

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2015 - 2016

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-000057

Senator McLucas asked on 11 February 2016 on proof Hansard page 72

Question

Assessment of training needs for Queensland Nickel workers

Senator McLUCAS: Does the department have any understanding of the skill level of that 89 in particular but also more broadly? I have met with a lot of these workers. Some of them are very skilled people. They are a range of ages. But I will come back to what stream B means, because these people do not need CV writing, I can assure you.

Mr Greening: I do not have a detailed assessment of the skill and experience of the 89 or 237 workers. Indications are that, as you were suggesting, many of them are fairly job ready in terms of being tradespeople or having related qualifications. We are also getting some advice that some of them are requiring some assistance to perhaps get some of their experience and qualifications recognised, so we are certainly working with the Queensland state government in that regard. But, yes, as you were suggesting, without having the precise details, our expectation is that many of them should be reasonably job ready.

Senator McLUCAS: Is there a document? I am trying to get an understanding of how we can really get in and help these people, whether it is through retraining for a completely different type of employment—there is some discussion of moving completely out of manufacturing and minerals to something completely different. What sort of analysis has been done about what the department needs to do?

Mr Greening: It is very much a case-by-case circumstance, so it is very difficult for me to generalise about what the department needs to do, but we have staff on the ground, working side by side with colleagues from the Queensland Department of State Development and Centrelink. There is certainly a big effort being made to assess what the individuals needs are and to tailor the responses accordingly.

Senator Cash: I know you are genuine in this line of questioning. It very much is as the official has said. We can generalise and tell you what the general package is, but I think what is so important about this particular package is that, as you said, some of those people are highly skilled. They do not need to learn how to write a resume. What then happens in terms of that highly skilled person is the local person will identify what jobs that person might be able to fill, and then they can tailor a package so that they might be able to take up that particular job. Alternatively, if there is a job there but they do not have a skill, they can ensure that they are upskilled to that job. What is unique about this is that it is very much 'I work with you to ensure that you are able to get into work if it is there.'

Senator McLUCAS: That is the point: if it is there. Do you know what the unemployment rate is in Townsville at the moment?

Senator Cash: It is very high. It is too high. I do not disagree with you.

Senator McLUCAS: I am a bit troubled. We know there are 237 workers in a very vulnerable industry. The total number of workers is nearly 700, and it is precarious. I would have thought that there would have been a little bit more proactivism to do some skill assessment and to find out where the vacancies may or may not be. Has an assessment been done of the retraining needs? Where are the gaps in employment in Townsville?

Ms Leon: That is what the state office is doing very intensively with those workers. We have

got an office in Townsville.

Senator McLUCAS: Okay. That was not made clear. Can I get a better understanding of what is happening?

Ms Leon: We can provide you with more detail on notice if you would like, but it has been quite an active and individually based engagement with those workers.

Answer

To date, retrenched workers from Queensland Nickel have included apprentices, graduates (from engineering and support functions), supervisors, cleaners, laboratory and other technicians, support and administrative staff, tradespeople, maintenance support, process engineers and other professionals.

To assist the workers retrenched from Queensland Nickel, the Queensland State Government announced, on 20 January 2016, the mobilisation of a Rapid Response Team to assist the workers retrenched from Queensland Nickel. The Rapid Response Team works in conjunction with the Department of Employment and Department of Human Services and connects workers with services including:

- assisting with access to financial assistance
- information and support for job seekers
- training and career information
- support for supply chain businesses
- referral to advice on debt and bills
- access to mental health services.

In addition, on 20 January 2016, the Australian Government announced a \$500,000 structural adjustment programme to provide career transitioning advice to Queensland Nickel employees who have lost their jobs.

Under the Queensland Nickel Structural Adjustment Programme (QNSAP), retrenched workers are eligible for immediate access to Stream B assistance through jobactive, the Government's national employment services network. For eligible workers, this will include a nominal amount of \$2,000 credit for use by a jobactive provider for work-related items, post-placement support, professional services, targeted training and licences.

jobactive is designed to meet the needs of job seekers and employers and improve job outcomes. The jobactive system includes initiatives to encourage greater local collaboration between employment service providers, employers and other stakeholders, which provides the framework to more efficiently match job seekers with employment opportunities. The Employment Services Information Line number is 13 62 68 or workers can visit <http://www.jobactive.gov.au/> to find a local jobactive provider.

jobactive providers understands local labour markets and have the flexibility to tailor their services to the assessed needs of the retrenched worker through individual case management. They can provide assistance in identifying transferrable skills and options for retraining, and in doing so connect retrenched workers with the business needs of local employers.

An additional resource available to retrenched Queensland Nickel workers is the What's Next website (<https://whatsnext.employment.gov.au/>), which is an online self-help resource. It provides a range of information on careers, training opportunities, help with résumés and practical tips on finding a new job and includes the following links:

<u>Information and Support</u> (https://whatsnext.employment.gov.au/information-and-support)	Support for retrenched workers, Advice on entitlements, Help with finances, Transitioning to retirement and Looking after Yourself
<u>Pathway to a new career</u> (https://whatsnext.employment.gov.au/pathway-new-career)	Choosing an occupation, Considering apprenticeships and traineeships, Work experience and volunteering, Relocating for work and Starting a small business
<u>Skills Recognition and Training</u> (https://whatsnext.employment.gov.au/skills-recognition-and-training)	Identifying your skills, Formal recognition of skills, Choosing a course and Choosing a training provider
<u>Help to find a job</u> (https://whatsnext.employment.gov.au/help-find-job-2)	Where do I look for work, Improve your cover letter, Improve your résumés and preparing for an interview

Please refer to EMSQ16-000059 for further information in relation to labour market data and analysis.