

## **Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Date of hearing: 31 March 2023**

**Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000208**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | Historical Data***

##### **Question**

How does historical data on employment outcomes in Northern Australia compare with current data?

##### **Answer**

Workforce Australia replaced jobactive as the Australian Government's employment service program on 1 July 2022. The Department's previous employment services program, jobactive, ran from July 2015 until June 2022. Workforce Australia is a new service that moves away from a 'work first' model and as such the data cannot be directly compared with jobactive, however historical data remains useful for internal program management.

The Department collects administrative data and undertakes research to inform policy and program development. It also assesses Workforce Australia Services provider performance through a Provider Performance Framework.

Additionally, research is conducted through some of these methods and analytical approaches including behavioural insights, user-centred design, randomised controlled trials (RCTs), longitudinal surveys and interviews, cross-sectional, correlational, descriptive and experimental/quasi-experimental data analysis. For example, the Participant Pathways Research is also part of the evaluation of Workforce Australia. Participants in Workforce Australia Online or Workforce Australia Services who choose to participate in this longitudinal research will complete one survey every six months over four years and may also be invited to participate in focus groups and interviews. To inform the evaluation of Workforce Australia, the department will also conduct research with businesses, providers and employment peak bodies to collect information on their views and experience of Workforce Australia.

The department also conducts post program monitoring with participants as part of the Workforce Australia Services Provider Performance Framework. This monitoring assesses the providers' delivery of high-quality services by surveying participants about their provider experiences and satisfaction with services.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000209**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | Industries***

##### **Question**

Which industries are struggling the most in Northern Australia to attract and retain staff?

- How does this compare by region?

##### **Answer**

Jobs and Skills Australia produces a number of regional labour market data products that that provide valuable insights into the workforce and labour market in each employment region as well as information about employers' recruitment experiences by both industry and employment region.

The [Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey](#) surveys approximately 1200 employers each month to find out about their recruitment experiences as well as whether they are expecting to increase staffing levels.

Results from the 2022 Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey show that 69% of recruiting employers in Northern Australia reported difficulty in filling their most recent vacancies. This was slightly higher than the national result, where 68% of employers reported difficulty.

The sample for Northern Australia does not enable a detailed industry breakdown. Despite this, the Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey results indicate that Manufacturing and Construction industries in Northern Australia are having relatively higher recruitment difficulty rates whereas Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade industries are having fewer difficulties.

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**QUESTION ON NOTICE**  
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**Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000210**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Initiatives to support workforce development in Northern Australia***

**Question**

What initiatives has the Department introduced to encourage and support workforce development in Northern Australia?

- How are these evaluated in terms of whether they are effective and fit-for-purpose?

**Answer**

Please see response to Question IQ23-000201 for information about programs the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations operates including in Northern Australia.

With respect to evaluation of these programs, the department regularly evaluates employment programs based on a principled, best-practice approach. For example, the Workforce Australia Evaluation will follow defined evaluation principles – being impartial and independent, credible and relevant – and will be conducted by experts in the department who have extensive experience in evaluating employment programs. External experts will also be consulted to advise on evaluation methods. This evaluation capability supports evidence for future policy development and continuous improvement in the delivery of employment services programs.

The department's latest evaluation reports are available at:

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/employment-research-and-evaluations/employment-services-evaluations>.

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### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

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**Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000211**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | Policies and programs***

##### **Question**

How does the Department consult with people in the north and co-design policies and programs to foster workforce development in Northern Australia?

- How are you working with remote communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

##### **Answer**

The Department's Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland State Offices consult with a range of local stakeholders including local and state government agencies, training organisations, locally owned businesses and social enterprises to share information and take advantage of opportunities to foster workforce development in the relevant Employment Regions. In addition, Employer Liaison Officers and Employment Facilitators under the Local Jobs Program bring together community stakeholders to address workforce priorities in each employment region.

The Department of Employment and Workforce Relations delivers Workforce Australia services in Employment Regions in Northern Australia that share boundaries with CDP providers. Providers from both the CDP and Workforce Australia program work closely on the ground to service job seekers when they move between regions.

One of the ways the Department engages with people in Northern Australia to foster workforce development is through Yarrabah Employment Services.

Yarrabah community is located about a 60km drive south-east of Cairns, with 97 per cent of its population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The Department worked with the Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council to co-design and build a model for the delivery of employment services in Yarrabah.

Wugu Nyambil Limited is the recognised agency, and is supported by Council to deliver employment, training and job seeker participation in the Yarrabah community. All 14 staff employed with Wugu Nyambil Limited are local community members except the General Manager and the Business Hub Co-ordinator.

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**Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000212**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Whole-of-government or cross-departmental initiatives***

#### **Question**

What whole-of-government or cross-departmental initiatives are in place to foster workforce development in Northern Australia?

#### **Answer**

Whole-of government and cross-departmental initiatives to foster workforce development, including in Northern Australia, that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) currently contributes to include: The Employment White Paper (Treasury), the Care and Support Economy Taskforce (Prime Minister and Cabinet), the Migration Review (Home Affairs) and the Net Zero Taskforce (Prime Minister and Cabinet).

DEWR also works with a range of other departments including the National Indigenous Australians Agency, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and the Department of Defence on workforce development, including in Northern Australia.

For example, DEWR are capability partners with Department of Defence Regional Force Surveillance Group and work closely with their units in Northern Australia on workforce issues. DEWR also supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into employment with the Australian Defence Force through provision of pre-employment training programs to boost skills prior to starting recruit training.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000213**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Workforce shortages***

**Question**

What data do you use to track workforce shortages in Northern Australia?

**Answer**

Please see the response to Question IQ23-000209 which provides links to information developed by Jobs and Skills Australia that can be used to assess recruitment trends and employer needs across regions.

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**Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000214**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Business growth opportunities***

**Question**

What initiatives does the Australian Government have in place to support Northern Australia to make the most of emerging economic and business growth opportunities?

**Answer**

Please see the response to Question No IQ23-000201 in relation to initiatives the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) has in place to support Northern Australia to make the most of emerging economic and business growth opportunities.

DEWR also works collaboratively across government with agencies responsible for industry, infrastructure and regional development to support sustainable economic development and growth. For example, the department reviews projects being considered by the Northern Australia Investment Facility to consider any positive or negative workforce impacts that could arise from a project and to ensure DEWR's relevant state or territory networks are linked into projects as they progress to understand any local workforce issues and consider opportunities as they arise.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000215**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Programs***

**Question**

What programs has the Australian Government established and supported to encourage more Australians to work in the north?

**Answer**

Please see responses to questions IQ23-000201 and IQ23-000214 which provide information about the Department's programs and initiatives supporting Australians into work, including in Northern Australia.

The Department also supports participants in Workforce Australia to relocate for a job anywhere in Australia, including to Northern Australia. Participants can request support to relocate if they have accepted a job that is located more than 90 minutes from their current address.



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#### **Outcome: Employment and Workforce**

#### **Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000216**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | Collaboration***

##### **Question**

How do levels of government currently collaborate to address workforce issues in Northern Australia, and what can be done better?

##### **Answer**

A wide range of federal, state and local government agencies collaborate on workforce considerations across Northern Australia. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) state and territory offices work closely with state and territory government colleagues to capitalise on each other's programs, reduce duplication and share intelligence such as the expected workforce needs of upcoming infrastructure projects (both public and private) and recent developments on issues affecting local communities (e.g. housing, water security).

The Local Jobs program provides good examples of how collaboration can work on a DEWR lead program. For example:

DEWR runs the Local Jobs Program which is a place-based initiative operating across 51 employment regions, including across Northern Australia. Employment Facilitators are on the ground in each region and support tailored, local approaches to reskilling and upskilling individuals to meet local employer needs. Employment Facilitators work with local or state government representatives, employers, Chambers of Commerce, industry bodies, education and training providers, community organisations and employment services providers.

In a recent example in the Darwin and Alice Springs region the Employment Facilitator set up the 'Let's Work Together' networking series. This included an event in Alice Springs that brought together organisations that support people transitioning out of prison, including Australian and Northern Territory government agencies, employers, employment services providers, training providers and community services. This has led to stronger local connections, collaboration and shared commitment (including between governments) to work together to support prison-to-work transitions, including for First Nations people.

In cases of industry restructuring or broader structural adjustment a Transition Support Network made up of Employment Facilitators, DEWR, Services Australia, and state and territory governments work closely with employers to provide information to workers about the support they can access, including employment support through Workforce Australia. In these cases, the department works collaboratively across multiple agencies to support a smooth transition for displaced workers.

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#### **Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000217**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | States and Territories***

##### **Question**

What factors do you consider would be within the control or remit of the states and territories?

##### **Answer**

Workforce Development is a shared responsibility of industry and governments.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and its portfolio agencies facilitate jobs growth through policies and programs that promote fair, productive and safe workplaces.

Employment Services for Australians who are in receipt of income support are delivered by the Commonwealth Government. These services aim to support individuals to overcome barriers to participation and support businesses to attract the employees they need.

The Commonwealth, states and territories work collaboratively to build the skills Australia needs for the future. For example, the Government is working with states and territories to deliver a new 5-year National Skills Agreement. This is guided by a vision statement and principles which have been agreed by Skills Ministers. The National Skills Agreement is funded jointly with the states and territories to provide 180,000 Fee-Free TAFE and vocational educational places in 2023.

The Agreement sets out training places across areas of national priority, including care, technology and digital, hospitality and tourism, construction, agriculture and sovereign capability. The 12-month Agreement supports industries experiencing skills shortages and emerging growth areas.

Fee-Free TAFE also prioritises and provides extra support for participation of First Nations Australians, women and other disadvantaged groups.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000218**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Problems in workforce development in Northern Australia***

**Question**

How do problems in workforce development in Northern Australia reflect Australia-wide issues and how are they unique to Northern Australia?

**Answer**

Northern Australia is a large area covering many diverse regions. This reflects the diversity across other areas of Australia. Workforce development challenges experienced by one area of Northern Australia may not be the same as those experienced by another area. For example, the Broome Employment Region is reliant on the seasonal economy and has a prominence of tourism and service sector jobs, while in the Fitzroy Employment Region, mining is the largest employing industry.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000219**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

***Written | Long-term, local economic benefits for the north***

**Question**

Which industries and sectors do you consider have the potential to create lasting employment and long-term, local economic benefits for the north?

**Answer**

Please see the response to question IQ23-000209 for information available from Jobs and Skills Australia about labour market trends in each Employment Region.

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**Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Question No. IQ23-000220**

Ms Marion Scrymgour MP, provided in writing.

#### ***Written | Problems historically affecting workforce development***

##### **Question**

What were the biggest problems historically affecting workforce development in Northern Australia, and how do these compare to today?

##### **Answer**

Northern Australia is a large area with diverse workforce development needs. Workforce development considerations are outlined in IQ23-000218.

Workforce development is a priority of the Australian Government. An example of Government investment in the area of skills development is the establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA). This independent body, focussed on strengthening workforce planning, ensures that consultation with all jurisdictions and stakeholders takes place to address workforce shortages, and builds long term capacity in priority sectors, including Northern Australia.

Other skills related investments include: a \$1 billion National Skills Agreement, the training of 10,000 New Energy Apprentices under a New Energy Skills Program and the \$1.2 billion Future Made in Australia Skills Plan.