



Responding to our needs

Australian Unemployed Workers' Union submission
to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment consultation on the
proposed licensing system for the New Employment Services Model

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Acknowledgement of Country

The AUWU the original inhabitants of this continent, who have been custodians of Country for thousands of generations. First Peoples have connections to place, land, water and community that have been unbroken for 120,000 years.¹ We recognise their sovereignty and the cultural significance inherent in these connections.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and stand with all First Peoples in their quest for self-determination, justice and truth-telling in the face of ongoing colonial violence.

Preamble

The Australian Unemployed Workers Union (AUWU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the proposed licensing system for the New Employment Services Model.

The Australian Unemployed Workers' Union represents 1.6 million unwaged, underemployed and insecure workers on income support payments and defends the rights of all people who rely on social security to live. The AUWU has no political affiliations, is run entirely by volunteers and is funded only from donations.

We believe that everyone has the right to a job with fair wages and conditions, and that all social security payments must be above the poverty line.

All too often, the voices of unemployed people are excluded from debates about the laws and policies that affect our lives. The AUWU believes unwaged, underemployed and insecure workers must have a seat at the table and be fully involved in decisions.

Contact for this submission

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¹ (Bowler, Price, Sherwood, & Carey, 2018)

Chapter 1: Overview and objectives

The AUWU has serious concerns about the design and development of the Next Generation of Employment Services.

We do not support the licencing system as it is proposed. Despite this, in addition to our recommendations about alternative approaches that would better support people in the employment services system, we provide recommendations to improve the licensing model if the department pushes ahead with this approach. However, in doing so, we do not want to convey any impression that licencing is the key issue to determine in the design of future employment services – it is not.

If we must have privatised employment services, then in the aftermath of COVID there is an opportunity to substantively overhaul and rebuild the licensing system to produce meaningful employment opportunities for people living on income support. This is an opportunity missed by the Next Generation of Employment Services as it is currently proposed.

While the introduction of digital services may alleviate the potential burden on providers created by the substantial increase in the number of people on unemployment payments and a dramatically reshaped labour market, a system designed pre-COVID will be even less fit for purpose.

There is no evidence in the discussion paper about how licencing will ensure minimum standards, or ensure providers are equipped to deal with complex needs by requiring minimum qualifications for frontline workers, even for the proposed specialist providers.

Employment services are in need of active government engagement, including direct investment in communities, the provision of high quality training and work opportunities and a labour market strategy coordinated by the National Skills Commission.

Employment services must be focused on providing useful, tailored, responsive, fair, realistic, trustworthy and supportive assistance to unemployed workers that will help them get into sustainable waged work. Giving unemployed workers access to better information and greater freedom to choose and change providers who will provide better services is essential to improving outcomes and will achieve the department's aim of creating a more competitive market.

Service provision should be by trained professionals with specialist skills. Depending upon private sector operators to deliver this will not achieve the positive outcomes for unemployed workers, particularly if there are further cuts to regulation. Using cohort specialist agencies fails

to account for the complexity of people's circumstances and that this aspect of the proposal is idealistic but fundamentally unworkable.

The proposal for cohort specialist agencies is a fundamentally flawed concept and on that the AUWU strongly opposes. We recognise the department is strongly in favour of this model and therefore our suggestions in Chapter 5 also include how this model could be made "less worse" for unemployed workers, if the department intends to persist with this direction.

We believe that the department has not solved service quality problems by simply swapping from a contracting model to a licencing model. What is needed are more significant reforms that drive high-quality services, with policy settings based on the reality that unemployed workers want to work and that we want high quality services to assist us to achieve this goal. Failure to start from this position will continue to result in policy failure. The proposed licensing system does not produce positive outcomes for unemployed workers or employers.

Increased flexibility should mean increased choice and activity options for the job seeker rather than simplified procedures for the job agency. We need a system to help unemployed workers judge the quality of a provider and to be given free rein to use their market power to shop around for a provider that is genuinely going to help them get a job. Nothing in the proposed model suggests that this is going to happen.

Finally, none of this matters in the context of there not being enough waged work. The government's unemployment target is 6 per cent, which will leave close to one million people out of work. No employment services program is going to ensure that people don't become long term unemployed when in the long term there are not enough jobs.

Repeating past failures

The proposed licencing system fails to address the fundamental weaknesses in the current model of employment services. The experience of unemployed workers is that the current model results in poor quality services that do not help us to get a job, that take credit for an employment outcome in which the services took no part, and that coerce us into a cycle of precarious work and unemployment.

We concur with the Parliamentary Enquiry that [jobactive is failing those it is intended to serve](#). In the period since jobactive has been in place, the average period of time on the payment has increased from two years and two months in 2014, to more than three years in 2019. It's clear that jobactive has been a failure in reducing the period of time people are on a payment and getting people into waged work.

The wrong incentives

In the NESM trial, providers have been better compensated for each person they assist but have had no compulsion to deliver more support, higher quality support, or make support more accessible for those required to participate in face to face services. We are aware that some providers have simply reduced the number of sites in response to a reduction in caseload. In our view this demonstrates providers' focus on cost cutting, rather than actually delivering what the department states is the intent of these changes, which is better quality service to job seekers who have higher barriers to employment. We have no confidence that providers will seek to do anything other than what they have always done – to minimise their greatest cost, salaries, by employing fewer workers, and workers with inadequate qualifications.

We see the underlying intention of “cutting red tape” without introducing other requirements such as minimum qualifications, or caseload ratios, as an incentive for providers to continue to drive down quality. While we acknowledge that there are some excellent frontline workers in employment services, our experience is that these workers are the exception and that they rarely last long in the system. The majority of our members describe having, or having had, workers who are inexperienced, unskilled, overwhelmed, or worse, disinterested in any expectation of providing useful help in finding work.

Accountability

We believe that employment service providers need to be held more accountable to their two most important stakeholder groups – unwaged, underemployed and insecure workers, and employers, whose involvement appears to be missing in the proposed model. We believe that service quality from the perspective of the end users will continue to be ignored and we therefore recommend that at an absolute minimum the proposed panels must include unemployed workers and employers, and that these must have a say in decisions about the awarding of licences.

The AUWU believes the inclusion of unemployed workers' ratings in the performance evaluation of providers is essential to any employment services model.

Chapter 2: Establishing a panel

We believe that employment service providers need to be held more accountable to their two most important stake-holders – unemployed workers and employers, the primacy of whose involvement both appear to be missing in the proposed model. We believe that service quality from the perspective of the end users continues to be ignored and we therefore recommend at an absolute minimum, the proposed panels must include unemployed worker and employer input into decision making about the awarding of licences. Furthermore, we recommend the inclusion of unemployed workers' ratings in the performance evaluation of providers, and that these ratings be publicly available separate to any overall performance evaluation outcome.

The level of decision-making involvement of the panel members is unclear, but it implies that they would have some role in determining who receives a licence. The AUWU has serious reservations about this proposal. The panel model is open to abuse by larger providers who may cooperate to lock out smaller operators unless there are restrictions in place to prevent large providers taking up all the contracts through operation of the market share agreements. Market share agreements undermine the stated objective of providing flexibility in order to facilitate competition.

The discussion paper suggests that participation in the panel will be minimised to reduce the burden of resources on the organisations who are on the panel. First, this implies that panels are not expected to achieve very much. Second, it implies organisations are not going to be financially compensated for participating in the panel, which again favours larger organisations. For example, a provider can have a place on a panel but not receive a contract. If they are a small provider then it is highly unlikely that they are going to be able to maintain their ability to deliver those services and thus continue to exist. This will make it hard for smaller organizations to maintain their capacity or eligibility to be on a panel. On the other hand, large organizations that are able to deliver services in multiple employment regions and who may miss out on a license for some of the employment regions in which they wish to operate, but can maintain capacity to operate in those regions should a license become available due to their scale in other employment regions and the security of income.

Organizations should not be sorted into generalist and specialist. We have provided detailed feedback and alternatives in Chapter 5.

If generalist and specialist organizations are to be granted licenses, it would make sense that they be on separate panels that reflect their specialism, but there are going to be so many types of specialist provider that surely this would be impossible to operate. Also, this would

give potentially two+ seats to larger organizations that are able to deliver both generalist and specialist services.

Providers should be able to enter the panel at any time in the first six years, which would address the department's concern about a shorter time period not enabling efficiencies and still achieve the objective of providing stability and long term planning for organizations that are given a place on the panel in the first instance. There should be no need for a limit on panel membership given that the number of contracts issued does not bear any relationship to the size of the panel. This would help the department achieve its aim of increasing competition. It might mean that there's slightly more pressure on the existing panel members to do a better job if the panel can be expanded at any time, so that when a licence comes up, there would be more organisations who could be available to take that licence.

This would help to address the problem of smaller organisations potentially not maintaining their capacity to deliver the services if they are given a place on the panel but no initial contract. If they lose their panel place during the annual assessment it would be easier to get back on the panel if they redevelop that capacity. You could just re-apply to be on the panel at that time.

The time-based panel refresh should be irrelevant because the process to apply to be on the panel should be open at all times. The panel should be refreshed if a certain proportion of organisations on the panel have received enough complaints to trigger a penalty from the department.

Chapter 3: Issuing contractual licences

It's hard to understand how the department intends for these licenses to be fairly issued if larger players outnumber smaller players on the panel, and therefore have outsized influence over the decision making process.

The number of licenses and the number of sites should take into account the employment prospects of people in the region. If there are no jobs it doesn't matter how much you encourage people to get a job their employment prospects are obviously low. The strategies and targets for providers in those areas should be different. For example, in a region where there are very limited employment opportunities, success should be measured by how many people were given access to quality training education (people in employment services should be able to count all forms of education to meet their activity requirements, including all levels of tertiary education), rather than forcing people into Work for the Dole programs or insecure employment as is currently the case. Funding should be redirected to support training opportunities.

The length of the contract period is less important than the performance measures, how success or failure is determined and the frequency of review. The threshold for a contract being terminated should be based on the number and frequency of complaints received from job seekers and job seekers should be encouraged to submit complaints directly to the department, rather than having to go through the provider first.

Chapter 4: Licence reviews

Asking about the number of performance groupings demonstrates the flawed reasoning underpinning the proposed model - whether it is three or five groupings will not change the end result for unemployed workers. While one of the original intentions of the star rating system may have included serving as a guide in assisting with provider choice, it has almost exclusively become a mechanism for contract management, particularly due to the amount of effort required by people to transfer to a new provider.

Few of our members report that they are aware of their provider's star rating and those that are aware of it, often report being incredulous – it rarely reflects their experience of dealing with the provider. While we understand the logic behind providing the industry this data, we do not believe that it is used to improve the services to unemployed workers. Larger providers with more resources and employees manipulate the system, giving them an unfair advantage within the market. Many of these providers have honed their skills in picking off unemployed workers more likely to respond to pressure to take any job, which is often precarious employment or underemployment.

These providers are also more sophisticated when it comes to taking credit – often coercively, for jobs that unemployed workers find themselves. We see nothing in the proposed model that will change this practice - on the contrary, we see the proposed model as reinforcing it. The reviewing and receiving of performance data by employment service providers, while necessary for their businesses, allows them to manipulate certain performance indicators to ensure that they are receiving a flow of income from government funding. This gaming of the system is neither beneficial for unemployed workers nor for the investment by taxpayers.

There needs to be a system in place where outcomes and performance of an employment services provider takes into account the treatment of an unemployed worker. This would mean that the experience of an unemployed worker is factored into the performance of a provider, as currently this does not seem to be the case. The process that unemployed workers go through in order to air grievances or seek correction of failures is complex, confusing and leaves unemployed workers with little hope.

The belief that the department seeks to “cut red tape” while believing that they can offer a quality service is not achievable. If the outsourcing of employment services is going to continue, there needs to be an independent body that receives enough funding each year to guarantee that the industry is held to account and provides quality for tax payers money, while also taking unemployed workers experiences and perspectives into account.

Chapter 5: Specialist licences

In the existing jobactive system, tenders were given to small providers that were supposed to provide a specialist service and yet those specialists have not been effective in placing people in work according to the information provided in Appendix A in the consultation paper. One of the reasons might be that there is no requirement to have specialist employees in organizations that are delivering these targeted services.

We believe that the practical implications of attempting to specialise services for unemployed workers overcomplicates the situation. The discussion paper gives some examples of cohorts, which included disabled people, people who've come out of prison and people who are homeless. Many people who have been in prison because of their disability then come out of prison and are homeless. Dividing people in this way demonstrates to the AUWU a fundamental lack of lived experience within the department about people with complex barriers to employment, who are likely to cut across many different cohorts. People cannot simply be categorised.

Does an unemployed worker who is a refugee from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) with a disability attend a specialist migrant provider, or a specialist disability provider? What market would be big enough to offer all these choices let alone any diversity within those choices?

By what mechanism would an unemployed worker make an informed choice about a cohort specialist and what incentive would their existing provider have to facilitate a transfer to a specialist, especially if they were a specialist for another cohort to which the unemployed belonged? This is not clear in the discussion paper and is, we believe, an irreparable design flaw.

Rather than specialist operators, part of the licencing arrangement should be that providers have specialist staff and maintain those staff to retain their licence – a mechanism to make sure that there are some qualified people in a place that is dealing with vulnerable people all the time. In other words, there shouldn't be specialist organisations, but rather, all organisations should have specialists.

While the AUWU supports individualised case management we believe that the cohort specialists model in the discussion paper is unlikely to make a difference in people's lives, we are also sceptical about the implementation of workforce specialists. The discussion paper implies that workforce specialists will essentially be labour hire agencies – labour hire has a

long track record of undermining pay and conditions, and engaging in wage theft and unsafe work practices.

The AUWU can see workforce specialist licences being given to labour hire companies, effectively subsidising work they are already doing. It is a concern that the idea of a 'single point' of access for employers will further undermine job security, as an outsourced labour hire model becomes the norm for larger companies. This will continue to undermine the rights and welfare of those already working in companies that transition their workforce to be largely supplied by these providers.

The current proposal of workforce specialists also has the potential to further create a precarious labour force because large employers will have the capacity to easily substitute existing workers in insecure employment. It has the potential to enable a system of hiring practices that benefit a concentrated market at the expense of workers.

The belief that these specialists will be able to assist in cross-industry transition also seems unrealistic as in reality this can only be achieved by significant investment in reskilling and training programs to allow for the transition of the labour force from one industry to another. This would require expansion and maintenance of formal training and education, for which we have seen providers have little appetite, preferring to refer unemployed workers to "mickey mouse" courses run by affiliated organisations.

The National Skills Commission take an intensive, proactive and strategic role within the labour market to understand what skills are needed and where. The commission should be tasked with establishing programs that identify and match labour force priorities in each region, working closely with employers and training institutions.

While we disagree with the proposals outlined in the discussion paper regarding specialist services, we believe that the department will pursue these measures regardless of input from stakeholders. Therefore, the AUWU has provided feedback below to enhance the department's proposals.

Providing appropriate services to specific cohorts

As mentioned, the AUWU supports the concept of cohort specialist staff within generalist providers as it will give people with barriers to employment access support. Offices with a range of specialist staff will provide a single point of access and have the ability to support people with a variety of barriers to employment with wrap around services.

Providers should also be required to employ staff who can relate to unemployed workers. The AUWU has detailed proposals regarding the integration of people with lived experience into employment services providers and invites the department to cooperate with us on developing this model further.

This should include the opportunity for students studying relevant qualifications, for example, youth work, to have placements in employment services providers, similar to how teachers in training complete placements in schools. Another example is the employment of people who have the similar experiences to those they are there so support – a person who has migrated to Australia would understand the complexities faced by migrants in the system, which can't be measured by educational and qualification outcomes. This would not only offer support, but would also create trust between the provider and person.

We also believe that mechanisms for including people with lived experience in the ongoing design of service delivery and staff training is essential, as this will assist in individualised support for people who may feel judged or vulnerable in a system designed to penalise.

Cohort specialist staff must have maximum caseload limits and minimum level of skills and qualifications in related fields, and also a minimum staffing of people currently studying to provide them with in work experience.

There are restrictions on providers under the current structure that limit their ability to provide meaningful support which are the product of the penalty-based system developed by Department of Social Services. This is exacerbated by the fact that these rules are enforced by DESE, a separate agency. The department should develop a framework for a more humane system, with requirements for stronger skill sets and services offered in face-to-face services for generalised and cohort support services. Please consider the following recommendations from the AUWU.

Recommendations for cohort specialists

To ensure that 'clients' get appropriate services and related supports:

- the department should require that offices for every provider – generalist and specialist – have minimum staffing of specialised workers to assist cohorts with individualised and professional services.
- mandated percentage of staff in the offices shall be hired based on lived experience, and those currently undergoing training in TAFE or university.

If the department decides to continue with the specialist model, people who choose to opt in to face to face employment services and / or long-term unemployed people who do not have specialist needs must be accommodated. This would be achieved by:

- Ensuring there are generalised support offices available to everyone by guaranteeing coverage of all locations.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment should collaborate with the Department of Social Services in developing amendments to social security law – current policies actively work against unemployed workers with barriers to employment and do not facilitate caring and supportive services. This will change the culture within providers, and allow for more compassionate assistance.

Workforce specialists

The AUWU believes that there should be a team that provides labour market strategy, coordinated by the skills commission. This would allow for the department to develop a breadth of understanding of what skills are needed in the labour market, but also give fair indication of the job availabilities in the market. This could then be connected to various TAFEs and universities around the country that can link education to training giving those currently in training to have access to opportunities before the end of their courses.

This would also allow for the skills commission to be directly linked to employers around the country who will be able to advise on real time changes in the market to advise on changes to education. This direct link between department and employers would be necessary in finding employment outcomes and assisting the unemployed in developing the correct skills for employment.

Recommendations for workforce specialists

The department establishes a team within the skills commission that develops a labour market strategy to understand conditions, skills, availabilities and requirements to support education, training and employment.

That there be a employer monitoring process through this department group to monitor hiring and firing practices of certain employers to assist in improving rights in the workplace.

Interaction with complementary programs

The AUWU strongly opposes the current structure of “complementary” programs such as Work for the Dole. Such programs provide neither a pathway into employment nor ‘give back to society’ in any meaningful way. The AUWU believes that there needs to be larger investment

in communities to develop employment and skills opportunities, ones that do not rely on reducing a person's bargaining power within the labour force.

As stated in earlier parts in chapter 5, the AUWU believes that providers should be staffed by a minimum number of specialist staff and individuals currently studying related degrees, as specialists in provider offices. This is one example of how skills training and alternatives to Work for the Dole and Transfer to Work could operate.

A labour force strategy can isolate and find hosts to provide people with relevant skills, in education or training, to provide them with the opportunity to access hands on experience that may end with them finding employment through the opportunity.

There should never be a program that forces someone to work for poverty payments. The program would be opt-in and the person would outline what they would like to do, the provider would find an opportunity for the person, this should be done at any time for the person.

Recommendation for complementary programs

End forced labour programs and replace them with an opt-in skills development opportunity program that is developed in collaboration with the skills commission and department.

Chapter 6: Market share

The AUWU requests to be provided with a copy of the independent research commissioned by the department into financial viability or directed to where it is publicly available.

The AUWU opposes any allocation of market share on the basis that it encourages, at the very least, complacency among providers. The AUWU supports complete un-allocation of market share to help ensure providers are continually pushed to provide a service of the best quality.

If a market share system is to be introduced, the AUWU proposes that the level of market share allocated to providers should be continually responsive to the experiences of unemployed workers. Under this approach, badly performing providers would have their level of market share decreased.

Chapter 7: Red tape reduction

The AUWU does not support the emphasis on reduced government regulation ('red tape'). The experience of unemployed workers on the AUWU hotline makes it clear that a major issue currently confronting private employment services is the lack of accountability for providers who unfairly penalise unemployed workers and breach the Employment Services Code of Practice / Service Guarantee.

Chapter 8: Performance Framework and cybersecurity

The description of the licensing model appears to continue the incentives that are currently in place that have been proven to be unsuitable and unsupportive. The proposed model has not solved service quality problems by simply adjusting incentives, just as it has not done for every other iteration since employment services were first privatised more than two decades ago.

The proposed payment model for providers continues the perverse incentives that exist in the jobactive system. Increased progress payments to providers for long term unemployed people only increases the provider's incentive to keep people unemployed for longer. Increased fees should be tied to inputs, such as the level of qualifications of the staff employed by the provider, the range of services the provider offers, and the quality of experience of unemployed workers.

The licensing system – both for issuing and reviewing licences – must involve an assessment of the experiences of unemployed workers rather than just providers' measured outcomes in terms of moving people into work. If the department wants to reward providers for doing a good job, job seekers should be able to make a choice about their provider when they are first engaging with one, rather than being assigned a provider and then having to request a transfer if they do not have a good experience.

The old procurement model focused on things that had no relevance to whether a provider would be equipped to give quality support to people who are unemployed. A key factor in whether they were deemed successful was whether they provided value for money rather than whether they were able to provide quality outcomes for people on income support.

A major gap is that the performance framework is intended to recognize employment outcomes and move unemployed workers through milestones, but again fails to mention the experiences of unemployed workers with their provider. More important than reduced caseload is the adequacy of the skills of provider employees. A more effective licensing model would require that in order to secure and retain their license, all providers to employ qualified and experienced specialist staff, for example- indigenous workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, vocational and rehabilitation counsellors, youth workers and locally relevant industry specialists, with high quality training to support those with barriers to work.

The proposed model suggests the following examples of performance measures that may be included in the Provider Performance Framework:

- achieving employment outcomes for job seekers

- progressing job seekers towards employment (e.g. successfully completing designated milestones such as training to increase employability skills)
- quality of service given to job seekers and employers
- job seeker and employer satisfaction
- achieving results for disadvantaged cohorts. (p.36)

Whatever performance measures are included, the underlying algorithm must be public and transparent. There's a [growing body of guidance](#) that says people's data should be used in a transparent way to maintain their trust. Yet when governments use algorithms to make decisions, if there's any transparency at all it typically doesn't go far beyond [what's legally required](#). This is unacceptable to the AUWU.

Evidence from a diverse range of health and human service settings suggests that systematically understanding the end-user's experience of a service can contribute to a research base for evaluating and improving service delivery design; for example: medical clinics and hospitals, child and adolescent services, and residential care. The Star Rating system is currently the only mechanism by which employment providers can be evaluated by their customers but several researchers have shown that the purpose of the star ratings is more directed to contract management than as an aid to customer choice. We rarely encounter any unemployed worker who is aware of their provider's star rating. We need a system to help unemployed workers judge the quality of a provider and to be given free rein to use their market power to shop around for one that is genuinely going to help them get a job.

The AUWU, in collaboration with Monash University is in the final stages of evaluating the reliability and validity of an experience rating scale of employment providers for use by unemployed workers. Our rating scale measures things that are important to unemployed workers because this is a scale that we want them to use and to trust. Broadly speaking this includes the qualities of: Useful, Client-centred, Responsive to feedback, Fair, Realistic, Trustworthy, and Encouraging. We would be willing to share this intellectual property with the department subject to a mutually agreeable licensing arrangement

With regard to the suggested performance targets we offer the following comments:

- Achieving employment outcomes for job seekers, and, progressing job seekers towards employment (e.g. successfully completing designated milestones such as training to increase employability skills)

While the logic of these measures may seem compelling, the evidence suggests clearly that the pre-eminence of these measures, particularly the first, are the primary drivers of parking and creaming. Adjusting the weighing of these two

measures, which has been trialed in every iteration of contracting since privatisation, will not prevent these practices. We are concerned that too many providers claim outcomes in which they took no part and that this practice drives much of the aberrant behavior that our helpline receives hears on a daily basis.

- Quality of service given to job seekers and employers

We see this as an important and missing component to provider performance measurement.

- Job seeker and employer satisfaction

We do not support the measurement of satisfaction; it depends on too many things outside the control of a provider. We want to measure experience – what happened, and, what did the person think of that. Measuring experience is more straightforward and it is also practical information that providers can use to make changes.

- Achieving results for disadvantaged cohorts

This is potentially problematic if the measurement of disadvantage is not transparent. There are long standing problems with the use of the JSCI for example, which relies on disclosure at initial intake.

How can cyber-security be improved in the new model?

The AUWU strongly believes that stringent cyber-security is a fundamental requirement for contract management and would vigorously oppose any diminution of requirements in a new licencing model. We are uneasy about the volume of highly sensitive material that providers already collect about unemployed workers, which is kept on their own in-house servers. We support that contracts stipulate a minimum level of security, however we do not see anywhere in the discussion paper a requirement for providers to notify their clients of any breaches of security, which we see as a minimum requirement. We are also concerned if this recommendation is viewed in the light of recommendations in Chapter 7 and seek assurances that data security is absolutely quarantined from any discussion about the “cutting of red tape”.

Finally, rather than focusing just on cybersecurity, the licensing system should enshrine general privacy and security, including mandating the public information certificate and outright prohibiting unqualified care and support workers from conducting ‘welfare’ checks’. All digital tools should meet the standards of the Digital Transformation Agency.

Chapter 9: Next steps

Feedback from our members suggests that previous transitions have been stressful and frustrating for unemployed workers. We see that all transitions need to be explained carefully and early, and that we cannot rely on providers to do this – that is, the department must take primary responsibility for communicating to unemployed workers about transitioning to new providers as well as making rights and responsibilities clear. Unemployed workers need to be given clear information about what choices they have if they have to transfer to a new provider and must have the right to choose a new provider rather than simply be reallocated.

We also believe that it is important for unemployed workers to be able to transfer to a new provider early as we have much anecdotal evidence of unemployed workers being stuck with providers who are losing their contracts and being subject to unacceptable levels of bullying or neglect in the process.