

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and Agencies

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 31 October, 2006

Question: HS41

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: Department of Human Services - Job Capacity Assessment

Hansard Page/Written Question on Notice: Written

SENATOR WONG asked on 31/10/06:

HS 41

- 1) Since 1 July 2006, how many occasions has the Job Capacity Account been accessed by Job Capacity assessors? What is the total amount of expenditure to date under the Job Capacity Account?
- 2) Can DEWR/Department of Human Services please provide a full list of the approved interventions that can be purchased under the Job Capacity Account? Of services purchased using the Job Capacity Account to date, what is the number and proportion of each of the approved interventions that has been purchased? What is the average expenditure for each of the approved interventions?
- 3) Why is the Job Capacity Account only available for people who have been referred to Job Network? What services are available for people who are referred to other employment services?
- 4) Can you explain what happens after a JCA is completed, if other issues are raised, for example abuse that led to a depressive illness that had not been addressed, how are the job seekers on-going needs for support met? How does the Department address duty of care issues that may arise with JCA's?
- 5) Do the JCA guidelines require that the service provider contact and discuss with the jobseekers treating physician or caseworker or support worker, whether the specific intervention proposed would be useful, beneficial, or even harmful?
- 6) Can you explain where the idea of this type of intervention came from and what studies indicate that it is a useful type of intervention, and what evidence that you have from overseas about the success of this approach to getting people quickly back into work?

Answer:

- 1) From 1 July 2006 to 11 December 2006, there were 1,841 recommended referrals to Job Capacity Account. These referrals are less than those initially estimated, reflecting slower than expected take up. Referrals have substantially picked up in December. As at 11 December 2006, total expenditure on Job Capacity Account was \$74,683.84. The low expenditure amount is due to Job Capacity Assessors only being able to claim for reimbursement of expenses after the Job Capacity Account service has been provided.

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2) There are six Job Capacity Account interventions which are currently approved by DHS:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy;
- Behaviour Management and Modification Interventions;
- Pain Management Programmes;
- Counselling Programmes, such as motivational interviewing;
- Social Casework Support and Intervention; and
- Work Conditioning.

There have been 131 claims for reimbursement of Job Capacity Account to 11 December 2006. **Due to the reimbursement model for Job Capacity Account expenditure there is a lag between assessment reports recommending a Job Capacity Account intervention and a claim being lodged and paid.**

The table below shows Job Capacity Account recommendations and claims by intervention type to 11 December 2006. System changes to include social casework and work conditioning in the assessment report are yet to occur so data on assessment reports recommending these items is not currently captured but is captured when request for reimbursement is lodged. In the interim, Job Capacity Assessors select one of the available four menu items most similar to social casework (counselling) or work conditioning (pain management).

JCA Account Item	Number of assessment reports recommending JCAc	Number of claims for reimbursement of JCAc (*see note below)	Proportion of total claims for reimbursement of JCAc	Average Expenditure
1. cognitive behaviour therapy	674	34	26.0%	\$640.52
2. behaviour management and modification interventions	101	1	0.8%	\$825.00
3. pain management programmes	144	5	3.8%	\$426.62
4. counselling programmes	922	87	66.4%	\$443.27
5. social case work support and intervention	As mentioned, not available.	4	3.0%	\$632.50
6. Work Conditioning	As mentioned, not available.	Nil to date	Nil to date	Nil to date
TOTAL	1,841	131	100.0%	\$502.50

* Because of timing factors, including invoicing after services are delivered, numbers shown in this column will typically be less than those shown in the first.

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3) The Job Capacity Account is only available to clients who are connected or about to be connected with Job Network services. The short sharp intervention is intended to assist a person to participate in Job Network services. Job Capacity Account is targeted for clients who do not require greater than three months of support/intervention.

Longer term support is provided by other services such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VRS), Disability Employment Network (DEN), Job Placement, Education and Training (JPET) and, Personal Support Programme (PSP). These programmes offer various levels of support for the client ranging from rehabilitation support (VRS), on-the-job support (DEN) or intensive case management (JPET/PSP).

4) The JCA process requires assessors to identify a client's barriers to participation and recommend interventions that may help to overcome those barriers. Assessors must identify barriers that are currently addressed, and barriers that need to be addressed in order of priority. Assessors are instructed to talk with the client about potential referral options and to inform the client about the benefits of following through with any such referral. Assessors are expected to connect clients with the most appropriate provider of Australian Government employment services wherever possible. They can also connect clients to services such as local mental health teams or family counsellors. Assessors are required to record personal matters sensitively and appropriately in the assessment report.

DHS has provided clear direction that assessors must exercise a duty of care. DHS has also provided guidelines to assessors regarding clients in crisis. Each person who occupies the position of a Job Capacity Assessor is delegated under the Social Security Administration Act Section 208(1) (a) to release information in the public interest if a situation requires them to do so. If a client expresses that they may harm themselves or others (including the assessor) and poses a severe and imminent risk, an assessor is empowered to act accordingly and contact the relevant authorities such as; child protection services, mental health crisis teams or the police to redress the situation. Assessors also follow any local Crisis Plan as instructed by their employer. DHS requires an incident report from the JCA provider as soon as possible when an assessor releases information in the public interest or where a crisis is encountered by an assessor.

5) The JCA service guidelines require that assessors undertake whatever liaison is necessary to ensure that all relevant medical information is taken into account by the assessor, and specifically note that assessors may need to contact treating doctors or other health professionals to discuss the suitability of certain interventions.

6) Items included on the Job Capacity Account intervention menu were derived from the most frequently occurring short-term interventions previously recommended by Work Capacity Assessors for DSP claimants, results from DEWR's 2005 Early Intervention and Engagement Pilot, and consultation with stakeholders such as employment service providers, peak disability advocacy groups and welfare groups.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 10 hours at an estimated cost of \$538.