

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2013-2014**

Outcome 3 - Employment

DEEWR Question No. EW0065_14

Senator McKenzie provided in writing.

Question

RJCP - operation, strategies and outcomes

Outcome 3 – Employment Services Arrangements in Remote Australia – the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program. According to the Portfolio Budget Statement EEWR,(pg 71) the new Remote Jobs and Communities plan will operate in 59 regions throughout Australia and will receive \$1.5 billion over five years commencing on 1 July 2013.

1. How is this program different to The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans? According to the Department's website the existing jobs plans draw upon existing strategic plans in each region, including the local Regional Development Australia regional plan.
2. How does the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program connect with these existing programs?
3. Will the existing jobs plans continue to operate?
4. How are these programs evaluated?
5. What criteria do you use to assess the success of these programs?
6. What has been achieved under the existing jobs plans? What measures do you use?
7. How many additional jobs have been created through the existing Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan outside of Regional Development Australia and associated coordinators?
8. What industry assistance has been sought to provide employment opportunities in regional areas?
9. How is the Priority Employment Area strategy which employs Local Employment Coordinators different to the above jobs plans?
10. How much money is allocated to the Flexible Funding Pool to support the work of Priority Employment Areas?
11. Can you list those areas?
12. What resources are provided to support this work?

Answer

1. How is this program different to The Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plans? According to the Department's website the existing jobs plans draw upon existing strategic plans in each region, including the local Regional Development Australia regional plan.

The 5-year \$1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) provides a streamlined and flexible approach to employment and participation services for people in remote Australia.

The 3-year \$19.1 million Regional Education, Skills and Jobs (RESJ) initiative is for 34 RESJ Coordinators in regional communities across Australia who coordinate and connect education, skills and jobs activities to improve outcomes for regional communities.

2. How does the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program connect with these existing programs?

One of the major components for the RJCP is a Community Action Plan (CAP) which will be developed for each RJCP region. RJCP providers will connect with existing programs by ensuring that the employment functions of existing government--approved plans are drawn upon when developing CAPs.

3. Will the existing jobs plans continue to operate?

The RESJ initiative is funded for 3 years, from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2014. The existing job plans will continue to operate during that period.

4. How are these programs evaluated?

RJCP and RESJ program evaluations will be undertaken by the Department.

5. What criteria do you use to assess the success of these programs?

The programs are evaluated directly against the objectives of the programs by defining program logic, and developing relevant evaluation questions and strategies to answer these questions.

6. What has been achieved under the existing jobs plans? What measures do you use?

In consultation with community stakeholders, RESJ Coordinators have developed RESJ Plans for the 46 non-metropolitan Regional Development Australia regions. The plans were published on the Department's website in September 2012.

Examples of the activities and achievements of RESJ Coordinators that demonstrate their effectiveness have been provided in response to DEEWR Questions on Notice, including EW0535_13, EW0616_12, EW0617_12, EW0618_12, EW0620_12, EW0621_12, EW0130_14, EW0131_14, EW0132_14 and EW0133_14.

7. How many additional jobs have been created through the existing Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan outside of Regional Development Australia and associated coordinators?

RESJ Coordinators are not employment service providers nor do they create jobs. The primary purpose of RESJ is outlined in the response to question 6.

8. What industry assistance has been sought to provide employment opportunities in regional areas?

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations does not seek industry assistance to provide employment opportunities in regional areas. Information on the Regional Innovation and Investment Funds can be provided by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. For more information see www.innovation.gov.au.

9. How is the Priority Employment Area strategy which employs Local Employment Coordinators different to the above jobs plans?

Local Employment Coordinators (LECs) identify and deliver employment, skills and workforce development outcomes over the short to medium term in priority employment areas with a primary focus on labour market strategies.

RESJ Coordinators identify opportunities and deliver outcomes in Regional Development Australia regions with a primary focus on schooling, education and vocational education and training over the longer term. RESJ Coordinators will also help to address employment issues in areas where there is no LEC.

10. How much money is allocated to the Flexible Funding Pool to support the work of Priority Employment Areas?

For the 2013–14 measure, \$4.2 million has been provided to assist Local Employment Coordinators drive local responses to local labour market problems and boost participation in these areas.

11. Can you list those areas?

The list of the Priority Employment Areas and Local Employment Coordinators is publicly available on the Department's website at: www.deewr.gov.au/list-local-employment-coordinators.

12. What resources are provided to support this work?

In addition to dedicated support from the Department, Local Employment Coordinators have access to the Flexible Funding Pool to develop projects and activities within their Priority Employment Area that do not duplicate existing grant activity or program funding.