



Provided below are responses to the questions raised by the Committee. Should you require any further information/clarification please do not hesitate to call me.

- **What basic training are case officers given?**

As a customer service organisation Centrelink is committed to ensuring that staff have the requisite skills to undertake their duties. All Customer Service Officers receive initial basic training. This includes customer service, interview skills, program and product knowledge. All staff receive technical training in how to operate the systems that captures information. This training is delivered through formal classroom sessions and through on the job training. The training provided addresses a range of interpersonal skill dimensions including issues such as 'reading' body language and dealing with customers from a wide range of backgrounds, eg indigenous, youth, people with a disability, diverse cultural backgrounds.

Centrelink has recently implemented an accredited certificate course for staff working in employment services. This is available to all staff. The program has components for new staff, more experienced staff and for team leaders.

- **Do they have any training in reading body language and in knowing how to elicit information from people who are upset or stressed?**

Yes. See above and below responses.

- **Are they taught how to calm a difficult client?**

Yes. See above

- **What skills are they taught about completing the JSCI?**

Centrelink developed training packages for Customer Service Centre staff which were designed to provide staff with a sound understanding of the administration of the JSCI. The initial training was designed as a two day training module. A key aim of the training was to ensure that staff understood that the outcome of the application JSCI determines the level of assistance that a job seeker is entitled to receive, beyond the basic Job Matching services available from all Job Network Members.

The training included instruction on how to apply the JSCI. The aim was to ensure that staff would administer the JSCI accurately. Particular attention was focussed on ensuring that staff had the requisite skills to elicit information from the job seeker, identify indicators of underlying (ie not disclosed) barriers to employment and where necessary explore issues of a sensitive and personal nature that affect the likelihood of becoming long term unemployed (such as for example the literacy/numeracy skills of the job seeker, whether the job seeker identifies as a member of an indigenous community, whether the job seeker is an ex-offender).

A key component of this training was ensuring that staff have the skills to identify job seekers whose needs require clarification through the secondary classification processes, undertaken by specialist officers.

The training package provided technical skills training and guidance on how to input the data captured through the interview process into the Centrelink and DEWRSB computer systems.

Subsequent to the implementation of Job Network, a number of training packages were also designed to ensure that staff had the skills to effectively administer the JSCI. We took the opportunity to revisit the interview skills of staff and ensure that there was a consistent understanding and appreciation of the importance of applying the JSCI accurately. These packages included an enhanced interview skills training package, structured around the application of the JSCI. This was designed as a two day training package. Further training on the JSCI has been included in training packages released to the network. These include "Putting the Pieces Together", a 2 day training package which provided instruction on the available employment related services available across all client agencies. The recently delivered "Preparing for Work" initiative also reinforced the need to ensure accurate application of the JSCI.

In addition to formal training, staff also receive 'on the job' training and feedback from Team leaders and/or office staff with expertise in this area.

- **How accurate are they in determining the score from a JSCI or is it automatic?**

Staff enter the job seekers responses and the JSCI score is automatically determined by the computer system.

- **How accurate is their keying, given that the JSCI is completed in the client's presence?**

Staff receive instruction on the entry of data into the system. Reviews of data entry accuracy have shown that there is a high level of accuracy in recording JSCI information. From July 2000, Centrelink is implementing a new approach to capturing the JSCI information from job seekers. The present paper based "Looking For Work" form, which captures the JSCI information will be available in electronic form. The job seeker will be provided with a copy of their responses and asked to verify that the information captured is a true and accurate record of the information provided.

Regards

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