

**From:**  
**To:**  
**Subject:** FW: Community Affairs committee - Further QoNs - Welfare Reform public hearing - 31 August 2017 - JA  
**Date:** Tuesday, 5 September 2017 9:43:52 AM  
**Attachments:**  
  
**Importance:** High

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**From:**  
**Sent:** Monday, 4 September 2017 3:06 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** FW: Community Affairs committee - Further QoNs - Welfare Reform public hearing - 31 August 2017 - JA  
**Importance:** High

Hi there Carol, please find Jobs Australia's responses to the QoNs arising for the recent Senate hearing into the Welfare Reform Bill below.

**Hansard Reference: page 11**

**Senator SIEWERT:** ... You said you undertook a review of the skills mix. Are you able to provide the results of that to us? That would be extremely useful.

**Ms Sinclair:** Yes.

**Mr Thompson:** Senator, there is also some ongoing University of Melbourne research that we both sponsor, which you should see.

**Senator SIEWERT:** If you could provide details about that, I would appreciate that.

To the first QoN David Thompson was requested to provide links to the Frontline staff surveys conducted by the Public Policy team at the University of Melbourne. Here are the links.

<http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/ssps/research/projects/employment-services>

PDF: [http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/2165878/2016-Australian-Industry-Report.pdf](http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2165878/2016-Australian-Industry-Report.pdf)

**In relation to Schedule 9:**

1. Do you think that jobseekers in the age group affected will find it harder to find work? What do you think the impact of this change will be on them?

The measure effectively requires job seekers to undertake job search activities and/or paid work for 15 hours per fortnight, in addition to 15 hours they may spend undertaking volunteer work. If they are already engaged in volunteer work of 30 hours per week they will be required to substitute this with job search activities and/or paid work, or engage in additional job search related activity while they undertake paid work.

Research from a range of sources supports the view that job seekers in the 55-59 age group find it more challenging to get jobs mainly because of the effects of age-related discrimination although research also indicates that this group are often highly motivated to work. These views are supported by research undertaken by BSL, HREOC and are reflected in the unemployment projections in the Intergenerational Reports. As Newstart is already a low social security payment in international terms, we believe this provides sufficient incentive for job seekers to

take jobs when they are readily available (this is the effect the OECD refers to as the Workfare effect (OECD, 2005 <https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/36780874.pdf> p.4).

The impact of this change will be to subject them to unnecessary inconvenience as per the comments in our submission, addressed in 3 below.

**2. Do you believe the changes in schedule 9 will reduce the ability of people aged 55 – 59 to continue to volunteer if they already do so?**

Yes because they will be required to reduce their volunteering capacity overall from 30 to 15 hours per fortnight. It is difficult to imagine that job seekers would be available to volunteer outside of normal working hours, as most volunteer work occurs during normal working hours. So if a job seeker spends 3 hours 5 days a week volunteering at a op shop for example, they would be required to drop this activity in order to participate in job search requirements and every six months in an AAR activity such as Work for the Dole.

We believe this would discourage volunteering as job seekers would be required to look for work on top of the activity in which they were already engaged or would otherwise seek to take up.

Furthermore, if they were able to engage in multiple activities, such as for example, volunteering and paid work, or other employment services activity, they would face practical barriers in attending multiple activities such as distance and time to travel to and from and between each activity, the cost of fuel or other transport costs. Requiring mature age job seekers to manage multiple relationships across these different forms of engagement may also result in undue stress.

**3. Jobs Australia said Schedule 9 would “create unreasonable administrative work for employment service providers and unnecessary inconvenience for jobseekers”. What exactly is the unreasonable work and unnecessary inconvenience?**

**Unreasonable work for employment services means:**

Employment services providers will be required to engage these job seekers in work-related activity such as job search and job search training, or when these job seekers are in the AAR phase to find them Work for the Dole activities for 7.5 hours per week in order to meet any short fall in activity undertaken.

Employment services will be required to manage multiple activity arrangements for which there is already an administrative burden such as undertaking Work Health and Safety risk assessments, maintaining host agreements, as well as administration relating to employment services systems claims and reporting. Given this burden of administration and monitoring of job seeker activity levels, it is likely employment services providers will prioritise job seeker engagement in non-volunteer related activity. This will erode the autonomy of job seekers who have already found volunteer work and may create conflict in street-level interactions.

**Unnecessary inconvenience means:**

If job seekers are already volunteering they will be required to search for jobs that may not be available as per our comments on age discrimination. When jobs are not available, the additional activity has been called activity for activities sake. This means job seekers are kept active indefinitely when there are few or no suitable jobs available. For employment services providers this means finding activity to engage in such as job search, and during the AAR period the job seekers would be required to participate in WfD or other activities

They will be required to drop volunteer activity in order to take up job search and this may cause them and the volunteer activity host inconvenience due the reduction in their availability.