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7th March, 2008

Senator The Honourable Joe Ludwig
Minister for Human Services
Suite 64
Parliament House
Canberra

Re Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) Review

Dear Minister,

Jobsupport was delighted to hear that an enquiry has been instigated into the JCA.

Jobsupport operates a Capped DEN service that specialises in people with a moderate intellectual disability (for example a typical client would be someone with Down Syndrome). The organization has a capacity of 500 and currently supports approximately 480 people in open employment jobs throughout Sydney. Jobsupport also operates a NSW Government funded Transition to Work (TTW) program that currently caters for approximately 90 school leavers.

Jobsupport's population are amongst the most vulnerable members of our community. People with a moderate intellectual disability were routinely institutionalised until the 1950s and were not considered capable of attending school. The first special school for people with a moderate intellectual disability in NSW was established in the 1950s and the first high school special class for this population was only established as recently as 1982. Prior to the 1986 Disability Services Act this population did not achieve open employment. Approximately 60% entered sheltered workshops and 10% activity centres. Even today only 20% of Sydney's school leavers with a moderate intellectual disability achieve open employment with nearly all obtaining employment through Jobsupport. Approximately 15% still enter supported employment and 40 to 50% enter state funded post school options programs.

The people with a moderate intellectual disability Jobsupport places work in highly modified jobs because they are unable to perform the full range of duties. They require approximately 450 hours of initial training to achieve six months in employment and require indefinite support thereafter to retain employment. Without on-going support to address behaviour/social skills issues, job changes and co-worker changes the retention rate for this population is very low.

Jobsupport supports the need for a gatekeeper into the Capped DEN program. It is appropriate that the program originally envisaged for people with ongoing support needs is restricted to those who really need it. Unfortunately the current JCA arrangements for people with a moderate intellectual disability who

need on-going support beyond two years don't work and are very time-consuming for the service provider. Two sample case studies are attached. In both cases the JCA assessor accepted that the client had on-going support needs but simply didn't know how to complete the computer screen so that the client was referred to the correct type of service. In the first case which occurred in June 2007 (Jobseeker ID [REDACTED] - Attachment 1) the JCA assessor didn't know how to complete the screen, the JCA assessor's manager didn't know how to complete the screen and three people from the Department of Human Services Help Desk didn't know how to complete the screen. Eventually we had to bring the matter to the attention of Don McKenzie the previous Program Manager for the Job Capacity Assessment Branch to get it rectified. The second case (Jobseeker ID [REDACTED] - Attachment 2) is still outstanding. This client has been given a Reduced Activity Test (instead of Voluntary) despite having a moderate intellectual disability, having attended a Special Class at school and having been accepted into a state-funded Post School Options program from school because she wasn't considered capable of employment. This case has now been brought to the attention of Alison Hale the Program Manager for the Job Capacity Assessment Branch. We understand that the Department of Human Services is currently preparing advice for JCAs about people with on-going support needs for approval by DEEWR.

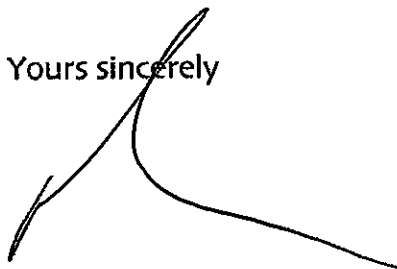
Until December 2007 Jobsupport could tick a box in the DEEWR EA3000 system that allowed people who had required a Special Class or Special School to bypass the need for a JCA. On 19 December 2007 this option was restricted to current school leavers (Attachment 3 refers). This means that instead of having occasional problems with inappropriate JCA assessments because the majority of clients bypassed the JCA we now fear that we will encounter weekly problems.

Jobsupport anticipates that on average it will be involved in at least one JCA assessment a week over the next two years. The majority of the TTW school leavers will need to enter Jobsupport's Capped DEN service over the next two years and will be subject to a JCA assessment. Approximately 15% of Jobsupport's clients lose their jobs each year and a number of these will also be subject to a JCA assessment before re-placement.

The current situation is unworkable. It is important that the JCAs are provided with help about how to complete the JCA screens as soon as possible. Jobsupport believes that it would be appropriate to make groups such as people with a significant intellectual disability or autism automatically eligible for Capped DEN services.

Thank you for the opportunity to have input. I would be happy to clarify any of the points raised if this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely



Phil Tuckerman
Director Jobsupport



DEN25/191207

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (DEN) BULLETIN

SCHOOL LEAVERS

This bulletin provides clarification on the definition of school leavers and the registration and referral process for school leavers who have a current Job Capacity Assessment.

Who are School Leavers?

School Leavers are school students with disability who have the capacity to work for a minimum of 8 hours a week with intervention where the student is:

- of legal working age and is working, or intends to work part-time outside of school hours at award-based wages; or
- in their last 6 months of school and is considering post-school options/employment opportunities; or
- a full-time student who is participating in a school based apprenticeship which is recognised by an Australian Access Programme Provider and a training contract is lodged on the Training Recognition System (TRS) are eligible to access DEN.

This initiative is targeted at current school students who require assistance for the transition into employment. As such job seekers who have left school are not eligible to be registered as a School Leaver (SSL) in EA3000 SmartClient.

School Leavers without a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA)

A job seeker can ONLY register as a School Leaver via the Provider Pathway (direct registration). If a School Leaver approaches a DEN member for assistance, and Proof of Identity has been established, the DEN member should search DEEWR's IT and Centrelink systems for the job seeker's record. If no record is located, a record should be created. This will register the job seeker with the DEN member. As a part of completing the Direct Registration form the DEN members should ask the participant if they have undergone a JCA.

If the job seeker advises they have not undergone a JCA, the "School Leavers" (SSL) tick box should be checked on the Case Details screen in EA3000. This will disable the 'get assessment' process as School Leavers do not require a JCA.

Revision	Date	Location of changes	Changes
Version 1	19 December 2007		Original version of document

Effective 19 December 2007

Once the DEN Participant has been referred to the caseload an Initial Interview should be scheduled. Upon Acceptance into the DEN capped programme the DEN member is eligible to claim an Intake fee and the School Leaver moves into Intake Phase and continues to move through the programme.

School leavers with a current and valid JCA with a recommended referral to DEN

If the School leaver advises they have undergone a JCA, the DEN member should complete the registration and check the job seeker's eligibility for DEN using the 'get assessment' process. If eligible, the job seeker will be referred to the relevant stream of DEN Capped/Uncapped based on their eligibility. These job seekers will not be considered School Leavers.

School leavers who subsequently have a JCA conducted

As per the arrangements with other DEN participants, DEN members may refer a School Leaver to a JCA, where there is a significant change in the participant's circumstances. School leavers may also be referred to a JCA by Centrelink if they apply for income support or advise of a change in circumstances. The outcome of this assessment may be a change of allowance, change of stream or change of programme e.g. referral to Job Network.

JCA providers should contact the current DEN member before referring the job seeker to another PAGES.

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