

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2017-18 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1.10 Working Age Payments

Question No: SQ17-000490

Topic: Drug Testing

Hansard page: Written

Senator Skye Kakoschke-Moore asked:

Is there a cap on the amount each job seeker can get in treatment funding?
Where is this funding coming from?
How much is it estimated to cost per person?

Answer:

Jobactive providers may use the Employment Fund to pay for treatment costs for job seekers.

- The Employment Fund is an intrinsic part of jobactive that provides a flexible pool of funds. Each provider receives credits which they can use to claim reimbursement for goods and services that genuinely support and assist job seekers to gain the tools, skills and experience they need to get and keep a job.
- The use of the Employment Fund is at the determination of the jobactive provider. The provider assesses whether the assistance requested provides relevant skills and experience. They also need to balance the needs of all of their job seekers. Providers are also required to ensure that the purchases represent value for money and will not bring jobactive or the Australian Government into disrepute.
- Jobactive providers are currently permitted to fund relevant assistance for job seekers from all streams using the Employment Fund, on the basis that addressing such barriers will greatly improve the job seeker's prospects of obtaining work.

There is no maximum cap on the number of hours' treatment that a job seeker can access.

Estimates of per person costs have not been calculated.

The Employment Fund is not intended to replace state funded services, such as methadone programmes, or healthcare funded services, such as those funded by medicare or private health funds.

From 1 January 2018, all job seekers in jobactive will be able to count drug and alcohol treatment towards their Annual Activity Requirement, regardless of whether that treatment was funded through the Employment Fund or by other means. This means that job seekers will have more capacity to participate in treatment and their other requirements may be reduced. Currently these arrangements only apply to job seekers in Stream C of jobactive.