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27 August 2003

The Secretary
Standing Committee On Employment And Workplace Relations
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

RESPONSE TO INQUIRY INTO INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN PAID EMPLOYMENT

Purpose of Report

To inform the Inquiry of the existence of the Logan Employment Task Force (LETF) and its progress to date regarding unemployment issues within the City of Logan.

To propose a pilot project to the Inquiry for the development of a holistic seamless model of delivery that would be utilised as a tool to promote services available to assist an unemployed/underemployed individual toward their preferred employment pathway. The model would encapsulate services related to: employment, education, training, health, business and industry pathways within the Logan region. In addition, the model would also address barriers that hinder an individual gaining and maintaining meaningful long-term employment.

This holistic model could be utilised as a model of best practise that would assist other local government authorities to identify gaps and map out service delivery pathways for unemployed and underemployed local residents.

Background

There are a wealth of services available to many local communities, but bridging a person's vision of meaningful employment can be quite confusing due to a number of gaps within the service provision area and at times, seemingly complex employment and training systems.

In October 1999, an employment meeting was jointly hosted by the former Queensland Department of Employment Training & Industrial Relations (DETIR) and Logan City Council, along with key community agencies. The meeting was convened to discuss significant rising unemployment levels within Logan City, in particular the areas of Woodridge, Kingston and Loganlea, whose unemployment levels were identified as amongst the highest in the State and nation.

The meeting process duly identified unemployment and crime as the two major issues in Logan and concluded that increased efforts should be directed by the Federal and State Governments, Local Government, education and training organisations, industry and the community to address these issues in a spirit of partnership.

It was from this meeting that the concept of organisations working together in a "whole of government" approach, was considered the most practical way of ensuring maximum benefit would be derived from the respective/collective resources of stakeholders. The Logan Employment Task Force was therefore established, with its overarching charter being to facilitate increased employment and training opportunities for long-term unemployed and disadvantaged Logan residents.

Membership of the Logan Employment Task Force (LETF)

The LETF is chaired by Logan City Council's Chief Executive Officer and is comprised of key organisations whose charters enable them to undertake activities that are intended to lead to an increase in employment and training opportunities and/or a reduction in the level of social and economic disadvantage and crime. It has been noted that the achievement of an enduring resolution of the long-term unemployment problem in Logan will, in itself, be a systematic and lengthy process.

The membership at present includes, but is not limited to:

- Logan City Council
- Department of State Development
- Education Queensland
- Mission Employment
- Greater Brisbane Area Consultative Committee
- Department of Housing (Public Housing & Community Renewal).
- Department of Employment & Training
- Logan Institute of TAFE
- Boys Town Link-Up
- Logan Office of Economic Development

The LETF has a directions plan in place, which incorporates strategies this year aimed at:

- (1) Increasing mature aged 45+ job seeker opportunities
 - (2) Increasing youth employment / participation opportunities
 - (3) The Logan Jobs & Business Expo 17th September 2003
 - (4) Engaging industry / business in employment issues within Logan City to improve economic base.
- (Attachment 1. LETF Directions Plan)*

The Logan Jobs and Business Expo 2002 and 2003 have played an integral part in meeting the objectives of the LETF Directions Plan. It provides an avenue to better meet needs of job seekers, business, service providers and industry within the region. It would not have been developed without the collaboration vision and commitment of the LETF membership.

Barriers

The membership of the LETF has identified the following barriers to its vision of contributing to the measurable reduction of unemployment in the city of Logan.

- Identification of gaps that preclude an individual from linking with education, vocational training, health and employment opportunities within the region. Thereby reducing the opportunities available to job seekers to make informed choices/decisions.
- Intergenerational Unemployment
(Lack of role models familiar with the world of work)
- De-motivation
(Low self esteem - individual becomes an under utilised resource and does not reach their potential)
- Diverse Cultural and Linguistic background clients
(Negotiating unfamiliar and complex employment and training systems/expectations)

- Life Issues - Health
(Underlying coping skills required for addressing mental health issues, drug addiction etc prior to education, training, and employment opportunities)
- Lack of financial incentives
(To assist with transport needs in accessing employment and training opportunities and associated costs relating to training and childcare.)
- Lack of understanding/promotion of employment opportunities and pathways within Logan's Industrial region.

Measures That Can Be Implemented To Increase The Level Of Participation In Paid Employment.

The Logan City Council proposes that for a pilot period of 2 years the Federal Government match funding with the Logan City Council to engage an Employment Development Officer (EDO) who will develop in consultation with the Logan Employment Task Force, key community, industry, business and service provider stakeholders, a model of seamless delivery as stated in the purpose of this report.

The benefits of this pilot are:

- Taps into existing expertise and resources;
- Already formed inter-governmental alliances through the LETF;
- Accountability through the LETF Directions Plan;
- To publish a model of best practise on the web.
- Conduct a real world initiative in an area recognised in Queensland as having high levels of unemployment.

Recommendations

The Logan Employment Taskforce would like to invite the Standing Committee's representatives to meet with the Logan Employment Taskforce members to further discuss the initiative in general and in specific terms.

Yours faithfully

for G R Kellar
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER