

Senate Select Committee on Job Security

Australian Unemployed Workers' Union

Public Hearing Melbourne

20 April 2021

Answer to question on notice

At the 20 April job security inquiry hearing, Senator Ben Small requested that we provide names of job agencies who have breached the rules. Our response is:

Every day the AUWU receives reports about job agencies wrongfully penalising, suspending and completely cutting off people from payments every day. We do not collect the name of the job agency in every case, and we will not disclose the name of job agencies our members have reported to us without their individual permission. It is a matter of protocol for us to refer people who raise complaints with us to the DESE National Customer Service Line so that the department is aware of job agencies who are not following the rules. Income support recipients do not receive any information about what action is taken regarding their complaint.

I have sought and received permission from two of our members to disclose the names of job agencies that have wrongly cut their payment specifically for the purpose of responding to this question on notice. One member has provided a detailed account of their job agency's failures – this document is attached. The job agency referred to is APM Hurstville. The document we tabled during our appearance at the hearing refers to Employment Plus Melton, which is run by the Salvation Army Australia.

To demonstrate the scale of the problem I refer the committee to a 2019 [Guardian report](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/08/more-than-120000-people-whose-welfare-was-suspended-were-not-at-fault-data-shows) based on government data that showed in FY2019 more than 120,000 people, or about 25% of the total affected by payment suspensions, had their payment wrongfully suspended. This was due to job agency errors and failures to apply the rules correctly, particularly rules regarding 'reasonable excuses'. An example of a reasonable excuse is being unable to attend a scheduled job agency appointment because of a work commitment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/08/more-than-120000-people-whose-welfare-was-suspended-were-not-at-fault-data-shows>