

Senate Standing Committees on Finance and Public Administration

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Bill 2021

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Date of hearing: 23 September 2021

Outcome: Employment and Workforce

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ21-000123

Senator Lidia Thorpe on 23 September 2021, Proof Hansard page 30

Job opportunities

Question

Senator THORPE: What about the jobs? In the employment and skills area, what is available for people in these areas? Well, we don't even know the areas, so we just have to pretend that it is somewhere that no-one has been consulted about. Maybe you people know where these sites are. But where are the jobs? Are there jobs?

Ms Jensen: In terms of jobs, we could check with the National Skills Commission. They provide a lot of rich information on job opportunities in mainstream employment areas. I would need to check because I am not quite sure of the depth of their intelligence on the remote regions. But we could take that on notice and, by all means, send it back to you with the type of data and support that is available through the National Skills Commission for those communities.

In terms of employment programs that are my area of responsibility, my employment group is regarding mainstream employment areas and not remote areas covered by the CDP.

However, other parts of DESE do have some responsibilities regarding some of the vocational education and training and schooling interfaces. I could take that on notice. It is not my area, but I am happy to come back to the committee with information on that.

Answer

Significant support exists for skills development, including in remote regions. This includes:

- The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program provides language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (LLND) assessment and training to eligible job seekers, with the aim of improving their ability to participate in further training or the workforce. The SEE program is available across Australia and job seekers are referred by Services Australia and employment service providers, including Community Development Program providers.
- The Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers Program aims to support older Australians by providing targeted support to help them stay in or get into the workforce. Services include targeted advice and guidance, as well as referral to additional support as required. The program is delivered nationally, with service regions initially limited due to the requirements of face-to-face servicing. In response to COVID 19, from April 2020 service delivery moved online, using ICT methods instead of face-to-face delivery. This has increased the ability to service rural and remote areas. Location data of participants is not reported and specific information of program uptake in rural and remote areas is not available.
- The Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) wage subsidy supports businesses and Group Training Organisations (GTOs) who engage a new or recommencing apprentices or trainees between 5 October 2020 and 31 March 2022.

Employers can claim up to 50 per cent of an eligible apprentice's wages, up to \$7,000 per quarter, for a 12 month period from the date of commencement.

- Businesses in regional and remote areas have been accessing the BAC successfully and represent around 30 per cent of total BAC claims paid.
 - As at 23 September 2021, the government has paid \$240 million in BAC wage subsidies to 15,751 employers in regional and remote areas, supporting 34,392 apprentices and trainees.
- The Supporting Apprentices and Trainees (SAT) wage subsidy was an economic stimulus measure to support businesses, and their apprentices and trainees, affected by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eligible employers could apply for a wage subsidy of 50 per cent of the eligible apprentice or trainee's wages.
 - Small businesses were able to submit claims covering wages paid from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021.
 - Medium-sized businesses were able to submit claims covering wages paid from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021.
 - The subsidy was also available to any employer who re-engaged an eligible apprentice that was displaced by an eligible small or medium sized business.
 - As at 23 September 2021, over \$1.909 billion in wage subsidies assisted over 74,900 businesses who employ over 152,700 apprentices and trainees.
 - As at 23 September 2021, in regional and remote areas, over \$673 million in SAT wage subsidies have been paid to over 29,000 businesses supporting over 55,000 apprentices and trainees. This represents around 35.3 per cent of total SAT wage subsidy.
- For young people preparing to leave school, or who have recently completed their schooling, the National Careers Institute (NCI) has ensured personalised support is available through the School Leavers Information Kit (SLIK) and the School Leavers Information Service (SLIS) which provides tailored education, training and employment guidance by phone, text or email. Where needed, callers to the service can book in for a 45 minute personalised careers guidance session with a qualified career practitioner, free of charge. The SLIK, available at yourcareer.gov.au, includes information for vulnerable cohorts such as:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
 - people with disability and/or special education needs; and
 - rural, regional or remote school leavers.
- In August 2021, the NCI commenced delivery of an Enhanced Support for School Leavers (ESSL) pilot career guidance program in the Northern Territory, with 21 schools in urban areas (Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek) invited to participate. The pilot aims to deliver targeted career support and guidance in schools and the Department has worked with the Northern Territory Department of Education. The program is being tailored to meet individual school needs, as well as considering cultural appropriateness and sensitivities with the high Aboriginal population.