

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Finance and Administration Portfolio

Department of Human Services and agencies

Budget Estimates 2006-2007, 25 May 2006

Question: HS26

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: Core Department - Skills of Job Capacity Assessors

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SENATOR Wong asked the Minister for Human Services, upon written notice:

Mr Leeper—Senator, I think that in the February hearing Mr Dolan was making the point that under job capacity assessments an individual assessor is meant to bring to bear whatever skills are needed to make the appropriate assessment.

Senator WONG—I think he conceded that that might include a referral to a relevant specialist.

Mr Leeper—It might, yes. But, basically, we are bringing together into one single point of assessment the responsibility for that action to occur, whereas, at the present time, a person may be referred from one assessment point to another without coordination.

Senator WONG—Could you take that on notice. I would like to clearly understand the difference between the current assessment process and the JCA.

Mr Leeper—Certainly.

Answer:

Unlike the current assessment process, the Job Capacity Assessments programme does not involve streaming to different assessment types. Under existing model the Centrelink action officer determines whether a client will be assessed by a Centrelink specialist officer or an external medical or work capacity assessor.

From 3 July clients may be referred by Centrelink and Employment Service Providers to Job Capacity Assessments. These are comprehensive assessments involving consideration of all barriers to work, including medical, psychological, social and vocational barriers, and the identification of interventions to help clients overcome those barriers. Job Capacity Assessments will also involve assessment of work-related impairment where required.

Importantly, Job Capacity Assessors will be able to directly refer clients to employment and related services at the time of the assessment, wherever possible. Under the previous assessment regime assessors could only recommend that such referrals be actioned by Centrelink.

Job Capacity Assessors will be drawn from a range of health and allied health professions.

The Job Capacity Assessment report allows assessors to record the input of a contributing assessor if they engage the expertise of a colleague from another professional discipline to complete their report.

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Job Capacity Assessors can also refer clients to an external specialist (for example for an IQ test) in a small number of cases if they consider it necessary to complete the assessment, as they can under the current Better Assessment arrangements.

All Job Capacity Assessors will have undergone DHS mandated training including face to face training and interactive e-learning modules on DEWR's Learning Centre. Assessors will also have access to a broader set of training and reference material including the Guide to the Tables for the Assessment of Work Related Impairment for Disability Support Pension (the Impairment Tables), broadcasts (via Centrelink's Business Television Network) on the application of the Impairment Tables, comprehensive Service Provider Guidelines and Job Capacity Assessment modules on the DEWR Learning Centre.

To prepare this answer it has taken approximately 2 hours at an estimated cost of \$139.