

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome 1 - Employment

Department of Employment Question No. EMSQ16-001060

Senator Marshall provided in writing.

Question

Work for the Dole incident - external consultation

- Has the Department started consulting with all other providers about the findings of the report?
- Since the report was completed, has the Turnbull Government issued a direction to the Department that they should consult with all providers covering the findings of the report?
- Have the Turnbull Government and the Department used findings about NEATO's Work for the Dole work health and safety practices in the report to improve the work health and safety of other providers?
- How many other providers have been instructed to improve work health and safety in their Work for the Dole program since the report was completed?

Answer

The requirement to ensure a safe system of work at all activities has been in place since the commencement of the program with the details included in the *Request for Tender for Employment Services 2015–2020*, the *jobactive Deed 2015–2020* and *jobactive Deed 2015–2020 – Work for the Dole Coordinator* (the Deeds) and the relevant Guideline.

The Department of Employment engages experienced and competent employment services providers to manage Work for the Dole activities. It is a requirement that providers must ensure that the requirements of all relevant work health and safety laws are met and that the host organisation complies with their statutory work health and safety obligations in their jurisdiction. A breach of work health and safety obligations can result in the application of various contractual remedies, including suspension or termination of the activity.

The Department monitors compliance with work health and safety requirements through ongoing contract management and program assurance activities including:

- site visits conducted by departmental Account and Contract Managers;
- Rolling Random Sample reviews;
- targeted audits;
- desktop monitoring and analysis of documentary evidence maintained by providers and Coordinators; and
- investigation and follow-up of incidents and complaints.

The Department communicates regularly and engages with providers and others about work health and safety matters including through:

- webinars;
- Provider Portal notices;
- on-line work health and safety fact sheets;
- the Department's on-line learning centre;

- an on-line Host Induction Kit and Job Seeker Workbook;
- ongoing contract management discussions; and
- letters to Chief Executive Officers.

Work for the Dole Coordinators and/or jobactive providers receive information about the outcomes and learnings from work health and safety program assurance activities. This has included advice on specific results for individual providers and/or Coordinators or general advice in response to program assurance findings.

Following the Department's review of Neato's management of Work for the Dole, the Department again reminded all providers about the importance of work health and safety requirements and the obligations established by the Deeds and Guideline. This was undertaken through written advice to Chief Executive Officers and in State-based jobactive meetings. In addition the Work for the Dole Guideline was updated to reinforce requirements around the risk assessment (Place) and the reporting and management of incidents.

In addition and as part of ongoing contract management and assurance activities the Department has:

- written to all jobactive providers and Coordinators in August 2016 again providing them with information in relation to work health and safety requirements and requesting advice on their Competent Person arrangements, as well as identifying the results of Ernst and Young onsite audits;
- held work health and safety discussions with providers and Work for the Dole Coordinators; and
- has expanded and more clearly articulated its internal arrangements for monitoring, investigating and following-up incidents.

The Department briefs the Minister for Employment as appropriate on matters relevant to Work for the Dole including work health and safety.