



**Un(der)employed People's Movement against  
Poverty Inc.**

**Submission to the Independent Review  
of the Job Network**

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## **Background Information**

The Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. was founded in March 2000 by a group of un- and underemployed people who felt that there was need to represent and advocate for the rights of people who are unemployed.

In October 2000 we affiliated with the Australian National Organisation of the Unemployed which was launched at the ACOSS Conference in November 2000.

Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. publishes a monthly newsletter, maintains a web site and has made numerous submissions, wrote letters to politicians and participated in a small research project. Further we are almost daily in contact with unemployed people who call us and want advise how to deal with Centrelink and the JNP.

The Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. receives no funding. We are involved in several networks locally which combat poverty and also with international networks overseas.

## **Executive Summary in Response to Terms of Reference**

In regards to the key guiding principles:

- 1) a strong focus on outcomes
- 2) to address structural weaknesses (purchaser-provider role)
- 3) the use of competition

the Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. would like to make the following statements:

In regards to 1):

- ⇒ A strong focus on outcomes needs to be accompanied by consultations with all stakeholders about what measurable outcomes indicate quality of service and how quality of service ought to be measured
- ⇒ Definitions of outcomes such as who is considered unemployed, if a job is found, how long will it need to be held, etc. need to be clearly and realistically defined to achieve improvement in the quality of services;
- ⇒ Evaluations of government programs cannot be undertaken in a climate of fear, recent JobNetwork research about breaching, effectiveness of Work for the Dolke programs, etc., have been undertaken either with selected participants or in a climate, where unemployed people do not speak the truth, as they fear retribution. None of our members has ever been consulted, neither has anyone in any of the groups affiliated with the Australian National Organisation of the Unemployed. And our telephone surveys show markedly different result from the officially published evaluations or participant satisfaction sheets.

In regards to 2):

- ⇒ The change of role of government from provider to purchaser can only be successful if quality assurance measures are implemented which come about with client consultation (and they should get paid for their time), and punitive measures are exchanged for incentives to participate. No comparison is possible between the effectiveness of the old model or the new. When people are forced to attend meaningless programs under the threat of having their incomes reduced or taken away completely, and find themselves a job for which the JNP, whom they had to involve, gets the credit, true quality and efficiency cannot be measured nor compared with a completely different system. Evidence on the ground has shown us that the old CES had compassion, assisted people individually (when they had enough staff) and found at least occasionally a job for someone. We have yet to hear of a single case where a JNP has found one of our members a job (and we have 50 long term unemployed activists and had about 30 short term unemployed activists over the last year)
- ⇒ Choice has increased but services are, with some exemptions, of the same poor quality, therefore the only choice unemployed people have, if they have more than one service in their area, is which religious grouping they wish to support, the Salvation Army, Mission Australia or Centacare, etc. For profit JNP are usually interested in profits and try to do as little as possible for their difficult to place clients.
- ⇒ Further, as purchaser of job search services, the government has eliminated accountability for the quality of services for the consumer. Unemployed people have no complaints mechanism in their dealing with the JN other than the Ombudsman. However, files cannot be accessed, as they belong to the provider who does not need to disclose his commercial secrets. We have come across a case where one for profit JNP disclosed information given to him in confidence to Centrelink, which took action against the unemployed person, while the application was sent in confidence to the provider. Who else gets to see job applications submitted to JNP while the clients do not have the right to view entries in their files if it is against the commercial interest?
- ⇒ Another concern is the opportunity provided by this model to rot the system. Where taxpayer's money is administered by government, clients of the service and taxpayers have the right to expect accountability. This is clouded in the current situation and rots near impossible to control with only a self regulation system or promises in codes of conducts.

In regards to 3) all the above responds to the question of whether greater quality and efficiency has been achieved by greater competition, it has not.

**The Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. believes that the performance of the JN could in general be improved by:**

- ⇒ Abolition of punitive measures and surveillance, instead basic income support payments and added participation payments will increase true motivation to look for jobs and get job ready
- ⇒ Better quality of job search programs, cold canvassing the same businesses over and over again, naturally receiving angry rejections, does not do much for the self esteem of job seekers;

- ⇒ Individual case management practices need to be improved by adding true career counselling services and access to affordable training, case managers need better qualifications to assess barriers to employment and referrals to adequate services; having run a lawn mowing business does not qualify someone to identify addiction problems or mental ill health in their clients, who often want to hide their problems as to not be excluded from finding a job.
- ⇒ Work for the Dole and Community Work should be amalgamated, why two classes of mutually obligated slaves? Further the amalgamated scheme should avoid any similarity to the Community Services Orders for convicted offenders. Community Work sounds like community service work, and unemployed people are even harsher punished, they often do the same work, but have to do work year in , year out, for as long as they are unemployed, offenders work towards an end to their 'sentence'.
- ⇒ Any enforced work program should contain a major training component, training which is accredited and should be delivered for free. There needs to be choice about where people can work.
- ⇒ Community organisations will find it very hard to become community work provider when they know about the required surveillance and compliance of their former volunteers. This creates great division amongst the many people who work as volunteers in the community. Already do volunteers point the finger at those mutually obligated volunteers to do the boring, dirty work, as they don't need to be here.
- ⇒ Eliminate the divisive, mean spirited elements from the treatment of the unemployed and they may actually gain the confidence to present themselves as winners and get a job, instead of feeling like a burden, a dole bludger, too old, or too young to be of use in our society.

**Regarding term of reference 5d)** Possible Scope for the model to apply to other government services:

Un(der)employed People's Movement against Poverty Inc. believes that this and other government services which have been outsourced have not always brought benefits to the public. We are in particular concerned about the possibility of privatising Centrelink's services in a similar manner. We believe that the control and administration of taxpayer's money ought to remain in government's hands.

We do not want our social services delivered by church or welfare organisations which have their own agenda for providing the service.

Social Security payments, assessments for eligibility and quality control of taxpayer funded program are the responsibility of the government.

The following responds to the Issues Paper of the Productivity Commission's Independent Review of the Job Network (JN).

## **1) Quality of assistance and sustainable employment outcomes**

In general the experience of our members and constituents has shown that there has been at the best no improvement since the old CES was tendered to the new Job Network Providers. Recent figures from DEWRSB have shown that the outcomes achieved were equal to the old system while costs had gone down slightly. However, economic growth had been significantly better, expressed in the falling unemployment figures over the last four years. So why did the current Job Network system not achieve better outcomes?

From the point of view of the individual client of the JN, the service quality has significantly declined. Many have reported that the old job clubs and SkillShare schemes were of better quality, staff were friendlier, they learned more and were offered real jobs. And that was at the time when Australia went through a recession!

UPM against Poverty Inc. has to yet find one single unemployed person which had a success story with the Job Network or a person who was satisfied with their experience of Job Search Training and Work for the Dole. Most have given up hope to find work through the system and perceive the JNP as additional hurdle to circumnavigate where possible.

Employers have told us that they resent the Employer Certificates (although they understand their purpose) and that they often get unqualified and ill matching referrals. A small verbal survey conducted in 1999 of small businesses in the Aldinga Beach area showed that none of the business owners had used the JN with satisfying results, and that most had tried several Providers in Noarlunga and Morphett Vale.

**The following responds in more detail to some of the raised questions in the issues paper:**

### **How should 'quality of assistance' be defined and measured?**

We believe that in any system of job search assistance outcomes (and funding tied to outcomes) ought to be measured in regards to **quality of service delivered**, ie. how many hours of career counselling, how many jobs offered, how much time spent on assisting client to find training, how much money spent on training, etc. Outcomes measured in terms of how many clients found employment, do not say anything about the quality of service.

Quality of assistance can be defined by code of conducts, quality assurance measures and targets in delivery or provision of essential and additional services such as training. The definition should be worked out in conjunction with unemployed people who have experienced the services and have been made to feel confident about telling the truth.

The quality assurance measures could contain statistics such as how much time spent in direct client contact, how many jobs offered, what kind of services offered (ie. mentoring or assistance in a new job, training, CV development, etc) and the self referral rate, which is always a good indicator whether the clients appreciate the service.

At no time should funding be tied to employment outcome. Most services only achieve their outcomes because the unemployed themselves have found jobs, which is accredited to the JNP. This will never give an indication about the quality of the service.

## **How should the term 'employment outcomes' be defined and measured?**

Employment outcomes should only be measured in cases where the JNP found the job and the applicant. Where a client found his/her own job some outcome can be credited as one ought to assume that the JNP worked towards getting the client work ready. Where an employer has approached the JNP to find suitable applicants outside of their own clientele, they could also get some bonus point as they provided a service to a customer. But these three outcomes and their variations need to be kept separate so that employment outcomes can be more accountable.

Further employment outcome in case of a client who has found a job needs to be defined more clearly and the definition needs to be linked to other factors/policies in the system. For example, a long term unemployed person (more than five years of continuous unemployment) is in Intensive Assistance and finds a short term job for twelve weeks. After this the person is again unemployed for several years. Did this short stint of employment warrant a new application for Newstart Allowance with its preclusion period and the cessation of eligibility for Intensive Assistance? Will this person have to start again with ten Employer Certificates per fortnight?

The same applies in case of part time or casual work. Although someone may hold a part time job, they may still need assistance to find a full time job and to be trained to increase their chances.

In addition and underlying is the question how unemployment should be measured! The current statistics do not give a clear picture about the extend of unemployment. Many people are not registered as unemployed, because they have assets, their spouses earn an income, or they are precluded for other reasons. Many have abandoned the system and work odd jobs they do not declare while still looking for a better job, many students are looking for work and there are also a great number of people with a disability who are looking for meaningful work.

Unless un- and underemployed people can be clearly and honestly reflected in the statistics, employment outcomes cannot clearly be defined. Is someone who got a part time job, but wants more hours or full time employment not a job seeker?

## **What have been the effects of the JN referral process on the incentive of unemployed people to seek work prior to actually utilising JN services?**

In our experience and resulting from our consultations with our membership the existence of the referral system has neither encouraged nor discouraged people to look for jobs prior to utilising the JN services.

However the prospect of having to enter the JN system is something many unemployed do not enjoy. Many of the complaints about the current system are outlined throughout the document. Most of the system, including services such as job matching, the touch screen, Intensive Assistance are seen as ineffective, Many job seekers enter the program hoping to get assistance and most report after a period of trying all they can think of, that there is no point in using the services.

Besides jobs no one wants, such as hanging live chicken on hooks on their way to the gas chambers, telemarketers, and running around in a bear's costume during hot summer months, are some of the rare offers received from the JN. Many of our members have extended periods of two years in Intensive Assistance with no job offer, not even as much as a suggestion.

Therefore it does not make much difference in regards to employment outcomes whether the JN services exist or not, at least not to the majority of job seekers.

### **What changes would improve the quality of Job Network?**

All Job search services ought to be funded in accordance with unemployment figures in the area, divided by available services, specialised services should get extra funding. All services should receive a basic funding which ensure they can pay their overhead costs and staff ratio and funding for salaries and other components can be tied to actual case load. This would ensure that rorts such as those emerging in the past six months are avoided.

Most of our members and constituents are enrolled with as many JNM (Job Network Members) as possible and practical for their region, some have up to eight JNMs working for them to assist with finding employment. Obviously this must influence the statistics of JNM in terms of enrollment rate and successful outcome, i.e. one unemployed person who finds themselves a job during intensive assistance delivers a nice profit to their primary JNM and all others who had him on his books, also receive at least a bonus point.

According to the experience of most of our members **Intensive Assistance**, for example, consists of:

- ⇒ an initial interview to asses skills and career ambitions,
- ⇒ a follow-up interview (sometimes up to four months waiting) to sign the all important Activity Agreements and check on the state of the CV,
- ⇒ three monthly interviews to check whether the client is still on track and
- ⇒ the occasional phone call with an invitation to apply for a job, for example, as a bottle shop attendant in regions inaccessible by public transport and 50 km away from the home of the client, or in a chicken killing factory where live chickens have to be hung up on hooks to enter the gas chambers, in other words, jobs which no one else wants. Admittedly these jobs have to be done, but maybe people would be doing them if more humane conditions were offered, or they live closer to the place of employment?

These and many other examples reported to us in public meetings and by our members indicate the fundamental flaws of the JN system:

- ⇒ Individual case management is almost non-existing, apart from the prescribed measures such as job search training (for what jobs?), and compliance measures
- ⇒ Staff of JNM are ill prepared for their roles as career counsellors (little knowledge of career and training paths) and social workers (they have to identify barriers such as mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions, domestic violence issues and risk of homelessness, etc)
- ⇒ Too much energy and resources are wasted to compete for open positions (incentive payments to potential employers are taking away resources available for training for the unemployed)
- ⇒ More scrutiny and public accountability is needed to ensure that taxpayers money is actually going towards solving the problem of unemployment for individual clients instead of ensuring profits for private entrepreneurs or share holders creating an employment industry,
- ⇒ Lack of training opportunities and career choice for clients as services are orientated towards filling existing positions rather than assisting clients to achieve their long term career goals

In other words profits have become more important than the people in this competitive job search market. We demand therefore that nobody should profit from taxpayer's money. If services need to be supported through the tax system, no financial profit other than investment into improvement of services and outcomes, should be derived by any person(s) or organisation with taxpayer's money dedicated to find jobs for the unemployed.

Much needs to be done to restore faith into the dysfunctional job search service which has become an instrument of oppression and enforcement of harsh and mean spirited policies, aside from participating in ripping off the taxpayer with dubious employment schemes. All confidence in receiving a professional services has been eroded by a system which demands total discipline, yet its workers are less than reliable and often untrained.

Regardless of how the job search services will be delivered in the future, they need to be made accountable for what they deliver (not remunerated for jobs an unemployed person finds themselves). The statistics in regards to outcomes are schewed, as our members have in all cases where they found employment, found it out of their own accord, without any assistance from the JN. Yet in all of our cases the JN Provider got the credit, most of them were on Intensive Assistance and received very little help.

In order to restore faith into the system, and to turn it into a true instrument of assistance to job seekers, we support:

- ⇒ the introduction of community based regional not for profit job search centres, which are build in conjunction with the local business and education and training community and provide a range of services to job seekers and businesses.
- ⇒ **The employment of professionally trained staff in the area of career counselling** and social work, and the provision of ongoing professional development for such staff, is vital in quality job search service, especially in view of more stringent requirements and eligibility criteria and assessment methods for people with a disability.
- ⇒ **Individualised and client centred case management practices**, which consider the aspirations, skills and abilities of job seekers and predominantly assist the job seeker to obtain their goals while maintaining focus on the fact, that those seeking assistance are the victims, not the perpetrators of maintaining high levels of unemployment.
- ⇒ **Access to affordable training and education**, as it is essential for any long term unemployed person and many older and younger unemployed. The introduction of up-front fees for post graduate degrees excludes many mature age students from further study and enhancement of career opportunities, TAFE fee structures exclude many young and older people from learning a new profession or becoming skilled in the career of their dream. For example, it costs about \$5.000 to become a chef, there are about 30% of the population who do not have this kind of money available to see one or even more children through such a course. Postgraduate study is also unaffordable for many low income older unemployed people.

We demand that people on low income and with few assets are exempted from up-front fees and TAFE fees, that they are given access to training of IT skills, usually very expensive, but much needed to keep up with the developments, and that education is accessible to all, in other words free, regardless of age.

The introduction of the training fund for participants of Work for the Dole and Community Work is recommendable. However, \$800 in the current training market does not go very far. Especially in regards to IT training which is badly needed for many of the older unemployed and for the young people to keep up with developments in times of unemployment.

Both schemes should feature a training component and all Intensive Assistance clients should be given access to training funds as part of their career preparation during Intensive Assistance.

Although the JNP are given a component in the funding for training for people in Intensive Assistance, that money is seldom made available or used. It should become part of the service delivery to encourage and financially support clients to access the training appropriate to their career goals and ambitions.

Further we recommend an **overhaul of the Recognition of Current Competency** system as it in its current form only serves those who already are part of the education and training system and **can pay the fees** for these services. The process of finding evidence for current competency is often convoluted and complicated and it may take as long to demonstrate the competencies than it takes to go through the course itself. Too few people are aware of the process and there are not enough trained assessors, nor appropriate models to assist, for example volunteers in organisations in this important task.

We recommend that the system be reviewed and streamlined to include more workplace assessment and flexibility in the interpretation of standards, as well as a mix of provision of training materials someone could work through to demonstrate competency and on the job experience. Much more could be done to advertise the options more widely and to make it easier for unemployed people to participate. We also demand extra funding for assessors and trainers for volunteers and un- and underemployed people who want competencies recognised. We believe that the JN could play a role in taking on the task of recognising the current competencies of their clients in Intensive Assistance. Surely that would boost the confidence and employment chances of the job seeker. It must also be more effective than sending the clients on cold canvass tours to fill their time, especially in areas hundreds of previous participants have already canvassed before.

### **What elements of assistance should the government be purchasing**

All of the above plus anything else which it deems suitable to overcome barriers, including for people with a disability, even if they are not on DSPs. Personal Support Programs are essential in the above mixture of programs and should be delivered with as much flexibility and as little as possible compulsion to achieve maximum outcomes.

One important factor though is missing: **career counselling**. Personnel in JN services is ill prepared to counsel their clients in regards to their skills, aptitudes, talents. Nor do they often know how to achieve a career ambition, what pathways to take etc.

And although Centrelink is planning to employ several Occupational Psychologists, they are not employed to advice people on what career path to take. They are rather there to determine the work capacity of people with psychiatric and mental health problems, such as Oppositional Defiance Disorders, post traumatic stress disorders and emotional disturbances.

How many ODDs will be diagnosed as a result from defiant stands of clients of the Job Network who refuse to participate in the prescribed job search training course for the fourth time?  
(This truly happened to one of our members, a former CES employee, herself in the business of assisting people to find jobs)

### **Are current arrangements flexible enough to meet the needs? What improvements can be made? Can services be better targeted?**

As long as services are associated with compulsory participation, breaching, and other punitive measures which are often harsher than fines or punishments for criminal offenses, the services can never be flexible enough to meet the need. In order to meet the need of unemployed

people, services need to be trustworthy, retain confidentiality, see the client as individual and important, worthy of respect, etc. This does not exist in most services.

If quality services which deliver outcomes are provided they will be accessed. The more flexibility they can offer the better. The current separation of NEIS, Intensive Assistance, Work for the Dole and Community Work, limits the flexibility as it puts a lot of time pressure on the unemployed person trying to navigate between Centrelink and the different components of the system. As one service does not know what the other can offer it is difficult to establish a client centred service. The current system is a prime example of a service centred approach with all its bureaucratic limitations and rigidity.

## **Purchaser rather than provider**

### **General Comments:**

UPM against Poverty believes and suggests that all tax payer funded and outsourced services ought to be delivered by not for profit organisations. Although that would require a rethinking of the economics of providing these services, it would avoid the pitfalls of having to make a profit, competing against other providers and the temptations to rort the system with fictive job creation schemes.

For profit companies make essentially profits on the back of the unemployed. They have to squeeze the already meager funds per client to make a profit.

Further we are concerned about the service agreements between the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business and Centrelink. In particular quota regarding anything to do with levels of breaching or overturning recommended breaches leaves important decisions about people's lives' in unqualified hands.

For example, several of our members suffer from epilepsy, not bad enough to be eligible for the DSP, but bad enough, that they are unable to hold employment or keep their commitments in regards to the required activities under mutual obligation. In one case the job seekers missed an appointment with their JNP and in the other case they did not come to their Work for the Dole placement because they suffered a seizure on the day. In both cases the person was in hospital following the seizure, one stayed only a short time, the other stayed for three days.

People who have suffered a seizure are often forgetful, disorientated and very tired. Both of our members had a letter in the letterbox the next and another one the day after. The first letter in both cases informed them that they had been breached (1. Breach) and the second informed them about a new appointment only days away from the previous appointment. Both clients were unable and unaware of the existence of the letters, because they were not at their home. However, both had asked relatives to pick up their mail a few days after their seizures. In case of the Work for the Dole placement a relative had phoned the coordinator and informed them that s/he could not come. A week after their seizures they found a third letter with notifications about a second breach.

Both members appealed, their appeal was rejected by the Original Decision Maker, the ARO and in one case the decision was overturned in the SSAT, while the other person actually found employment before the appeal reached the SSAT and s/he gave up. It is remarkable that the employer is showing great understanding of the problems this person faces, while Centrelink and the JNP staff did not deem it necessary to contact the people in question, nor did they ever

in their significant time of unemployment got the opportunity to discuss their illness with their case managers.

The inhumane decisions of the ODM and ARO can be clearly linked to the \$ 5.5 million bonus Centrelink receives if more than 65% of breaches recommended by the JNP and more than 85% of breaches recommended by Work for the Dole providers remain in place.

These kind of agreements, which lead to unfair decisions and especially unprofessional case management practices, do not only hurt the clients, but also put enormous strain on Centrelink workers on the front lines. Several Centrelink employees have indicated to us that their team performance reviews, the requirements to make decisions, they know, will hurt families, the constant pressure they are exposed to and the bullying of their team leaders are at times unbearable. Only the fear to join the queue on the other side of the counter keeps many Centrelink employees quiet. This is obviously an Occupational Health and Safety issue.

The solution is simple: REMOVE PUNITIVE MEASURES AND INTRODUCE INCENTIVES. This would increase participation, especially if the base rate is reduced, and incentives are only paid in case of participation. Incentives do not need to be large but should cover the true costs of participation in job search, training, transport costs, postage and phone, personal grooming etc.. In other words if someone is in need of job search training, they can get \$ 60 extra per fortnight to cover costs of transport, personal grooming and lunches. Plus they have a little extra. The incentive is only paid after the training was attended (but immediately following the first week of full attendance (or reasonable excuses such as illness for not more than 20% of the time).

### **In regards to the issue of choice of provider:**

People do not exercise their choice, other than convenience of location, because there is no true choice. There is not enough quality information available about why one service should be chosen over another. The information available (success rate of job matching and employment outcome) does not say much about what services a providers offers which set him/her apart from other providers.

In the area of employment services for people with a disability it may be easier to choose, although the introduction of quality assurance measure for these providers highlight the need for accountable services. These services need to be encouraged by incentives to find fully waged employment instead of increasing the number of people sheltered workshops.

Only community based, specialist services, usually not tendering for government funding, offer detailed information about what they can offer. DOME in SA is one such example for the older unemployed. Employment support groups in neighbourhood houses another.

When it comes to the services which are funded the choice is either over- or underwhelming, depending where one lives. Partially the lack of difference in quality between the services or their lack of information about their uniqueness originates from the way the JN is funded. There seems to be a lack of resources to provide meaningful services.

As most JNP only provide the compliance mechanisms prescribed by the current legislation which are mainly designed to ensure compliance, real assistance in planning, choosing and developing a career cannot be provided.

So there is no choice.

## **Regarding the complaints procedure:**

**UPM against Poverty Inc. supports the introduction of an independent monitoring body for the JN.** We imagine that such a committee would include unemployed people or representatives of unemployed advocacy groups, as well as providers and government representatives and business people.

The complaints procedure should follow the normal internal grievance procedures and then go on to the Committee, if it cannot be resolved there, the case should be passed on to the SSAT or AAT or in the future the ART. The Job Network should not be exempted from accountability. It is responsible for major life changing advice and through their recommendation of breaches, for significant financial losses of their clients.

Public accountability and a pathway to reverse decisions or complain about discrimination and lack of quality service is essential in a climate, where government directly cannot be held accountable any longer. Although the government spends taxpayers money on the service, it has got rid of the responsibility for the quality of service provided.

## **Regarding the role of the relevant players:**

It is not our task to resolve the administrative and managerial problems of service delivery, nor decide who should do what. However, any kind of service delivered under duress caused by lack of funding, mean spirited policies, compliance measures instead of incentives, cannot be a best practice, quality service.

It is government's responsibility to look after taxpayer's money. As taxpayers, and we all pay taxes, we have the right to ask for appropriate, efficient, quality services which make a difference to our already stressful lives. The current JN just costs a lot of money and its success is carried by the number of job seekers finding employment **despite** the JN's interference.

Whether services are delivered by for profit, not for profit or government organisations, unless they provide quality services they are a waste of money. The role of government is to ensure that clients get benefits from the service.

To really assess benefits clients get, the clients have to be free of fear of retribution and have a trusting relationship with the body asking questions about the effectiveness. Unemployed people cannot risk an honest answer. They risk their career, because if their case manager, their JNP or other service providers do not like that person, they will not get him/her the best job they may come across. They will also not make good referees.

The greatest problem is the transfer of information from one provider to the next. Unemployed people have to fill in meaningless forms everywhere. Many JN providers have a kind of application form, where the job seeker has to indicate their previous experiences, preference for future jobs and skills. Usually the form includes contact details (half a page), information about the contract to be signed and leaves a third of the page to fill in skills and ambitions.

This is a reflection of the quality of services. Personally I have joined with eight JNPs and only one has taken the time to have a longer conversation about my dreams in the last 3 years. All my experiences are compacted to three lines which the JNP uses to match me with incoming jobs.

A central data distribution and storage system, which can only be accessed if the job seekers ID number is entered should be made available and accessible to all providers involved.

## **In regards to alternative models of job search services:**

For those areas where job search services are non existing due to remoteness, convenience or non-profitability, communities could get together and form their own services which may attract a special funding package. Communities could form an association or a co-operative and deliver job search services, possibly in conjunction with one of the regular providers, in remote or regional communities.

For example, the very small town of Aldinga in SA is 20 minutes by car away from the next big centre with job network providers. In total around 7500 people live in the area surrounding Aldinga. Aldinga had the highest youth unemployment rate in the last Census and the general unemployment rate is high as well. Yet the last Skillshare Centre closed. There is a lot of industry and business in the area and employment can be found locally.

A model like this could also be partly owned by the local business community , which can find local employees, use employment creation schemes of the Co-Op to provide work experience or get short term assistance for special jobs, etc. Further such a Co-Op could also attract other funding such as the Home and Community Care packages to deliver local services, managed by the community for the community. These services if properly supported, could solve many problems for the current distribution of Job Network services. Every community library has access to computers and the internet, and services could use the existing infra structure by sharing IT and office space. Every local council wants to do something for their unemployed. Here is their chance to bring all elements of the community together and deliver an appropriate sustainable service.

Further these kind of organisations could also be used (especially the Co-Op model) to build new enterprises with the help of the local unemployed. People often do not have enough capital to start businesses, and they cannot afford to risk their regular income by building jointly owned businesses, a possibility the current NEIS and SEDS scheme does not allow.

With a few changes to NEIS, local employment creation schemes could look at building more labor intensive enterprises, which may have to start with some support, but would mainly need the input of human resources. If the participants were able to continue to receive their NewStart Allowance during the first year, as the other NEIS participants can in cases where they have not reached certain levels of income, the development of such businesses would become a feasible option for many unemployed and would boost local economies.

Participants should in the beginning be able to decide, in consultation with the local and regional business community, what kind of business they would like to build. Once the business is stable and established, it could be sold off to some of the original founders or others. Participants in these programs should all receive similar training as NEIS participants, plus extra training required to run the business they are planning to set up. Such training should be accredited.

