he cannot find work.

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The video, which the jobseeker shared with the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union (AUWU), begins with the job agent telling the man he needs to attend his appointments on time.

The agent, who works at WISE Employment in South Australia, then asks the man: "why are you unemployed? Have you tried getting a job?"

The jobseeker replies, "So now you're saying it's my own fault for not having a job?", to which the agent responds: "I'm actually saying that it's your fault because if you wanted a job you would have had one already."

The agent then questions the man over the veracity of the information on his resume.

"These jobs, an hour-and-a-half away, how'd you get to these jobs? Have you got a licence?" he asks the jobseeker.

"Where's your résumé from if it's not yours? Is it your résumé?"

"You don't know anything about my personal situation," the jobseeker replies.

The agent also claims the man has not been applying for suitable employment.

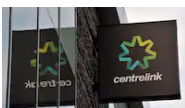
"You're telling me a kitchenhand has transferable skills to administration?" he said.

"The question I'm going to ask is do you actually want to work?"

The job agent then refers to information on his computer screen that states the jobseeker has a psychological psychiatric disorder.

He then tells the man it's time he starts coming in and "taking it more seriously" and orders him to come into an appointment each week.

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When the argument escalates between the two and the jobseeker attempts to leave, the agent tells him an incident report will be filed with Centrelink.

"We just talked about being condescending, we just talked about using people's situations against them," the jobseeker replies.

"You're protecting your job, and you're literally trying to manipulate me, knowing that I'm dependent on you ... you know that and you get a h*** on."

'Shocking' behaviour

Jeremy Poxon, a spokesperson from AUWU, described the video as "shocking" but also said he was not surprised by the interaction.

"This is the kind of treatment that happens to jobseekers through the system," he told SBS News.

"It was incredible to see that a job agent who knew full well that the jobseeker was recording, still had the gumption and felt he had the right to treat someone this way.

"I think that's indicative of how powerful these people feel."

Mr Poxon said there are very few avenues for jobseekers to complain about treatment by job agencies.

"This situation could have gone so differently, even if the job agent suspected the jobseeker was maybe fudging a few things on his resume," he said.

"It's no excuse to shame the jobseeker that he is unemployed and he's living in destitution because it's his own fault and he's not trying hard enough.

"It was like he was being bundled up into the principal's office. And he was being punished as such."

Mr Poxon said the idea that jobseekers aren't trying hard enough to secure work is a myth.

"About 40 per cent of people on JobSeeker payments have either a disability or a mental health condition. It's incredibly difficult to stay stable and afloat and employed," he said.

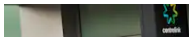
He said the jobseeker in the video lived in a small rural town whose economy that has been smashed by the Omicron wave.

"It's just a plain fact of our economy that there are more jobseekers than jobs actually available."

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When contacted by SBS News, a spokesperson at WISE Employment said the agency was “now aware” of the incident and would be conducting an internal investigation.

“Given the incident is still being investigated, we won't be able to comment on the video or any comments made at this time,” the spokesperson said.

“We prioritise the wellbeing of both our customers and our staff, and we're taking the matter seriously ... the investigation will recommend actions to be taken to resolve the issue, including where appropriate an apology to the jobseeker.”

A spokesperson at the Department of Social Services told SBS News they would also investigate “the alleged conduct in the videos.”

“The Department is unable to comment further on this matter at this stage. We are also unable to release information related to an individual's circumstances,” they said.

“The individual is encouraged to make contact with the National Customer Service Line on 1800 805 260 to raise any concerns they may have with their Employment Service Provider.”

Mr Poxon urged the department to suspend mutual obligation requirements - tasks and activities agreed to



Menu 

“I would be asking the general manager of WISE Employment to really have a cold hard look at this video footage and enact some disciplinary measures,” he said.

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