

## Audit Report No. 49, 2005-06, Job Placement and Matching Services

### Introduction

#### Background

- 14.1 The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) contributes to the Australian Government's employment outcome to provide efficient and effective labour market assistance by administering working age income support payments, and labour market programmes. Through these activities, DEWR assists people to participate in the workforce in order to reduce the social and economic impacts of reliance on income support.
- 14.2 The various employment programmes administered by DEWR are delivered under the Active Participation Model (APM), which has been the policy platform for the department's employment services since July 2003.
- 14.3 As part of the APM, DEWR administers Job Placement and matching services, which have a dual purpose of helping job seekers to find work, and employers fill vacancies. Job Placement and matching services are the successor to the employment exchange arrangements under previous Job Network contracts and the former Commonwealth Employment Service. The primary objective of these services is to increase the speed and efficiency with which vacancies are filled in the labour market.
- 14.4 Job Placement and matching services are outsourced. Services are provided under contract (known as a 'licence') by around 375 Job Placement Licence Only (JPLO) organisations and 110 Job Network

Members (JNMs), which automatically have a Job Placement licence by virtue of their employment services contracts with DEWR. Collectively, these organisations are known as Job Placement Organisations (JPOs).

- 14.5 JPOs canvass employers for jobs and load the vacancies onto DEWR's national vacancy database, JobSearch. JNMs also load job seekers' particulars, skills and occupational preferences ('vocational profiles') onto JobSearch. This enables electronic job matching of job seekers with vacancies, in addition to traditional job matching activities conducted by JPO staff and job seekers. All eligible job seekers receive Job Placement and matching services for as long as they are registered with Centrelink or a JNM. There are two levels of eligibility: job seekers on a specified income support payment who are registered with Centrelink or a JNM are classified as 'Fully Job Network Eligible' (FJNE); other job seekers can register as 'Job Search Support Only'.
- 14.6 JPOs can claim Job Placement outcome payments when they have sourced a vacancy from an employer, and placed an eligible job seeker in that vacancy for a specified length of time. The outcome payments range from \$165 to \$385 per placement, depending on the job seeker's characteristics and the length of the placement. The outcome payments are weighted towards FJNE and highly disadvantaged job seekers. A bonus payment of \$165 may also be paid for the placement of FJNE job seekers who work for a longer period. The total cost of Job Placement and matching services in 2004-05 was in the order of \$176 million, comprising outcome payments for JPOs, service fees for JNMs, and DEWR's administrative costs.

### Audit objectives

- 14.7 The objective of the audit was to assess whether DEWR's management and oversight of Job Placement and matching services is effective, in particular, whether:
- DEWR effectively manages, monitors and reports the performance of JPOs in providing Job Placement services;
  - DEWR effectively manages the provision of matching services (including completion of vocational profiles and provision of vacancy information through auto-matching) to job seekers;
  - Job seeker and vacancy data in DEWR's JobSearch system is high quality and is managed effectively; and

- DEWR effectively measures, monitors and reports Job Placement service outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

14.8 The audit report was tabled on 26 June 2006.

### Overall audit conclusion

- 14.9 The ANAO found that DEWR effectively managed the implementation of Job Placement and matching services. Until mid-2003, the government's employment services were outsourced to JNMs that provided these services, then known as Job Matching services. On 1 July 2003, as part of the introduction of the government's APM, DEWR contracted around 110 JNMs to provide Job Placement and matching services, and opened up the Job Placement market to an additional 375 commercial recruitment organisations (JPLOs), many of which had little or no history of engaging with government agencies in the delivery of employment services. DEWR has been successful in encouraging JPLOs to use their licences – JPLOs now make around 37 percent of all eligible placements.
- 14.10 As part of the APM, DEWR introduced mandatory interviews for newly registered job seekers to collect information relevant to the provision of employment services, to access a range of self-help services and to include them in electronic matching, a system which facilitates the on-line matching of job seekers to vacancies. DEWR has worked with JNMs to identify and overcome challenges that arose with the implementation of these services, including a lack of support for matching mechanisms from the industry, concerns about the quality of job seekers' 'vocational profiles' and the capacity to produce quality résumés for job seekers using supporting information systems. DEWR has substantially streamlined and improved these services, although there are still some difficulties to be resolved.
- 14.11 DEWR has been successful in increasing the number of vacancies listed on its on-line national vacancy database, JobSearch. Over 2.2 million vacancies were created on JobSearch in 2004–05, a substantial increase over previous years. This increase was largely the consequence of the inclusion of vacancies from commercial on-line job boards, MyCareer and CareerOne.
- 14.12 The ANAO found that DEWR's ongoing management and oversight of Job Placement and matching services would be strengthened by improvements in the following areas:

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1 ANAO Audit Report no 49, 2005-06, *Job Placement and Matching Services*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2006, p. 45.

- monitoring of the quality of the services provided by JPOs against the Job Placement services Code of Practice;
- clarifying resources requirements and expectations for new referral interview services with JNMs;
- improving the quality of vacancy data on JobSearch, the government-owned on-line vacancy listing enterprise;
- following-up the government's intention to review the costs and benefits of maintaining a national vacancy database, such as JobSearch; and
- more transparently reporting overall service performance, especially by reporting Job Placement outcomes in a manner that is comparable over time.

14.13 To effectively manage contractual arrangements, the contracting party needs reliable feedback on the performance of the contractor in meeting its contractual commitments. While the quantitative data available to DEWR contract managers on the placement and vacancy lodgement activity of JPOs was sound in itself, it was limited when it comes to the service requirements of the Job Placement licence. Most significantly, there was no systematic monitoring, through a program of site visits, of the compliance of JPOs with service commitments made in the Job Placement licence and the Code of Practice (which forms part of the licence).

14.14 To enable electronic matching, JNMs are required to conduct new referral interviews with job seekers, part of which involves entering job seekers' 'vocational profiles' onto JobSearch. This has been a time consuming and costly undertaking that had, at the time of the audit, resulted in few job placements. A small proportion of job seekers benefit from electronic matching. Placements attributable to electronic matching accounted for around 1.3 percent of eligible placements in 2004-05. The ANAO concluded that DEWR should assess the resources required by JNMs to deliver the new referral interview services and clarify its expectations in relation to those services. This would assist DEWR to assure itself that the appropriate balance between price, resource requirements, and outcomes has been struck.

14.15 DEWR's quality assurance processes provide a reasonable level of assurance that vacancies on JobSearch meet its minimum content requirements. However, vacancies were found to be frequently duplicated, and dated. At any point in time, around 14 percent of vacancies were duplicated. Over time, the duplication rate was substantially higher, at over 46 percent, which indicates that re-posting of

vacancies on JobSearch was very common. Duplicate vacancies can be misleading to job seekers, and also substantially distort DEWR's reporting of vacancy numbers. Old vacancies are unlikely to result in a placement. While DEWR has advised that it has now taken steps to reduce the rate of duplication of vacancies sourced from the online job boards and to reduce the number of dated vacancies on JobSearch, the ANAO concluded that it also needs to take steps to minimise the incidence of duplication more generally and to take duplication into account in its reporting of vacancy numbers.

14.16 At the time JobSearch was established (1996), the on-line vacancy listing market was immature. As a result, the government accepted that there was a case for JobSearch to be publicly owned and operated. However, the government also anticipated that the on-line vacancy market would mature and considered that public ownership may not be necessary in the long-term. Consequently, the government considered, at that time, that a review should be conducted at a later date of the continued need for DEWR to maintain JobSearch. No such review had occurred at the time of the audit. The ANAO concluded that, in light of the government's original intention and the subsequent maturing of the online vacancy listing market, a review should be conducted of the costs and benefits of maintaining a government owned and operated on-line vacancy listing enterprise, aside from the necessary business functions within JobSearch that support contracted employment service providers.

14.17 Reporting of Job Placement and matching performance was not consistent or transparent. DEWR reported 'record' Job Placement outcomes for:

2003-04 and 2004-05 of 518 350 and 665 868 respectively. In the absence of a substantive evaluation it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the outcomes reported by DEWR for Job Placement and matching services have been affected by exogenous factors such as macro-economic conditions, the state of the labour market, changes in the way job seeker eligibility is determined, or changes in DEWR's capability to capture data on employment outcomes. DEWR has reported 'outcomes' on the basis of a performance indicator that includes placements for which DEWR is not prepared to pay JPOs, such as placements that have resulted from job seekers finding their own employment. In such cases, it is not clear that the JPO has always made a significant contribution to the job seeker finding work. <sup>2</sup>

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2 ANAO Audit Report no. 49, 2005-06, *Job Placement and Matching Services*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2006, p. 18.

14.18 The ANAO reviewed the available evidence and concluded that Job Placement and matching services under the APM were performing at or around the historical levels for previous job matching services in terms of eligible placements and post-assistance outcomes, although they were more costly overall – requiring outlays in 2003–04 and 2004–05 between \$67 million and \$100 million per year more than during the first and second Job Network contracts. The additional outlays reflect the cost of upgrading self-help facilities for job search, such as new touch-screen kiosks, as well as the requirement under the APM that all ‘Fully Job Network Eligible’ job seekers attend new referral interviews to register for Job Network services from the date of their receipt of income support payments. As a result, the cost per eligible placement was around 40 percent higher than historical levels.

### **ANAO recommendations**

14.19 The ANAO made six recommendations aimed at ensuring that DEWR’s management and oversight of Job Placement and matching services is effective. DEWR agreed with most of the recommendations. However, it disagreed with three parts of the recommendations relating to: developing objective indicators for key service commitments; specifying the quality of résumé it expects JNMs to provide to job seekers; and, assessing the resources required to deliver new referral interview services. The ANAO’s recommendations are as follows:

Table 14.1 ANAO recommendations, Audit Report No. 49, 2005-06

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1.	<p>The ANAO recommends that, in order to strengthen assurance about the management of Job Placement services, DEWR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) improves the quality of data relating to contract details, related entity records and employer identity records;</li><li>(b) develops objective indicators and measurable performance standards for the key service commitments in the Job Placement licence and Code of Practice; and</li><li>(c) establishes minimum requirements and targets for monitoring visits.</li></ul> <p><i>DEWR response:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) <i>Agree.</i></li><li>(b) <i>Disagree.</i></li><li>(c) <i>Agree.</i></li></ul>
2.	<p>The ANAO recommends that, in order to strengthen assurance about the management of electronic matching services, DEWR should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) ensure that its contract with JNMs is up-to-date, reflects the importance of résumés as an outcome of new referral interviews, and specifies the quality of the résumés JNMs are expected to complete for job seekers;</li><li>(b) assess the end-to-end resource requirements for JNMs to deliver new referral interview services; and</li><li>(c) monitor and assess the cost of auto-matching operations.</li></ul> <p><i>DEWR response:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) <i>Disagree.</i></li><li>(b) <i>Disagree.</i></li><li>(c) <i>Agree in part.</i></li></ul>
3.	<p>The ANAO recommends that, in light of the government's original intention and the maturing of the on-line employment vacancy listing market, DEWR review the full costs and benefits of maintaining a government owned and operated on-line vacancy listing enterprise.</p> <p><i>DEWR response: Agree.</i></p>
4.	<p>The ANAO recommends that DEWR assess the impact of increasing the number of vacancies on JobSearch on job seeker employment outcomes.</p> <p><i>DEWR response: Agree.</i></p>
5.	<p>The ANAO recommends that, in order to improve client service and ensure accurate reporting, DEWR should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) take steps to minimise the duplication of vacancies on JobSearch from all sources; and</li><li>(b) take duplication into account in reporting the number of vacancies on JobSearch.</li></ul> <p><i>DEWR response:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(a) <i>Agree.</i></li><li>(b) <i>Agree in part.</i></li></ul>

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6. In order to improve client service, increase transparency about the performance of Job Placement and matching services, and provide greater assurance about the efficient use of public funds, DEWR should:
- (a) monitor and report on its performance in achieving job placements in a consistent manner over time;
  - (b) evaluate the impact of the Job Placement Licence Only organisation initiative in increasing job placements; and
  - (c) take site activity into account in reporting aggregate service coverage, and indicate whether a site is active when it is listed on JobSearch.

*DEWR response:*

- (a) Agree.
  - (b) Agree.
  - (c) Agree in part.
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## The Committee's review

- 14.20 The Committee held a public hearing to examine this audit report on Wednesday 29 November 2006. Witnesses representing DEWR and the ANAO appeared at the hearing.
- 14.21 The Committee took evidence on the following issues:
- the complaints mechanism available to Job seekers;
  - site visitations by DEWR contract managers;
  - contracts and payments to JPOs;
  - the requirements of clients in relation to SMS job matching services;
  - the need for the Australian Jobsearch website to be kept in Australian Government ownership; and
  - clarification of some job placement and performance indicators.



## Job Placement Services

### The complaints mechanism

14.22 The Committee was interested in an assurance from DEWR regarding whether complaints from job seekers were being actioned. DEWR assured the Committee that:

...we have a complaints line which has a formal register of complaints however we receive them. Whether it be by phone, by email or by third party reference, they are recorded there and monitored through that register for timely completion or resolution...

14.23 DEWR also alerted the Committee to the complaints handling process stating that initially it is the responsibility of:

....the job seeker to lodge their complaint with the provider in the first instance to try to reach resolution. If they fail to do that then they are certainly entitled to call the DEWR complaints line.... If the department's intervention cannot reach a satisfactory solution to all parties, then the next step is somewhere like the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The job seeker can certainly complain to that office.<sup>3</sup>

14.24 DEWR informed the Committee that the system works as a two-way process, which involves feedback between the complaints line and DEWR contract managers. There is also a follow-up system for complaints in place.

14.25 The Committee was interested in learning about the main complaint which is received by the complaints line. DEWR advised that it is job seekers complaining that JPOs have referred them to a job that they are not suitable for. DEWR qualified this complaint by adding:

...we all know that Jobseekers are obliged to accept that [which] they can be reasonably expected to do.<sup>4</sup>

14.26 DEWR agreed in part with Recommendation 7 of the ANAO's earlier Report number 50 (2004-2005), *DEWR's Oversight of Job Network Services to Job Seekers* by establishing minimum requirements for monitoring complaints handling by JNMs. However, the ANAO found in this report that the same did not apply to ascertaining the

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3 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 6.

4 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 5.

adequacy of complaints handling by JPOs. The ANAO found that there was no data available on the complaints received by JPOs nor were there assurances available that job seekers were receiving the services that were being paid for by DEWR.

## **Recommendation 22**

**The Committee recommends that DEEWR establish a process which determines the adequacy of complaints handling by JPOs. A reporting system should be established to ensure that complaints are handled in an appropriate and timely manner by JPOs and that this information is communicated to DEEWR for assessment purposes.**

### Site visits

14.27 Ensuring that JPOs provide the services which they are contracted to provide is an integral part of the contract management process. DEWR informed the Committee that its contract managers conduct onsite visits to JPOs. Onsite visits are coordinated through the risk management tools provided to contract managers. This allows managers to assess the risks of each provider against specified criteria and thus they are able to determine which sites require a visit and the frequency of such visits. Once a visit has been completed, the risk management tools record the outcome of the visit along with any follow-up action required.<sup>5</sup> DEWR also drew the Committee's attention to:

...the job placement site monitoring visit checklist which our contract managers use. The second [tool] is what we term our owners manual, which is a document that was produced before the ANAO audit. It tries to encapsulate what our expectations as policy formulators are of our state contract managers.<sup>6</sup>

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5 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 2.

6 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 3.

## Contracts and payments to JPOs

- 14.28 The introduction of the APM in 2003 saw the Government give approval for Job Placement services to be introduced. The Government subsequently purchased the services and allowed fixed payments to be made to contracted JPOs for specified services.
- 14.29 The Committee noted that there had been public comments made in relation to the delivery of Job Network services and contractual compliance. It was also noted that the audit report considered:
- ...that DEWR's approach to assessing contractual compliance would be more transparent if all stakeholders were clearly advised of the approach being taken for all contract requirements, and of its evolution over time.<sup>7</sup>
- 14.30 DEWR responded that changes made to the new licence agreements included that providers were to maintain a complaints register and the 'Job Placement monitoring owners manual' was to be used as a tool to clearly communicate expectations of contract managers in terms of adherence to the contract. DEWR stressed that in relation to the 'owners manual':
- ...it is only fair, for that document to be made available to the Job Placement organisations themselves, so that they can see what my expectations of contract managers are in monitoring aspects of the contract.<sup>8</sup>
- 14.31 The Committee was interested in learning about overpayments to JPOs by DEWR or where JPOs overcharged DEWR for services which had not been provided. A question was raised about debt recovery in these instances.
- 14.32 DEWR responded that:
- We certainly attempt to recover any debts that are identified and we have a number of ways of doing that. The most successful is that we withhold the amount owing from the next payment due to the provider. In that way we can guarantee an offset or a recovery. If there is not enough money in the next payment due to be able to do that, we request payment directly from the provider. If they refuse, we

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7 ANAO Audit Report no. 49, 2005-06, *Job Placement and Matching Services*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2006, p. 52.

8 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 4.

take other action including, if necessary, handing it to debt collection agencies.<sup>9</sup>

14.33 DEWR conducts 'programme assurance' projects to gain assurance that services paid for are being delivered. Surveys of job seekers, for example, focus on a job seeker's recollection of services being provided by a JPO which ultimately lead to a job being obtained by the job seeker.

14.34 The audit report raised concerns that in terms of recovery, 5 – 6.5 percent of responses to the programme assurance surveys resulted in a debt (which is money that needs to be recovered from a JPO). DEWR informed the Committee that it did not necessarily agree with this particular finding by the ANAO and that the figure was based on the 'first tier' of DEWR's detection process. The figure, derived from the results of the survey, can be interpreted as where:

...the Jobseeker either erroneously fills in or does not remember or recognise the role that the job placement organisation played. What the department does with that five percent is then do a more targeted investigation by going, in some instances, and speaking to the Jobseeker and saying, 'Are you sure that you did not have interaction with Company X in the course of getting your employment?' I believe that what we see through that and through other reporting analysis that we do is that the true debt rate is not as high as five percent. We think it is probably less than half.<sup>10</sup>

14.35 The Committee was interested in DEWR's response to allegations that contractors were encouraged to overcharge for services performed and that overpayments were 'built-in' to the payment mechanism. The audit report made reference to the fact that when contracts are entered into, JNMs:

... must have considered that any perceived underpayment for vocational profiles is made up for by higher payments in other areas of the contract.<sup>11</sup>

14.36 DEWR said that it did not agree with the accusations, especially those that were made in the media. In relation to the comment by the ANAO, DEWR responded:

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9 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 6.

10 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 6.

11 ANAO Audit Report no. 49, 2005-06, *Job Placement and Matching Services*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2006, p. 77.

The government's policy was that the emphasis was always going to be on paying the substantial amount of money to them once a job was attained. The service fees upfront were meant to be the smaller proportion so that any contractor could not survive on service fees alone and it was there to provide an incentive to getting people jobs... the higher fees under the contract are provided when you get somebody a job, not as the service fees upfront.<sup>12</sup>

## Electronic job matching

14.37 Electronic job matching is a process that relies on the vocational profiles of job seekers to match them with potential vacancies. The aim of electronic job matching is to bring vacancies to the attention of potential job seekers quickly and more efficiently. Methods used to notify job seekers of vacancies include Short Messaging Service (SMS) and email.

14.38 The Committee asked DEWR whether they believed that the needs of clients were being lost in the system in terms of electronic job matching. DEWR refuted the claim saying that a record number of people were being placed into employment, justifying current policy in the area.<sup>13</sup>

14.39 One of the techniques used by DEWR to alert clients to potential matching jobs is by SMS text message. The Committee pointed out the ANAO's finding that the SMS messages sent by DEWR did not comply with the *Spam Act 2003* in that job seekers receiving messages were not provided with an explicit option to unsubscribe from the message. DEWR informed the ANAO that there were processes linked to the SMS facility allowing job seekers to unsubscribe; however, the ANAO found that job seekers were not informed of this. DEWR responded that:

If they inform their Job Network member that they have full-time employment, then part of the Job Network member's wrap-up is to remove them from subscription to those auto-match services.<sup>14</sup>

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12 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 8.

13 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 8.

14 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 8.

**Recommendation 23**

**The Committee recommends that DEEWR expressly informs job seekers of the 'unsubscribe' facility within the Department's SMS job-matching facility to comply more fully with the *Spam Act 2003*.**

- 14.40 The Committee also sought assurances from DEWR that its electronic matching services were value for money. DEWR responded that after consideration of the costs of running the associated servers and the SMS messages themselves that:

We believe that the figure is somewhere between \$100 per placement and \$160 per placement today. That augers well...against the minimal job placement outcome fee we pay for human intervention matching. As we place more and more people, I will divide that infrastructure cost by more and more placements, so it only gets cheaper from this point forward.<sup>15</sup>

- 14.41 The Committee notes with some concern the responses provided by DEWR to Recommendation 2 of the ANAO's report. The recommendation was:

The ANAO recommends that, in order to strengthen assurance about the management of electronic matching services, DEWR should:

- (a) ensure that its contract with JNMs is up-to-date, reflects the importance of résumés as an outcome of new referral interviews, and specifies the quality of the résumés JNMs are expected to complete for job seekers;
- (b) assess the end-to-end resource requirements for JNMs to deliver new referral interview services; and
- (c) monitor and assess the cost of auto-matching operations.<sup>16</sup>

- 14.42 DEWR disagreed with parts (a) and (b) while partially agreeing with part (c). The Committee notes that in relation to part (a), the ANAO commented on the fact the ESC3 (Employment Services Contract 3) does not set a standard as to the quality and further monitoring of

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15 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 8.

16 ANAO Audit Report no. 49, 2005-06, *Job Placement and Matching Services*, Commonwealth of Australia, June 2006, p. 91.

quality of resumes. The ESC3 is the contract under which JNMs engage with DEWR and defines JNMs responsibilities to job seekers.

- 14.43 The Committee also agrees with the ANAO's comment in response to DEWR's response to part (b), that DEWR should develop a fuller appreciation of the costings of delivering such services. Finally, the Committee agrees with the ANAO's comment in relation to part (c) in terms of the performance of the other matching functions in achieving placements.

## Recommendation 24

**The Committee recommends that DEEWR implements Recommendation 2 (b) and (c) of the ANAO's report.**

## JobSearch

- 14.44 Jobsearch (found at [www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au)) is a government-owned, national online vacancy and resume database. The free service provides all Australians with information on job vacancies, career opportunities and government employment services.
- 14.45 The Committee questioned DEWR as to why it believed that Jobsearch was best kept in the hands of the Australian government. DEWR replied that it had commissioned a review of the website and that:

We certainly do not see Australian Job Search – and it never has been this way – as a competitor. It is meant to work with the other job boards, but I think this many years on, it is timely to stop and just review whether the government needs to be in that space going forward.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 3.

**Recommendation 25**

**The Committee recommends that DEWR consider the appropriateness of ongoing government ownership of the JobSearch website and also that the results of its review of the website be reported to the Committee.**

**Reporting Job Placement and matching service outcomes**

14.46 DEWR's employment service outcomes are measured by the securing of vacancies and placing unemployed individuals into those vacancies. One of the performance indicators used by DEWR for this purpose is that of measuring the number of placements achieved annually. In 2003, DEWR changed the figures that it reported from 'eligible placements' to 'total placements', the latter resulting in much higher figures in terms of placements achieved. The Committee noted the ANAO's finding that DEWR did not clearly state this in its 2003-2004 Annual Report, which may have confused observers of these figures. DEWR disputed the claim, stating:

My understanding is that there was one year that it was changed and that in fact every since then, and also previously to that, we have been reporting total placements. That is definitely clearly footnoted in our annual reports and will continue to be.<sup>18</sup>

14.47 Another indicator used by DEWR is the length of time that job seekers remain in a placement. ANAO found that DEWR achieved a 74 percent outcome of job seekers remaining in placements for three months or more against a benchmark of 70 percent. DEWR clarified these figures to show that 72.2 percent of job seekers were staying in placements longer than three months. Figures provided by DEWR to the Committee also point to a steady increase in this factor since 2003-2004.<sup>19</sup>

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18 DEWR, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 November 2006, p. 8.

19 DEWR, Submission no. 3. .



## Committee comment

- 14.48 The Committee overall is satisfied with DEWR's progress in regards to the audit and urges DEWR to implement any remaining recommendations of the ANAO and of the Committee as soon as is practicable.

