

21/2/2008

The Honourable Senator Joe Ludwig
Minister for Human Services
Shop 1, Beenleigh Market Place
George Street
Beenleigh
Queensland 4207

Re: Response to Job Capacity Assessment Issues

Dear Senator,

I am writing to you as a representative of JOBMATCH, the employment service within Northcott Disability Services based in Sydney. JOBMATCH is a capped DEN service with 98 places that are provided to people with a range of disabilities, as recognised by Centrelink.

In response to your request for feedback, Northcott has identified a number of issues associated with the Job Capacity Assessment which impact on the ability of DEN clients to successfully secure employment in reasonable timeframes.

These include the following;

- Currently the Job Capacity Assessors (JCA) spend around 45 minutes with a client during an interview to establish their eligibility, ability and needs. However, this is insufficient time to gain a full understanding of the potentially complex needs of a person with a disability. This assessment is the basis of the level of support that clients will receive through JOBMATCH and is often inaccurate. Often additional needs become evident once the person with a disability has started accessing the service. If the JCA's were provided with comprehensive training around the needs of people with disabilities, their capacity to assess these clients would be greatly improved.
- The Job Capacity Assessment tool does not allow for accurate representation of the range of needs of the person. For example, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are not prioritised as having a higher level of need than other clients. However, there are a range of issues associated with supporting someone from a CALD background which can impact on their ability to secure employment.
- Some of these issues include availability of and adequate resources for providing translations and interpreter services. In addition to these issues for people from CALD backgrounds, the needs of people with certain types of disabilities are not reflected. An example of this includes particularly in the case of certain mental health issues
- People are referred to the service whilst they are awaiting a decision of granting the Disability support Pension. These people are referred with a working capacity of 0 – 7 hours and are often granted the pension shortly after we take them on as clients. After being deemed eligible for the pension, they become voluntary participants of the programme and generally decide to exit. This time we spend supporting these clients is therefore wasted.
- There appears to be systemic issues around systems for re-referring clients. JOBMATCH has experienced on numerous occasions, clients being referred to other services through error. Addressing these problems are time consuming and lengthy.

Northcott aims to provide an accessible and equitable service to all people with disabilities, therefore would appreciate any support you are able to offer the sector with these issues.

Yours Sincerely,

Don Thomson
Team Leader
Jobmatch – Northcott Disability Services