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Online Lodgement

The appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive

The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into Senate Education and Employment Committee (“Committee”) inquiry into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive (“inquiry”).

SCoA considers that Australia has much to gain from the development of a responsive, relevant and individually-tailored employment services program and we therefore welcome the current large-scale review of employment services which is occurring both through this inquiry and the Department of Jobs and Small Business Expert Panel reviewing the future of employment services in Australia. Our submission below repeats much of SCoA’s submission to the Expert Panel.

SCoA represents over 100 agencies in the settlement sector across Australia, which comprise the vast majority of agencies providing settlement support to recently arrived migrants, including those from a refugee background. Our members work directly with a wide range of new arrivals from diverse backgrounds, as well as the mainstream Australian community and various government and private stakeholders. The mission of the sector is to provide effective and efficient settlement services which assist newly arrived migrants to achieve the best possible settlement outcomes.

SCoA members are actively engaged in their clients’ journeys into employment and witness firsthand the challenges they have to overcome in this crucial element of the settlement process. Over the years, SCoA members have evolved their business practices to include a range of employment-related activities to supplement traditional mainstream employment services and indeed, a number of SCoA members are jobactive providers.

Given the importance of employment outcomes to the settlement journey of all migrants, the issue has taken considerable focus in SCoA’s research over many years, including hosting fifteen national forums in 2017 which focussed on what is needed to ensure successful employment outcomes for this vulnerable cohort of job seekers. We have engaged widely with our members and other stakeholders following the announcement of the Expert Panel’s review and this inquiry. The findings of our research

and nationwide member consultations have informed the preparation of this submission and the recommendations we make.

The nature and underlying causes of joblessness in Australia

SCoA submits that new Australians from a migrant and/or refugee background represent some (though clearly not all) of the most vulnerable job seekers and as a result encounter significant difficulty in entering the Australian labour market.¹ We therefore suggest at the outset that it is crucial that the experiences of new Australians be given due consideration by the Committee and that specific attention be paid to the factors that lead to unemployment within this cohort. Ultimately, SCoA will recommend that additional support must be given to this cohort through employment services at the federal level.

Engaging with the labour market is pivotal to successful settlement and is one of the most visible and important contributions that migrants make to Australia.² Migrants pursue employment as a means of acquiring economic security for their families and welcome the opportunity to contribute to their new home.³ Obtaining employment is not only important in terms of economic wellbeing but also leads to greater participation of migrants in their communities, better self-esteem and protects and enhances mental health.⁴

It is accepted that overall, it takes time for newly arrived migrants to achieve the same levels of labour market engagement as persons born in Australia. Similarly, within the broader class of migrants, different groups, such as migrants from a refugee background, report lower levels of economic participation than others.⁵ This is a result of a number of different factors that impact a migrant's employability and economic independence on their arrival in Australia, including lack of Australian work experience, difficulties in obtaining skills assessments and challenges faced as they develop their English language skills.

Research clearly demonstrates that migrants, including those from a refugee background, possess a strong desire to work and a resourcefulness and resilience which is fundamental to long term job outcomes. However, the settlement process is complex and highly variable, meaning that not every new Australian is ready to start job-hunting immediately upon their arrival in Australia. For employment outcomes to be truly sustainable, migrants must first be supported through a number of complex and individual settlement foundations⁶ and policy must reflect that this will take different lengths of time depending on the personal circumstances of each individual and their families.

These separate but clearly closely linked settlement foundations must be adequately supported and given due consideration as part of any focus on employment outcomes for this vulnerable group of job seekers.

¹ See for example, Centre for Policy Development (2017) *Settling Better*, p9.

² Ott, E. (2013), *The Labour Market Integration of Resettled Refugees* (UNHCR), p3.

³ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings* (DIAC, 2011), p34.

⁴ Parsons, R. (2013), *Assessing the Economic Contribution of Refugees in Australia* (MDA Ltd).

⁵ Hugo, G. (2011), *A Significant Contribution: The Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants, Summary of Findings*, p34.

⁶ For more information see SCoA's *National Settlement Services Outcomes Standards* at http://scoa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SCoA-National-Settlement-Services-Outcomes-Standards-2016_.pdf

The methods by which Australians gain employment and their relative effectiveness

New Australians are supported to seek employment through a variety of means and services. This can include direct support through government funded employment programs such as jobactive, through assistance from a settlement provider, or through other local networks and of course self-directed employment searches.

The role of jobactive in supporting recently arrived jobseekers

SCoA commends the government's commitment to the funding of employment services, and its willingness to adapt to changing labour market trends, which has been demonstrated through the development of targeted complementary employment programs. We acknowledge that jobactive is a significant government program, with over 650,000 participants at any point in time, delivered by 42 providers at over 1700 sites nationwide.⁷ Naturally, this makes the management of such a program complex to say the least.

The interaction between migrants and jobactive varies depending on the visa held, and the length of time they have been in Australia. Broadly speaking, the following applies in respect of job-seekers from a migrant background:

Australian Citizens

All Australian citizens who are unemployed and aged between 22 and 65 may access jobactive provided they meet assets/income tests.

Refugees and other humanitarian entrants

Migrants from a refugee background who hold permanent visas in Australia are eligible to access jobactive services. As with all other eligible recipients, those accessing these services are required to meet certain commitments including attending regular meetings, looking and applying for jobs, and/or undertaking study (known as "mutual obligations").

From January 2019, migrants from a refugee background will be exempt from mutual obligations for the first six months of their residency in Australia. During that time, they will not be eligible for regular jobactive services but are entitled to access the "volunteer" stream.

Skilled and Family migrants

Under current legislation, any permanent resident who holds a skilled visa and has been in Australia for less than two years is excluded from accessing income support and/or most jobactive services. However it may be possible to access the "volunteer" stream of jobactive.

Proposals currently before parliament include to extend this waiting period from two years to four.

Temporary migrants

Government support in the form of Newstart Allowance and/or jobactive is not available to temporary visa holders. Some temporary migrants may be eligible for other forms of income support (Special Benefit etc) but this is in limited circumstances only.

⁷ Department of Jobs and Small Business (2018) *The next generation of employment services* (Discussion Paper), p18.

The role of settlement services in supporting employment outcomes

Australia’s approach to the provision of settlement services has been identified by the Productivity Commission as playing a crucial role in empowering migrants to seek employment outcomes that are suitable and provide a solid foundation for establishing life in Australia.⁸

Increasingly, settlement service providers (among others) have stepped in to fill perceived gaps in current employment services policy and practice. By providing crucial information, training and opportunities, and meeting other needs of job seekers, SCoA members are often seen as a more trusted source of respectful and appropriate employment support, despite many not being funded as such.

While direct employment services are not typically funded through settlement service providers, it is increasingly the case that members of the settlement sector are including innovative and highly successful employment programs in their suite of services to new migrants.⁹ These include training migrants in Australian workplace skills, assisting with job searches and, most importantly, making sure migrants (particularly those from a refugee background) are progressed to employment in a way that supports their overall settlement process and is nuanced and responsive, taking into account trauma, health issues and other socio-economic concerns. In recent years, many settlement service providers have been directly contracted by the government to fulfil the role of mainstream employment agencies.

The programs of our members are possible largely owing to their innovative and responsive service delivery and the commitment at various levels of government to additional programs of activities, including under SETS,¹⁰ or state-based funding (such as NSW’s Refugee Employment Support Program). That being said, there is clearly added pressure being placed on settlement service providers who become the “go to” source of employment-related assistance and aren’t necessarily resourced to provide the help that is required.

Given the prevalence and relative success of these types of models, there need to be complementarities between them and formal employment services. Funding should be more readily accessible for the full suite of services needed by a job seeker, and a job seeker accessing one suite of services should not be forced to duplicate, or engage in unrelated or unhelpful activities, just to meet their mutual obligations.

The extent of consultation and engagement with unemployed workers in the design and implementation of jobactive

SCoA notes that Australians from migrant and/or refugee backgrounds have traditionally had negligible involvement in the design and implementation of jobactive. However, we acknowledge the positive effort taken by jobactive providers and their peak bodies to engage with this community,¹¹ and welcome the positive steps taken by the Expert Panel to take a range of diverse voices into account as they consider the future of employment services in Australia. We would hope that such commitment continues into the future and that the opportunity for all jobseekers to be heard be entrenched in both the design and implementation of employment services.

⁸ Productivity Commission (2016), *Migrant Intake into Australia*, p178.

⁹ SSI (2016), *Working It Out*, p14

¹⁰ The Department of Social Services-managed Settlement Engagement and Transition Support grants. See <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-services/programs-policy/settlement-services/settlement-grants/what-is-settlement-grants/about-settlement-grants> for further information.

¹¹ Refer Jobs Australia

The ability of jobactive to provide long-term solutions to joblessness, and to achieve social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of unemployed workers

Increasing access to employment services for more disadvantaged job seekers

We suggest that the Committee must acknowledge that many new Australians are currently excluded from accessing any support: as discussed above, migrants who hold a provisional visa,¹² or who have held a permanent visa for less than two years, are excluded completely from receiving assistance.¹³

Exclusion of this entire cohort is contrary to the accepted notion that improving job outcomes will serve Australia's interests. Some of the affected migrants are at risk of suffering unique and ingrained disadvantage when entering the labour market and the exclusion of most new arrivals from accessing employment services works to the detriment of their employment outcomes and long term settlement prospects.

Naturally, securing lasting employment has considerable benefits for migrants as they establish their new lives in Australia. However, successful economic engagement of all migrants flows through every aspect of the economy and results in a net fiscal benefit to Australia's bottom line.¹⁴

While it is not suggested that all new migrants will require support, SCoA suggests that even if the numbers are relatively small, the denial of crucial services to those people undermines the success of our migration program, and directly impacts Australia's economy. It is therefore crucial that policy be reviewed and broader eligibility be implemented.

Recommendation 1

SCoA recommends that eligibility for employment support be extended to any provisional visa holder or permanent resident where the need exists.

Cultural Competence

SCoA Member feedback indicates that some employment service providers lack cultural competence and do not adequately (or appropriately) use interpreters and translations for their clients. While some operators are actively dedicated to improving the level of service to job seekers from migrant and refugee backgrounds, it is a concern of SCoA and its members that there is insufficient funding to support professional development in this area and a resulting lack of focus on the cultural competence of providers.

Cultural awareness training should be a mandatory component of professional development for all Providers and engagement and collaboration with local settlement service providers should be encouraged where relevant.

We suggest the need for specific training and competence also extends to service providers working with job seekers in demographics that are particularly vulnerable to joblessness, including young people from a migrant and refugee background, CALD women, and those with a disability. To that extent we

¹² Such as provisional regional, skilled, business or spousal visas.

¹³ Current legislation before parliament seeks to increase this exclusion period to three years, and government has signalled its intention in the 2018 Budget to extend this further to four years.

¹⁴ OECD (2014), *Is Migration Good For The Economy*, p1.

endorse the submission of our colleagues, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, the Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, the Harmony Alliance and the Refugee Council of Australia.

Recommendation 2

Employment service providers must be required to undertake cultural awareness training and be adequately funded to provide in-language support where necessary.

Employment services must focus on finding work that is relevant to a job seeker's skills and qualifications

A significant issue SCoA and its members are presented with is the underemployment of highly skilled migrants (irrespective of the visa they hold). Many new Australians bring with them significant skills, which they want to use. However they are often unable to transfer those skills into meaningful and relevant work in Australia and are, instead, required to comply with processes designed to obtain a quick outcome.

We accept that this is not an issue for jobactive alone. Australia must actively work to improve the skills recognition process for overseas qualified migrants, and implement an accessible and transparent system for funding necessary bridging courses and work experience so that new Australians can ultimately achieve employment that matches their experience and, wherever possible, is comparable to their employment pre-arrival. This is crucial to achieving long term social, economic and cultural outcomes that meet the needs and aspirations of this group of unemployed workers.

This process must be complemented by the employment services system, and the following considerations directly impact components of the jobactive model:

- It is not appropriate to maintain an approach of “any job will do” – A specialist doctor should not be placed into work as a fruit picker. Instead, assistance must be provided to find relevant work that respects the wealth of knowledge and experience many migrants bring to Australia;
- Job seekers should not be encouraged (or required) to complete irrelevant courses that may be considered to enhance their short-term job prospects but which are not relevant to their existing skills or future aspirations;
- Guidelines governing access to the additional funding under the Employment Fund need to support any migrant actively seeking to translate overseas skills and qualifications into the Australian workforce (see further discussion below);
- Migrants who hold trades or paraprofessional skills from their country of origin (who may lack formal qualifications) require opportunities to obtain recognition of prior learning and/or worksite observation in order to observe how the same tasks are carried out in Australia and assess suitability for those tasks.

We suggest that there are many positive examples of jobactive providers who work in conjunction with other service providers to find meaningful employment opportunities for their clients from a migrant or refugee background. However the complexities arising out of Australia's skills recognition and regulatory system can result in much of this effort going unrewarded, which is clearly a disincentive.

Recommendation 3

The employment services model must empower providers to seek and understand each job seekers' skills, qualifications and experience, and appropriately fund them to assist their clients to overcome the barriers to the use of those skills in Australia.

Recommendation 4

Urgent review of Australia's overseas skills recognition system must be undertaken and a process implemented for a transparent, fair and accessible pathway for overseas trained professionals and para-professionals to translate their skills into relevant employment in Australia.

The fairness of mutual obligation requirements, the jobactive Job Plan negotiation process and expenditure of the Employment Fund

Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

As a precursor to reviewing mutual obligation requirements it is important to understand the impacts and rigidity of the job seeker assessment process. Many SCoA members report first-hand observations of the shortcomings of the current "streaming" process for job seekers from a migrant or refugee background. This results in a high proportion of migrant and refugee job seekers being placed in Stream A, when they are, in fact, in need of greater support. The reasons for this include:

- The current Job Services Classification Instrument is inappropriate to capture unique issues;
- There is no consideration given to a job seeker's experiences of torture and trauma which may manifest in various ways and not always as traditional mental health concerns;
- Clients feel obliged to "put their best foot forward" in the streaming interview, resulting in a reluctance to be open about their level of need; and
- Too much weighting is placed on the fact of a job seeker ever having worked, without considering the length of time (and intervening circumstances, such as upheaval and seeking protection) that may have passed since that person was last employed.

SCoA questions the merits of placing the current streaming process in the control of assessors who are not then tasked with assisting the job seeker, who don't have a trust-based relationship with the job seeker and who only have a limited time period to conduct the assessment.

We recommend that employment services consultants should complete a frank and ongoing assessment of the strengths and needs of their clients, including where necessary by liaising with other service providers working with the individual client (such as their settlement service provider in the case of migrants from a refugee background).

Recommendation 5

The assessment of a job seeker's strengths and needs should be conducted in a detailed and ongoing basis, and the current streaming process should be abandoned. Assessments must be tailored to identify the specific characteristics of the individual and the assessment criteria must therefore be flexible and not generic.

The fairness of mutual obligations for new Australians

SCoA members have expressed concern that under current policy, new Australians from a refugee background are being forced to choose between accessing much-needed settlement and related services and meeting their “mutual obligations”. An often-cited example of this relates to migrants’ access to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). SCoA members repeatedly report that their clients are being forced to give up AMEP classes due to conflicting employment-related obligations. This is contradictory to the well-accepted need to ensure English language as a precondition to achieving long-term employment outcomes.

From January 2019, migrants from a refugee background will be exempt from mutual obligations for the first six months of their residency in Australia. During that time, they will not be eligible for regular jobactive services but are entitled to access the “volunteer” stream of jobactive. For some, six months is still likely to be too short. We are equally concerned that for those humanitarian migrants who are ready to enter the labour market before the expiry of six months, this policy will exclude them from accessing much needed employment services at a time when access is likely to be most crucial.

As a result, SCoA suggests that any new Australian should be introduced to the employment services system as soon as they are ready to commence that journey, but that the development of a Job Plan and mutual obligations for such job seekers must take into account the other forms of support they are receiving.

While it is important to maintain integrity within the system, care must be taken to ensure any requirement under “mutual obligations” is secondary to the settlement support required by job seekers from a refugee background. We suggest that where a job seeker is actively engaging with their settlement service provider through a formal support program (such as HSP, SETS or AMEP)¹⁵, and where that support conflicts with other mutual obligations, the settlement services should take priority and be considered sufficient for that person to be considered to be meeting the requirements of “mutual obligations”.

Recommendation 6

Any arbitrary time limit for newly arrived Australians to commence their relationship with jobactive should be abolished. Instead, early in their settlement journey, each job seeker should be provided with an individually tailored plan for entry into employment services which is informed by their settlement service provider (if any) and which takes into account the specific assistance they need to achieve their settlement foundations and broader job readiness, prior to commencing mutual obligations.

Expenditure of the Employment Fund

We have received feedback that, for any number of reasons, initiatives and proposals that should ordinarily qualify for funding through the Employment Fund are rejected. For example, seeking work experience in Australia can be crucial for job seekers from a migrant background, but is currently only recognised if there is a strong chance of gaining employment in that workplace afterwards.

¹⁵ Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP); Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) and Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

One suggestion is that the administrative process of accessing the Fund is too burdensome (and is itself un-funded). This can be rectified by enhancing the ease of access to the Fund and further opening the eligibility criteria to include a broader range of relevant activities and support.

We are confident that sufficient measures can be implemented to ensure the ongoing integrity of the Fund while making it more useful and transparent and therefore more readily accessed.

Recommendation 7

Employment service providers should be empowered to access the Employment Fund to provide funding to support a broad range of activities designed to enhance job readiness, and clear guidelines should be published outlining the broad range of activities eligible for funding under the Employment Fund.

The adequacy and appropriateness of activities undertaken within the Annual Activity Requirement phase, including Work for the Dole, training, studying and volunteering programs and their effect on employment outcomes

The purpose of employment services, first and foremost, must be to empower job seekers to overcome any barriers to employment, and to remove any external hurdles that impact entry into the workforce. That is, they must focus on “job readiness” before dealing with issues such as compliance.

SCoA and its members consider that the goals underpinning current employment services largely treat job readiness as a secondary consideration. Job outcomes and compliance take priority over addressing limitations on the sustainability of a job seeker’s engagement with the labour market. Employment service providers are largely required to focus on their client’s job applications and outcomes (often referred to as a “check box” approach), and the important activities required to build work readiness are left to ancillary services and third party service providers (such as settlement providers). This exacerbates endemic issues such as underemployment, lack of job security and long-term unemployment.

Future employment services must focus on investing in the individual and ensuring work readiness for all job seekers, prior to requiring them to embark on the search for a job. We submit that with such a shift in focus, long term employment outcomes will be more common and the need for a strict compliance-focused system will be reduced.

What is Job Readiness?

Job readiness relates to the set of personal characteristics and strengths that a job seeker possesses that puts them in the best possible position to obtain meaningful, relevant and long-term employment.

Job readiness requires a strength-based approach that recognises any existing skills and qualifications (see above) and ensures that a job seeker is equipped with the knowledge, competencies and, importantly, personal health and well-being, that will best empower them to seek employment.

Exactly how much assistance a job seeker needs to achieve job readiness will differ depending on the individual circumstances and characteristics of the job seeker, and so a client-centered model which assesses the strengths and needs of each job seeker and develops appropriate individualised pathways is essential.

By way of example, the unique circumstances of migrants and refugees require, among others, that attention be paid to issues such as:

- skills recognition;
- upskilling opportunities;
- Australian work experience;
- orientation on the Australian workplace;
- awareness of legal rights and responsibilities at work; and
- digital literacy.

Recommendation 8

The overarching goal of future employment services should be to support long-term sustainable employment by ensuring job readiness among all job seekers.

[The impacts and consequences of the job seeker compliance framework](#)

SCoA accepts that the success of any employment services model requires a commitment by the job seeker, as well as by their jobactive provider. Notwithstanding this, we have repeatedly heard reports of the negative impact the current compliance model has on the relationship between the job seeker and their service provider. We suggest this undermines the success of the employment services system and must be addressed in a future model.

SCoA considers that the monitoring of jobactive compliance must be informed by the notion that the *majority of job seekers want to work* and we support the notion put forward recently by the Department of Jobs' Discussion Paper that "(t)ailoring activation strategies to individual circumstances and local labour market conditions can encourage a more career-oriented approach."¹⁶

We suggest that a more long-term approach that takes into account a job seeker's job readiness can preserve reporting requirements while ensuring a fair and supportive relationship between the job seeker and their service provider.

To achieve this we submit that it is crucial that the compliance aspect of the system be separate to the role of the jobactive provider, who must instead focus on supporting and advocating for their client.

If such a model is adopted, the activation arising out of the proposed approach will have far more positive outcomes than merely imposing a set of often arbitrary targets on each job seeker and punishing those who fail to meet those targets. In this sense, a more tailored and flexible compliance model will maximise individual strengths and take into account local labour market conditions, thus supporting people into jobs that will last.

Recommendation 9

The requirement for compliance under the Social Security Act should be overseen by an independent body which would maintain oversight of both service delivery and the job seeker's reporting requirements to ensure all funding (both to service providers and job seekers) is made with integrity.

¹⁶ Department of Jobs and Small Business (2018) *The next generation of employment services* (Discussion Paper), Chapter 7.

The appeals process, including the lack of an employment services ombudsman

SCoA is not sufficiently aware of issues concerning appeals from jobactive decisions, however we believe that given the importance of this service (both in terms of the quantum of funding provided and the contribution that successful outcomes can make to Australia's economy) a sufficient level of independent oversight and accountability is crucial. An employment services ombudsman is a suitable method of achieving such oversight.

The funding of jobactive, including the adequacy of the 'outcome driven' funding model, and the adequacy of this funding model to address barriers to employment

On the subject of outcome driven payments to employment service providers, SCoA members have raised concern about the current payment model and its susceptibility to exploitation and misuse. Anecdotal feedback provided to SCoA suggests that the linking of success payments to outcomes may in some cases be seen to be encouraging short-term employment and/or unsatisfactory arrangements with employers. We suggest the funding model must ensure proper and fair remuneration for employment service providers and would envisage that a system focused on supporting job readiness as a primary consideration should avoid the need for incentive-type payments.

Further, there is need for investment in the professional development and training of the employment services sector, including on important issues such as cultural competence (see above), and suitable funding must be available to ensure staff are well-trained and sufficiently resourced to fulfil their roles.

Alternative approaches to addressing joblessness

As part of our submission to the Expert Panel's review into the future of employment services in Australia, SCoA proposed an alternative approach to addressing joblessness in Australia. We reproduce that below for the Committee and would be happy to further elaborate if requested.

SCoA considers that a crucial requirement for future employment services is that the quality of the relationship between the job seeker and their consultant be enhanced. We believe this can only be done by recalibrating the nature of the relationship and creating a supportive role for a consultant to act in the best interests of their client, rather than as a compliance officer.

In order to achieve this, there are three key service areas that should be included in the future model of employment services:

- a) Employment Services Consultant: Job seeker guidance, support and counselling, links with local services and employers;
- b) Employment Service Providers: A range of services required to achieve job readiness and to secure employment; and
- c) Monitoring and compliance.

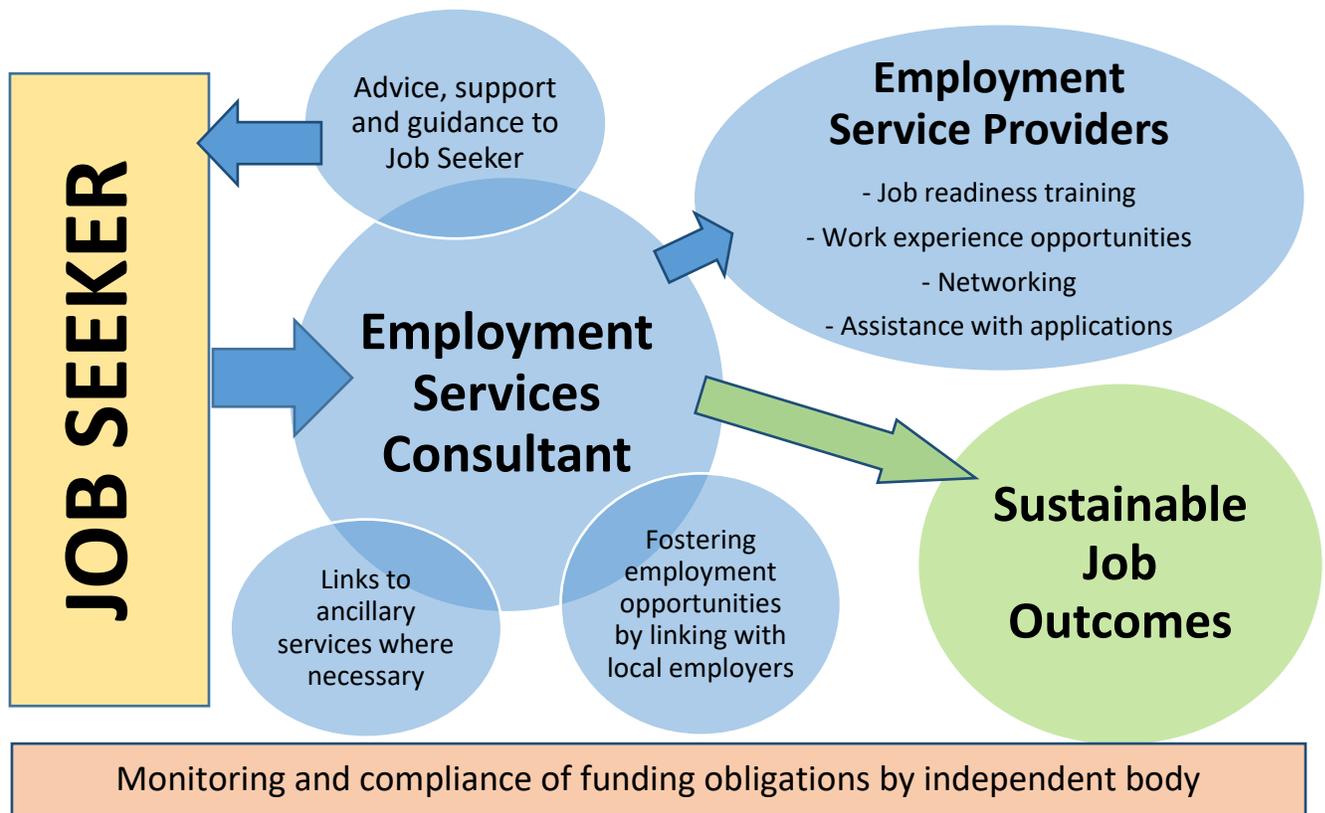
The ideal structure for employment services would separate these three functions so that a job seeker has a trusting, supporting relationship with their Employment Services Consultant (a). The commencement of a relationship between a job seeker and their Employment Services Consultant must include a detailed orientation on the employment services model, and an examination of a job seeker's future aspirations such that their employment pathways are suitable to achieving those aspirations wherever possible, and so that any hurdles impacting their job readiness are well understood and plans for overcoming them can be implemented.

A key role of the Employment Services Consultant will be to assist their clients in recognising their needs and to link them with a suite of local Employment Service Providers (b) and ultimately, employment opportunities. This will ensure job seekers receive the necessary assistance to achieve job readiness, placing them in the ideal position to start seeking employment (with guidance and support from their Employment Services Consultant).

Importantly, it must be open to the Employment Services Consultant to refer their client to external service providers outside of the traditional employment services model where such support is considered necessary (for example, to English language or other settlement support services if needed by a migrant or refugee job seeker, or to mental health support, etc).

The Employment Services Consultant should also be responsible for cultivating relationships with employers in their locality, and supporting employers who take on job seekers through the employment services process, to ensure optimum participation by local employers in the process and to support the longevity of employment outcomes.

Finally, an independent monitoring and compliance body (c) should maintain an oversight of both service delivery and the job seeker’s reporting requirements to ensure all funding to Employment Services Consultants, Employment Service Providers and job seekers (income support payments) are made with integrity.



Recommendation 10

Employment Services should be restructured into separate functions to ensure a supportive and responsive system of employment support that acts in the best interests of the job seeker, maximises informed user choice and enables job readiness as a precondition to achieving long-term employment outcomes.

Conclusion

SCoA thanks the Committee for providing this opportunity to contribute to its inquiry into the effectiveness of jobactive.

We repeat our comments above that the Committee must give due consideration to the experiences of new Australians as a cohort of job seekers that are particularly vulnerable to joblessness, especially early in their settlement journeys.

As well as being a major contributor to the Australian economy, the achievement of sustainable employment outcomes is a key foundation of the settlement journey of newly arrived migrants, including those from a refugee background. We therefore view this consultation as a crucial opportunity to contribute to further enhancement of employment outcomes in Australia.

We acknowledge the significant commitment of government to funding employment services in Australia and believe that by taking the above factors into consideration, many of the current shortcomings that have been discussed throughout our submission can be resolved, and a future model for employment services can ensure long-term sustainable employment outcomes, to the mutual benefit of all.

We would be happy to appear before the Committee to further elaborate on the content of this submission, should you consider it to be of assistance.

Should you wish to discuss any of the matters contained in this submission, we invite you to contact our CEO Nick Tebbey on 0434 589 493 or ceo@scoa.org.au

Sincerely



Dewani Bakkum
Chairperson
Settlement Council of Australia