



Ms M Chan  
Inquiry Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Employment, Education  
and Workplace Relations  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Chan

I undertook to give your committee the snapshot of some of our activities around Australia.

Here they are.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Vardon".

SUE VARDON

22 October 1999

## **LOOKING AT VOLUNTEER AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR JOB SEEKERS**

### **Ipswich CSC (Area Pacific Central)**

The Employment team at Ipswich supplied the following information:

- \* Treat all customers the same regardless of age. All options are explained.
- \* Emphasize the option for Volunteer Work as per brochure "Giving everyone a go" - Voluntary work Initiative.
- \* Best practice is to recommend Volunteer Qld as a starting point.
- \* Look at option for reduced reporting.

### **Nerang CSC (Area Pacific Central)**

Centrelink and JNM encourage older jobseekers to actively participate in Voluntary Work and there are two organisations to which we refer jobseekers if they are considering doing voluntary work, "Volunteering Australia" and "Fast Track". These organisations help jobseekers to find appropriate voluntary work. Should a customer, who is over 50 yrs participate in at least 32 hrs/fortnight of voluntary work, they may be placed on an "Approved Activity".

Similarly should a job seeker 50 yrs+ be doing a combination of voluntary work and paid part time work of 40hrs/wk or more they are also eligible to be placed on and "Approved Activity".

Older jobseekers may access Job Network Services under the general eligibility criteria. However under some circumstances they may decline certain types of assistance from the Job Network. eg 50yr+ customer may decline Intensive assistance if they are doing approved voluntary work, combo of voluntary/part time work or on reduced reporting. Centrelink staff always take care to inform the customer of services they are eligible and of suitable options and allow the customer to make an informed decision about what service/ option suits them best.

### **Tweed Heads CSC (Area Pacific Central)**

50 years plus are encouraged and referred to full-time voluntary work in our normal course of work, when interviewed by CSO's and on exiting INA.

If disabled customers are considered to be unemployed. Project currently being set up to actively encourage volunteer work.

## **Area Hunter**

### **Taree**

Encourages older customers to seek voluntary work in order to satisfy the activity test. Customers eligible for IA are screened to determine whether they will benefit and this is done in conjunction with JNM's

## **Area West Australia**

Voluntary Work Initiative: There is increased awareness in CSCs of voluntary work as a means of enhancing employability and community involvement, particularly for unemployed mature age customers. Our local Volunteer Centres are very supportive of Centrelink and assist in the placement of mature age customers in appropriate voluntary work. They also liaise with Intensive Assistance providers, who may include participation in voluntary work in their customer's Activity Agreement.

## **Area West VIC**

### **Footscray CSC**

Footscray Centrelink in conjunction with the Vietnamese Community Association in Victoria and Adult Multicultural Education Service in Victoria have already organized several training programs for volunteers in Welfare Work.

The course was run by experienced welfare workers from different community organizations and the MSO at the Footscray Centrelink. The volunteer were trained in building self confidence, answering phone queries, filling forms with particular emphasis on Centrelink forms, how to use the touch screen at Centrelink offices, how to use government resources, minutes taking, resume writing and making referrals to suitable agencies, as well as assisting in programs run for youth, mature age men and women, elderly, young mothers etc.. The course will run for the duration of 6 to 8 weeks with a two week placement in a nonprofit organization. The course was found to be very successful. Three participants found employment after their graduation in the fields of family support, employment consultant and child care worker.

Currently another volunteer course is being run for 8 weeks . the course will finish on 21st September 1999.

## **Area North Central Vic**

### **Box Hill CSC:**

Box Hill refers unemployed mature age customers to the Volunteer Resource Centre (VRC), an umbrella organisation representing a range of other voluntary work agencies. The VRC matches the skills of the customer to the type of community work the voluntary work agencies perform and then makes the appropriate referral. VRC material is advertised in Box Hill's public contact area.

**Darebin CSC:**

Customers who are over 50 years of age are encouraged to undertake voluntary work as a means of enhancing their skills. They may be referred to Volunteering Australia for services or to local organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

**Heidelberg CSC:**

Mature age job seeker are encouraged 'not to give up' and to consider voluntary work as an option to retain and maintain existing skills whilst looking for paid employment. They are also matched to organisations seeking support from volunteers.

## **OUTREACH WORK AND LINKS WITH ORGANISATION TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO OLDER JOBSEEKERS**

### **AREA PACIFIC CENTRAL**

#### **Lismore CSC**

From JET Adviser Lismore

Last year I was approached by TAFE Lismore to assist with Co-ordinating a work and study opportunities for Men course

TAFE Outreach Co-Ordinator Lismore Campus Sue Weingarth is a regular contact I use in my local JET Program.

We are in regular contact for JET referrals to the Career Education for Women and Work Opportunities for Women courses but we had identified a need for Men to have the same opportunity to prepare for work or further study.

Especially men who were in a caring role and had now, significant lifestyle changes restricting work and study options.

We needed the course to be Free, within school hours be part time and of interest to mature men.

Sue worked on getting TAFE funding for the course and I worked on getting the participants and identifying the study needs.

I prepared a customer questionnaire, mailed and then collated the responses identifying the customers study needs.

From the collated responses Sue was able to format the course content and organise and information session.

Once the information session was planned I posted information about the course to my customers and TAFE targeted the course in the local media

The course was then presented by John Armstrong at Lismore Campus of TAFE 1st semester 1999.

As computers and communication skills were high on the survey needs Lismore campus was able to accommodate these study topics rather than Wollongbar.

The project proved to be very successful and most of the original participants have now enrolled in further study at TAFE 2nd semester 1999

Towards the end of the course I spent a few hours with the group and discussed Centrelink, it's Programs and Services.

From a personal perspective I considered those hours some of the most rewarding Outreach work I have completed recently. It gave me a satisfaction in knowing that almost 6 months worth of preparation and co-ordination to make the course happen, had made an impact on the future direction of these particular JET and Centrelink customers

**Beenleigh (or Beaudesert) CSC** from John Briggs (check if ILO)

I Believe the work I am doing with the **ATSIC Business Loan Application** for a Mature Aged Couple in Beaudesert may be of some interest to this forum. The objective being to get both parties "Off Benefits" and commence living independently through their business production.

**My role** has been to provide and complete an interim business plan ,(on behalf of the **customers**) which has been submitted to ATSIC to take the application process to the next level. At this point in time we are now waiting to meet an independent service provider who is to assist in the submission of a final and more detailed business plan for the final stage of approval.

I have assisted throughout this process for the customers as they have some difficulties with their articulation and literacy so Centrelink's ISO in Beenleigh has been the Facilitator throughout this whole process between **ATSIC, Deloitte Consultancy and the Customers.**

**Tweed Heads CSC**

Our local TAFE have a Work and Study Opportunities for Men Course. This is open to all age Groups and we have information for customers and appointment times available of Wednesdays when we have the local TAFE in the office.

**AREA TASMANIA**

One of the real positives is the role of the Career Information Centre in providing advice on job search, study, resumes and job applications. A large proportion of CIC customers are mature aged customers who have found themselves made redundant from their former occupation.

The JET Program is also a significant program for Widow B, Carer Payment, Widow and Partner Allowance customers in this age group. The JET Adviser is able to work with customers on an individual level to discuss options to allow the customer to make informed decisions, encourage the customer to study and think long term and offer ongoing support and encouragement.

## **AREA HUNTER**

### **Charlestown**

Referrals to Disability Officer if indicated by JSCI, referral to Mature Age Workers Programme at Belmont and Toronto, information on alternative payment types if appropriate, reduced reporting, voluntary work, FIS services, conducting business via phone rather than calling customers in, displaying applicable material in the office, specific assistance with touchscreen usage.

### **Forster**

Use of flexible lodgement, offering FIS service, liaison with JNM's, encouragement of customers to undertake voluntary work or promoting NEIS. Some of the volunteer organisations used are Police, Rescue Patrol, Fire Brigade and welfare organisations.

### **Gunnedah**

Referral to Mature Workers Program from Tamworth (finishing in November), offer of personalised service to the target group.

### **Newcastle**

Close liaison with local Mature Workers Programme, referrals to programme, referral to Centrelink specialist officers, close liaison with Pensioners' Advisory Service

### **Port Macquarie**

The office has been working with a community organisation to establish a Mature Age Workers Programme in the area. Older workers are identified as a specific target group for assistance.

### **Raymond Terrace**

Advises all customers of the Mature Age Workers Programme which has an outreach on a weekly basis in the town. Older customers are encouraged to look at voluntary work options and are usually considered for variable reporting.

### **Tamworth**

Assistance with access to Job Network, use of flexible lodgement arrangements, establishment of good relations with JNM's, promotion of self-employment possibilities, FIS services/outreach, arranging vacancy distributions to downsizing organisations.

## **Tuggerah**

Train in Touch screen usage, after 3 months placed on 12 weekly lodgement, FIS appointments, work effort levels in keeping with age and abilities, discussions on alternatives benefits, effects of superannuation, occupational psych referrals

Wallsend: office uses the services of the Mature Workers Program for referral and assistance for the 40 plus. Normal services and programmes are offered as well

## **AREA NORTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Broome**

Our Broome office is sponsoring a seminar for those long term unemployed aged over 40 years. The seminar will basically have guest speakers from service providers in Broome. The intent of the seminar is to see if this group of people would like to form a support network. Broome office are targeting a local caravan park that have a large number of unemployed over 40 year old people. Support groups can work under the same concept of Job Search Training programs where people develop links and give each other tips of unadvertised or advertised vacancies as a result of their own Jobsearching. And provide support and motivation to each other.

### **Casuarina**

Casuarina office actively promotes the Financial Information Services (FIS) provided by Centrelink for older Jobseekers as it is a free and independent service available to everyone as people have different financial needs at different stages of their lives. The Centrelink Financial Information Service can provide help and information for these different stages. For people who are under 55, but want to know what their options are for savings now and for planning their future retirement. Examples of this are; securing your future, superannuation-options, Financial strategies, investing, debt management, housing, estate planning and wills.

Help for people aged over 55 years may include investment options at retirement, retrenchment, estate planning and wills, housing how to reduce your mortgage. There are different ways that this information is provided to Jobseekers by telephone, post, seminars/workshops and interviews. Jobseekers are made aware of the limitations of this service eg: recommend any particular type of investment, tell people how to invest their money - the decision on how to invest is up to the individual.

## **AREA BRISBANE**

### **Bundaberg CSC**

All customers over 50 years who claim Newstart are invited to attend a special new claim seminar with other customers of the same age.

The FIS Officer also presents a session at this seminar.



## AREA WEST AUSTRALIA

There is general awareness among CSOs of the difficulties mature age people face in obtaining employment. Some strategies adopted by CSCs are:

- As part of the job seeker registration process, the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) is applied and customers are referred to Intensive Assistance or Job Search Training, as appropriate. The JSCI includes a weighting for age and customers over 45 years old attract the highest weighting for this component of the JSCI.
- CSOs spend time explaining to customers over 60 years old the implications of going on to Newstart Mature Age Allowance, which makes them ineligible for Job Network services. Customers are encouraged to remain on mainstream Newstart if they wish, as they may then still access Job Network services.
- There is a focus in CSCs on providing full financial information to mature age customers, particularly those going on to Newstart Mature Age Allowance or other age-related benefits, to help them organise their finances to become self-reliant and to set themselves up for retirement. Employment Services and other Teams identify specific customers who would benefit from this sort of assistance and refer them to the Financial Information Service. FIS officers throughout the Area conduct outreach to the community and provide advice to a wide range of mature age customers; not just income support recipients.
- Specialist officers (JET Advisers, Disability Officers, Multicultural Service Officers and Indigenous Customer Service Officers, as well as FIS officers) provide personalised support and encouragement to customers; this is particularly beneficial for mature age customers, who often lack confidence and "attachment" to the labour market. For example, specialist officers and Customer Liaison Officers provide personalised assistance in accessing touch screens and other self help facilities for mature age customers who have not had exposure to recent technology.
- All regional offices have at least a part-time JET Adviser. JET is available to Widow Allowees, Widow B Pensioners, Carer Payment recipients and Partner Allowees, many of whom are mature age customers, who have been marginalised from the labour market and have limited or outdated skills. JET Advisers assist by providing advice on career directions and through referral, as appropriate, to education and training; as well to Job Network services.
- In WA, TAFE regularly runs New Opportunities for Women (NOW) courses, which are designed to help women to build up confidence and skills. These courses are particularly helpful for mature age women returning to or entering the workforce for the first time; or for mature age female jobseekers whose confidence has been eroded by long term unemployment. CSOs, particularly JET Advisers, are aware of the existence of these courses and may refer customers to them.

- The State Government funds a community-based Job Link program, which provides a range of activities to assist jobseekers. There is a specialist (DOME - Don't Overlook Mature Expertise) Job Link service for mature age people, located in the metropolitan area, of which CSCs are aware and to which they may refer mature age customers.
- We have recently been advised of a Mature Age Employment Proposal from the State Department of Training, whose objective is to provide an early intervention service to assist into employment people aged over 45 who have been unemployed for 3-12 months and who are not eligible for Job Search Training or Intensive Assistance. The program will be run by the DOME Job Link. Centrelink locally is supportive of the initiative, and we anticipate that CSCs will play a role in raising awareness of the program among mature age customers and facilitating their participation. (Note publicity for this WA State initiative in clips for 19 October)

### **AREA SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

- Area SA of course provides the standard services to mature aged unemployed people. IE Newstart Allowance, Parenting Payment Single, Mature age Allowance etc ,access to the Job Network, access to the JET program where applicable, and access to FIS services. The option of voluntary work as a way of enhancing skills is also offered to mature age unemployed people.

The assistance provided by JET Officers is generally in regard to the payment of fees to attend training institutions.

Some examples of local initiatives to help mature aged people are listed below.

1. The SA Council of the Ageing is a member of the SA Centrelink Community Consultative Committee.
2. Liaison with agencies such as DOME (Don't Overlook Mature Expertise) and the Seniors Information Line.
3. A staff Member from Area Support Office has a regular fortnightly spot on a local Radio Station 5UV talking about issues likely to be of interest to mature aged people.
4. Participation in community events - displays, expos at various locations. There are numerous activities during "Celebrate Seniors Month" in October each year.
5. Provision of display material to Customer Service Centres.
6. Promotion of International year of Older Person - each Customer Service Centre supplied with Info kits.

## **AREA EAST COAST**

- Staff in one 'cluster' of CSCs are currently undertaking research to identify local community agencies which may specialise in providing assistance to this customer group. The aim is to incorporate this information into a One Main Contact reference tool, which will assist staff to provide customers with a range of services to suit their needs.
- Community Service Officers in the inner city of Sydney provide an outreach service at hostels to mature aged customers, particularly those more disadvantaged due to homelessness and substance abuse.
- At an inner Sydney CSC, Parenting Payment Single customers are being encouraged to undertake further study through the JET program. A number of customers, including those over 40, are studying for qualifications such as TAFE Certificates and University degrees.
- In the inner Sydney area, mature aged jobseekers are provided details of the State Government Mature Aged Workers' Program as part of the suite of services available. Specialist staff have established strong links with the agency responsible for this program.

## **AREA SOUTH WEST NSW**

### **Griffith CSC**

This response was prepared by the Employment Liaison Officer.

Local initiatives that the Employment Liaison Officer is involved with on behalf of Centrelink are:

- On the board membership of the Western Riverina Competitive Employment Agency, which provides an employment placement service for people with disabilities - this includes 'mature aged' unemployed customers.
- Belongs to the membership of the Riverina Area Consultative Committee (RACC) 'Riverina at Work' - it is one of at least 70 ACC's nationally which are funded by the Dept of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) with representatives from business, industry, government and community to foster and identify opportunities for employment, economic development, training, etc. This covers all age groups, however the RACC is aware of the more specific issues associated with mature aged unemployed and consults the funding body on same.

### **Cooma CSC**

This response was prepared by the Employment Liaison Officer.

Snowy Mountains Training Company Cooma and Coastrain Bega are currently conducting a Mature Workers Program for persons over 40 and Looking for a Job. The free service offers expertise with Resumes, interview techniques and job applications, and offers to organise

voluntary work providing an opportunity to gain future employment. A flyer has been advertising this program within the Cooma office reception area.

### **Dubbo CSC**

Provided by Annette Davis JET Officer,

Apart from all the normal JET services mature JET customers get, there is a "mature workers" program run in Dubbo by "Access Group Training" private provider. The program is state govt. funded apparently, like JPET. The contact person at Access Group Training is Colleen Whiteley phone 6884 9981.

It is for people over 40 yrs wanting to re-enter the workplace.

It is for flex 1 customers only, not flex 2 or 3.

An assessment is done of the clients needs and goals through a group session. eg resume need, training need etc.

Work place cover is available for work experience etc.

### **Bowral CSC**

Response prepared by Chris Styles CSC Manager

I am not aware that re-employment of mature age customers in the Southern Highlands has been a problem but we have in the past certainly visited coal mines in the area when retrenchments were being offered and explained to staff being retrenched what their Social Security entitlements may/may not be depending on their redundancy money.

Our Social Worker and Jane Craig, ASWs Multi Cultural officer, have become involved in attending Interagency meetings and I have actively promoted Outreach in the area covered by Bowral office including appearing on the local community radio station to talk about customers with disabilities.

Our outreach has been to youth and schools mainly and the need to assist the more mature customer has not been raised till now, apart from one case I am aware of where there was a language barrier which needed to be addressed first.

I have just chatted to two Mission Employment staff who advise that in this area employers actually request more mature applicants for jobs so it in some ways confirms that the problems in other places with employment of mature age persons do not exist to the same degree in this area. An example given was the placement of a 55 year old in a jewellers shop recently. The ME staff did make the comment that more mature persons may be employed as temps as employers do not want to be bothered with super contributions, etc but I don't know whether this could be extrapolated out to other areas.

### **Albury CSC**

This response was prepared by the Assistant Manager.

Rite Personnel in Wodonga are running a pilot programme called skillspay. It is funded by the Victorian Government and is targeted at unemployed people over 45yrs. They assist with training for new skills and transition from previous workplaces to another.

Our involvement is minimal other than promoting their services in our waiting area and at some seminars

## **AREA WEST VIC**

### **Essendon CSC**

The Essendon CSC identified a number of strategies it uses to assist mature aged people seeking work. These include the role of the Social Workers in attending the Older Persons Network ( service development & coordination) at the Moonee Valley Council; information and contact made with mature sole parents at PPS seminars conducted by the office.

### **Watergardens CSC**

At Watergardens, for two years running now, we've hosted the Brimbank Employment Expo which was aimed at providing information and linkages to Job Network providers to unemployed customers in the region.

Mature-aged new migrants who attend English classes at the AMES Centre in St Albans are also provided employment referral advice through the Centrelink outservice held there every week.

Centrelink Watergardens also held regular consultations with Western Older Workers (WOW) at St Albans on providing ongoing support to mature-aged unemployed. However, with the closure of the WOW office in St Albans, this service has ceased although contacts are still maintained with the WOW office in Sunshine.

The newly-formed Marketing Team at Watergardens intends expanding the above services through:

Regular contacts/meetings with Job Network providers in the region

Establishing links with the Victorian Government's Skills Pay program which is a skills training and employment initiative aimed at;

Unemployed jobseekers aged 45+ with relevant skills training linked to a job  
Access to a network of specialised employment placement agencies - Community Business Employment (CBE) projects and,  
Upto \$340 for approved training by a registered training organization such as a TAFE institute or registered private provider.

Accessing and providing information on a regular basis to community groups, neighborhood houses, Migrant Resource Centre etc.

## AREA NORTH CENTRAL

In partnership with other Victorian Areas, Area North Central was involved in a working party to implement the SkillsPay program initiated by the Victorian State Government body "*employment* Victoria". This initiative is also supported by DFACS Victoria.

The SkillsPay program was implemented on 6 April 1999 as a value added component of the Community Business Employment (CBE) program.

The program, which will run as a pilot project for six months, is administered by *employment*Victoria and is delivered by the CBE program. SkillsPay will offer eligible job seekers (45 years and over) relevant skills training linked to a subsequent employment placement. CBE providers will identify employers willing to offer an employment placement, negotiate with them regarding pre-employment training and refer eligible job seekers who are prepared to undertake that training. The employer will then select their preferred applicant and, if approved, the State Government will provide funding for the training. Training is provided through TAFEs or ACFE providers.

One of the objectives of the program is to achieve the placement of approximately 560 mature aged people in training and job placements.

Centrelink's role has been to facilitate the process by developing a streamlined process for approving the proposed training and referring job seekers to contact this program. We also drafted a form for CBE providers to complete and for Job seekers to bring to Centrelink to verify that the customer has received an offer of employment from the employers. On this basis we exempt them from the Activity Test for the duration of the training.

Publicity material and forms have been distributed to our Customer Service Centres.

All parties worked in partnership to streamline Centrelink procedures, ensuring that older job seekers are encouraged to take advantage of this program and therefore increase their chances of obtaining a positive outcome and returning to work.

To ensure that this project was supported by Centrelink staff, arrangements were made for a SkillsPay representative to talk about this program to our Employment Services operational staff.

### **Box Hill CSC:**

SEDS and NEIS are strongly promoted. These schemes are popular among unemployed mature aged customers. Customers are encouraged to attend information seminars on these schemes at Box Hill TAFE courses (Mondays) and Mission Australia (Fridays). Customers are informed of these schemes at the Employment Services information seminars.

Box Hill CSC also refer Job Matching Only customers to the Community Business Employment Program as the 45+ age group is one of their target groups.

Qualified professionals are assisted to get their qualifications recognised by being referred to NOOSR or the Overseas Qualifications Unit. These customers are also referred to orientation

courses at Box Hill and North Metro TAFE and at AMES. These courses familiarise overseas qualified professionals with the Australian environment and include a work experience placement in Australian industry.

Box Hill CSC also refer mature aged unemployed customers to the Job Network, including Job Matching, INA and JST, the Self Help Facilities as well as referring customers to the Community Support Program and the Occupational Psychologist for further assessment of assistance needed.

There is also a multitude of brochures in their public contact area from a variety of organisations assisting unemployed mature aged customers. Though Centrelink is the official gateway for referral to many of these organisations they also advertise material from organisations for which Centrelink is not the gateway.

### **Broadmeadows CSC:**

Last year, Broadmeadows CSC and Moreland CSC established the 'Hume and Moreland Employment Network'. This network consists of representatives from the further education sector, Job Network providers, Community Based Employment provider, the Northern Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre and local government.

The Network has endeavoured to actively disseminate information regarding the Job Network, Literacy and Numeracy Training and a survey was recently undertaken to gather information on how employers in the Hume and Moreland Region are recruiting / filling vacancies.

The Multicultural Service Officer (MSO) has been involved in organising information seminars for older workers from a diverse cultural and linguistic background. These information sessions have covered the Job Network, literacy and numeracy and the recognition of overseas qualifications. The MSO also assisted AMES and the Northern Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre with the preparation of a response on the issues regarding changes to Trades Recognition Australia.

### **Darebin CSC**

Mature aged customers who have a need for additional support in literacy and numeracy are encouraged to participate in associated courses. In some cases this may mean that a course in language skills is more appropriate and a referral may be made to Adult Migrant Education Services.

The customer may be offered more focussed assistance by the Job Network Liaison Officer who will conduct counselling regarding their labour market options and prospects. Various TAFE courses are highlighted at these interviews or they may be promoted at interview during a Labour Market Review.

In some cases where the customer has a marketable skill and has expressed an interest in becoming self employed, they may be referred to a local NEIS provider for assessment. If they qualify for assistance, income support is provided during the initial stages.

Mature aged customers may be issued with Employer Contact Certificates or with Job Seeker Diaries as an aid to looking for work.

### **Fitzroy CSC**

The FIS Officer has very effectively targeted older customers who have been made redundant through her close links with the private financial advisory services. She has run a number of seminars at a city location which target older unemployed. These have been very well attended and received by older customers.

All mature unemployed customers who qualify are given the option of twelve weekly lodgement. This reduces the stigma many older, previously employed customers, feel in being dependent on income support. It also enables them to develop new employment paths without the pressure of the fortnightly activity testing.

Many older unemployed customers in Fitzroy's region have significant barriers to employment due to homelessness and language barriers if they are from a diverse cultural and linguistic background. The Community Service Officer, JET Officer and Occupational Psychologist work closely with local Community Support Program providers such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence in assisting the mature unemployed. The Community Service Officer provides support to mature unemployed customers who are homeless or have substance abuse and psychiatric disabilities. Visiting services are provided to the Home of Compassion, St Vincent's Psychiatric Centre, St Mark's Community Centre, DePaul House DeTox Centre, the Coolibah Centre and Ozanam House.

Fitzroy has a large community welfare sector which includes a number of State wide and peak welfare organizations. They provide indirect service to a number of older customers their CSC interface with these agencies who use their expertise on Centrelink services for mature unemployed customers.

Fitzroy also provide direct phone access to staff in agencies such as Bedford Street Outreach Service, the Smith Family, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, three Community Health Centres, the Welfare Rights Unit and St Vincent's Hospital. Through having previously had AILOs at Fitzroy for over seventeen years this CSC has a reputation of being receptive to the needs of older

Koori customers who attend State wide Koori Centres in their region such as the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

### **Greensborough CSC**

Greensborough is currently working with the North East Health Promotion Centre to establish a mentoring program for mature aged unemployed. It will be run by mature aged unemployed customers to assist other mature aged unemployed customers and has the potential to lead to gainful employment for the participants.

It is being indirectly sponsored by VICHEALTH.



### **Heidelberg CSC**

Heidelberg will shortly be embarking on visits to local employers with the aim of encouraging them to look at employing the mature age job seekers.

Heidelberg will be participating in a local council employment forum on 7 September 1999 which will address this issue in a co-operative approach using a variety of local providers, job seekers, community groups and employers.

Mature age job seekers who are not eligible for job search training/intensive assistance are informed about State funded community based employment program which can provide individual assistance to job seekers 45 year old plus.

### **Lilydale CSC**

Lilydale makes variable reporting available to their unemployed mature aged customers and ensures that the services offered to them are tailored to their specific needs.

### **Moreland CSC**

Moreland places their mature aged unemployed on variable lodgements, they refer customers to specialist programs, such as SkillsPay, and they also encourage voluntary work participation.

### **Newmarket CSC**

Newmarket maintains contact with a range of other community providers who can assist older workers. These include the Western Older Workers (W.O.W.) Employment Services Inc. which is a Community Support Program provider who specialises in assisting older workers. Newmarket also links customers to the Community Business Employment program of the Victorian Government often by referral to other organisations such as W.O.W and the Australian Vietnamese Services Resource Centre in Footscray who will refer customers to the program.

Newmarket's mature aged unemployed customers often are keen participants in NEIS or SEDS programs and voluntary work programs.

Through their Multicultural Service Officer, Newmarket conducts outreach programs to their community organisations where issues affecting the mature aged unemployed customer are discussed.

### **Richmond CSC**

A local factory which employs mainly mature aged women is about to close and the Multicultural Service Officer and FIS Officer will be providing them with information about their employment and income support options.

The Multicultural Service Officer recently organised an information session on English as a Second Language options for the local Vietnamese community. Representatives from Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) and Advanced English for Migrants Program (AEMP) attended the session and provided information about the services they offer.

The MSO and FIS Officer recently organised an information session for the ethnic Chinese community to provide them with employment options and financial information.

### **Ringwood CSC**

Ringwood has two providers of the Victorian State Government's Community Business Employment Program (CBE) situated locally. Job seekers aged over 45 years and unemployed for less than 12 months are a specific target group for this program. Ringwood has a very close working relationship with both providers, and actively promotes this program to all eligible job seekers. They also promote the SkillsPay Program supplement to CBE for those aged 45+. This provides some financial support to address skills gaps through approved formal training.

Ringwood has also established links with the Maroondah Council's Coordinated Care Unit who provide support to older persons. Information on Centrelink services has been provided, and Internet Links are being developed.

### **Wangaratta CSC**

Wangaratta provides their mature aged unemployed customers an information session with the Rural Services Officer to discuss financial planning and financial services available to them - for services from within Centrelink and within the community.

### **Windsor CSC**

The participants referred to the Community Support Program program run by the Sacred Heart Mission in St Kilda have an average age over 50.

A representative from Sacred Heart recently attended Windsor's Employment Services meeting to further raise the awareness of this program amongst CSOs.

The Multicultural Service Officer (MSO) has also participated in activities with community agencies within the local area. The MSO has visited the Elwood Neighbourhood House who organise language classes for DCALB customers.

The MSO has run information seminars for students at this learning centre outlining what Centrelink's function is and the services we provide. Classes contain people of all ages and mature aged customers are included in this group.

## **AREA SOUTH EAST VICTORIA**

Activities aimed at unemployed mature age people across Area South East include:

Ensuring that Network members do not inappropriately exit customers over 50 bearing in mind that they are likely to attract a higher JSCI score,

Discussions with Work for the Dole sponsors which have gained an acceptance from them that mature customers have numerous skills to share and can be a good influence on younger participants,

Involvement's with the Community Business Employment (CBE) providers who have case workers specifically for over 45 job seekers. This has included a trial in having a CBE Employment Consultant based in self-help areas to assist with job applications, resumes and letters.

AMES staff attending CSC Team Meetings to highlight the assistance they are able to provide in numeracy and literacy training of over 45's.

JET involvement in the referral of mature age people to computer awareness training.

## **AREA WEST NSW**

The Salvation Army Mature Worker Program in Blacktown is particularly successful with the customers that we refer in obtaining employment outcomes. There are two arms to this program : Employment Plus is a job network provider and Job Link assists unemployed with special problems. Our customers benefit from both of these programs.

## **AREA SOUTH METRO NSW**

From the Jet Adviser - **Liverpool CSC**

In Liverpool I send most of my mature age customers who are work ready to Peter Wright of the Salvation Army who runs the local Mature Age Workers' Program. Peter is very helpful to my customers and always sends them back to me to keep me informed of their progress and to let me see what they are doing, with resumes etc. Peter and I have a good working relationship which is demonstrated by the successes of our mutual customers.

I also refer many of my mature customers to do TAFE courses in particular the "Career Education for Women" (CEW) course which is designed to assist women who have been out of the workforce for some time or who are looking for a new career direction. The TAFE co-ordinator for this course at Liverpool has talked at seminars I have run and I have made presentations to TAFE classes and will participate in mock interviews at TAFE for students, so we also have a good ongoing relationship for the benefit of our joint clients.

I also refer customers to University contacts and many other training courses and all other Job Network members as required.

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH JOB NETWORK PROVIDERS**

### **Charleville CSC (Area Pacific Central)**

We do have an excellent relationship with our Network Providers and this has assisted with a healthy turnover of unemployed finding work. Our Flex 2/3 provider for the Charleville region is very motivated in this area and has a good knowledge of jobs going which are suitable for these customers. Many of this age group in our region are unskilled and generally have been labourers most of their working lives. We have a good general knowledge out here where labouring/shearing, etc jobs are able to be accessed, that is, by using local knowledge such as companies like Wesfarmers or Elders or the potential of CDEP.

An excellent local knowledge of your area's employment status, work availability, access points and a good rapport with the Network Providers tends to provide a holistic approach when assisting with not only mature age customers but all customers.

### **AREA HUNTER**

#### **Kempsey**

Has established a strong working relationship with the local Mature Workers Programme provider. Customers are referred for assistance from the CSC and the organisation also refers customers back for literacy, career counselling, etc.

### **AREA NORTH AUSTRALIA**

**Palmerston Office** and other CSC's are considering a seminar in conjunction with Job Network Members (Job Network Member) to explain to customers over 40 of the types of assistance available, as one Job Network Member mentioned that a number of customers over 40 "assume they don't need assistance or how can JNM's help them as all employers think your to old once your unemployed and over 40 years."

Job Network Members can explain how they can help from Job Matching services to Intensive Assistance. A particular Job Network Member stated that approximately half of their caseload of customers was over forty and many lived in rural areas which can disadvantage them further in some cases in regard to job searching expenses. They had some success stories one in particular was a 51 year old indigenous man, in a remote had been now working for 9 months as a Mechanic Trade Assistant. Another was a 59 year old woman who was looking for cleaning work and could only get casual on-call work. With the JNM's employer contacts he canvassed work giving her a reference as reliable and keen to work. She now has employment with a large contractor, who has placed her in Full Time work in a Government Organisation.

Linking training and employment opportunities, proved successful when a 43 year old woman with limited educational background wanted to improve her career prospects. She commenced a Certificate course while also working Part Time, her efforts finally paid off when she secured an Administrative Officer - 2 position with the Northern Territory Government. Her employer has now given her study leave during employment hours so that she can complete her Diploma.

## **AREA EAST COAST**

- Staff from **Nowra CSC** are regular participants of the Shoalhaven Area Consultative Committee (ACC) for the Job Network. The ACC is currently sponsoring a Mature Age Placement Advisor and also offering skill audits. Centrelink staff are providing mature aged customers with access to this service.

On general note staff are keen to explore further opportunities to assist mature aged unemployed people.

However, there is an ongoing issue where Job Network Members do not appear interested in providing assistance to this customer group and are constantly trying to exit customers over 50 years of age from Intensive Assistance.

## **AREA WEST VIC'**

### **Footscray CSC**

In 1998 and 1999 Area West MSOs in conjunction with AMES, Victoria University of Technology and Jo ACction (Job ACction has been set up through Victoria by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations & Small Business (DEWRSB) for the specific purpose of promoting the Job Network) have organized several employment Expo's to cater for job seekers in the City of Maribyrnong, Brimbank, the Expo provided an opportunity to all jobseekers who registered with Centrelink to access information about government and non-government services. The Expo also provided workshops and information seminars which covered information about Centrelink services, job market trends, resume preparation, NEIS scheme, employer expectations, interview skills and other courses at TAFE or University.

### **Horsham CSC**

We work closely with the job network to ensure the smooth running of the referral service. We attend meeting with the providers looking at options for over 50's in rural areas without transport. We had two meeting this week to discuss options with the ACE, DEWRSBY and Job network providers to look at options but for the time being there is no clear opportunity to develop.

## **AREA NORTH CENTRAL VIC**

### **Darebin CSC**

Customers who are over 50 years of age are encouraged to undertake voluntary work as a means of enhancing their skills. They may be referred to Volunteering Australia for services or to local organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

## **Fitzroy CSC**

Fitzroy has good links with Job Network providers and invite them to attend their customer information seminars on a regular basis.

## **Ringwood CSC:**

There is no organisation in the Ringwood locale providing support specifically to this customer segment. Ringwood has had contact from support organisations located in the Inner Melbourne region who will provide services to their job seekers. Ringwood provides information display facilities for appropriate interested parties, and has invited these organisations to attend Employment Services and Retirements and Special Services team meetings to promote their services to CSOs as well as improving working relationships between the parties.

Job Network members in the Ringwood CSC area provide services to all job seeker groups. Older aged job seekers are actively encouraged to access services of local members and other facilities, such as JNA etc. Staff have found that the take up rate of those in receipt of Newstart Mature Aged Allowance has been very low, despite promotion of incentives such as the Pensioner Bonus Scheme.

## **AREA SOUTH EAST VICTORIA**

Ongoing work with Job Network Members and Individual Employment Managers to try and encourage them to keep assisting their customers and try harder to find them some kind of employment.