

IMPROVING RETRENCHMENT PROCESSES

Further to the Round Table discussions on a Code of Conduct to guide employer actions and support to potential retrenchees, the following suggestions are made further to some of the ideas being canvassed at the Round Table held on 21st March 2000.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The basic principles of the Employer Code of Conduct (voluntary code), could be developed by the Department of Employment, Work Place Relations and Small Business and then views sought from some major employers, employer associations, unions and community, private and government providers of services to unemployed people.

The Code should be promoted as an ideal that responsible corporate citizens should subscribe to and perhaps a list of employers who are in agreement with the code could be published to encourage all employers to adopt the principles contained in the code.

CLARIFICATION OF SECTION 170 CI

There needs to be some clarification of Section 170 of the Work Place Relations Act which refers to notifying the CES of any retrenchments. My understanding is that even some Centrelink offices are unsure of their responsibilities in regard to this aspect of the Act and not always able to provide follow up or support to employers notifying potential redundancies.

INFORMATION KITS

Development of an Information Kit aimed at employers

A comprehensive kit which contains a copy of the Code of Conduct together with some helpful, colour coded Information Sheets which advise employers of support available and also step by step action to be taken when making employees redundant. The kit could contain information from an employers perspective, such as –

- Advice on the Labour Market
- The experience of unemployment and the impact of delaying job search.
- Directory of Job Network Agencies
- Directory of Career Advisors and/or 'out placement' services.
- Role of Centrelink
- Advice on free Financial Advice for employers and workers.
- Clarification of responsibilities under the Work Place Relations Act.

The Kit could be disseminated through Centrelink offices, Job Network agencies and employer organisations.

Development of and Information Kit aimed at potential retrenchees

A kit containing helpful advice for potential retrenchees should be made available through Centrelink Offices, Job Network agencies, Unions, Community Groups, libraries, local councils.

This Kit should contain colour coded, Information sheets and advice on a range of issues, including –

- Advice on the Labour Market
- The impact that unemployment can have on individuals and families.
- Advice on job search.
- Directory of Job Network Agencies
- Role of Centrelink
- Advice on Financial Assistance.
- Advice on specialist counselling services.
- Sample resumes and job applications.

INFORMATION HOT LINE

An Information Hot Line should be established which could be advertised extensively in the media, telephone directories and in the Employment Section of Newspapers.

FORMATION OF 'MENTOR CLUBS'

A number of retired business people are keen to offer their services and advice 'free of charge'. In addition, successful business people often offer volunteer services to assist their local communities.

Sometimes these people are actively involved in service clubs, such as Rotary or Lions or involved with a local Area Consultative Committee.

The Department could establish 'Mentor Clubs' enlisting the support of these people and providing them with some basic training in respect to job search training and mentoring of unemployed people.

A listing could be established and these 'Mentor Clubs' could be accessed by employers or unemployed people who are unable to access formal 'outplacement services'.

DIRECTORY OF VOLUNTARY AND FEE FOR SERVICE CAREER ADVISORS

A Directory of Career Advisors and Out Placement services could be established and this could include a listing of 'voluntary' services available.

ACCESS TO JOB SEARCH TRAINING

Formal Job Search Training assistance is available to eligible job seekers following 6 months in receipt of Newstart Allowance. Eligibility for Job Search training should be reviewed in the case of people retrenched, particularly if there is an assessment which suggests that the individual may be at risk of long term unemployment, as is often the case for 'older workers'.

ASSESSMENT FOR INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE

Eligibility for Intensive Assistance is confirmed through the Job Seeker Classification Instrument. It is absolutely critical that 'older workers' confronted with retrenchment understand how the JSCI works and are given advocacy support to assist them in working through the various options which may be available to them.