

Australian Unemployed Workers' Union (AUWU) Submission to the Australian National Audit Office Inquiry Into *Jobactive*

31 December 2016



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Introduction

1. The Australian Unemployed Workers' Union (AUWU) is a national body representing unemployed and underemployed Australians. The AUWU formed in early 2014 to give unemployed workers a voice within Australian society. The AUWU has over 40 branches across Australia and has in excess of 6,000 members. The AUWU is run by volunteers.
2. In November 2015, the AUWU set up a National Advocacy Hotline to inform Newstart recipients of their rights under social security law and assist them in their dealings with Employment Service Providers. The data received shows *jobactive* providers routinely failing to uphold the *jobactive* deed. In November 2016, the AUWU released its yearly National Advocacy Hotline report (attached).
3. The AUWU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian National Audit Office and seeks the opportunity to consult directly with the Australian National Audit Office in relation to the audit. The AUWU feels strongly that having the voices of *jobactive* participants heard during this process is essential in order to achieve measured and appropriate policy in this area.

***jobactive* Summary**

4. In July 2015, the Coalition Government introduced the \$6.8 billion *jobactive* system (2015-2020). As noted in the accompanying graph prepared by Jobs Australia, *jobactive* represented a significant change from the previous Job Services Australia (JSA) system.

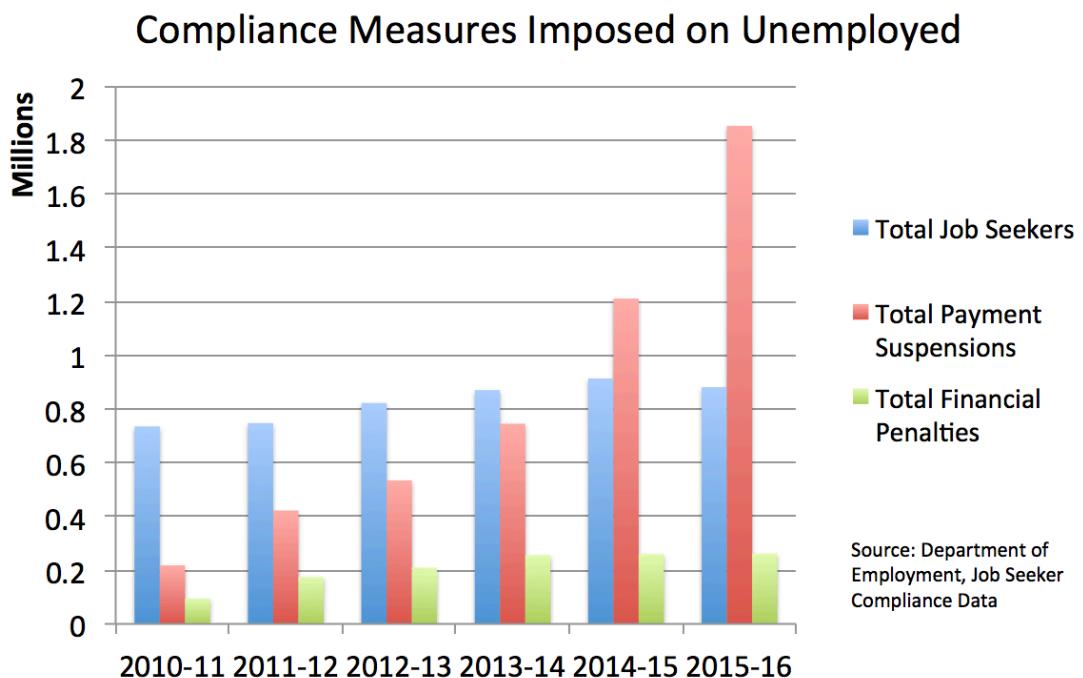
These changes resulted in a higher proportion of government payments being tied to outcomes – be it placing an unemployed worker into a job, training program, or Work for the Dole activity. This is commonly referred to as the “outcome driven” system.

Under *jobactive*, providers were consequently provided with a smaller pool of funds to provide employment services. As this submission will argue, *jobactive*'s focus on outcomes has had a negative effect on the experience of unemployed workers in the *jobactive* program.

Key facts and figures

	JSA	<i>jobactive</i>
Provider orgs	79	44
NFP share (approx.)	70%	55%
Contract regions	110	51
Sites	1,889	1,719
Term	2 x 3 yrs	5 yrs
% of funds up-front	65%	40%
% of funds in outcomes	35%	60%

- During the 2015-16 financial year, the number of penalties imposed by jobagencies on unemployed workers increased 50%. Since the Coalition assumed office, the amount of penalties has increased more than three and a half times. The AUWU would like to point out in the strongest possible terms that the significant increase of penalties is in part a consequence of the “outcome driven” system and the perverse incentives the *jobactive* system offers to providers.



- With the introduction of the *jobactive* system, Work for the Dole was significantly expanded. Under the new system, unemployed workers were required to Work for the Dole after receiving Newstart for six months (formerly one year) and under 30s were required to work for 25 hours a week (formerly 15).

The outcome-driven *jobactive* system places significant pressure on job agencies to place as many unemployed workers into Work for the Dole activities as possible. Consequently, the number of Work for the Dole participants went from 54,000 in 2014/2015, to 106,000 in 2015/2016. This has led to Work for the Dole risk assessments being rushed, or in some cases, skipped altogether.

jobactive Policy Objectives

7. The Department of Employment Budget Statements 2015-16¹ states that:

the objectives of the jobactive programme are to help job seekers:

- *find and keep a job*
- *move from welfare to work*

In its budget statement, the Department of Employment outlined five services that will be delivered to meet these policy objectives:

- *jobactive employment services assist job seekers to find and keep a job and ensure employers are provided with job seekers who meet their business needs*
- *Work for the Dole Coordinators, which started on 1 May 2015, are responsible for sourcing suitable Work for the Dole activities in not-for-profit and government organisations to help prepare job seekers for the work environment*
- *New Enterprise Incentive Scheme assists eligible job seekers to start and run their own small business*
- *Harvest Labour Services and the National Harvest Labour Information Service support the requirements of growers in the horticulture industry for harvest workers.*

Other “features” of the *jobactive* programme include:

- *new payment and performance frameworks to ensure jobactive organisations are focused on better meeting the needs of job seekers and employers*
- *new outcome payments at 4, 12 and 26 weeks to ensure jobactive organisations help job seekers to take up all available work opportunities including short term and seasonal work. Higher outcome payments will be made for longer term job opportunities*
- *wage subsidies to encourage employers to hire young job seekers under 30 years of age, job seekers over 50 years of age, indigenous job seekers, parents and the long term unemployed*

¹ Department of Employment, ‘Entity Resources and Planned Performances’,

- *a streamlined Employment Fund for work-related items, professional services, support and targeted training that will help job seekers obtain and stay in work*
 - *modern online and self-help facilities for job seekers and employers*
 - *a stronger mutual obligation framework to ensure job seekers remain active and engaged while looking for work, including the national roll-out of Work for the Dole for most job seekers under 50 years of age*
 - *the establishment of new Work for the Dole Coordinators to work with not for profit organisations and government agencies to identify suitable Work for the Dole activities*
 - *new indigenous outcome targets to ensure jobactive organisations are helping indigenous job seekers into work at the same rate as other job seekers in their region*
 - *the establishment of 51 new Employment Regions to promote economies of scale*
 - *reduced service prescription and red tape in the administration and delivery of employment services*
 - *the new employment services contract is for five years instead of three years, as was offered in the past*
 - *a mid-contract price adjustment paid to ensure employment providers can deliver the service for the life of the contract*
 - *a new regional loading for providers in selected regions in recognition that labour market conditions vary across Australia*
 - *greater emphasis on service quality including compulsory certification under the Quality Assurance Framework for jobactive organisations.*
8. The AUWU would like to make a few preliminary remarks about the objectives of *jobactive*. While the AUWU supports *jobactive*'s central policy objective to help unemployed workers "keep and find work", the union has deep concerns about the system's approach.

Through its persistent focus on the need to make unemployed workers 'employable' through its services (training, wage subsidies, Work for the Dole, etc), *jobactive* frames Australia's growing employment crisis as an employability issue. In other words, it is a problem of labour supply.

This assumption, however, is at odds with the reality of the Australian labour market. According to the most recent data collected by the

Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Employment,² there are currently 19 job seekers competing for every job vacancy. When you consider low-skill jobs – the sort of jobs unemployed Australians will most realistically be considered for – this rate is even higher. The problem is not with the ‘supply-side’ of the labour market, but rather with the lack of demand for labour from employers.

In the place of an urgent Federal job-creation policy, the Government has instead decided to persist with its ‘supply-side’ focus of making Australians more ‘employable’. Over the duration of the jobactive and DES contracts, the Government will spend more than \$10 billion Australian’s employment services industry. This policy of focusing on the ‘employability’ of unemployed workers has not worked in the past to fix Australia’s employment crisis and it will not work now.

Given the shortage of jobs, it is clear that the Australian government must implement policies that will lead to the creation of more jobs within the economy. The AUWU are still waiting for such a policy to be announced.

jobactive Performance Measures

9. The Department of Employment Budget Statement 2015-16 makes the following statement regarding how the performance of *jobactive* will be measured:

Performance against the objective of helping people to find and keep a job will be measured in terms of the proportion of job placements that last 4, 12 and 26 weeks, in keeping with the new outcome payment structure. Performance against the objective of helping people move from welfare to work will be measured in terms of the proportion of job seekers who move off income support or reduce their reliance on income support, six months following participation in jobactive.

Furthermore, the Department Employment states:

The programme's cost efficiency will be measured by the total programme cost per employed job seeker. Targets have been set for each performance measure based on 2014–15 labour market conditions and caseload composition. Many performance measures are affected by external factors, particularly labour market conditions and the level of disadvantage of the job seekers taking part in the programme. These factors will be considered in

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force* (November 2016); Department of Employment, *Vacancy Report* (November 2016); Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Persons Not in the Labour Force* (November 2013)

conjunction with reporting on the programme's performance in the Department of Employment's Annual Report 2015–16

10. The performance targets set by the Department of Employment are as follows:
 - “Objective One – Help jobseekers keep and find work”

Table 3 Results for objective 1

Indicator	Target
Count of job placements	380,000 overall 38,000 Indigenous
Proportion of job placements sustained to four weeks	68%
Proportion of job placements sustained to 12 weeks	44%
Proportion of job placements sustained to 26 weeks	24%
Proportion of job seekers employed three months following participation in jobactive	45% overall
– Stream A	55%
– Stream B	35%
– Stream C	25%

- “Objective Two – Help job seekers move from welfare to work”

Table 4 Results for objective 2

Indicator	Target
Proportion of job seekers moving off income support, or with significantly reduced reliance on income support, six months following participation in jobactive	40%

- “Objective Three – Help job seekers meet their mutual obligations”

Table 5 Results for objective 3

Indicator	Target
Proportion of Work for the Dole participants who report increased motivation to find a job	75%
Proportion of jobactive appointments attended (appointments for activity-tested job seekers, excluding appointments where the job seeker had a valid reason for not attending)	90%
Proportion of job seekers (with mutual obligation requirements) who are actively looking for work	95%

- “Objective Four – *jobactive* organisations delivery quality services”

Table 6 Results for objective 4

Indicator	Target
Proportion of employers satisfied with the assistance provided by a <i>jobactive</i> organisation	80%
Proportion of <i>jobactive</i> organisations that meet the service delivery requirements	80%

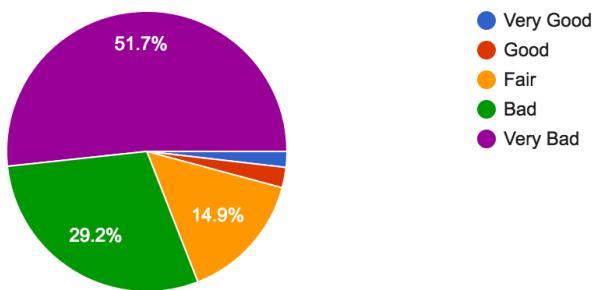
11. The AUWU would like to make a few preliminary remarks about *jobactive*'s performance measures. By using 'outcomes' to measure the performance of *jobactive* providers, the Government's *jobactive* performance measurement process ignores the day-to-day experiences of *jobactive* participants. This is unacceptable. As part of its submission, the AUWU will be presenting data it has collected from its members' *jobactive* experience.

AUWU Data on Jobactive Experience

12. In preparation for its submission to the Australian National Audit Office, the AUWU asked its members and other *jobactive* participant to fill out a *jobactive* performance survey. The results of the survey are summarized below³:

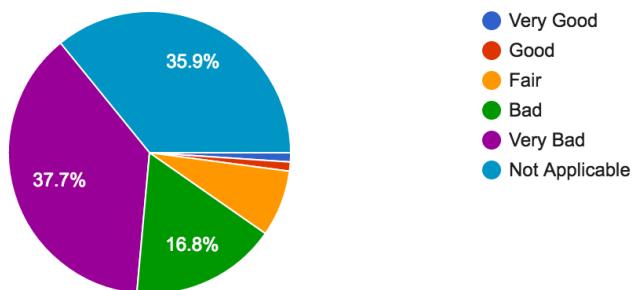
Overall, how would you rate the assistance offered by your jobactive provider to help you find work?

(383 responses)



Overall, how would you rate the assistance offered by your jobactive provider to help you keep work?

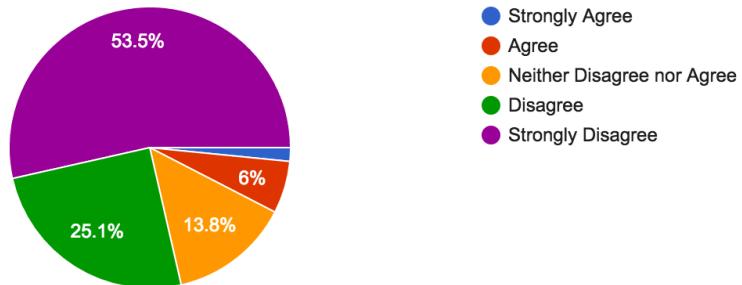
(382 responses)



³ The location breakdown of data is available on request

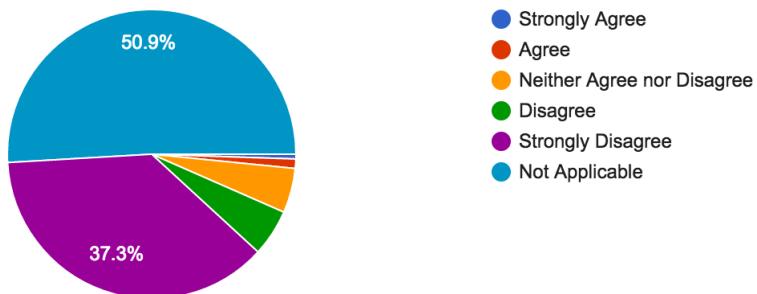
Did your jobactive provider identify your strengths and any issues you may have relating to finding suitable employment?

(383 responses)

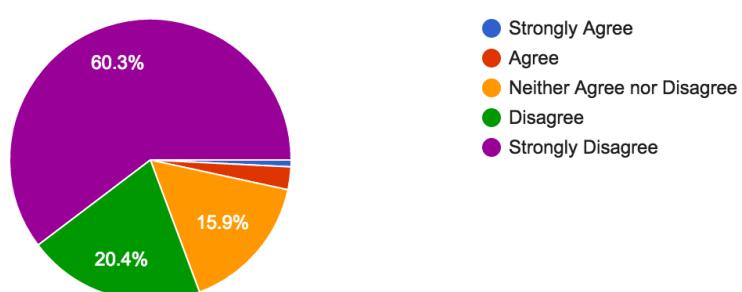


Did your participation in Work for the Dole help prepare you for work?

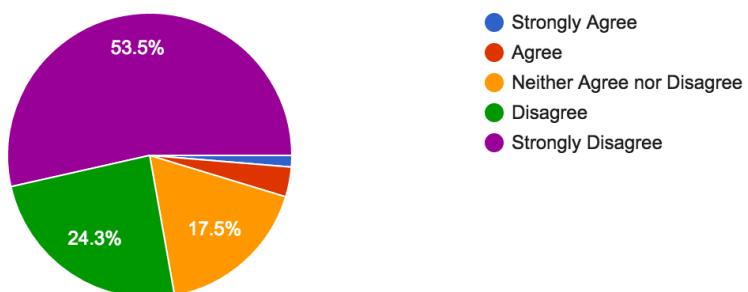
(381 responses)



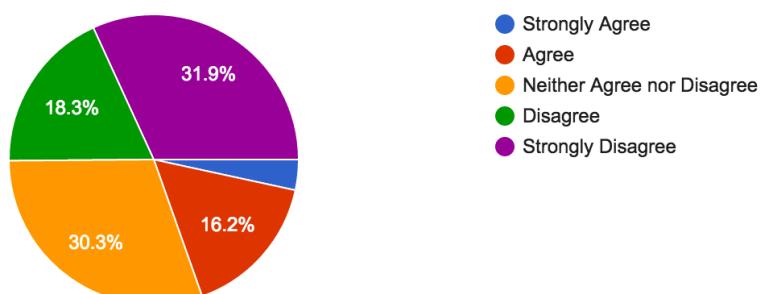
Did jobactive's streamlined Employment Fund help you obtain and stay in work by providing you with access to work-related items, professional services, transport and targeting training?
(383 responses)



Did jobactive's stronger mutual obligation framework help you remain active and engaged while looking for work?
(383 responses)

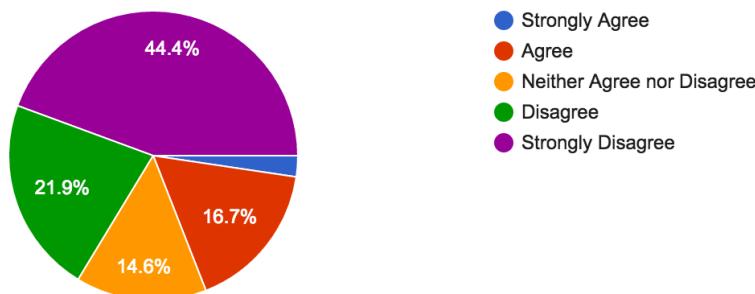


Did your jobactive provider treat you fairly and with respect in a culturally sensitive way?
(383 responses)



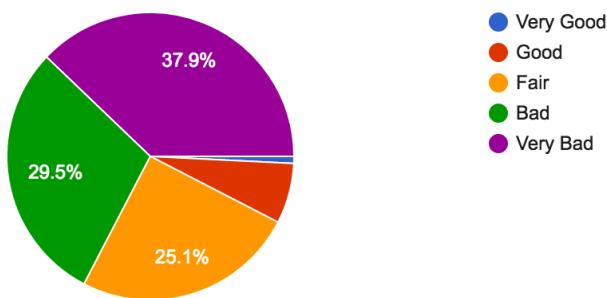
Did your jobactive provider explain to you your rights and obligations under Social Security law?

(383 responses)



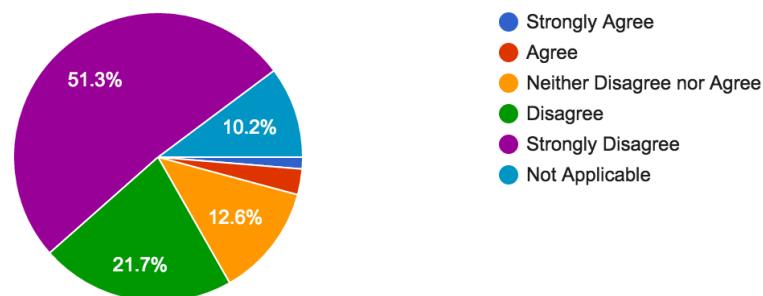
Overall, how would you rate the self-help facilities made available to you by your jobactive provider?

(383 responses)



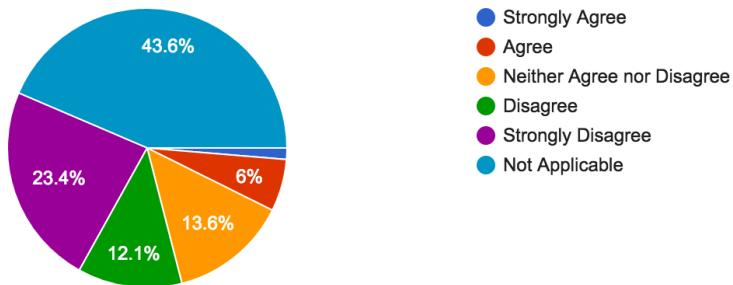
Did your jobactive provider offer a feedback process that was fair and helpful?

(382 responses)



Did the Department of Employment National Customer Service Line consider your concern/s promptly and fairly?

(381 responses)



13. In addition to answering the above 11 questions, each survey participant was encouraged to "make further comments about your *jobactive* experience". Below is selection of the 202 responses received⁴:

- *No individual assistance given just attendance to group training sessions which I suspect are set up to monitor attendance to as the content and deliverance of such training is very poor.*
- *Was falsely reported as non-compliant on several occasions (for not attending appointments when I was working and had told them-- they did it as retribution for refusing to provide pay slips) and my complaints not looked into. I had a consultant argue with me about the Job Active Deed and belittle me in front of other waiting clients (as he forced me to have my appointment in the waiting area). He had also previously made a comment to the tune of 'when I first met you, I was in love with you'!!!!*
- *One thing ive learned over my 24 years... if you treat someone like something theyre not for long enough they eventually give up and become that anyway. i can guarantee that most people on the dole started as happy people who were ready to work, i was. but the relentless wfd scheme, being told volunteering in your community isnt "giving enough back" not to mention theres ONE EMAIL ADDRESS for the whole location, its like (jobsstatewide@noarlunga) or something. but a communal email in todays age???? im now an anxious mess, and depression is a daily struggle. im treated like a criminal for things well out of my control. and any wfd im offered is*

⁴ Details of respondents are available on request

"get on a minibus, go do "landscaping" then get back on the bus back to my car..." voila no petrol vouchers, not travel help (the bus belonged to workskil) the course for new businesses is designed for failure, and they regularly discourage working for yourself. 90% of the work in my area is "women only" and "early school leavers need only apply" but noone can speak out about it because its seen as speaking out against equality... i will be moving providers, but not getting my hopes up

- At my first "interview" the consultant was more interested in filling revolving manual labour jobs rather than helping participants understand their options. After a brief chat with the other participants I introduced one to the NEIS program as he was qualified geologist with a hobby business importing gemstones. Explained how training funding worked to two others who were interested in updating their skills to be better equipped for employment. At the end of the session the consultant asked me to stay back before informing me that there was nothing that they could do to help me find a job.*
- I am currently reporting Matchworks as they were intimidating and did not address my health issues whilst pushing me into employment, I was forced into a toxic workplace and told I could not leave unless I had another job, when I complained to the manager about my case manager my worker fixed things so I could not get my centrelink payments, and spent a day running around sorting it out. They did not assist me when I was made redundant a month before Christmas with NO notice. It was an appalling experience and affected my health.*
- Sarina Rosso didn't provide me with any job leads or training or anything else of any use. They frequently gave me appointment times during periods where I had already told them I would be working and thus unable to attend. They would not provide me with assistance to buy PPE required for a job I found.*
- I have multiple mental health diagnoses and have had two hospitalisations just this year. The constant turnover (basically sack anyone who actually accepts limitations and isn't all about parroting the party line) means I've had six different consultants in a year and a half. I've spent more time rehashing the same pointless conversation and introducing myself than anything else. There seems to be ZERO effort to understand the nature of the disability and find suitable work. They just send you for anything, even if it's directly damaging and it is supposed to be a specialised disability agency.*
- Inexperienced overworked staff who hector, bully and disrespect.*

- Why make someone go to a course on how to do an interview when you have 20+ jobs on your resume which suggests you have already had 20+ successful interviews + the other 100s you have missed out on.
- Was kicked off Parenting Payment for making a complaint against this Jobactive provider after they required me to sign a contract I hadn't been given a copy of or had the contents explained to me. It was pre-printed before I came to the first interview and did not in any way take into consideration my personal circumstances, education & experience. They did not read or take a copy of my resume that I brought with me to the interview. Centrelink required me to attend another interview with the same Jobactive provider and sign the contract anyway, so I didn't attend because I had no options available to me other than to be forced to sign an illegal contract that I had no say in whatsoever. Eworks also wanted my professional registrations to lapse & fully acknowledged that this would make me much less employable and would not discuss this any further other than to say they didn't care about that & it was irrelevant. I have since closed my MyGov account & finished all dealings with Centrelink even though it has put me in EXTREME POVERTY with a 6 year old child for the last 6 months. One of the eWorks staff members approached me in a public place to gloat about what they had done a few weeks after I was kicked off payments. I am out of "the system" now and I will NEVER return to it or comply with the government in any way
- Disability provider continues to put through fulltime work for me to apply for eve though I have a partial capacity to work 15hrs per week. Failed to provide appropriate feedback after applying for several positions with the provider. Tried to prevent me from undertaking part time study of 15hrs per week with TAFE OTEN claiming that the government does not allow it. Constantly ignores legislation regarding mutual obligation and partial capacity to work ie study fulfilling the obligations. Breached me for being sick and bedridden. Reprimanded me for rearranging appointments to attend job interviews claiming that it was making it too hard to co-ordinate times.
- Horrible debilitating place and process, terrible for a 22 year old's mental health. these places need to be shut down before they cause any more mental health harm to anyone!! even worse suicide! They are bullies and nothing more.
- I was forced to do work for the dole when I was already employed which was a breach but I was unaware of my rights and obligations.
- Got spoken to like I was some idiot. Huffed, puffed and rolled her eyes at me every time I walked into the room or asked a question. Made

my Depression & Anxiety 10x worse by going there or even just a thought of going there. Applied for over 200+ jobs with no help what so ever from the case manager for me, didn't tell me where's the best place to look and belittled me so much that it killed my confidence and happiness.

- *Does not seem to achieve much. Providers spend an inordinate amount of time on compliance and paper shuffling. The WFD system offers no advantages to clients, skills attained remain unacknowledged, no references provided. most WFD supervisors hold no workplace training skills or qualifications.*
- *Provider had no real knowledge of someone who has recently been taken off a disability pension and put on a new start benefit no attempt was made to alter the job plan or give guidance as to navigate a solution. If I were to adhere to the job plan my health and that of others would of been jeopardised no duty of care*
- *My consultant sexually harassed me, including unwanted touching of my hands etc, every meeting. The first consultation he had said things like I reminded him of his wife, was gorgeous, asked if I wanted to have coffee with him and take a ride on his motorbike. I complained twice to two different people and requested a different consultant but it was never followed up. The last appointment I had with him, I learnt that he was being promoted. I told Centrelink about my problem and asked if I could be transferred to another employment services agency, which they stated they could not do. My appointments with this consultant were fruitless, he did basically nothing for me and seemed to relish the appointment as an opportunity to flirt with me.*
- *I have used several job active agencies..they were all useless, and in some cases I was coerced into signing things that were explained to me it was just 'sign here'. Goodness knows what I was signing for, its a mystery to this day. They did the barest minimum, I had to do the rest. I have obtained every single job I have had on my own with no help from agencies even tho I was signed up to them.*
- *I had my Newstart payment stopped due to Employment Plus not ringing me for a phone appointment. They changed the method of contact from an in office interview, to me calling them and finally them telling me they will call, which they didn't. I then had to endure the Centrelink's troublesome phone system to correct their mistake. They advised me to change my resume (already professionally written) which I did but then they never bothered to look at it. That is the only advice I've received from them. I have never been offered any assistance/training whatsoever. I have had that many case managers I've lost count. My only contact with them is basically a 5 minute chat with them once a month. I will have a new case*

manager in January. Nobody seems to stay in the job. They keep pushing for me to do volunteer work even though I have told them I am physically unable to do it. I am over 60 years of age. I am waiting for surgery to replace 2 hips and 2 knees and have a debilitating auto-immune disease. I therefore look for work even though I will not be able to fulfill an employer's expectation of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay" if I am offered employment.

- *Had my payments cut off on three (3) times for not showing up for appointments to my Job Network when I had no appoints those days in question and each time they told me it was a IT problem. I was not given an apologue for the times I had my payments cuts. Each of the times were after I came off from Medical Certificate.*
- *My DES jobactive provider has accommodated my needs but only after a very negative experience had me complain directly to its Head Office after which DES started taking me seriously. However the assistance they provide is absolutely minimal. Assistance was definitely much more comprehensive under the previous CRS system when support was provided by qualified psychologists and funds were available for training and I actually with their help got and held down a job for 18 months notwithstanding my disabilities.*
- *Did not inform me about the 15 hours per week of volunteer work (above 55 years of age) which is regarded as meeting your obligations towards Centrelink. Applied for a few jobs on my behalf without telling me in advance and hence unprepared for phone calls received. I had a new employee looking after me every second time ,more or less, due to high staff turnover at their office. The list is long. Never told about petrol vouchers for interviews. The list goes on. Very rude, patronising people.*
- *During my time at AMES Wesley I was badgered constantly for payslips. Nowhere was it mentioned in my mutual obligations agreement that I needed to provide evidence of payslips, as I was fully compliant and fortnightly reported to Centrelink. I was even repeatedly called after hours by AMES Wesley employees asking for my payslips. I was also constantly emailed about it, even though I explained I would not send any documents without being given the part of the JobActive deed that specifies where this is required of me. When asking why they were needed, I was never provided an answer and brushed off. I was also told I would be put onto Work for the Dole during the Work for the Dole phase, even though I was ineligible as I was in paid work. When I told my caseworker this, it was ignored and I was just told I needed to "get my hours up and work more", despite the fact they knew I was a casual employee with a set number of contracted hours. At no point did they help me, or even suggest anything to me in anyway to help me get employment. At no point were my rights and obligations under Social Security law*

explained to me. What was written in the Mutual Obligation Agreement was never suggested to be negotiable. It was just put in front of me with very little time to read and I was told to sign it. When I first secured work (this was before I entered the Work for the Dole Phase) I was told I'd need to come in for an appointment to get my details. I told them that to do this I'd actually need to take a day off work, as I was employed as a casual, but worked 5 days a week (Mon - Fri). I suggested emailing or faxing them my new work details. I was told I would still have to come in. This actually resulted in me taking time off work. I explained that I didn't think they were able to ask anyone to take time out of work to come in and see them, but this was what I was told and what I ended up doing.

Additionally, on my first meeting with a male AMES/Wesley caseworker, I was told that I would need to come in for meetings once a month until I found work and that I should think of it as meeting him once a month, "like going on a date." I felt uncomfortable about this as I found it rather unprofessional. I didn't feel like there was any real oversight of this worker's conduct. I understand it was a throw away, casual comment - but I found it to be incredibly unprofessional. It made me uneasy about coming in for appointments there in the future.

- *Just one of the untoward things my jobactive member did was to cross out one of my responses to their privacy request, mark a different response and initial for me, right in front of me. Their obligation framework exacerbated a pre-existing stress related eye disorder I suffer from, leaving me UNFIT for work or study for over 12 months now while my eye heals. When I told them of my illness they treated me with suspicion and derision. My provider even tried to insist that I needed to attend an appointment which would see me lose money in my small business, rather than complete the work required and come in on another day. As Atwork writes the Disability service rules/ethics, i could not complain to the disability employment service complaint line (conflict of interest), and had to go through the normal one. UNPROFESSIONAL, UNHAPPY, and now UNWELL - these services are the biggest WASTE of taxpayers money I have ever seen*
- *Repeatedly lied to regarding the suitability of volunteering in place of WFD activities. Case manager never read my work history or qualifications. Told to apply for jobs which I was in no way qualified for.*
- *Incompetent uneducated staff. An insult to my intelligence. Uncaring and unempathetic staff employed to abuse the unemployed. Proved to be of no use what so ever in my search for employment. Patronising. Condescending. Disregarded my input. Threatened to cut off my payments. Had no respect for my experience or qualifications.*

- *I was with Max Employment due to single parenting, having depression and chronic pain as well as children with health issues, working and studying casually and they were no help at all, made my issues and anxiety 100% worse. Unethical and uncaring agency. I'm not with them now, that's a whole different story. I say that all of the agencies should be shut down immediately.*
- *Punitive approach that saw them discounting jobs applicable to my tertiary education as 'too competitive'. Placed me in an op shop for work for the dole that saw me turning coat hangers so they all faced the same way after 6 yrs of tertiary education. Threatened to place me in the chicken factory or a minimum wage service station, with threats of suspension if I didn't comply. Total lack of respect and empathy, helpfulness or intelligence*
- *I found my service provider unhelpful, discriminatory, extremely rude, and never responded in an appropriate manner to my complaints, concerns, questions, expectations of mutual obligation. My rights and responsibilities were totally ignored in favour of the agencies own agenda. No assistance intensive financial or otherwise was provided to help me look for work.*
- *Have been trying to transfer providers for last 3 weeks and Dept. Employment have refused*
- *The Job Active system does not help me overcome barriers into employment,*
- *AMES Preston insisted I attend monthly appointments with them despite my working full-time (a short-term work contract I found without their assistance). I was not informed at the time that I had the option of "attending" these appointments via telephone. AMES Preston reported me to Centrelink for failing to attend an appointment without a valid excuse. My access to the mygov website was then blocked which prevented me from declaring my income. I was then informed by Centrelink that as I had failed to declare my income, I would no longer be eligible for assistance. This happened twice in 4 weeks & resulted in both AMES & Centrelink deregistering me. My contract has now ended & I will have to re-register with Centrelink & another job service provider all over again. I forwarded a complaint (4 weeks ago) to the Department of Employment regarding the unfair & punitive behaviour of AMES Preston & have yet to receive a reply.*
- *APM have done virtually nothing to help me find work. The staff turnover is very high, and I've had more than 12 consultants. Each one suggests I improve my CV and give me suggestions on what to do, then the next person suggests I undo those improvements and put*

it back to how it was before. The next one says change it back, and so on. They never look at what is written on my file because they always ask me the same questions - no, I don't want to work in the same line of work I was fired from 4 years ago!!!! I got some money towards interview clothes once, and nothing in the 3 1/2 years since. APM will NOT pay for any training unless I get a job. How do I get a job without training? They did not tell me I was entitled to a free TAFE course - I found out from another disability service. The meetings with APM cause me great anxiety and I always feel sick before each one and then go to bed for several days afterwards. After one meeting, I was so upset I couldn't eat for days, and I fainted and hit my head on furniture. All AMP ever do is criticise the job applications I've written.

- *Even though I was entitled to funding for a guaranteed job I was denied that funding and because I couldn't get a suit I was turned away for the job. I strongly stated that I have to study not do work for the dole (legalised slavery) and they bullied me into signing a contract making me do 50 hours a week.*
- *Outrageous experience. Receiving zero support and help. Receiving constant insults and humiliation in the most offensive way one can imagine. Became deeply depressed. Medication doesn't help.*
- *Really bad when a provider tells you they are not set up for your line of work. Constantly in breach of their own job active agreement & they don't show you your mutual obligation agreement either.*
- *Frankly, the place was abysmal. I received next to no help. There were no pathways to or discussions about upskilling. There was little to no engagement in how to move forward, only a churning out of mandatory appointments. During work for the dole, there were next to no options, and accessibility was not taken into account. Furthermore, as my mental health worsened I was given no room for error, which compounded a worsening depression that lead to attempting suicide for the first time in over a decade. I received no support from the agency. It wasn't until I had my payments cut off, and had to call Centrelink and explain that I was hospitalised for attempted suicide that I was moved to stream four and given access to any kind of support. I was later diagnosed with PTSD and ultra-rapid cycling Bipolar Disorder, Type II. I firmly believe that had there been support for people struggling with their mental health, that engaged people in even a modicum of conversation about where they were at personally, the stress and deepening depression could have been mitigated, if not alleviated. I was unemployed for two years with a history of breakdowns, including depressive psychotic episodes. At no point was that taken into account. Toward the end, before I finally came off of Jobseeker and with it the ludicrous mandatory appointments with the network provider, I stopped*

applying altogether. I was exhausted and so disheartened I just took whatever job was on the web and marked it down. At no point did anyone ever check, at no point did the network provider notice that I was 'applying' for random vacancies (some of which completely outside of my skill set). Providers are a joke at best, and a vicious animal at worst. Australians need pathways to employment that take into account their needs. Not a blanket of oppressive obligation to waste money travelling to a parade of bullshit every other week. The way things are, the way this system works, there won't be employment for everyone. So it's high time we cut the crap with regard to un and under employment, welfare, and ensured that every Australian has the inalienable right to subsistence, quality of life, and social mobility. "Pull together" appears to only matter when the rich need us to. And the clearest proof of that fact lies in the bankruptcy of network providers

- *I was told by APM I had to work at a place they FOUND for me which was going to pay me under minimum wage and refused to pay me superannuation. When I told APM I didn't want this work they threatened to cut my payments. When I asked for that in writing via email they agreed, then a couple of hours later had a "regional manager" call me on the phone and tell me I would not receive anything in writing and I just had to take her word for it that they wouldn't actually cut my payments if I refused to work for this place they recommended me. When I asked what proof I'd be provided with that this conversation took place she told me she could hear people laughing at her in the background. It was the trees in my backyard blowing in the wind. I made a complaint to DOE the next day and got a job a week later (without any help from them at all). They constantly threatened to cut my payments for no reason and treated me like a second class citizen. Worst experience I've ever had in the welfare system.*
- *I have had about 6 different case managers in just over a year with them. They have had a huge staff turnover. Everytime I go I see new faces. I am getting so tired of seeing different people all of the time.*
- *Absolutely rotten and corrupt. NO help at all for my situation, all efforts were to create pointless interviews and mind numbing activities to torment jobseekers and make these parasites richer. Five years without a single job referral. I became seriously ill in 2012, and consequently significantly disabled while with them, and they NEVER told me about how there was a POS requirement for applying for DSP. They NEVER did anything useful for me before my illness became very serious, I was subjected to utter nonsense from a staff psychologist who made up a bunch of shocking psychobabble BS about me to fabricate lucrative interventions they planned to profit from. I did not see this ridiculous document until I was appealing to the AAT about my DSP claim, and it was refered to by*

the agency as proof that their program was helping me. this stupid plan was a year out of date before I even made my application, and it predated my health disaster by 6 months. These creeps REFUSED to provide a letter for Centrelink explaining that they had told me their program had nothing to offer due to my worsened heath condition, and that I should apply for DSP. Recently I got copies of my document history from them, and found that the notes about these appointments where these things were discussed were IN THERE, on the dates i told them the conversations happened, but they had refused to help me at all when asked. Also, the DOE complaint line is useless, because they have NO powers at all to compel rogue JSPs to act according to their charter of service. Agencies know this, and they just laugh at our complaints, knowing nobody will do anything about their shocking mongrel behavior to unemployed disabled people. It has taken notifying this agency of my intent to SUE them to get cooperation from them to tell the truth about the situation.

- *I completed a teaching degree at the end of October and was removed from Austudy and placed on Newstart. I had already applied for, been interviewed and accepted a temporary contract teaching full time commencing at the end of January prior to being linked to the job provider. I had a one on one interview were my time was wasted as they did not correctly input the details I provided them and I had to correct and revised the issues. I was then made to sign a contract that contained incorrect information even when I pointed it out to them. I was required to apply for 20 position a month even though I had a job starting in less than 10 weeks time. They provided no assistance in providing any referrals to employers for short time placements. Further my time was wasted sitting in group appointments of 20 or more people with only 4 computers to assess self service and photocopies of the newspaper vacancies, both of which I had already been through. there was only one staff member to assist and it took up to 2 hours to be seen and signed off, and no assistance given. As soon as I started the job that I had secured myself prior to being placed with the job provider, they asked me to provide the details of the position to them again that I had already given them previously and then they reported to Centrelink that they had placed me so that they could claim payment and this resulted in my family being cut off from the Health Care Card even though we were entitled to remain on it for 8 weeks. I then had to waste more time getting the HCC reinstated.*
- *My provider deliberately provided incorrect information to Centrelink, resulting in my payment being suspended. When I attempted to lodge formal complaints about his conduct, I was told that the matter was resolved as I'd managed to get my payment reinstated. I was punished for his unprofessionalism yet he was not.*

- *I've found my dealings with ORS to be inappropriate in many circumstances. Given that I am 63 I find the generational and ageist way I am treated/spoken too, completely inappropriate and unethical. They also have no regard for my cultural issues, and on occasion I have found them to be very insulting.*
- *Have been treated unfairly after being bitten by a dog at my wftd activity at the rspca payments have been suspended for unattendance and have had threats of being penalized sarina russo told me that it shouldn't have happened but nothing has been sorted out yet*
- *Australia desperately needs an inquiry or commission into the conduct of JSPs. The multi-billion dollar rort they are performing on taxpayer funds is nothing short of criminal. It is one of the most unethical industries out there, with documented systematic theft - not to mention flagrant abuse of the government deed and therefore of clients. They are completely shameless in their behaviour and people are taking their own lives over the treatment they receive from JSPs. Max is by far the worst perpetrator of it; they have no shame. We need to get control over these frauds. Even if they choose to ignore the law- they are bound by it and we need to ensure it is enforced and they comply.*
- *During my time with my provider I have been non-stop lied to and deceived by them on a regular basis. They have on multiple occasions used increased "appointments" as a form of punishment if I do not do what they want, even if I am not obligated to. Although I was able to defend myself against their abuse by opening a case with an authorized officer from the DES, many unemployed are too vulnerable, misinformed, and afraid to ever go against them and simply do whatever inane and pointless 'activity' they are put in, earning the job provider a pretty penny from the government. They are a mafia, who's only purpose is to get paid to waste people's time, they exploit the most vulnerable in the community by keeping them misinformed about their rights and obligations and threatening any questions with devastatingly punitive actions.*
- *I found APM Ingleburn to be the worst provider i have ever used they are rude and incompetant ,Brendan the young guy that saw me told me I couldnt apply for Jobs advrtised on websites he said that I had to go cold calling on bussinesses ,when I asked him why he said shut up and get out of my office as I am now exiting you from this agency your to old and to fat to get a job nobody will hire you.*
- *I am a 49 year old teacher, artist, musician, - someone who has over 20 years of experience of education, music, as well as many years of previous experience in hospitality and aged care and music (entertainment, arts etc). I am someone who has suffered from*

chronic back pain for over 12 years now - sometimes it has been manageable, though the past few years the condition has worsened and made life very difficult - I've used up my finances, made it often impossible to work, sleep etc. (And spent much time and money trying to improve the situation.) In addition to the spinal problems, I've also recently had the number of epileptic seizures Medication has now effectively kept the epilepsy at bay, and it is less of an impediment, now, to employment than the spinal condition. My experiences of Max Employment (in two locations) were (and I have had friends and colleagues with similar experience of the same company) as follows: (a) Most staff have neither the maturity, training, 'industry contacts' or experience required to effectively work with the diverse range of people who are required to sign up with them, and to address the issues that hinder re-entry into employment. (b) The job network agencies, (many, like the foreign owned Max Employment) work on quota systems and will penalise people for being unwilling (i.e. often unable) to take up the 'work' that is being offered to them. (Often this is temporary work with no possibility of promotion, - telemarketing, for example, entirely unsuitable to a persons' personality, character or physical ability, and possibly not even viable, when factors such as transport are taken into account.) (c) In addition to staff lacking the 'people skills' to work effectively in such an environment, too many (although not all) lack respect for the clientele. I have witnessed many incidents of staff at these places condescend, i.e. 'talk down' to unemployed people who are more than twice their age - old enough to be the consultants' mother or father. This creates an 'ugly' environment - a negative social dynamic; something inappropriate and entirely unacceptable if the real problems associated with long term unemployed, in particular, are to be addressed in any effective way. Whilst signed with Max Employment, and with my ongoing back problems, I agreed (against my better judgement) to undertaking another course - a Certificate III in Aged and Community Care. After completing the 2 or 3 weeks of work experience (unpaid) I was, once again, experiencing severe lower back pain, and unable to sleep or work effectively. Eventually, I took an opportunity to teach (music) overseas - However I now may have to return to Australia because of the persistent back pain, and the lack of treatment options in the country I'm now living and working. I believe there other broader (cultural) issues which need a lot more time to discuss, and write about now. You are welcome to contact me at a later time. It is likely that I will be back in Australia soon, anyway.

Paul Robertson

- *job active never offered Employment Fund even tho obvious need, and met all criteria. NEIS was suggested and attempted, but without the requested, and necessary offsite ie. out of house (and eligible)*

music therapy training, NEIS was pointless to be frank. But job active would have been paid for my NEIS component? I know SO many others who are not even aware of Employment Fund altho eligible. One recent example is \$1000 for public vehicle licence disallowed --- even though this person had a guaranteed job and had previous experience. Basically begging but disallowed!! even though on correct STREAM. Please excuse ramble, but I fear there is a growing 'overseas' mindset trickling in. There is opportunity for global "welfare" logistics supply companies to profit and sadly this may be driving expansion here. Too much power, and no oversight allows Job agency to sanction clients (many cases proven unfounded and unfair) and this forces clients to then require welfare "gift card" that are limited-to-supplier. The supply company provides these generating tax write-off? (or government reimbursed?). The face \$\$value of the "giftcard" is less than the actual cost of goods. Big profits. A subsidiary US company has been convicted of racketeering, and is job active provider operating here in Australia.

- *my provider agrees with me that i should not be made to attend, however she says she has her hands tied. She said i have so much evidence of chronic sickness, she didnt know why i was not on dsp. After visiting specialist i am about to apply again for dsp. If they find me not eligible again i am so scared of what may become of me..... what the provider will make me do. I have never been so scared of something in my life, this will make me or break me and i have a feeling it will be the later :(*
- *I was much better supported by Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services, before they were disbanded. Before I had consultants that have a background and knowledge in Disability and healthcare, as well as job seeking. Max employment claim to be a disability service provider, but they don't even have the facilitates for people with disabilities (eg easy access to toilets, wheelchair friendly, appropriate chairs/desks etc.). The consultants also have zero training or expertise in disability, in fact they also have very little knowledge of how Centrelink works, their own obligations, or even how to operate their computer system (that crashes every time I'm in the office). They have been a hinderance in me keeping employment, and in looking after my health. I was just told the Max employment I attend just won best Office in Australia. I can't bare to think of what others must be going through if my own horrible experiences are coming from the 'best office' in Australia.*
- *I was with Neato for 12 months in 2015/16. Not once did they said me for an interview or even suggest any employment opportunities . They just told me what my obligations to them where. The staff were never friendly and always their first approach was offensive and threatening. It was always an adversarial approach from them and I never felt like they were there to help me, only to threaten me. To be*

honest whenever I went to their office the experience was as I would imagine having a parole officer is like. The worst experience I had with them was actually when I was no longer receiving any benefit from Human Services and Neato continued to send me letters telling me I needed to attend appointments with them. This continued for 2 months after I was no longer on Newstart. I went to their office to complain, they said it was Centrelink's fault. I went to Centrelink, they said no it was Neato's fault. Went back to Neato and challenged them about still having me on their books and perhaps they were still receiving money for me even though I was no longer receiving benefit. Something that the local Centrelink office implied could be happening. NEATO threatened to call the police on me. I called their head office and was fobbed off and told they would ring back. They never did but the letters stopped. I know of at least 5 people in my area who's experience has been so bad with both NEATO and Best employment here that they choose not to be receipt of benefit and live in poverty, relying on infrequent casual work and friends and family to survive.

- I have had three different case managers in my time at WorkSkil Broadmeadows in Victoria, and all of them were unhelpful and had various issues. My first was very disengaged and never paid attention to anything that I said or did. She neglected to give me the right paperwork and I was never in her office for more than one or two minutes at a time. My second was very rude and arrogant. He used our appointments as opportunities for him to brag about himself. How great he is at his job, how much experience he has, how much education he has, how he used to be an accountant, how he had been a refugee twice over and nobody had had a harder life than him, and how everyone who works with him gets a job, except for one woman with a body odour issue. Whenever he asked me anything about job searching and I answered, he would always respond with some variant of "Yeah, it's no wonder you haven't got a job doing that." He would promise me the world and offer to do everything for me, but never followed through. My third and I have never got on well. I missed my first appointment with her because I had already had an appointment with my second case manager that month, and I wasn't told about the new one (the letter didn't come until ten days later), and when my payments were cut off and I had to go into WorkSkil Broadmeadows to sort that out, she was stroppy and rude to me, thinking that I had missed the appointment on purpose, even though I had an exemplary record for attendance and compliance. This attitude carried throughout the rest of our appointments and she lied to me on numerous occasions, repeatedly telling me that I could stay on Newstart and not have to apply for jobs, attend appointments or have other obligations, and then later contradicting herself. I later found out from an independent source that none of my obligations would change, once I went back to full time study (which I have since done). I have switched over to Youth Allowance.*

Although it pays less than Newstart, it is far less stressful than being on Newstart, because I don't have to constantly worry about jobactive, Work for the Dole and Centrelink. Being on Newstart is also a constant reminder of being unemployed and that is really depressing and aggravating in itself. I don't believe that anybody chooses to be unemployed, because the alternative is dealing with Centrelink, jobactive and Work for the Dole. All of those three factors combined made me depressed, anxious and angry, all of the time. At least one of those emotions was present in my life, for every minute that I was on Newstart. I hated every single second of it. Not one of these case managers at WorkSkil Broadmeadows made any effort to refer me to any jobs or other employment resources, that could have helped me. I did not receive any training, interviews or anything else worthwhile from them. In fact, I regularly asked my second case manager for some help with addressing key selection criteria, and his response was "Just look online, you'll find something." That's just one example of the kind of behaviour that the vast majority of these case managers represent. I am so glad that I no longer have to put up with Centrelink, jobactive providers (because from talking with other people in the same situation, they seem to be much the same, regardless of name or affiliation), or Work for the Dole providers. However, I am absolutely terrified of not being able to find a job after my graduation. I am literally scared of having to go back on Newstart, because regularly having to constantly deal with Centrelink, jobactive and Work for the Dole made me feel awful about myself. Any self esteem that I had prior to going on Newstart was sorely tested and damn near obliterated by being treated like a criminal, just because I was / am unemployed. The "guilty until proved innocent" mentality is absolutely rife within Centrelink, jobactive and Work for the Dole. It genuinely treats people like unspeakable criminals for being impoverished and disadvantaged. The absolutely maddening thing about it is that the Australian government seems content to bury its head in the sand, about the ever growing unemployment and underemployment crises in Australia. There are nineteen job seekers for every single job opening now and it's only getting worse. The young, disabled and those living in rural areas are especially disadvantaged. In most cases, if not all, not having a job or not having enough hours at your job, is truly down to the economy and not personal fault. The attitudes of both the government and general society need to change their attitudes towards welfare, because the current system that we have is designed to punish, rather than help. It is cruel, harrowing and most of all - unnecessary. We as citizens deserve better than this.

- *I have been registered with Mission Providence for nearly 18 months. In that time they have not assisted me in any way to find employment. I don't use their facilities as I have my own computer and internet. They seem to put no effort into finding me work or work for the dole hosts - the only WFD placement they had was*

working for Vinnies. It's Vinnies or the Salvos in Leongatha, that's it, and I live a 75km round trip from Leongatha. When I asked for access to the \$300 I was entitled to from the Employment Fund they said that I was not eligible for anything. I had to point them to the relevant guidelines, and finally managed to access that money. It seems to be impossible to get money for some training that I need. So basically, I am on my own. I could go on, but it would just be a rant about how the government gives millions of dollars to private orgs that do nothing for jobseekers, instead of actually asking jobseekers what they need. Training would be high on my list of things that might help me find permanent work, but rather than invest in some training, the government would rather pay Mission Providence to do nothing for me.

- *As a single parent I found dealing with my JSP to be annoying. I was studying and had a casual position in my field of study but still had monthly appointments to fit in. I received no financial assistance and the JSP did not help me either get into my course or get my job. Instead of WFTD I was expected to get my supervising teacher to sign off on my attendance. Worse was that this included my placement time as part of study. I'd have been better off left to my own devices instead of stressed out by mutual agreements. I am now working permanently with a higher qualification at my original work place. No help from the JSP.*
- *3 years and not one interview. max employment cut my payments when I was full time student and whilst I was sitting exams, I had been receiving full time counseling after marriage breakdown, suffering anxiety and depression, I am in my 50's have applied for hundreds of jobs. I do not need the stress from there constant threats and harassment. If there were jobs out there I should have one.*
- *An awful experience with assistance lacking and a non-existent nurturing approach. I was targeted unfairly and bullied. Not all job listings on the Jobactive website were legit either. Overall, an unpleasant and stressful experience which has only put me backwards.*
- *When I started at my current provider they were the best experience with a job agency I'd ever had. Over the last few years the quality of service has declined dramatically. The only reason I didn't change providers in July 2015 was because the management of the office I go to changed, along with most of the workers, and I was given a copy of Helps 'WoW' (wheel of work) and told that things would be different from now on, and a bunch of promises, eg. I would get 2 jobs to apply for at every appointment, that I'd get help with locating training, etc. NONE of the promised new systems have ever eventuated. In the last few months the assistance and treatment I have received has gone from uninspired and leaden to*

obstructionary and punitive. The current system is structured in a way where I can have a stop payment applied for 'not attending an interview' when the office was advised the day before that I had a job interview and induction at that time. While at the same time I'm still trying to get the paperwork for qualifications that I was forced to do by the same provider December 2012. There is seemingly have no recourse or way to deal with this apart from an official complaint, which would just cause more punitive responses. This is sign that the balance of power is to much in favour of the private, commercial operations and biased against the job seeker.

- *Was able to find casual work but was suspended on numerous occasions for attending this work lodged numerous complaints with centrelink mps secretary of employment dept (ms renee leon) and the dept complaints line but never got responses this happened with more than one provider*
- *JobCo continually harass me, while I am covered by medical certificates. Centrelink have also informed me that I do not have any mutual obligations.*
- *I should never have been involved with a job search provider, and should have been involved with a disability service provider. That's a Centrelink screwup due to a recommendation that was never followed up on, but Jobs Statewide should have recognised that I needed to be elsewhere and guided me in that direction. Less than a month ago, so late in November 2016, I met with someone I hadn't met before, discussed my situation with them, and was informed that I can change to a disability service provider (pending an ESAT), and have received good assistance starting that process. With Jobs Statewide, on a regular basis appointments are booked for me with no input from me or notification given, leading to me missing that appointment and having benefits cut because they don't bother sending me a letter or calling me to let me know about the appointment. Sometimes they decide to book a new appointment for me after I've missed one like this, but don't communicate with me about it, and fail to notify me of the new appointment, leading me to miss that one too. Despite my medical issues they have, until recently, tried to press me into participation activities that I am unable to undertake due to medical reasons. Trying to constantly deal with fallout constantly exacerbated my medical problems. In short, Jobs Statewide are incompetent and unprofessional when it comes to scheduling appointments, communicating with their clients, informing their clients about other options that may be more suitable, and they fail to work with their clients to adjust their jobactive initiatives to suit their client with medical problems.*
- *Direct recruitment were very unhelpful and reluctant to answer any queries I had about most topics I raised. I participated in WFTD and*

they did not even notify Centrelink so I was not correctly paid the supplement I was entitled to.

- *My provider was primarily concerned with my participation in the work for the dole program above anything else including helping me find real work. My brief participation in this program was a waste of time as the vast majority of placements are in lifeline type stores. I strongly believe the program is not designed to help people prepare for work otherwise it would be based on your age, background and experience as to whether you are required to participate, like sending a 40 year old accountant made redundant to work experience when its normally reserved for high school students. I believe its there as a deterrent for people to apply for Newstart or stay on it for any period of time forcing them to become a burden on their families and if they do participate it reduces their time to look for real work which is Incongruent. My wife returned to the workforce after many years away until our child turned 6 and was briefly with the same provider and instead of offering her interview refresher training etc all they were concerned about was placing her in the WFD program. In the meantime she secured employment with Coles and they probably got the credit and payment after doing absolutely nothing to assist her. This would include not even using their facilities as everything was done from our home. My strong opinion is the amount of money the government spend on these job service providers that do very little to actually assist the majority of people to find a job, although like in my wife's case the statistics would read otherwise, we would all be better off with a self service type support network where if my wife or myself choose to use a choice of programs eg Interview skills refresher training or their office facilities to apply for jobs etc then the government is charged on our behalf like an outplacement program. This would save a fortune and more than pay for anybody who may be on the dole longer than expected. I think the group or profile the job service providers really assist currently would be the young and inexperienced or under educated etc and a self service system would not change this. The fact that their are really only so many job vacancies per skills and age group only magnifies this situation.*
- *My experience with Mission Providence was a lot of hassle and waiting around for little reward. They gave me forms to fill out, I returned them, then they put them in a drawer without looking at them and gave me a new form. I didn't receive any advice on how to find work, and I didn't receive any help finding work. I honestly don't believe that their purpose is to help you find a job. I think they just want to waste your time and make life difficult for you. I had a similar experience previously when I was between jobs and went to Max Employment. The only vaguely useful thing about Max Employment was they said I could print my resume there if I wanted, although I declined as I usually apply for jobs online. With both*

companies I spent a lot of time trying to make appointments, filling out forms, making phone calls to them etc. At the same time I had to deal with centrelink and the millions of forms they wanted, trying to work out why I had been cut off from centrelink without notice, trying to get back on centrelink, filling out more forms... I wasted so much time and energy that could have been spent doing volunteer work or applying for jobs.

- *The jobactive providers at this place bullied and harassed me. I had a panic attack in my last meeting as they were bullying me into doing Work For The Dole, when I was aware that it was my right not to do so because I am doing part time work and have pay deducted from my Centrelink. Despite showing them the social security law and the part in the mutual obligations guidelines that said I didn't have to do Work For The Dole, they continued to harass me for one hour until I eventually had to give up. She couldn't show me one part in the law that said otherwise and said that the union was wrong. She said I had to give my psychologist and the union her business card so she can talk to them instead and correct their wrong information. I think she was just trying to wear me down until I gave in. It worked. Even while I was having a panic attack and had told her that I have severe anxiety and depression, which has made it difficult for me to do full time work at the moment, she showed no empathy or understanding. It was horrendous and I left in a terrible state of anxiety and anger. It was extraordinarily humiliating and I now feel scared that she is going to continue bullying me.*
- *Quite often rude and disrespectful to me. Outright refused to use the Employment Fund to help me do a Barista course which was totally relevant to my experience and would definitely have improved my chances of finding work. Expected me to go into their office everyday to use their slow and not-always working computers to find work. I volunteer at the Childrens Hospital 3 days a week AND have 5 kids and they were not considerate of this at all*
- *it appears that this provider wants to take credit for me getting employment...they continue to harass me even though i have on countless occasions requested that they do not contact me or my employer.A TOTAL WASTE OF PUBLIC TIME and MONEY*
- *Encountered bullying whilst doing work for the dole. Although bullying is widespread in the community, i believe work for the dole does more harm than good. No one deserves to be put in a position, when it is not necessary, an can leave people vulnerable.*
- *When the 3 'month funding for employers to give me a job ran out, so did my job*

- After some mucking around with Centrelink to obtain Newstart I commenced the process with Jobs Statewide on 28th October 2015. In Thirteen months I have seen eight supposed case managers and one case manager re my resume. All but one of these case managers have left. What does that tell you about there Culture ,Staff Moral and there commitment to us? The people that are there are using this as a stepping stone to better job roles. I am in my sixties so I miss most of the stuff you have to complete. But let me tell you the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. My Job Plan has changed three times. They Jobs Statewide cant stick to it. I have to keep bring them back to the job plan that we both agreed on. Once they SMS myself to say I had not been to an appointment and my payment's would be stopped. The person on the front desk did not log off my name when I checked in fortunately I gave them a name of a case manager I was talking too to go see them. They came back and said yes you were here. My gut feel is they are talking the money from the Government and do very little for it. You are on your own they do not have a support system and do not have your interest at heart not one case manager has sat down and gone through my Resume with me and asked what jobs are you targeting, working full time ,part time. I keep my own log and I would strongly recommend everyone keeps one. In the New Year I am off to see the Federal Members for my area I will share my experiences with them.
- Work for the dole was the most depressing thing I have ever done in my life, did not use my skills at all and they constantly ran out of work for me to do (sending actual volunteers home). It did not help me return to work, it made me want to die of embarrassment because everyone knew why I was there and it was like I was on prison-release.
- The employment agency my daughter has been dealing with have been extremely unprofessional and caused harm with their disrespectful attitude and comments. We asked to have her moved to another service but were told she would have to get permission from her current service provider. When she asked them to transfer somewhere else she told them as politely as she could the reasons why and she was told her reasons "wouldn't cut it!" They have caused her and us as a single parent family grief and despair. We are currently still trying to have her be transferred to another service provider
- Obtained a major injury on-site during Work for the Dole activities, with ongoing chronic pain from back/hip/ankle injuries resulting from fall trauma 10 months ago. There is no WorkCover or liability insurance for which to be compensated medically, so my treatment has been sub par and financially I cannot afford follow up investigations or treatment. These policies and practices are

dangerous.

- *Put me on WFD with maximum hours WHILE I was studying part time. I asked them if this affected my hours and they said no. I discover, 3 months later, that I was entitled to 5 hours WFD less a week.*
- *If I ever need Unemployment Benefits again, seriously would consider suicide. Centrelink staff were okay Tracys were abysmal.*
- *My provider gave minimal assistance. The worst thing was that they had other jobseekers and myself 'sign in' as attending on-site activities when we didn't actually attend. By the time I'd been with them for a few weeks I took a job telemarketing wine-club memberships as the prospect of continuing with this agency was too depressing.*
- *Holly Voller and Renee Simpson from Open Minds Goodna treated me poorly and I found the Department of Employment were bias during the dispute process. I felt DoE sided with Open Minds (even without much input from me as DoE closed my initial dispute within 7 days of it being opened without myself having had any contact from the Manager from Open Minds who was suppose to contact me to try and resolve my complaint and DoE didn't tell me my dispute was closed until I contacted DoE approx. 1 month later!). Open Minds Head Office also ignored my concerns. I found the Department of Employment useless and an insult as it got me nowhere and Open Minds Goodna continued to harass me for 3 months after I had left them. Holly Voller told me that Open Minds had recently won a big government contract (Employment Services) so now they have moved into bigger buildings, Open Minds called us (people who use their services) customers (not clients???) and they recently sent an email link to their 2015/2016 Annual Report where they gloated that their profits are up 13.7% for the year to \$29.1 million. Proof it's about the \$\$\$\$\$?????*
- *My experience with Workskil has been one of meaningless tasks and misinformation under the guise of finding a job but really driven to ensure compliance. Often I haven been told by Workskil to see Centrelink about an issue and then be told to go back to Workskil all the while having no real resolution. Lately my experience is of multiple case managers alternating between well-meaning misinformed and competent, conciliatory people assuring me that the same mistakes won't happen again. 3 initial assessments because apparently information isn't shared with centrelink, or within their own systems. When I was working Workskil maintained I was getting a full payment from centrelink even though I was not, which was conformed by centrelink. Still they would not or could not*

update their systems.

- *I only attended 1 appointment with Wise before I was medically exempted from work. I and several others arrived for our appointed time and were left sitting in the foyer for 1.5 hours as they were "overbooked". Only when several of us began to loudly complain were we attended to. I saw the Wise person for 5 minutes and gave him a copy of my doctors certificate. He didn't want to know and told me to give it to Centrelink. He then immediately said I had to do work for the dole despite just being handed a doctors certificate stating I was not fit to work for 3 months. I was not told of any alternative like volunteer work. I am 58 and thought there were reduced requirements for my age but none were mentioned. I was subsequently exempted from work by Centrelink for 3 months and then 12 months after a work capacity review. I have not seen Wise since. Some years ago I was with Break Thru as a DSP due to my health. I was told I had to attend twice weekly which I believe is not correct for over 50. I had to beg them to send me on a computer accounting course, but they would not pay \$15 for the software disc to take home so I could practise! I got a 6 month contract job. They still insisted I still attend appointments or they came and saw me. At the end of the contract no new contract was given to me or further employment offered, so after the end date I considered that my contract was over and I finished the job. I was then called a few days later asking why I wasn't at work. I was told I had 'deserted' my employment despite me arguing that my contract (that I had in writing) had been fulfilled and the end date had passed. Break Thru sided with the employer even though they were clearly wrong.*
- *I was in Stream 4 that was cut July 2015 & is now Stream C. I have a reduced work capacity of 8-12 hr / week, but am forced to look for full time work. I am almost 60, but being treated as a teenager. However, I have a new case manager who is trying hard to help me as much as she is able, which sadly isn't that much because of restrictions by the Government departments responsible. It has become far more difficult than it should be. This is the 2nd Agency since the changes July 2015. The 1st vanished after 4 months & left me in limbo for 3 Months until PeoplePlus took over. My Doctor gave me a medical certificate so I wouldn't lose my payments during the transition.*
- *The Jobactive program has been a punitive and unpleasant experience for ALL concerned in my case. I experienced discrimination, homophobic abuse, breeches of confidentiality and unreasonable demands from the provider of the WFTD program. I have since REFUSED to participate in any future Work For The Dole scams. Jobs Statewide has allowed me to conduct my own work experience program, which is something I have to explain every time I attend an appointment with them. Their turnover of staff is so high*

that every time I attend I have to deal with a new employment officer. I have complained about this - I feel it is important that when someone has the power of life and death over me that they should at least KNOW me and understand my situation. I find the entire Jobactive program to be punitive, exploitative, fraught with various dangers, humiliating, unfair, unjustifiable and above all CORRUPT. At Jobs Statewide Adelaide candidates are only ever sent to WFTD providers that Jobs Statewide owns itself. Which means the money is funnelled straight back into Jobs Statewide over and over. They get paid out both ends. This has been my experience with the Job Services Network generally. Campbell Page used to only send its clients to affiliated training providers (and staff from these training providers would regularly work in the Campbell Page office). They would refuse to send clients to TAFE, for example, even if it was in the clients' best interest. Because they like to keep all that sweet sweet Government money to themselves. And THAT is the overriding priority of the Jobactive program. To attract and retain Government funding, while benefiting the client is the very LAST issue of concern to them.

- *Appalling, full of bullying thugs that regularly scream and yell at jobseekers and are only interested in their own KPI's, bonuses and kickbacks that they get whenever they shove a jobseeker into anything, be it a training course, usually dodgy job, WFTD or whatever. I am permanently scarred by my experience with these dithering idiots and after several years of this remain unemployed!*
- *The agency I was with were not proactive in helping me gain employment. They just expected that continued to show up for appointments, they never assisted me with any training in my work. Fortunately I didn't have to do work for the dole but I was told that I would have to go to Salamander Bay to recycling plant if I was to do it, my background is office administration so I did not see the relevance plus the travel would be 80kms each way in which I was expected to pay for my travel I think I would have been given \$20 extra. The whole process is degrading, you are made to attend ridiculous meetings, it's an ego trip for the government. Privatising unemployment is disgusting, having agencies who have to meet kpi's is dehumanising. All it has does is create an industry that trades on misery and doesn't achieve anything. Except keep people unemployed fortunately I gained employment but I was also told I would need to attend group meetings I was working part time and so was not even receiving the full amount of poverty support and then I was expected to attend group training which meant I would need to travel over 60kms for some ridiculous training that wouldn't assist me in gaining employment. It wasn't that I was unemployable, but I did have age against me, a "profession" that is becoming more automated (probably the most with technology changes), less jobs and more people seeking employment in that type of field, demand*

outstripping supply.

- *I have had worse experiences dealing with my employment services provider than I ever did under the old system of dealing with and reporting directly to Centrelink. I have been deliberately misinformed or misled about the extent or nature of services available to me, on more than one occasion had my payments suspended for missing an appointment despite having a conflicting job interview scheduled and giving prior notice, on one occasion I had my payment suspended despite attending the scheduled appointment, and despite having a certified and extensively documented disability, I was met with ongoing disbelief and derision rather than support services, capped with the ultimate insult of being recommended to apply for a position with the NDIS that my condition makes me incapable of or face suspension of payment for non-participation. In the end I claimed an advance payment from Centrelink, used the money to buy a used car, and immediately found employment with zero assistance or input on the entire process from my employment services provider.*
14. In November 2015 the AUWU set up a National Advocacy Service to inform Newstart recipients of their rights under social security law and assist them in their dealings with Employment Service Providers. In November 2016, the AUWU released its National Advocacy Hotline Yearly Report (attached). The report stated:

The data gathered by the AUWU offers a rare insight into the experiences of unemployed workers in job agencies. Below is a breakdown of the issues raised by callers in relation to their job agency, the percentage of calls from each state, the rural/urban breakdown of calls received, and a complete list of the job agencies involved.

Job Agency Name	Job Agency Name
Advanced Personal Management	AMES
At Work Australia	At Work Australia
Communicare	Employment Services Group
Wise Employment	Global Skills
Job Prospects	Jobs Statewide
Jobs4You	MADEC
MBC	OCTEC
Max Employment	NEATO
Salvation Army	Sarina Russo

Notes: Based on a sample of 170 calls. Callers can raise more than one issue. Max Employment (25%) and Sarina Russo (13%) were the job agencies most represented in the data collected.

The report concluded:

The AUWU is deeply concerned by the data gathered. The broad spectrum of issues poses serious questions regarding the quality of services being provided by job agencies. The data exposes not only the unscrupulous and punitive practises of job agencies, but also the failure of the Department of Employment to effectively regulate the industry and ensure that job agencies follow the relevant Government deeds and guidelines. Alarmingly, there were little to no consequences for job agencies that failed to uphold the government's rules.

The data gathered by the AUWU warrants the complete overhaul of the dysfunctional and punitive employment services industry. The existing mechanisms designed to reign in badly behaving job agencies are not working.

The AUWU renews its demand, in the strongest possible terms, for the establishment of an independent body to investigate and review the implementation of the jobactive and DES deeds, as well as the establishment of an independent ombudsman to handle complaints.

[...]The AUWU would like to point out in the strongest possible terms that before any changes are made to the employment services industry, the government must appoint an independent body to review and appropriately regulate the employment services industry. The government should and must do better to ensure that unemployed workers are treated fairly and offered the helping hand they require to get back into the workforce. To this end, the AUWU make the following recommendations to the Coalition government:

- Establish an employment services ombudsman to handle complaints

- Establish a parliamentary enquiry into the implementation of the *jobactive* and DES deeds
- Raise Newstart to the Henderson Poverty Line
- Improve laws and processes to hold badly behaving job agencies accountable
- Provide more funding to advocacy services related to employment services issues
- Remove strict eligibility requirements for the Disability Support Pension
- Abolish the dangerous Work for the Dole and Community Development Programs
- Establish parliamentary enquiry into Centrelink's process of rejecting medical certificates
- Establish parliamentary enquiry into Centrelink's imposition of financial penalties

Recommendations

15. The data collected by the AUWU as part of its survey and National Advocacy Hotline reveals the shortcoming not only of the *jobactive* system, but also of the Government's processes of measuring its performance.

Despite the deeply troubling nature of many of the issues raised by respondents to the survey and callers to the hotline, the vast majority would not be considered as relevant to the Government's 'outcome-focused' performance measuring processes. Indeed, the testimony of *jobactive* participants suggests that the negative experience of *jobactive* participants were in part influenced by the zealous manner in which *jobactive* providers pursued outcomes.

The AUWU would like to point out in the strongest possible terms that the Government's *jobactive* performance measuring process should prioritise the day-to-day experiences of *jobactive* participants. Having the voices of *jobactive* participants heard during the *jobactive* performance measuring process is essential in order to achieve measured and appropriate policy in this area. Consequently, the AUWU recommends that a comprehensive independent inquiry into the experience of *jobactive* participants be launched as soon as possible.

Appendix I: National Advocacy Hotline Yearly Report 2015-16