



28 September 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Senate Inquiry into the Appropriateness and Effectiveness of the Objectives, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Jobactive

SUBMISSION

Introduction

The Edmund Rice Centre WA (ERCWA) is a not-for profit agency established in 1998 to provide services to assist and support Humanitarian Entrants, Migrants and Aboriginal children and youth. We provide a wide range of community education programs for adults from the culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities, as well as sports, leadership, and arts programs for children and youth from low socio-economic backgrounds. Our main aim is to empower those who lack confidence or networks to access mainstream services, and respect for cultural diversity is fundamental to our mission.

Summary

This submission addresses the following terms of reference:

- The nature and underlying causes of joblessness in Australia;
- The extent of consultation and engagement with unemployed workers in the design and implementation of jobactive;
- The ability of jobactive to provide long-term solutions to joblessness, and to achieve social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of unemployed workers;
- The fairness of mutual obligation requirements, the jobactive Job Plan negotiation process and expenditure of the Employment Fund;
- The adequacy and appropriateness of activities undertaken within the Annual Activity Requirement phase, including Work for the Dole, training, studying and volunteering programs and their effect on employment outcomes;
- The impacts and consequences of the job seeker compliance framework; and



- The appeals process, including the lack of an employment services ombudsman.

This submission was prepared collectively, and in consultation with the employees, volunteers, and management of the ERCWA, who regularly work with clients. The (non-exhaustive) case studies in this submission illustrate some of our clients' and case workers' experiences with the Jobactive services providers. The names of the persons involved are omitted in the submission, and additional details can be provided in a due course and in accordance with the law and confidentiality obligations, outside of the public submission.

An overall observation is that the current Jobactive system is inadequate and counterproductive, and improvements can and should be made. The submission provides recommendation and ideas how to improve the system.

Submission Particulars

1. The nature and underlying causes of joblessness in Australia

(a) Migration

A high volume of skilled migration in Australia each year (appr. 140,000). This applies both to the temporary skilled migration, as well as to the permanent skilled migration (General Skilled Migration Programme, the GSM). One of the aspects of the GSM is that permanent residence is granted before a skilled migrant enters Australia. As a result, when a skilled migrant enters Australia and subsequently gains employment, it is statistically being considered as an "Australian" person (not a migrant) has been employed. Therefore, statistically it might appear that Australians (citizens and the long-term permanent residents) are being employed in large numbers, whereas in fact the citizens and long-term resident might keep being unemployed, and the workplaces go to the newly arrived migrants (who also often are citizens of the other countries). The perception that Australia does not have enough skilled workers to fulfill the vacancies is also highly questionable.

A better approach would be to correctly interpret employment statistic and recognise employment of "permanent residents" who have just entered Australia (and are citizens of other countries) as distinct from employment of "Australians" (those long-term permanent residents and Australian citizens), with consequential policy considerations prioritising employment of Australian local skilled workforce.

(b) The red tape issues and self-regulating professions

Continuing from the previous point, the process of recognition (professional licensing) of the overseas skilled workers differs from the process of professional licensing of the local professionals, with the process for the local professionals, specifically at the market entry point, being more onerous than that for the foreign professionals. For example, in legal profession, an Australian graduate who has been admitted to practice, after completion of qualifications and after satisfying additional requirements for the admission, cannot enter the legal professionals market until the person works as a restricted practitioner in one of the existing law firms. Only for a very limited number of practitioners the restricted legal practice places are available in the law firms; the majority, however, will never have an opportunity to



overcome this obstacle. The existing legal market players might not be willing to allow the new legal services market entrants to actually enter the Australian market, using the restricted practice requirement as a mechanism to limit the professional services market entry. Same applies to other self-regulated professions in Australia.

The self-regulated professions, run by the existing professional services market players should be de-regulated to allow a free market entry and a healthy market competition. The "presumed" issues of incompetence of the new professionals, underlying the "restricted practice" requirement should be dealt when (and if) the issues actually arise, rather than "fighting" the hypothetical issues. A successful example is the Migration Agent profession, where there is no the restricted practice requirement. Another successful example would be the entry level requirements in the legal profession before introduction of the restricted practice. Most of the strongest legal firms, as well as the legal professional bodies in Australia were established (and are still being run) by the practitioners who were not restricted from practicing after their admission requirements were satisfied.

(c) Underskilling, De-skilling

Relevant to the above, and as a result of highly skilled Australians, holding tertiary professional qualifications, but being unable to enter their respective industries due to the red tape, market entry-preventive and anti-competitive self-regulation mechanisms, and the high concentration of skilled workforce, are being forced to undertake low-skilled jobs. This has a profound effect on another social group – the low skilled workers. Many of the clients the ERCWA is working with are the low skilled refugees and humanitarian migrants looking for jobs that don't require qualifications or English language and high literacy skills (e.g., factory and manual labor). It appears, however, that they cannot "compete" with highly skilled workers being employed in the low skilled positions. Not only it leads to creating a longer-term unemployment for the low skilled workers but the situation also leads to the de-skilling highly educated people and to an inefficient use of the human talent. The des-skilling is only one part of the problem, however. The low skilled employment impacts of the work history of the highly qualified workers, with a potential long-term impact leaving such workers with no prospect of being employed in their professional capacity. They might be seen, after doing the low-skilled jobs for a period of time, as not being connected to the industry, and as having lost professional competency.

It has to be noted, that, from the practical experiences with the Jobactive providers, it is common that the Jobactive providers explicitly force qualified jobseekers to apply for and accept low-skilled positions. The Jobactive providers, as commercial entities, are being motivated by a system of financial rewards which they receive for placing a jobseeker in a paid job, no matter how insecure, unsuitable, or low paid. The reward for placing a jobseeker into a workplace, according to the information obtained from a Jobactive provider, is \$100,000 for 1 person. The Jobactive providers, as government subcontractors, are expected by the public to promote the public sector values rather than their own commercial interests, in serving the public and being funded by the taxpayers.

(d) Obstacles created by the current Jobactive system to small business development and self-employment.

As continuation from the previous point, the qualified jobseekers have higher capacity to



develop small businesses, which could be a more effective strategy from the societal point of view, than forcing them to undertake low skilled jobs. The low skilled jobs or otherwise unsuitable jobs that the highly qualified jobseekers are forced to "grab" on the first available opportunity can also interfere with a more strategic approach to the career development that might require longer-term planning and a step-by-step development.

The low- and medium-skilled jobseekers too can do better pursuing self-employment or small business opportunities. The current Jobactive system does not support this view. On numerous occasions various representatives and administrators of the "system" and owners of the policy behind it (Centrelink, Jobactive agencies, etc.) have expressed a negative view to the effect that it is inappropriate to use Centrelink payments to allow a person to develop a commercial business. There also appears to be a lack of understanding by the Jobactive providers (specifically on the consultants' level, but not exclusively) of what constitutes a small business income.

Another reason why the small business development is not being supported by the Jobactive services providers is that while a small business produces a part-time income, the situation does not commercially benefit the Jobactive providers as commercial entities (they are not being "rewarded"). The Jobactive providers appear not to have any interest in the societal benefits of the small business (unless it is a full-time job equivalent). The "requirement" to place every unemployed person in a full-time employment is not realistically achievable (since no other country have done it historically). Disrupting the development of the small business or from the part-time employment (by requiring to apply for the full-time jobs) is counterproductive.

This theme is a recurring theme in our clients' and staff's feedback in relation to the requirement to prioritise an unachievable, and often plainly counterproductive full-time employment search or other prescribed full-time activities, to the detriment of the realistically achievable, as well as of the actual part-time income. This applies to both the clients of the centre and more generally, and can be illustrated by two examples:

First, a person was able to obtain their first part-time paid position in Australia with a very small local business. The position currently does not bring the person's income to the level that would make the person ineligible for a Centrelink payment, or to reduce their Centrelink payment. The person, however, is able to develop their language and computer skills, and to develop an employment record that can benefit the person in the future when applying for jobs. The position is within an ethnic diaspora enterprise, and allows the person to utilise their (other than English) language skills. The position provides the person with other benefits of employment, both tangible and intangible (building of self-esteem, social skills, connections, business knowledge, etc.).

The second scenario is where a person leverages on their existing skills and resources and operates as a sole trader, providing services that don't require good English proficiency. For example, many of the clients at ERCWA have skills such as sewing, cooking, artistic skills, etc. These skills can earn them a part-time income making clothes and cooking for representatives of their own ethnic diaspora in Australia. While the level of income is insufficient to bring the person off the Centrelink payment, in the absence of a realistically achievable prospect of obtaining a full-time job, the benefits (both personal



and societal) of participation in social life and of business development or extra income opportunities are high. This is particularly so, considering the "alternative", which the current system imposes: spending the majority of time on completing job search reports or prescribed full-time activities (often inadequate).

The current regulatory problem is that a part-time income, particularly at a low level, is not considered as satisfactory in the context of the currently existing system. The system, however, does not take into consideration the following factors:

- that in a private enterprise, when a person operates as a sole trader, there are marginal profits for an extended period of time, and that to get to the level of profit (which is an individual's income for a sole trader) equivalent to a minimum full-time income may not be possible, without allowing a person to focus on the development of their business and re-investing of the income back into their business; and
- that pursuing this sort of private enterprise positively contributes to the development of English skills, social skills, business skills, confidence, psychological well-being, and networking opportunities of the entrepreneurs, as well as setting a good example within the ethnic communities and family units.

2. The methods by which Australians gain employment and their relative effectiveness

No comment

3. The extent of consultation and engagement with unemployed workers in the design and implementation of jobactive

It is rather apparent that there is no consultation or engagement with the unemployed (or underemployed) Australians in the process.

4. The ability of jobactive to provide long-term solutions to joblessness, and to achieve social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of unemployed workers

There is a very limited ability to provide long term solutions when the Jobactive staff and caseworkers are not qualified or trained to interact successfully with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds or those suffering trauma and mental health issues. Clients are often confused about what they are expected to do when they attend appointments and why they should attend appointments in the first place.

- The feedback we have been given by our clients (through interpreters, or directly), as well as our staff experiences in communicating with Jobactive providers on the clients' behalf, clearly indicate that the qualification level of the Jobactive staff is overwhelmingly inadequate for the role and the purpose they are to fulfill.
- Many of our clients have complex personal issues that require the support of qualified social workers. The clients that attempt to develop their own business require an



understanding on the part of the Jobactive staff of the business income structure and reporting patterns.

- The staff in the Jobactive agencies changes and rotates quickly. This leads to the inconsistent advice and an exceptionally long time for staff members to get an understanding of the client's issues and needs. Often, to achieve such understanding (even of a simple matter) by a single staff member requires involvement of various levels of management within an agency, multiple consultations. All is paid by the taxpayers' money, including the services of the under-qualified, yet over-vested with power, staff. The liquidity of the Jobactive workforce negates all the effort and resources spent when almost each new appointment with the client is managed by different staff members.
- The Jobactive services require a client-centered culture and time should be allowed for the relationship-building between a consultant and a job seeker to establish trust and rapport in order to achieve the best outcome. It is particularly important for people who are disadvantaged due to their mental health, illiteracy or limited English. Unfortunately, Jobactive has the reputation for having a "tick and flick" attitude to jobseekers. We have many clients who have no English but attend their monthly appointments where they are talked at in a language they don't understand, sign agreements they can't read and given job diaries that they can't complete. They are all made very aware, however, that if they don't attend the appointment their Centrelink benefits will be cut. Their already low self-esteem and self-worth is further diminished because they quickly become aware that they are very unlikely to find a full-time job.
- Culture competency training must be mandatory for the Jobactive providers, particularly in areas with a high population of Indigenous people and migrants.

5. The fairness of mutual obligation requirements, the jobactive Job Plan negotiation process and expenditure of the Employment Fund

People who do not speak English and people who speak English but cannot read and write must complete job diaries. We have been informed on several occasions from several job active providers that this is compulsory policy and if not completed fully and in English they will have their payments cut. When reminded that the person cannot read or write the advice given is to get someone "to do it for you". This indicates that the process is not legitimate because filling the diaries by a third person is misrepresentation.

When clients attend appointments, there have been many cases when interpreters have not been booked and the clients have been asked to bring a friend to interpret.

Feedback from the ERCWA staff members (quote):

"Asking clients to navigate a complicated 'Australian' way of applying for a job i.e. online, addressing key selection criteria without any training or intensive workshops to educate people.

[Jobactive] sending very long text messages in English with all the jobs available, even if they are not suited to the skill set of the person they have sent it to. This creates a follow through effect of causing stress to the client who cannot read it and puts pressure on services (time and resources) when we need to book an interpreter to explain what the



message says, this is often a complete waste of time as the client is unsuitable for the jobs anyway.

Asking clients to agree to the job plan when it is often not achievable – i.e. our clients are inclined to say ‘yes I understand’ and ‘yes I will do it’ due to fear for saying ‘no’ to someone in authority, or feeling incompetent for not understanding or culturally it is hard to say ‘I do not think I can do this’. Etc.

Signing everyone up to the Morley [Jobactive] office without asking what office is most convenient. Again, our clientele doesn't not have the confidence/understanding/knowledge that they can ask to change offices. Accessing Morley on [public transport] from suburbs like Koondoola and Girrawheen puts a lot of pressure on clients who need to look after children (drop off/collect from school), attend English class and meet their job plans. It is also very obviously not the closest office. "

Another feedback from an ERCWA staff member:

Prematurely imposing job seeker obligations on people with low English leads to the consequences that are clearly not intended and are highly counterproductive. Thus, recently we have seen a noticeable rise in the numbers of clients who access ERCWA services seeking support with understanding their ‘Job Plans’ and completing job diaries because they can’t read, write or speak English. While having those obligations imposed on them by the current system, the clients have to rely on friends, family, and other, often random, assistance in completing their job search diaries. Not only an obligation to comply with requirements which are well beyond the people’s capacity is an ineffective strategy in getting such people employed, the strategy is a waste of the taxpayers’ money.

The disadvantage of illiteracy has even stronger impact on women. Many of the (predominately) women who participate in ERCWA Language for Living in Australia program (approximately 180 participants per week), are over 35, have never had any formal schooling and spoke no English when they arrived in Australia. A high percentage of these women lived for many years in refugee camps in Africa and the Thai-Burma border. These people might have well developed skills, developed through their life experiences, include high levels of initiative, strength of character and keeping their families safe, fed and hydrated. The clients with low English, however, cannot have those skills communicated to the Jobactive providers.

6. The adequacy and appropriateness of activities undertaken within the Annual Activity Requirement phase, including Work for the Dole, training, studying and volunteering programs and their effect on employment outcomes

The quality and appropriateness of prescribed (or approved) activities being imposed by the existing system is highly questionable, not only for the less "sophisticated" clients, but for more job-ready clients too.

The following examples illustrate the point:

For example, we are aware of the situation where a university-qualified 45-year old person from a non-English speaking background, who, after completing an Australian tertiary



qualification, was trying to establish their small business. Instead, the person was forced by the Job services Provider to attend a government-funded course which teaches people to use office equipment, full-time. This activity was inappropriate because the person already had highly developed skills with the office equipment (as well as business management skills), and the full-time course activities have prevented the person from attending their small business development needs. The same person was later required to attend a two-week full-time CV writing course, developed for people with low literacy and job capacity skills. With the same Jobactive provider, the person was prescribed to attend two sessions with representatives of a cleaning company which was recruiting within the Jobactive agency. The inadequacy of the prescribed activities was specifically evident considering that the qualifications held by the person were tertiary legal qualifications. The activities also did not have a capacity to increase the person's income and interfered with the person's effort to organise their own small business. Such an approach by the Jobactive provider created instability for the person, based on un-predictability of the requirements imposed on the person, leading to giving up on developing a professional services business.

A 25 year old South Sudanese refugee who had only attended school for two years came to consult with an ERCWA case worker because a Job Active provider had organised for him to attend a course and he didn't understand anything more than the address of the training provider and the date he had to attend. Although his spoken English was acceptable, he never learned to read or write in English (or any other language). He struggled to be able to write any more than his name, address and date of birth. The ERCWA case worker was surprised to see that he had been enrolled in a Certificate III in Warehousing. This was clearly beyond his capabilities and when the ERCWA caseworker spoke to the Jobactive staff, the jobactive responded that they don't have anything else available for the client. This had a particularly adverse effect on this man who had been very excited about getting the opportunity for some training. He became visibly distressed and berated himself for being useless and unemployable.

The case below illustrates inappropriate level of service by the Jobactive provide, inadequate to the client. The case also illustrates psychological consequences resulting from the inappropriate service.

A 64 year old client who can't speak any English and is illiterate in her own language is told to attend an Employment Agency or to have her payment cut off, if she does not attend the appointment. She found it impossible to look for a job as she uses public transport and can't communicate in English. The client has a severe congenital deformity of her face which affects her speech, making it difficult for her to be understood, even in her own language. During the appointment nobody attended her and no interpreter was provided on site or by phone. She says that she cries after each appointment with the Jobactive provider, feeling humiliated and fears her payment being stopped.



This case illustrates how the Jobactive providers are unable to meet the needs of a jobseeker:

A young South Sudanese man in this mid 20s arrived in WA from Kenya when he was 18 years old, after being tracked by Red Cross on behalf of his mother, who arrived in Australia as a humanitarian entrant 5 years earlier. For eight years he had been kept as a slave in appalling conditions in the South Sudan, had never been to school, and had limited opportunity to develop his verbal communication skills.

He attended a post-compulsory High School Intensive English Centre in WA for two years where he developed good English language knowledge but very limited literacy skills. Due to the trauma and conditions he had suffered, he has developed an intellectual disability and a severe speech impediment.

His application for the disability support pension, however, was denied (because he can physically look after himself), and he remains on New Start Allowance. He is a strong healthy young man who plays sport and volunteers with several organisations, but although he has applied and given his CV to over 100 people and businesses he remains unemployed.

Two years ago his Jobactive provider arranged for him to do a Certificate III in Warehousing. It is interesting that this is a different person from the one described earlier in this submission who was sent to do the same course, while not having capacity to learn.

7. The impacts and consequences of the job seeker compliance framework

The jobseeker compliance framework is not being appropriately managed.

The ERCWA generalist caseworker's report and a case describing personal experience of another jobseeker below illustrate the point:

A 25 years old single lady, refugee from Myanmar approached the caseworker as her Centrelink payment was suspended due to a missed Jobactive appointment. With a help of an interpreter in the ERCWA, it was established that the client arrived 6 months ago in Australia, and never missed any appointment. When the client went to Centrelink to re-install her payment, the Centrelink referred the client back to the Jobactive agency. The agency explicitly refused to talk to the client, and told her to go back to Centrelink. The assisting ERCWA caseworker eventually insisted that the Jobactive employee checks their record. It was established that the client actually attended the appointment, but the service provider failed to update the client's data in the system.

No natural justice was afforded to the Client in way of informing the client that the Jobactive provider has any concerns with the client, before reporting the client's alleged failure to attend an appointment with the Jobactive. No natural justice was afforded to the client by Centrelink either, and the client wasn't warned that her payment is going to be cut, after



the adverse (and incorrect) information was received by Centrelink from the Jobactive provider. Neither offered an opportunity to the client to comment.

A 48 years old single lady, undertaking full-time study, as well as complying with a full range of the mutual obligation activities, attended her regular Jobactive provider and found out that she has a new employment consultant. The new consultant decided to update her Job Plan. Three appointments later (each approximately 5 minutes long), without any warning from the Jobactive provider or from Centrelink, the person received an SMS on her Centrelink payment day to the effect that her payment has been cut-off for non-compliance. The Centrelink payment day was also the rent payment day, and the person defaulted on her rent. After more than of an hour waiting on the phone, the person was able to talk with Centrelink to clarify the issue. The Centrelink officer explained that the person did not report her job contacts. The person has, in fact completed and recorded (as usual) the employment contacts, well exceeding her prescribed obligation. The person had overlooked in the updated Job Plan that she is required to also report her search. The job seeker accepted that she has overlooked the requirement and informed the Centrelink officer that she has completed and recorded the job search and can provide it. Centrelink supported the Jobactive provider's decision to report the failure, despite the fact that the Jobactive provider has never indicated to the jobseeker that the jobseeker is non-compliant (it was reasonable in the circumstances to believe that the new consultant has overlooked it too). The payment at that occasion was re-installed and the job seeker received from Centrelink a penalty requiring to do twice as much job search and report all the search (original and additional) to Centrelink directly, before a certain date two months away. Since the required number of searches has been already completed (twice exceeding requirements), a short time after the job seeker has uploaded a full record to the Centrelink document upload facility. There was no further concerns expressed by Centrelink or the Jobactive provider, during the entire period. At the end of the period (two months after the first incident) the payment of the job seeker has been cut-off, without a warning. It took another few hours to resolve it with Centrelink. It appears that Centrelink didn't consider/ see/ read the earlier uploaded documents, and that the Jobactive provider did not communicate to the jobseeker any warnings again. The payment was as a result re-installed, but the jobseeker again defaulted on rent. A written complaint was lodged on this occasion by the job seeker.

Practically, the situations described above could be avoided by ensuring that the Jobactive provider has appropriate protocols in place requiring: (a) to cross-check their records (e.g., visitors registration form on reception with the computer record); and (b) to afford the client natural justice, namely an opportunity to comment, either before reporting the client's presumed fault to Centrelink, or by Centrelink alerting the client, before cancellation of the client's payment.

Considering that the recipients of the New Start Allowance are people living below the poverty line (which in practical terms means that they are unable to cover costs of everyday living, accommodation, and basic needs), any irregularity in the Centrelink payments will, inevitably, result in severe hardship. One of the most obvious examples of such hardship is client defaulting on their rent and being evicted.



8. The appeals process, including the lack of an employment services ombudsman

The internal and external appeal and complaints processes are necessary to ensure the transparent and democratic nature of the process. The current process is arbitrary and violates the principles of the human rights and democracy in Australia. The current process doesn't afford procedural fairness to the client, and avoids checks and balances that the Common Law system requires from the government agencies (and their contractors) in handling their obligations to the society.

It is almost incomprehensible that in a country like Australia we observe, for a number of years, a process that disregards principles fundamental to our political system and omits the mechanism of control of the government action.

We support establishment of the employment services ombudsman, as well as clear and transparent process, which can reinstall trust in government agencies in the community. We strongly recommend that issues, as briefly outlined below are addressed.

(a) Lack of Transparency

We observed a profound and persistent lack of transparency with regard to:

- Mutual obligations requirements;
- Job Plan change requirements;
- Purpose of the appointments;
- Fairness of the requirements;
- Accuracy of the imposed requirements;
- Assistance, financial and non-financial available from the Jobactive;
- Obligations of the Jobactive providers to the jobseekers and the scope of their assistance;
- Actual (not necessarily imposed or represented by the Jobactive provider) obligations and rights of the jobseeker;
- Contractual obligations under the Job Plan (or Participation Agreement) on the part of the Jobactive providers;
- Contractual rights of the jobseekers under the Job Plan (or Participation Agreement);
- Responsibility for the consequences of the changes in the Job Plan imposed by the Jobactive providers, often unreasonable, unexplained, and illogical;
- Rights of the jobseekers to challenge or appeal the Job Plan or the fact of the changes in the Job Plan (the Participation Agreement);
- Responsibility for financial consequences affecting the jobseekers, for incompetent or negligent conduct of the Jobactive providers;
- Internal (to the Jobactive providers) and external complaints process;

The case below illustrates inconsistency of "mutual obligations" on part of the Jobactive provider. Unilateral power of Jobactive providers to change Job Plans, unpredictably, and to dispose of their own undertakings (effectively – to breach the contract), leads to instability in client's personal circumstances and an inability to plan for the future.

A newly arrived young single man born in a French speaking country (Congo) with ten years of education and attending English classes attends appointment with an



employment agency. After being in Australia for 4 months, he is asked to look actively for job; yet no assistance is provided to do so.

Client wanted to enrol for a course in age care at TAFE but has no financial support to do so. The Employment agency offered to pay half of the fees and after the client enrolled, the agency reduced the assistance to ¼ of the required fees. Consequently, the client had to withdraw from the course.

The client asked for financial support to do a driving course as most of the job opportunities require driving license, but the Jobactive provider refused to assist.

Below is a feedback provided by a structural division of the ERCWA:

"It is unclear to clients and service providers such as ourselves what assistance actually is provided to the clients.

When clients attend appointments [with Jobactive], there have been many cases when interpreters have not been booked and the clients have been asked to bring a friend to interpret.

Clients are often confused about what they are expected to do when they attend appointments and why they should attend appointments in the first place.

A Newstart Payment for one specific client has been stopped despite his attempt to do the right thing. He did not understand clearly what was said to him because an interpreter was not used. He assumed by the [Jobactive] worker's body language that everything was sorted. He needs to apply for the payment again".

(b) Lack of Accountability

Currently, it appears that there is a complete lack of accountability on the part of the Jobactive providers for their acts, omissions, or representations

The case below illustrates severe hardship created by the active provider for their acts.

"A newly arrived young single woman, refugee from Burma with no English is cut off of income support as she missed an appointment with her Job Services Provider. Client was assisted by an ERCWA caseworker; she reassures that she never missed any appointment. After a long process going back and forward to Centrelink and employment agency, the issue was clarified by the agency, confirming that there was a power cut and the computer system was off line at the time of client's appointment. The agency failed to update the client's file resulting in payment delay of 5 days which led to a breach in her tenancy lease due to non-payment of rent. Client needed additional assistance to deal with all issues that should have been prevented".



9. The funding of jobactive, including the adequacy of the 'outcome driven' funding model, and the adequacy of this funding model to address barriers to employment

Comment from ERCWA employee:

"In general the Jobactive lets down humanitarian entrants by creating a system that causes clients to lose confidence, feel unworthy and disempowered. A system to support humanitarian entrants [to] find employment should be put in place, be culturally responsive, [and able] to increase self-esteem and confidence, recognising skills from their home country, providing intensive training to upskill and to strengthen their capacity to find employment and become financially independent. Job Active has not successfully supported [even] one of my clients to secure employment. They have all found work through community links".

Return address and contact details

Should you have any questions, please contact Christina Ward (the Deputy Director) at:

Yours sincerely,

Christina Ward

Deputy Director
Edmund Rice Centre WA