

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ17-001948

Senator Marshall asked on 30 March 2017 on proof Hansard page 26

Question

Risk Assessments and Safety in Work for the Dole Program

Senator MARSHALL: So it is a no. 'No' would have been just fine, then. What has been changed in how the Work for the Dole program handles risk assessments and safety since this incident?

Ms Milliken: The Work for the Dole activity has quite a substantial risk framework underpinning it already. As I think—

Senator MARSHALL: Should I ask the question again? What has been changed in how the Work for the Dole program handles risk assessments and safety since this incident? What has changed? If there has been no change, just say that.

Ms Leon: We are constantly revisiting the work health and safety framework. We issue guidance to providers all the time.

Senator MARSHALL: So what has changed?

Ms Leon: I would have to take that on notice. There would have been myriad changes since then. I would have to take on notice what they have all been. What was the date of that incident?

Ms Milliken: Late last year—approximately October.

Ms Leon: It was October last year, so in the nearly six months since there would potentially have been numerous changes. I would have to take on notice what they have all been.

Ms Milliken: I can specifically say—

Senator MARSHALL: What has changed in how the Work for the Dole program handles risk assessments and safety since this incident? You will take that on notice and you will give me a list, will you, of all those things that are constantly changing?

Ms Milliken: I can say that the department issued a reminder to all Jobactive providers in December reminding them of the need to be aware of asbestos and to take that into account in risk assessments and in the management of activities and that occurred specifically after the identification of the nonfriable asbestos at the Torrensville site.

Senator MARSHALL: And not to take down warning signs.

Senator Cash: To be fair, I know exactly what you are asking for. The department are providing some information but not all of it. We will get the department to look at exactly what changes have been made and ensure that the committee is provided with that. Would you like to see all changes made, not just as a result of this incident?

Senator MARSHALL: Yes. If you could point to any of that were made as a result of this incident, that would be very good.

Answer

The requirements for managing work health and safety in Work for the Dole are set out in the *jobactive Deed 2015 – 2020*, the *jobactive Deed 2015 – 2020 Work for the Dole Coordinator* and the Work for the Dole Guideline.

The Deeds require that jobactive providers and Work for the Dole Coordinators (Coordinators) ensure there is a safe system of work in place at Work for the Dole Activities.

In addition, the Work for the Dole Guideline has always specified that any work health and safety issues and any other concerns be identified in the risk assessments (Place) and that a place must not be considered suitable if concerns could not be mitigated to create a safe working environment or be suitably managed.

The department has an ongoing process to ensure that all work health and safety requirements are met on all Work for the Dole activities, including compliance with jurisdictional work health and safety laws. The department updated the Work for the Dole Guideline (Guideline) in 2016 to reinforce to jobactive providers and Coordinators their obligations for work health and safety in Work for the Dole.

Specifically, the department has amended the Guideline to emphasise that jobactive providers and Coordinators must identify, assess and record all work health and safety issues and any other concerns in the risk assessment (Place). Examples of hazards and risks that may cause harm have been expanded to include: electrical equipment; warehousing, traffic management and driving (traffic and pedestrian interactions to be marked appropriately with safe clearances and walkways, vehicles and mobile plant to be registered and well maintained); lifting and manual handling; and emergency preparedness. The department has also further emphasised in the Guideline that, where an activity involves people from vulnerable cohorts, the host organisation is to provide continuous supervision throughout the activity.

The Guideline has also been strengthened to place clear responsibility on the lead provider to monitor, review and, where necessary, update the risk assessment (Place) for any changes to the activity and to immediately notify other jobactive providers with participants in an activity of any changes to enable them to determine if the activity is still suitable for the participant. This built on the previous requirement that lead providers update the risk assessment (Place) when notified of any changes to an activity.

jobactive providers and Coordinators have been reminded in letters from the department that they must use Competent Persons to fulfil work health and safety obligations under the Deeds and Guideline, including conducting risk assessments. (A Competent Person is a person who has acquired through training, qualification or experience the knowledge and skills to carry out risk assessments and other specific work health and safety tasks.)

The incident at the Work for the Dole activity in Adelaide occurred in late October 2016. Since this time,

- the Work for the Dole Guideline has been updated to confirm that the Work for the Dole Coordinator or jobactive Provider must ensure that the risk assessment (Place) is implemented by the Host Organisation in full including any identified work health and safety controls.
- the department issued a specific work health and safety reminder on 19 December 2016 to jobactive providers and Coordinators about managing the presence of asbestos as well as on working outside and sun exposure and construction white card training.
- the department included in a letter to jobactive providers on 31 January 2017, a reminder about the requirements of risk assessments and the importance of appropriate work health and safety measures to manage risks to jobseekers.