

Adam Boyton – National Skills Commissioner

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the Australian labour market.

It is against this backdrop of unprecedented labour market volatility and disruption that the role of the National Skills Commissioner has come into being.

Reflecting the shutdown of various non-essential services and trading restrictions earlier this year, employment fell sharply, by 871,600 (or 6.7 per cent) over the two months to May 2020.

The initial labour market impacts were disproportionately borne by women.

Young people have also been disproportionately affected.

Encouragingly, however, the labour market has recovered somewhat since then, with employment increasing by 446,500 (or 3.7 per cent) between the trough in May 2020 and September 2020.

Also supporting signs of recovery is our monitoring of internet vacancies, indeed in some areas of Australia job vacancies have returned to the levels seen at the start of the year. In other areas of the country conditions remain considerably softer.

Despite the signs of recovery, and as reflected in the Budget forecasts, it is likely to be some time before the labour market returns to conditions seen prior to the onset of the pandemic.

The immediate work of the Commission has been to help Australians get back to work as we continue to emerge from the shadow of the pandemic.

This work includes:

- Research and analysis into which occupations are likely to be the most resilient following the economic shock of COVID-19

- Publication and analysis of a range of labour market data – including surveys of employers to help identify jobs in demand.

We also continue to support job seekers through applications like **Jobs Hub** – which is an online tool helping individuals identify and be linked to jobs in demand in their local area. It also finds vacant jobs with a similar skills profile to the one they searched.

This tool is part of the Jobs and Education Data Infrastructure, or JEDI, project, which provides job seekers with improved data-driven job matching.

At the same time, work continues on the development of more nationally consistent VET prices, developing a single Skills Priority List, and the development of new approaches to skills needs analysis, such as Nowcasting.

The NSC has also analysed and identified a number of emerging occupations – occupations likely to help drive innovation and productivity over the years ahead.

The work of the National Skills Commission will, over time, more closely integrate labour market and skills needs analysis, including emerging skills needs, with our skills and training system.

Doing so will help to more effectively match job seekers with jobs; and provide the skills industry needs. This will support both our immediate recovery from the pandemic, but also economic growth over the longer-term through greater productivity and more effective labour market matching.

Thank you Senators. I look forward to your questions.