

The Chair
Job Network Review
Productivity Commission

Tuesday, 29 January 2002

Personal Submission: Tom Collins

Interest: As a client of a Job Network Provider.

Dear Sir,

It was only when my attention was drawn to a short article on page ⁴ of the Sydney Daily Telegraph, January 29, 2001 “**Agency fines for Job Seeker referral error**” that I realised there was an avenue to bring another perspective to the cost of service provision of Job Network and the possible misuse or manipulation of the assessment system to erroneously project the optimum results by some providers in enhancing the possible quantitative results as being also qualitative and the distortion of the data as to the problem of long term job placement, particularly to clients requiring Intensive Assistance.

It would appear that some providers, and I have to date experienced only one, are intent only placing clients with the only constant criteria being a sustained income to Job Network provider. This creates further problems with clients who are usually bereft of self esteem, being manipulated through covert and somewhat subliminal suggestion that if they do not acquiesce to what is suggested their benefits will be reduced and or cut. This is reinforced in written form particularly in preparing for work agreement, which refer to punitive action when the client may fail to meet the agreement, but no such action taken against the provider in their failure to meet either their commitment to the client or the Commonwealth which funds this service. In fact it was this newspaper article which encouraged me to write this submission, as I had been reluctant to even follow the complaints procedure in because of a perception of apprehension as to a relationship in maintaining a mutual pretence financially responsible tendering of public services.

The cost of this movement of those in need of Intensive Assistance through a revolving door of illusory permanent employment, with the only achievement being the Commonwealth subsidisation of private Job Network providers with public funds.

There is also room for an audit of the actual provision of mandatory or other services advertised by the network provider, and if they are actually provided freely without obstacles such as face to face interviews, with the possibility of discovering the client was not meeting their obligation through the omission of some “I” not dotted or “t”, not crossed. From the published figures of 54% of recommended penalties being rejected by Centre link and the tripling of penalties are indicative of serious anomalies and incompetence in this service provision.

Fortunately , my perception has not been tainted , and I am still of the view that in Client / Service Provider that without the client there can be no provider , and the service advertised must be provided and quality control of this service should be monitored independently and on a regular basis. With aura of trepidation and reluctance to question unusual behaviours ,from the client , and inappropriate or no audit or quality control systems in place there is a possibility of collusion between some employers and job network providers in rorting the system by recycling positions vacant every few months by changing the description of the position vacant.

The performance indicators should reflect, a long term solution to those who require Intensive Assistance, and not a short term result with the losers being the Client and the Commonwealth.

The penalties, now imposed on the most vulnerable and needy in our society, which are, in at least 54% instigated of cases, used only to control clients who are not intimidated in a compliance of what could be described as a pretence perpetrated on the Commonwealth.

Claimed productivity is of little consequence if it is necessary to provide the same service to the same clients ,on a continuous basis because of deliberate Job Mismatching , with the purpose to rort the figures of permanent placements, be they for 13 , 26 or 52 weeks.

In summation, it would appear that the Performance Indicators are flawed, do not reflect a true representation and are not only open to misinterpretation, they encourage it. There is no independent audit on the figures or results claimed by service providers, and the complaints system is flawed in that, most clients are reluctant to complain about those to who appear to have an economic control over, even if it is theoretically challengeable.

Tom Collins
NSW