

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING – 2 and 3 JUNE 2003

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS PORTFOLIO

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Outcome: 1 An effectively functioning labour market

Output Group: 1.2 Labour market programme management and delivery

Outputs: 1.2.2 Employment Services

Question Number: W133-04

Question:

Senator George Campbell asked in writing:

The Victorian Government submission also argues that many marginalised or disadvantaged job seekers are excluded from obtaining Commonwealth intensive assistance because of its exclusive focus on certain long term unemployment in receipt of unemployment benefits or who fit the current profile of those assessed as being at high risk of becoming long term unemployment. The committee has been told that those excluded include migrants in Australia less than two years, some young job seekers aged 15-24 years, retrenched job seekers in receipt of redundancy payments but struggling to find work and unemployed people aged 45 years or more and whose income and assets make them ineligible for full unemployment benefits.

- (a) Is DEWR aware of these general criticisms, what is your response?
- (b) Has consideration been given to extending intensive assistance to a larger group of those disadvantaged in the labour market? If so, what groups does the department believe are in need of further assistance? What assistance are you advising they be offered?
- (c) What was the rationale for limiting intensive assistance to the current target group? Please provide copies of any research or other advice used in reaching this conclusion.
- (d) Has any research or analysis been undertaken to determine whether extension of intensive assistance to some of those currently ineligible would reduce their risk of experiencing long-term unemployment? If so, who conducted the research and what are the conclusions of that research?

Answer:

- (a) In the context of the new Active Participation Model arrangements for Job Network services which commenced on 1 July 2003, the Department's response is:

Migrants in Australia less than two years:

Provided they meet eligibility requirements, humanitarian migrants, including those in Australia less than 2 years, are eligible for the full range of Job Network services from

registration with Centrelink. In line with other job seekers not in receipt of Government income support, migrants subject to the Newly Arrived Residents Waiting Period are eligible for Job Network's Job Search Support services (commenced 1 July 2003). These migrants may be eligible for the full range of Job Network services at the completion of their waiting period.

Retrenched job seekers in receipt of redundancy payments:

In recognition of the need for early intervention, all retrenched workers are eligible for early access to Job Network's Job Search Support service (commenced 1 July 2003) on notification of their redundancy, regardless of the likely size of redundancy payments.

Provided they meet eligibility requirements retrenched workers are eligible for the full range of Job Network services from registration with Centrelink. It is only those retrenched workers with redundancy payouts and assets sufficiently large to exclude them from receipt of Government income support that do not gain access to Job Network's more substantial Intensive Support services.

Young job seekers aged 15-24 years:

All young people aged 15 to 20 years who are not in full-time education or employment are eligible for the full range of Job Network services irrespective of whether they are in receipt of Government income support. From July 2004, young job seekers in receipt of income support will be provided with Intensive Support job search training immediately on registration with Centrelink. Young unemployed people not in receipt of income support will be able to volunteer for early access to this programme.

The Government has put in place a number of other more specialised programmes to provide assistance to young job seekers (and adult job seekers) with severe or multiple personal barriers to employment. These programmes include the Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) programme and the Personal Support Programme (PSP). Both JPET and PSP have strong links to Job Network.

Unemployed people aged 45 years or more and whose income and assets make them ineligible for full unemployment benefits:

Adult job seekers not in receipt government income support have access to Job Network's Job Search Support services. Any person, including those aged 45 years or more, in receipt of full or partial unemployment payments is eligible for the full range of Job Network services. Job seekers aged 50 years and more (as well as Indigenous job seekers) can volunteer for early entry to Intensive Support job search training and can undertake needed accredited training which can be paid for by their Job Network member using the Training Account.

Mature age job seekers aged 50 years and older (not in receipt of income support) who have been away from work for 2 years or more are eligible for the Transition to Work (TTW) programme.

- (b) Any consideration of altering eligibility for intensive services would be a Government policy matter.

- (c) It is Government policy to target the most substantial employment assistance to the most disadvantaged in the labour market, consistent with the objectives of getting all job seekers into sustainable jobs and reducing dependency on income support.

Support for careful targeting of intensive employment assistance also comes from overseas and Australian evaluations, including the evaluation of *Working Nation* and Job Network.

- (d) No.