



Ms Maureen Chan  
Inquiry Secretary  
House of Representatives Committee on Employment,  
Education and Workplace Relations  
Parliament House  
Canberra 2600

Dear Ms Chan

Thank you for your e-mail of 19 January 2000 in which you sought advice about the help Centrelink can provide to employers who are about to retrench staff and the retrenched people themselves, including those who have no entitlement to income support payments. You also advised me that you contacted the Centrelink Employer Contact unit and require a clarification of that information.

**Comprehensive list of services that Centrelink can offer an employer and those about to be retrenched**

- Employers can access Centrelink services by dialling the Centrelink Employer Contact (CEC), through Call Centres or by visiting their local Customer Service Centre (CSC).
- Employers retrenching numbers of employees can be offered a visit by a Financial Information Service (FIS) officer and / or local CSC representative to conduct an information session for their employees. CEC staff would contact the FIS or CSC on behalf of the employer to arrange the visit. For large retrenchments Centrelink staff would visit the work site to explain the assistance available to workers and to issue claim forms and reference material.

Centrelink ensures that the employees are aware of the services available and employers know to advise their employees to check their eligibility (including waiting periods, income maintenance periods, income and assets limits etc.) as follows:

- Call the Newstart line on 132850 for information and to arrange an appointment to discuss their individual situation and make a claim for income support.
- Visit their local Customer Service Centre to arrange an appointment. Urgent cases can be accommodated straight away and most job seekers are interviewed within a few days.

- Once it is determined that a job seeker is, or will be, eligible for income support a range of assistance is available:
  - Registration as unemployed to determine eligibility for job network assistance,
  - The Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) is completed in order to identify barriers to employment,
  - Eligible job seekers are granted income support and sent written advice of when the first payment is due,
  - A Jobseeker Diary is issued providing job seeking guidance with a requirement to record up to 10 job contacts a fortnight for the first 10 weeks,
  - Attend an information seminar providing details of the assistance available, job seeker obligations, including a walk through of the self help facilities (such as touch screens and computers).

### **Centrelink and Job Network assistance available to Jobseekers**

Self Help and job seeking services are located in all CSC's and are available to anyone who is a bona fide job seeker regardless of whether they are receiving income support or not.

Centrelink Customer Service Centres provide the following services:

- Telephone for employment related calls
- Fax machine for forwarding employment applications
- Computers and printers
- Photocopier
- Touch screens to access vacancies and Job Network information
- Registration of Jobseekers
- Information on, assessment and referral of eligible job seekers to the Job Network. Job seekers do not have to be receiving Newstart Allowance to qualify for Job Network assistance, but receive job matching services only if qualified but not payable for an income support payment, or if receiving Mature Age Allowance or Age Pension. Jobseekers link with Job Network Members (JNMs) in their area and selected out of area JNMs. Refer to the Attachment for details of the eligibility for Job Network services.

Centrelink Career Information Centres (CIC) can also provide the following information:

- Details about particular occupations - including printed material, on-line career guides and videos
- Returning to study
- Making career choices
- Information on all Aust. Tertiary Institutions and TAFE colleges
- Labour market information
- Access to photocopier, fax and computers for resume preparation

There are 12 CICs located in major cities, that can also be accessed via phone and email.

### **What kind of problems does the Centrelink Employer Contact deal with?**

In general the CEC's purpose is to raise the awareness of the important role an employer plays in maintaining the integrity of the social security system and assists employers by providing a dedicated contact line. Specifically the most common issues that employers raise are:

- Request for income details - usually when Centrelink has written to an employer seeking to verify earnings of an employee who is receiving income support,
- Employer Contact Certificates (jobseeker) - these are issued to some job seekers who are required to have them stamped by an employer as evidence of seeking work where there is an actual vacancy,
- SU1 requests - job seekers claiming Newstart and Youth Allowance obtain from the ex-employer a certificate that provides information affecting eligibility for payment, such as reason for leaving employment and payments of leave,
- Public denunciations - information received regarding possible incorrect payments,
- Job Network enquiries - commonly how to register with the network and the location of Job Network members.

### **Advertising the Centrelink Employer Contact**

The CEC received widespread media coverage when it was launched in 1996. A series of mail outs and strategic advertisements have been used to promote the number. Research has shown that Centrelink should focus its awareness activities for the CEC towards those employers who deal with Centrelink. Using this knowledge Centrelink promotes the CEC service on all documentation and correspondence sent to employers.

In addition, the following advertising is used:

- The CEC is listed in the Telstra phone directory under the Centrelink entry. A promotional brochure was included with the ATO PAYE booklets sent to most businesses throughout Australia in September 1999.
- Details are provided on the Centrelink web site where emails can be sent to the CEC. This is an increasing line of work.
- Advertising in selected business publications.

#### **Information for people walking into a Centrelink office**

Staff are trained to help job seekers who may require income support or who just wish to use the job access services. New signs are now being installed in Centrelink offices to better inform job seekers of the services available.

#### **Action on Business Closures**

As a matter of course, Centrelink has established procedures in place to deal with business closures. Centrelink can help retrenched workers claim their entitlement, it is common practice during business closures for Centrelink staff to liaise closely with employers and affected staff to ensure accurate information is made available and the claim process is expedited. There are also procedures in place to deal with customers who are in immediate financial hardship.

Please contact me on 6244 6080 if I can provide any more help for you.

Peter Wightman  
Manager  
Employment Allowances  
2 March 2000

## **Attachment Eligibility for Job Network Services**

Most Job Network Services are available to eligible job seekers. Eligible job seekers are job seekers registered with Centrelink who are:

- not in full time education or training; **AND**
- receiving a qualifying Commonwealth income support payments; **OR**
- participating in a Community Development Employment Program (CDEP); **OR**
- aged 15-20 years of age and not receiving income support, and:
- not working more than 15 hours per week, or
- not in full time education or training.

Other job seekers are eligible for Job Matching services **ONLY** if they are:

- Job seekers who have made a claim for an eligible payment, but who are waiting for Centrelink to determine their eligibility for benefit payments;
- Job seekers who have claimed an eligible allowance, but who are serving a waiting period;
- newly arrived migrants currently serving the two year newly arrived residents waiting period;
- recently arrived New Zealanders during the recently arrived New Zealander waiting period; and
- other job seekers who are not eligible for income support payments. (These include job seekers who received redundancy payments and those with working partners.)

These job seekers must also:

- NOT be working 15 hours or more per week on an ongoing basis; and
- NOT be a full time student.