



EXPERIENCES OF NEWSTART RECIPIENTS FOR SENATE COMMITTEE

Submission #1

Name:

Email:

Submission:

In October 2013 an employee of _____ submitted a “participation report” to Centrelink that had my Newstart allowance suspended. The official explanation was that I had missed an appointment.

I have always attended every appointment when able to do so. At no point have I wilfully disregarded my obligations under my employment pathway plan.

For every appointment I have had with _____ I have received an email notification, but in this instance I did not.

On the same day that the “participation report” was lodged with Centrelink, I was sent an email by _____ that offered a \$50 cash deposit in my bank account if I would sign off on a document that misrepresented some part time work that I had done.

The email called the \$50 an “incentive payment”.

What had happened was I had five weeks work at a local radio station. The work was temporary, but the station called up a few months later with a couple more days work.

wanted me to sign a document stating I had 13 weeks “continuous” work. I had spoken with their “outcome manager” and stated I wasn't sure that I agreed with the document that they wished me to sign. They later sent the document via email.

It is my belief that the “incentive” as they put it was to suspend my Newstart allowance so I would sign their paperwork so that they could claim a better result and more money from the government.

What's the point of giving someone an “incentive payment” of \$50 when you have had their Newstart Allowance suspended? How does that make sense?

I obtained documents from the Department of Employment under freedom of information and made some interesting discoveries.

The “participation report” clearly states that I was sent an email notification – I can prove that this didn't happen.

It also states that the employee had called my mobile and left a message – I can also prove that this didn't happen too.

I had to call Centrelink on my lunch break on one of the days I was working and try and have the decision reversed. Thankfully after a long wait on hold, I spoke to a Centrelink customer service representative who reinstated my Newstart after I used the simple logic of why are they having my Newstart suspended and offering me \$50 at the same time?

I have suffered from depression and anxiety that is well documented in several job capacity assessments that have been conducted by Centrelink. This was exacerbated by having my Newstart suspended and the unnecessary stress it caused.

After the suspension my depression and anxiety reached the point where my doctor placed me on a mental health care plan. I ended up in therapy with a psychologist and Centrelink had to exempt me for six months from job seeking efforts until I recovered.

job is to assist job seekers to gain employment, not manipulate and bully them to the point where they can't even function.

In my case, were either being incredibly dodgy or they were incompetent and negligent and failed in their duty of care. I still get angry and depressed at what happened to me. I didn't deserve this. I'm desperate to get sustainable employment and are only concerned with their bottom line.

I have no doubt that changing the laws to make it easier for and other job active staff to have job seekers Newstart cancelled will be used to unfairly coerce and bully people. This is already happening and changing the law will be condoning this shameful behavior

Submission #2



Name:

Email:

Submission:

At the time of writing my own my submission I had already been "blocked" from payments for one month. I was attending appointments. I was trying to raise my concerns and negotiate a plan which I could feel comfortable with and which would consider my circumstances. Instead I was denied service

from the employment service provider because, their records say, I was refusing to participate. I had been trying to negotiate a plan that would be suitable for my circumstances. I do not believe I was being treated honestly or with consideration for my circumstances. My concerns and complaints were not being addressed and I was basically being bullied and coerced to agree to sign the paperwork.

At this time I had already been cut off from payments on two previous occasions which were said to be the result of "mistakes".

I made a number of attempts to speak with a manager at centrelink and I was told variously, that the manager was not in, the manager was busy, and also, no one gets to speak with a manager. I was being given the run around. I am written into the system simply as "does not wish to participate".

By the time of writing my submission I had also been blocked from doing my own reporting for some months, due to a "glitch in the system" I was told. When I last went in to centrelink to report I was served by someone I had not previously seen in that office. He was rude and confrontational. After many incidents of such blatant rudeness, having not received payment for a month and being treated like I was somehow doing something wrong I walked out. I was very distressed and tired of being bullied.

Soon after this I received a letter which referred back to the date which I was originally "blocked" but informed me that I had failed to report and therefore I was cut off. This makes it appear on record as though I had failed to report a whole month before I was bullied one time too many and does not acknowledge that I had attended appointments and made attempts to meet with a manager in that month without payment.

Such treatment of people has not been exclusive to myself. It would appear that a very large number of people on unemployment benefits are being treated in such a way that will increase and add to their distress and this is a practice which does not go onto the record. No one is being held accountable and those unemployed people who are distressed are then being referred to the mental health services. Basically it appears that the bullying is partly beneficial to growing the market for the mental health services. Just one of the concerns I have tried to raise.

A number of serious problems regarding the programs as implemented overseas for some time now are well documented. Additionally, figures which claim to measure the success of the programs do not include the numbers of unemployed who have been cut off welfare. This flawed system claims success by ignoring the real lives pushed to further struggle and

suffering.

I am informed that I am entitled to newstart allowance but I have been treated otherwise. I am informed that I am entitled to some assistance in my search for work but I have not received that except one time when I literally begged for a referral to a job interview, and that was short term work.

One of the difficulties for me is that the denial of service, bullying, etc only increased for myself apparently because I raised concerns about privacy breaches and profiteering. I am saddened that it has come to this, not only for myself but for so many others.

Thank You

Submission #3



Name:

Email:

Submission:

Centrelink Appeal Case 2015

Appeal No.

Thursday 27th. Aug 2015

I discovered that Work for the Dole is been held on Mondays and Tuesdays. So i asked if i could do my Work for the Dole on those days, which he said i could. I asked him what do i have to do to arrange that, he told me to just turn up on those days. In order to keep within my contract obligations i still came in on the Friday for that week, and start the Monday and Tuesdays Work for the Dole next week.

Monday 31st. Aug 2015

I met the two ladies there and introduced myself, i told them that i am from Thursday and Fridays Work for the Dole and have just transferred over. That is when they informed me that i cannot do that because of the limited number of vacancies they have available. They said i can remain there on that day and Tuesday, but i would have to go back to Thursday and Fridays.

Alleged offence Friday 11th. Sep 2015

During Work for the Dole i was on You Tube trying to line up some music to listen to while working. I'm not very experienced on that site and i was having a little trouble establishing something to listen to.

walked past, glanced at my monitor and said i was watching music videos. Before i could explain to him what i was actually doing he'd already walked off. Nothing more was said. I was not at any time given any warning that my unemployment payments would be jeopardised.

Thursday 17th. Sep 2015

Got an email from Centrelink telling me i have a letter. Because i often get letters from Centrelink with information that i already know, i thought i would read it the next day when my unemployment form was due.

Friday 18th. Sep 2015

I logged on to my Centrelink account to lodge my unemployment form as usual, and it was then that i discovered that i cannot lodge my form and that my unemployment payments have been suspended, and to call the Participation Solutions Team on 1300 306 325 that day.

Called 9.38am. Duration 1 hour 12 minutes

Spoke to Receipt No.

I rang the number and spoke to She told me my payments have been suspended because i didn't turn up for Work for the Dole on the 3rd. and 4th. September, and she asked me why.

I explained to her that i attended Work for the Dole on the 31st. Aug and 1st. Sep instead. She asked me who said i can do that, i told her She then asked me about the incident on the 11th. Sep.

See above paragraph titled Alleged offence Friday 11th. Sep 2015.

She put me on hold after i explained everything to her, then when she came back she told me that my payments are reinstated, but she is going to penalise me \$54.88c for the incident on the 11th. September. So immediately i told her that i'm going to appeal against that decision. She said i have that right, i said i know. She

gave me an appeal number. She then made an appointment for me at my Jobactive centre for the following Monday. I assume it was to discuss the incident further and to state my appeal. I asked her for a receipt number for that call, which she obliged.

Monday 21st. Sep 2015

Went into Direct Recruitment and spoke to [redacted] we spoke about the incident on the 11th Sep. After i explained the situation to her she said my penalty will be withdrawn and i will get my full payment.

Money was taken out 5 Oct 2015.

But then she went on and said that i've watched You Tube there in the office as well. I always get to the Jobactive centre early, and as a result there is often at least a few minutes wait. So to make the best use of my time i get on their computers and use it to look for work while i'm waiting. Now that [redacted] claims that i watch You Tube videos, i can no longer use their computers for job search in order to protect myself. Another thing she said was that the \$54.88c penalty is not a big deal.

Monday 2nd. Nov 2015

Ring up [redacted] and ask her to ring Centrelink and tell them it has already been resolved and to cancel it. If not, ask for the Complaint in writing in relation to the act.

She said she can't do that because Centrelink won't speak to her about it, and she refused to give me the complaint in writing in relation to the act.

Rang Centrelink in relation to the letter i got Dated 20th Oct 2015. Asked to speak with [redacted] i got [redacted] instead and he said that [redacted] is not in for the rest of the week. I asked him if he could reverse the decision based on the fact that the report is inaccurate. He said no, and to just contact the AAT and make an appeal with them.

Wednesday 4th Nov 2015

On another matter, i wrote to Centrelink complaining about not been allowed to look for work on the internet during my Work for the Doll activity. After receiving a letter on 2/11/15, dated 26/10/15, i rang Centrelink (Customer Relations Unit) and had a conversation about my Complaint letter. She told me that the information i was told was incorrect, and that i am allowed to look for work on the internet during my Work for the Doll activity.

Monday 9th Nov 2015

Rang up the Department of Employment on 1800 805 260 and spoke to Receipt No.

I explained to that the report for Inappropriate Behaviour was inaccurate. She told me there wasn't anything she could do for me, and advised me to just take it to the next level, meaning the AAT.

Rang the Administrative Appeals Tribunal on 1800 228 333 to launch an appeal. Spoke to , a Case Manager. She said i will get an acknowledgement letter next week. The Hearing will be in the next few weeks.

Notes

Ombudsman.gov.au or Call 1300 362 072

Melbourne office 9613 6222

Let them know i have been treated unfairly by Job Active & Department of Employment. Launch an official complaint

Getting advise from Australian Unemployment Workers Union. Person i'm talking to is Owen Bennett, Melbourne Branch Secretary.

Melbourne

Social Security Rights Victoria

Contact times: Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 12:30pm

Address: PO Box 1221, North Fitzroy, VIC, 3068

Telephone: (03) 9481 0355.

Website: www.ssrv.org.au

Victoria Legal Aid

Contact times: Monday to Friday, 8:45 am – 5:15 pm

Address: Office is Melbourne CBD. Telephone: 1300 792 387

Website: www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Time sheet for the 24th & 25th Sept is missing.

Owen

contact@unemployedworkersunion.com

Department of Employment

National Customer Line

Secretery

Phone: 1300 488 064

Submission #4



Australian
Unemployed
Workers'
Union

Name:

Email:

Submission: Timeline of Disasters as a Single Parent on Parenting Payment when My Child Turned Six

- The day after my daughter turned six, I received what could be described as a dole form telling me I was to report to Centrelink every 12 weeks. This came as a shock as I wasn't warned that this would happen, even though I was aware that "obligations" start when your child turns six.
- I had already been registered voluntarily with my job network for around a year – in that time I was studying, held two part time positions and went through a family court case (self represented because I couldn't afford a lawyer and legal aid deemed it not urgent enough!)
- Not long after receiving the dole form, I received another letter informing me that my parenting payment had been cut off. There was no explanation as to why.
- After hours on hold with Centrelink I spoke with someone who explained the payments had been cut off because my employment pathway plan had not been updated with the word "compulsory" in it.
- I was not informed that I was required to complete a new employment pathway plan by either Centrelink or the job network.
- The Centrelink customer service officer then reinstated my payments and I attended my monthly appointment with the job network some days later and had a new employment pathway plan updated.
- The following month I was unable to attend my job network meeting because I was ill in bed with the flu. I called them to let them know and I was threatened with being cut off parenting payment and that I was required to get a medical certificate. I thought this unnecessarily harsh, and not even a normal work place would demand a medical certificate for one day and would not threaten you for losing your job simply for calling in sick.
- The time came to lodge this dole form. I filled it out and walked the 35 minutes to Centrelink, mindful that I needed to get home and complete a job application that had to be in by 5pm and that I wouldn't be able to complete it when my daughter was home from school at 3:15pm. I waited standing in a queue for 30 mins. Once at the front of the queue I was told that they couldn't accept my form and to sit down, someone needs to see you. I asked why and explained that I needed to get home and complete a job application. They failed to explain why and were very rude and ordered me to sit! I began getting a bit agitated and was eventually told I was to be taken through the steps to apply for online services. I explained I was already registered for on-line services and asked again if they could please take my form. They refused. After about an hour I left.
- The three hours I wasted with Centrelink meant that I was unable to lodge my job application by the 5pm deadline.
- I was worried they wouldn't process the form and I would have my payments cut off again. So the next day I called Centrelink (waited 1 hour on hold) and asked them if they had and they hadn't. I was told that I could lodge online and as I was already registered for on line services so I could just go ahead and do that and also for all other 12 weekly forms. So I did just that, no problem.

- My next monthly appointment with the job network came around and this time I had to cancel the appointment because my child was off school sick – she is often sick and I believe this to be due to our damp and cramped housing situation.
- In the weeks following I landed what would have been the perfect job opportunity to springboard me back into the land of plenty. Unfortunately, due to lack of child care options and constant illness of my child I lost this opportunity and was devastated and felt helpless, frustrated and under immense pressure.
- The following appointment with the job network came up and I rang them the day before the appointment to explain I had an appointment to take my child to an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist and that I may not be able to make it and that I would call and let them know if I was able to drop my child at school. Unfortunately she was still ill and I was unable to drop her back at school, so I called the job network people and let them know.
- The Job network provider tried to reschedule the appointment and couldn't because "the system was down". He and I agreed I would call him first thing Monday to reschedule the appointment. I did that and the appointment was for the next day.
- On that Monday I was required to submit my 2nd "dole" form. I attempted to do that but because I had earned some money as a contractor, the system was unable to process it.
- I called Centrelink and was on hold twice being cut off once, totalling 85 minutes. When I finally spoke to a customer service officer and before I had begun to tell her of the trouble I was having submitting the "dole" form, she mentioned I had been cut off parenting payment again! She then went on to tell me off and say I was not attending appointments and that I would need to provide documentation as to why. *She also mentioned that I was now to report to the job network and Centrelink fortnightly, which I understand is the same sort of requirements as a single person on the dole.* (I never received a letter telling me that this was the case).
- I told her that I was in constant contact with job service provider and they knew what was going on. Unfortunately it appears "that on the system" this communication is not recorded and it looks from their perspective that I am simply not turning up, which is not the case.
- I went to the job network appointment on the Tuesday and was told I was to have a stream service review and this should have been done some time ago as apparently I was "commenced" in June. This sounded very strange to me, despite not knowing what it means. In June, I was a voluntary client within the job Network, I was also studying at the time and going through a family court case.
- The job network provider also mentioned I was now required to participate in "Work For The Dole" and wrote up a new Employment Pathway Plan, to which I refused to sign, because I have been doing everything humanly possible to get a job, had recently lost a job due to constant illness of my child and that I couldn't understand why I was required to do this when I have only been compulsory with them for 6 months.
- He made an appointment for me to go back and see them two weeks later.
- It looks to me that I am on the wrong place on the continuum because I had joined the job network voluntarily and so I went to Centrelink to try and get them to lay off with the hassling

and rectify this problem, especially considering my recent job loss, my daughters consistent illnesses and the plethora of bureaucratic bungles not of my doing.

- After waiting in the queue at reception for 30 minutes, and then waiting for a further 30 minutes I was seen to by someone at Centrelink who also appeared to be unhelpful – granted I was getting a bit agitated and frustrated at this point, so I asked to speak with the manager.
 - The first thing she mentioned was that I had an appointment with the Job Network provider for the following morning at 9:30am. This came as a surprise to me as I had only just seen them and hadn't been told of this. Aside from the fact there is no way I could attend the appointment due to school drop off and a Dr's appointment for myself, I was dismayed that yet again communication had broken down and that if I hadn't of attended the appointment that I didn't know about, my payments would have been cut yet again.
 - The manager at Centrelink also confirmed that I was to be put on work for the dole, required to report fortnightly and actually attend the job network facility twice a week. I kept trying to explain that I think that this is unfair and that there has been multiple stuff ups and that I think I am placed wrongly on their continuum and that I am a parent and that this needs to be taken into account.
 - Eventually they agreed to look into the matter and made an appointment for me for a "Jobs Capacity Assessment", two weeks later.
 - I then went back to the job network provider to find out about and cancel the mysterious 9:30am appointment for the following day. I was told the appointment would be cancelled.
 - But guess what?! It wasn't!!!! And it was only due to one staff member there who has been a single parent that took the time to think of me, even though I am not her client, to check. She called me at 8:30am to let me know.
 - Two weeks later I was again cut off parenting payment due to not 'reporting' online. This reporting requirement was news to me as I hadn't been told I was to report!
 - That to me was the last straw - following all of this harassment, the recent loss of my job because I had to care for my daughter who has been constantly ill, the increasing destabilisation of our housing situation (both landlords/neighbours are terminally ill and are on deaths doorstep), I'm feeling depressed and worried about our future.
- I sought a medical certificate for three months to exempt me from this harassment so I can attempt to sort out our imminent housing crisis and mentally regroup.

Submission #5



Name:

address:

Email:

Submission:

In September 2015, I was transferred from ORS group to _____ in Frankston without my knowledge. This was done under the pretext of the 2 year rule, even though for Stream C clients it is actually a maximum 3 years. This was the first of many mistakes made by Employment Service Providers which I have had to pay for.

_____ then booked me in for an appointment without informing me. I was sent a letter informing me my Newstart Allowance had been “impacted” as a result. I have been informed this means my newstart has been suspended and I will not receive the money I had lost in back pay after I attend a reconnection appointment.

I then tried to transfer back to ORS group to make up for this mistake.

However, to this date, _____ refuse to process my transfer request form. I have failed to receive my Newstart payments as a result of the ongoing incompetency of Employment Service Providers.

Submission #6



Name:

Address:

Email:

Submission:

I attended an appointment with my Employment Service Provider informing that I would not be able to attend my next appointment because I had paid employment on that day. My Employment Service Provider (in Greensborough) informed that that would be an acceptable excuse.

When I did not attend that appointment as I was I at work, I got a letter in the mail a few days later informing me that I had been suspended.for not attending my appointment with my Employment Service Provider even though I had made it clear that I could not attend because of paid work.

Submission #7



Name:

email:

phone:

Provider:

Submission:

In September I was transferred from the single parent payment to Newstart as my child turned 8. I attended an appointment with my Employment Service Provider who informed me that I would have to do Work for the Dole. After getting calling the Australian Unemployed Workers Union national hotline service, I was informed that a Newstart recipient cannot be forced onto Work for the Dole until they have been receiving Newstart for more than 6 months. By trying to push me onto Work for the Dole before I was eligible, my Employment Service Provider did not carry out its obligations.

Submission #0



Name:

email:

Address:

Phone:

Submission:

Recently, my Seek account started sending out resumes without my permission. I contacted the SEek security team and they recommended I contact the police which I did. At my next appointment with my Employment service Provider I discovered that my job agent had taken over my seek account and sent I applications without my permission. I was furious as many of the job applications they sent out were very underdone and had not tailored the resume to suit the position.

Submission #9



Name:

Address:

Phone:

Submission:

My name is [redacted] I am sick and tired of complaining and getting lied to by [redacted] and their Managers from Narre Warren South office. I have for the last approximately 8 months asked [redacted] to for fill their very existence as a job network by repeatedly asking them to reverse market me for interviews and put me foward for interviews for jobs I can realistically do.

To date [redacted] have not put me foward for 1 interview and say they have reversed marketed me but I don't belive them. I have found that being with [redacted] job provider has been a waste of my time and they have lied to me on many occasions. Other jobseekers that I have seen leave comments about [redacted] seem to be the same as mine which makes me feel even more worse as it shows that [redacted] do not live up to their Service Delivery Guarantee and help me get a interview and a Job. [redacted] wont even fund me petrol money so I can drive around to employers myself and look for jobs in areas that public transportation is in excess able.

[redacted] has failed me.

I am in crisis due to lack of assistance in finding me work. My car that I use to get me around to look for work has broken down and it is in service with my mechanic and is going to cost me \$356. I wont pay for my car repairs which I really need as I only recive \$526 a fortnight and I pay \$456 a month in rent. I called the Centerlink Urgent payment line this morning and spoke to a man named and told him about lack of help in this matter. Im facing possible eviction as I do not have the financial means to pay my rent.

Could someone please help me.

I have recived in my opinion a very aggressive letter from were they aggressively state that I have to turn up to mutiple appointments for Job search training which I have previously done with them. I believe that have not reversed marketed and have not put me foward for any interviews to date. I have repeatedly asked to deliver there service Guarantee to myself by actually doing there job and putting me foward for interviews.

Now I have not been given a chance to discuss my employment pathway plan which should be agreed by both myself and When I was in office last time I felt that I was forced to sign the employment pathway plan by (Manager). I told that I didnt agree with the employment pathway plan and I reminded that an employment pathway plan by law needs to be negotiated between the Job Services provider and the Job seeker. I was not given that chance and I was told in an a aggressive manner to sign the employment pathway plan.

I will be taking this further and I am seeing my psychiatrist Dr about this, Im stressed and I don't have to accept threats towards myself.

please contact me tomorrow about this once you read this email.

Kind Regards

MAX Employment Narre Warren
Suite 1003 Westfield Fountain Shopping
Centre Cnr
Narre Warren, VIC, 3805
28/10/2015



Australian Government



REFERENCE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
NARRE WARREN SOUTH, VIC, 3805

Appointment/Activity Schedule

Name: [REDACTED]

Job Seeker ID: [REDACTED]

Period: [REDACTED]

You must attend the appointments and activities outlined below, in return for Newstart Allowance. If you do not attend any of the outlined provider appointments or activities (including entering into or reviewing your Job plan if that is required), your payment may be stopped by Centrelink. You may also lose back-pay if you don't have a good reason for failing to attend or don't advise beforehand if you are unable to attend. **This is a notice under Social Security Law.**

To assist you in remembering your requirements for the upcoming week, please see over the page for a list of your requirements, including the type of appointment or activity, dates, times, locations and the appropriate contact for that particular appointment or activity.

Questions?

You need to call [REDACTED] Narre Warren on [REDACTED] if:

- you are unable to attend any of the scheduled days below (you must contact [REDACTED] Narre Warren before the particular day to discuss);
- you have any questions about your requirements;
- you have special requirements for the appointments or activities (such as an interpreter or special building access).

Please treat all communication from us very seriously, because it is the same as being notified of your requirements by Centrelink.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED] Narre Warren
[REDACTED]

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

The following are your requirements for the period 28/10/2015 to 17/11/2015. You must attend these appointments and activities in return for Newstart Allowance

Provider Appointments

Appointment Reason	Date	Time	Location	Duration	Phone	Contact
jobactive Contact	5/11/2015	1:00 PM		60 min	[REDACTED]	Reception
jobactive Contact	6/11/2015	1:00 PM		60 min	[REDACTED]	Reception
jobactive Contact	10/11/2015	11:00 AM		60 min	[REDACTED]	Reception
jobactive Contact	12/11/2015	11:00 AM	JOBS ON LINE	60 min	[REDACTED]	JOBS ON LINE
jobactive Contact	13/11/2015	2:30 PM		90 min	[REDACTED]	Reception
jobactive Contact	16/11/2015	11:00 AM	INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES	60 min	[REDACTED]	INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Centrelink Appointments

For your reference, we have also included any appointments you have with Centrelink and your reporting date.

Activity	Location	Day/Date	Start Time	End Time
DHS Reporting (2 weekly)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DHS Reporting (2 weekly)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Submission #10



Name:

email:

“Hi.

I am trying to find help as my job network is trying to railroad me for speaking up. They have even sent me email from their legal team threatening to sue for defamation if I say anymore. It started because I posted on Gumtree asking if anyone else was experiencing the same issues and I got heaps of emails and when i read them a lot of people had mentioned the same office with same problems including bullying and poor service.

I was taken back by it and told the manager of my office. My next appointment i was confronted by 5 staff in a room and spoke to a qld regional area manager who was dictating to me. When I offered her to look at the concerning emails she was telling me she could careless aand throw them in the bin for all she cared.

This was strange to me as was the next few weeks with and all became clearer when started to get a lot of bad publicity and it was confirming issues I was experiencing with them. I reposted information about the rorting and four corners report when it came out and two days later I received legal notice from their legal people to sue me for defamation if I say anymore about the conversation I had with the area manager in general causing them loss of buusiness and said I was to stop this “nonsense ” with them. Offended and destroyed I took a few days to get over that email because I went into seizures for three days from the stress! No exaggeration and attempted to sort this mess out.

I have been stonewalled by centrelink and like they are working together against me. I went for an esat app at centrelink when i joined where I asked to update my medical records and also asked the

interviewer why i had sat across from him for 20 minutes and he hadn't said one word and he replied he is just copying everything over and doesn't need any information!

I requested my file from a few days ago and found on it that centrelink called and told them I refused to answer any questions and had nothing medical to update! !! All lies. But why!!! After reading my file from I soon realized they have been setting me up for months writing things like I am aggressive.. and confused all the time and so many lies and have only included what parts of conversations we had that makes me look like I am a nut and they are perfect. The thing I am most devastated about is the way they described my disability on a computer screen for anyone to read and believe they have written it in a way to humiliate me. It should go Like this... client name " suffers from a rare condition from birth resulting in deformation and has undergone multiple operations that have failed and left client with continence issues impacting the kind of work and or facilities to accommodate clients disability. . but it reads like this..... clients name " CANT PEE WHILE HE IS STANDING UP".

I am beside myself and feel absolutely discriminated against and bullied and humiliated by this company and the more I try to fight them the more sick i get and they are doing this to me. What can I do!"

Submission #11



Name:

Submission:

I work casually and I have been informed a few times by my job agent that I need to start attending Work for the Dole. When I discussed this with the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union national advocacy hotline, I was informed that according to the mutual obligation guideline, I am not eligible for Work for

the Dole when I am receiving a partial Newstart payment as a result of income I earned at my work.

It is completely unacceptable that Employment Service Providers can simply refuse not to follow the rules and take advantage of the fact that many unemployed people do not know their rights.

Submission #12



Australian
Unemployed
Workers'
Union

Name:

Email:

Submission:

I am being bullied to attend three times a week. This is despite the fact that I have a serious medical condition. I had 2 medical exemptions but the last one expired July. I was then told by my Job Agent that I could not have 3 medical exemptions in a row which I later found out from the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union was a highly contentious decision.

These Employment Service Providers cannot be made to make it up as they go along and not follow the rules.

Submission #13



Name:

Provider:

Submission:

I wanted to do voluntary work but my provider said I cannot do voluntary work. After contacting the Australian Unemployed Workers' Union I was informed that under the Mutual Obligation guidelines I am entitled to do volunteer work to fulfill my obligations. What gives Employment Service Providers like the right to simply ignore these rules?

Submission #14



Name:

Submission: I have just been rolled over into I received a letter on the day of the appointment, advising me that “I have a Face to Face, initial contact @10am-11am. I go to the appointment in belconnen, (now I’m pretty chirpy person in general, currently parent (15yr old)and sole trader, so I pay taxes etc).

Well I walk in go reception, staff member said” your suppose be in that room”, so I go “that room” where staff member says”oh your not here, you have Face to Face contact”. And directs me back to reception. One hour later nothing happening. Finally at 11.20am apparently it’s my turn (for what, I don’t know). A staff member asks me sit at a shared work station, then says to me, “right I have some forms for you to fill out”. I said forms for what? They replied,” your work for dole commitments. Your required 25hrs a week WFTD”.

Within 2minutes a team leader/ supervisor approached me telling me that this is what it is, if you don’t sign you won’t get paid”. I tried to explain that i am already working, and parent. Well team leader told me that I was being aggressive. I replied with”I’m strong woman not aggressive (mind you I’m sitting, their standing). I was then threatened that if I did not sign and or return paper work (Which was not individual for my circumstances, nor had I agreed or had been given any options,) that in 48hrs they)would cut me off center link benefits, and how would I like that. Then team leader stormed off....

I did not choose this provider, they have not had decency to explain what’s going on all new changes. (Hello 5min power point presentation would have helped something). So it looks like I’ll be cut off from center link benefits,something? because ‘online systems/crashed, down. So I am unable to access a new provider.

Submission #15



Name:

email:

Submission:

An industry grunt's overview of the structural tensions in the Federal employment services system - and the adverse outcomes this creates for vulnerable Job Seekers in our community

The most important thing to consider, when contemplating the ability of the Federal employment services system (Job Network / Job Services Australia / JobActive), is that frontline staff of Employment Service Providers (herein referred to as ESPs), with the administrative workload that is allocated to them, are - whilst they are mostly titled Employment Consultants, and variations therein - effectively contract administrators. They work providing contract compliance for their ESP, who delivers these administrative outcomes to the Australian Department of Employment

The Australian Department of Employment was formerly the Department of Employment, Education, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and prior to that, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

What this effectively creates, is a relationship between Job Seekers and Employment Consultants that is primarily geared towards meeting the administrative contract compliance requirements between the Employment Service Provider (ESP), and the Australian Department of Employment. Without hyperbole, this structural requirement sets the stage for the chronic, systemic inability of the employment services system to provide the services which it is federally mandated to perform.

- a) ESPs are paid by government at 4 primary points
- 1 - when a Job Seeker files their Employment Pathway Plan (EPP)
 - 2 - when a Job Seekers attends resume / interview training
 - 3 - when a Job Seeker gets a job offer requiring specific training certification prior to commencement, and the ESP administrates the successful completion of this
 - 4 - when a Job Seeker is placed with a job whilst on the books of the ESP

These specific nodes in the employment services contract, create the impetuses in the Employment Services Provider business model, to maximise activity based around these 4 specific points of their relationship with a Job Seeker. Whilst they are intended to encourage an overall pathway through employment services that enables a Job Seeker to re-enter the workforce better prepared, networked, and trained for the economy as its industry requirements change, the entirely understandable self-interest of Employment Service Providers maximising their profit ratio effectively creates the focus of getting the Job Seeker's signature on any of these four specific areas in which they are engaged with their ESP.

This focus on continuous signatures - effectively negotiating the contract between Job Seeker and Employment Service Provider continually like difference phases of, for example, a building contract, creates the tensions which all contract negotiations in industry are subject to. The difference is this regard, is the eminently unequal relationship between Job Seekers and Employment Service Providers. They are not business partners engaged in contract negotiations in which one or the other has scope to disengage

and refer to legal counsel should they conclude the negotiation disadvantageous to their firm. It is a relationship profoundly unequal, with one partner (Job Seekers) effectively dependent on the goodwill (and competence) of their Employment Services Provider.

This is a very large part of why the now ingrained behaviours of punitive action (breaching / refusing to provide important information / resources access) are conducted against Job Seekers by their Employment Services Providers.

Financial Incentives and Frontline Staff Caseloads

The 4 primary contract points which underpin the payment model government administers to Employment Service Providers require the principal involvement of frontline Employment Consultant personnel. Managers may also become involved should they consider it their prerogative, but time pressures and the general acceptance of risk management by Job Seekers (due to their unequal place in the business relationship) create the pronounced tendency towards frontline Employment Consultants being the chief contract administrator and arbitrator.

As a frontline Employment Consultant is expected to manage a group of Job Seekers, this group is referred to as a “caseload”. Employment Service Providers calculate their capacity to maximise profit - and prospective bonuses to frontline staff - based on how many new Job Seekers they file through Employment Pathway Plans into the overall branch - and then caseloads are adjusted according to which “Stream” the Job Seeker’s EPP has allocated them into.

Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) and “Streams”

Under the recent change from Job Services Australia to JobActive, the most substantive change to Employment Pathway Streams has been a conversion from:

Streams 1 - 4

to

Streams A - C

Given that the 1 - 4 Stream structure shaped the availability of training and industry certification access for Job Seekers into specific numbered streams, the reduction of this part of a Job Seeker’s Employment Pathway Plan into less administrative silos may prove to have a positive impact in enabling resources access - merely due to one Stream being 33% of allocation instead of \$25. The resources attached by the Australian Department of Employment will alter this obviously, if they have decided to substantively shift their resources allocated to the Employment Streams.

The Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) is the evaluation tool for establishing the most suitable Employment Stream for a Job Seeker. However, given the onerous nature of the contract compliance duties on frontline ESP staff described above, the tendency is to push a Job Seeker into an Employment Stream which will:

- consolidate the number of Job Seekers in their caseload i.e. reduce their time pressures
- be less administrative work for the Employment Consultant

Given this, I advise all Job Seekers, upon negotiating their Employment Pathway Plan, that if they wish to pursue industry certifications - i.e. OH&S ticket / Responsible Service of Alcohol ticket, to advise their Employment Consultant that they have a potential job lined up which requires certification, and that their Employment Stream will allow them to access this. Otherwise they just end up in limbo for months on end, with no assistance forthcoming from the Employment Service Provider - and all the problems that absence from the workforce creates for a Job Seeker attempting to re-enter it. I shall return to this point of advice in my conclusion.

Industry Consultants

Some Employment Service Providers employ a dedicated Industry Liaison Consultant, whose job is to seek out available jobs and link them to Job Seekers in their branch. The success of these Industry Liaisons depends on their industry connections - which many of them are suitably connected - however, their success depends on the capacity of frontline Employment Consultants to consult their available date in the timeframe available to get a Job Seeker into an interview with a prospective employer. The administrative and contract compliance pressures attendant on frontline Employment Consultants make this at the least, a difficult proposition, and generally end up with the job lead falling through, with a frustrated - and no longer co-operative prospective employer - and a frustrated, bewildered Job Seeker, both with zero confidence in the employment service system's capacity to connect and to work with industry on meeting job availabilities.

Employment Service Providers - Consultant suitability

Further to the points raised regarding Industry Liaison Consultants above, and to reiterate the effective taskload of frontline Employment Consultants, the bulk of frontline staff are not - repeat, not - industry connected people. For example, they are not a former tradie who has significant amounts of local, and current, industry knowledge and contacts. They are administrators, whose job is to conduct contract compliance on behalf of their employer for the Australian Department of Employment. They have no skills, knowledge, or contacts, to assist their Job Seekers re-integrate into the workforce. They sell the employment services contract administration, nothing else. Further to that, the Employment Services qualifications which Employment Consultants can undertake have no industry component, merely administrative, and therein achieve nothing but clearing the way to managerial promotion - thus increasing and institutionalising the lack of industry skills, communications, knowledge, and networking, within the management of Employment Service Providers/ The system, effectively, is set to fail.

Administrative Pressures and their Effect on Structural Poverty

My final point refers to the effective outcome of the contract compliance and attendant administrative pressures faced by frontline ESP staff on those that they are supposed to help. The structure of ESP contract compliance, and its onerous nature, creates:

- a transfer of contract risk to Job Seekers
- a transfer of contract risk to the communities in which Job Seekers live
-

said another way, onerous contract compliance pressures lead frontline ESP staff to reduce available resources to Job Seekers from particular suburbs - due to the poverty those suburbs, and the extra resources, Job Seekers from those suburbs are inclined to need to engage effectively in the workforce. The result is structural - and if the administrative aspects of the current system are maintained, intergenerational poverty in particular geographical regions of Australia.

This provides a an incomplete, yet significant, insight, into our inability as a nation to ameliorate long term unemployment in particular geographical regions during a sustained period of economic boom, as below:

https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/small_area_labour_markets_-_june_quarter_2015_0.pdf

https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/small_area_labour_markets_-_june_quarter_2015_0.pdf

The tendency towards higher unemployment in suburbs and geographical regions already experiencing high unemployment levels - especially in low-skill, labour intensive work - is exacerbated by the increased administrative pressures related to jobs available in ESPs operating in these areas. That is to say, onerous employment service contract compliance exacerbates, and sustains long term poverty where this tendency was already incipient in the relevant community.

As a community and a nation, we're creating structural, potentially interminable poverty - and we're paying several billions dollars a year for the privilege of doing so - all because the administrative side of the system has no one in charge at the wheel, taking responsibility.

Tips for Job Seekers

These are the most important tips I stress to Job Seekers:

- take responsibility for all your information - as ESPs will not be able to maintain it
- take an up to date copy of your resume to all ESP appointments, preferably in memory stick format - so they can upload it directly onto their system. Remember, the customer interfaces for these organisations are geared around digital engagement as a means of efficiency
- attempt to create relationships with the ESP personnel engaged in industry communications
- be proactive - if you help an Employment Consultant make their jobs easier, they will be inclined to reciprocate
- always be aware of what Employment Stream your Employment Pathway Plan has placed you in, and create a job offer narrative about having work set up requiring any industry certification you consider an asset in going for jobs. If necessary, ask friends, family and associates to vouch for this to ensure you have access to the training certifications that much of industry re-integration requires
- as stated before, be organised - ask Employment Consultants what they need, and endeavour to help them, because they will reciprocate. The alternative is the informal punitive breaching system that ESPs use to transfer risk to Job Seekers. This is unfortunate, but it is a fact of the employment services system in its current form.

Conclusion

- the transformation of employment services in this country from the Commonwealth Employment Service has established a system based on contract compliance as its driving force, with employment outcomes a vastly inferior second
- the industry knowledge, skills, contacts, and corporate memory which accompanied this change has never recovered, and indeed been compounded, by successive Federal Government makeovers built around cosmetic changes
- the effect on individuals, families, whole communities, and the economy that we are seeking to gear towards continued national prosperity have been significantly undermined
- the most plausible off-the-shelf solution to ameliorating - and hopefully changing things for the better - resides with shifting the onerous nature of risk transfer in employment services contract compliance towards the Australian Department of Employment
- the best way of undertaking this is shifting the client relationship between Job Seekers and Employment Service Providers from the present model, to the candidate / client relationship model practiced by the recruitment industry - less paperwork, more quality communications, more capacity for directing engagement between Job Seekers and industry
- replacing administrative trained Employment Consultant personnel with industry people - regardless of their administrative skills, they are there to facilitate client / industry engagement and communications
- if this is undertaken, then completely understandable concerns about “rotting” of the system - and the administrative measures used to crack down on “rotting” - by both the minority of Job Seekers, and the majority of Employment Service Providers - should significantly dissipate as both contract parties endeavour to achieve their goals - a job, industry contacts, training geared to industry shifts for one party; and a profitable bottom line for the other. The alternative is a continuation of the status quo, with the unnecessary hardships a significant part of the Australian community has sustained over the last decade.

former Employment Consultant



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