

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Social Services and Legislation Amendment (Youth Employment and Other Measures) Bill 2015

Public Hearing

Question

Senator SIEWERT: Thank you.

Senator MOORE: Ms Kidd, you said you had surveys of employers that talked about their particular employment needs, and I know the department does that regularly to get a test of the market. You said that 28 per cent of employers said that for low-skilled jobs they were not able to get a good market. They were not getting people turning up. On that discussion, was there any work done about age? For the 28 per cent of employers who expressed concern that they were not getting a relatively low-skilled response, was any work done in that cohort to look at whether there was an age component in that?

Ms Kidd: I would have to look at the survey again to see if it is disaggregated by age.

Senator MOORE: That would be good.

Ms Kidd: But I guess the correlation is between the skill status of the jobs and age. We know a lot of young people tend to be drawn towards the lower skilled jobs that we were looking at, so I guess we were using lower skilled as a bit of a proxy for age.

Senator MOORE: Can we have a look at the questions that the employers were asked as well?

Ms Kidd: Certainly.

Senator MOORE: That would be very useful to see. It is just to see whether we can correlate the datasets and the information the departments have with the introduction of the legislation.

CHAIR: I think it would be useful if you were able to come back with as much detail on that survey as possible so that the committee can have a look at it.

Senator MOORE: That would be great.

Ms Kidd: Certainly.

Answer

This information that 28 per cent of employers who had recently recruited for lower skilled occupations had difficulty filling their vacancies was compiled from the Department of Employment's *Surveys of Employers' Recruitment Experiences* in 2014. The survey results are used to identify employment opportunities for local job seekers and to help address the recruitment difficulties of employers.

In order to determine whether employers are having difficulty in filling their vacancies they are asked a broad range of questions covering issues such as the recruitment methods used, applicant numbers, and whether the employer had to compromise their requirements to fill the job. Information is also collected on the reasons that they did not interview job applicants and the reasons for their recruitment difficulty.

The Department of Employment does not collect information, as part of these surveys, on the extent to which young people contribute to employers' recruitment difficulties in filling lower skilled vacancies. That said, young people are predominantly employed in lower skilled occupations as they offer entry-level opportunities and generally do not require post-school qualifications.

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Senator SIEWERT: We had some comment earlier from welfare rights about undertaking the JSCI process—the streaming process—and it potentially being done over the phone. You just said human services will meet with the young person. Can you clarify whether any of that streaming process will be done over the phone and at what stage they will actually meet with the young person.

Ms Kidd: The process will be that a job seeker will present to the Department of Human Services. DHS would apply the JSCI to stream the job seeker into employment services, whether it be jobactive, disability employment services or elsewhere.

Senator SIEWERT: Would there be any time that that was done over the phone?

Ms Kidd: Yes, it is possible for that to be done over the phone.

Senator SIEWERT: So in fact a person may not have a face-to-face meeting when they are being assessed.

Ms Kidd: That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT: Under what circumstances would that occur?

Ms Kidd: I think that is largely the call for the Department of Human Services. They make that call based on the way they service job seekers.

Senator SIEWERT: So you have no idea under what circumstances a person may end up just being dealt with over the phone?

Ms Kidd: I think any more detail is really for the Department of Human Services, but a large number of assessments are done over the phone.

Senator SIEWERT: Yes, but in these circumstances you are talking about young people being streamed and potentially not having income support for five weeks.

Ms Kidd: Yes.

Senator SIEWERT: That will be done over the phone.

Ms Kidd: The streaming tool, yes, potentially.

Senator SIEWERT: When do they then have a face-to-face meeting?

Ms Kidd: They would have a face-to-face meeting with their jobactive provider. They would present to jobactive, and that would be a face-to-face meeting.

Senator SIEWERT: Once they have been streamed.

Ms Kidd: That is right. Certainly if there are issues that were not disclosed in the phone call or if there are any changes in the individual's circumstances then there is an opportunity for the streaming tool to be reapplied, so the jobactive provider could refer them back for another assessment if it was seen that there was something potentially wrong with the streaming.

Senator SIEWERT: So they would then go through that process. How long does that process of reallocation to stream B or C take?

Ms Hatton: I would like to refer to that question to DHS as well because it is about their servicing level standards. We have only had a few coming through the system at this stage, so I cannot tell you what we are seeing in the way of the new jobactive program for that referral process. So I think we will take that on notice at this stage.

Answer

A change of circumstances re-assessment can be conducted at any time a job seeker's circumstances have changed and may result in a job seeker being moved to a higher level of service.

Under jobactive, Stream A or Stream B job seekers who are in their first six months of service and require a Job Seeker Classification Instrument change of circumstances re-assessment must be referred to the Department of Human Services. If the change of circumstances re-assessment undertaken by the Department of Human Services indicates the job seeker should be placed into a higher Stream, this will occur immediately.

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Senator MOORE: Can we also find out the list of programs that you read out, Ms Halbert and Ms Kidd? I am sorry; it is a Qantas issue with planes to Brisbane deciding not to fly and that is why we have been out there. Maybe they need some job ready people? In terms of the focus, can we find out from those programs that you read out, which already seem very positive, what numbers of job seekers they are targeted at. I will take that on notice, because I did pick up in particular about the issue of the 200 young people with mental health issues. The evidence given by Orygen and also headspace indicated that they were very keen to be involved in such programs, but they indicated they had many more than 200 on their books that could well be part of it. It is to build up the picture that from all the submissions we have got—and I am sure that you have read them all—everybody was actually speaking very positively about the support of programs that have been brought in. I think every submission, whilst raising concerns about this legislation, then went on to say that they welcomed the other things. It is important that the department gets the feedback. It was not everybody just saying, 'We hate what's going on.' I think they were very positive.

Ms Halbert: We can certainly get you those numbers.

Answer

The table below outlines the details of the Growing Jobs and Small Business measures administered by the Employment Portfolio and expected job seeker numbers.

Growing Jobs and Small Business Package Measure	Number of job seekers
Transition to Work Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On average 19,000 young people annually
Innovative Youth Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On average 3,000 young people annually
Supporting Parents to Plan and Prepare for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On average 19,000 parents annually
Engaging Early School Leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">On average 28,000 annually
National Work Experience Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An estimated 3,500 places in 2015-16, building up to around 6,000 places annually in later years
Redesigning Wage Subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The number of job seekers supported by wage subsidies will scale up over time to around 80,000 – 100,000 per year.
Rapid Activation for job Ready Job Seekers aged under 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">54,000 young job seekers annually