



St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL
good works

St Vincent de Paul Society

ABN: 46 472 591 335 001

Units 4-5, 22 Thesiger Court
Deakin ACT 2600
PO Box 243
Deakin West ACT 2600

Telephone: (02) 6202 1200
Facsimile: (02) 6285 0159

Email: johnf@svdpnatcl.org.au
Website: www.vinnies.org.au
Donation Hotline: 13 18 12

27 February 2008

Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Human Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

JOB CAPACITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

We refer to your letter dated 12 February 2008.

Introduction

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society welcomes the opportunity to make the following short submission to you on the Job Capacity Assessment Program.

Background

The St Vincent de Paul Society is not a member of the Job Network. We are however a proud employer of hundreds of Australians with disabilities. The St Vincent de Paul Society has for decades operated businesses throughout Australia, such as Ozanam Industries in New South Wales (www.ozanam.org.au), providing employment and training to Australians with disabilities. We are concerned that the current Job Capacity Assessment Guidelines do not adequately support Australians with disabilities by removing some of the key barriers to their social and economic participation.

Job Capacity Assessment Guidelines

As we understand, the Job Capacity Assessment tools are based on data provided by unemployed people in around 2003 (when the labour market had more people with more capacity to work).

When this assessment tool was then applied to the long term unemployed and the new groups caught up in the extension of the mutual obligation regime such as single parents and people with a disability, it became quite inflexible and resulted in inappropriate outcomes, ultimately setting people up to fail.

As a result, the previous government had to establish other policy frameworks and associated programmes such as the financial case management regime to underpin an inadequate assessment tool and a failure to provide individualised service delivery.

The future

The Job Capacity Assessment tool needs to be re-constructed so as to act as a means of increasing genuine, long-term, sustainable and appropriate workforce participation. We would argue that the current arrangements do not assist the growth of productivity and certainly do not assist people who are currently marginalised, failing to meet their needs both structurally and personally.

The Job Capacity Account program must be increased to allow for continual support to ensure that a person's capacity is sustained and developed. People need to get the support to deal with the obstacles and underlying issues affecting their lives. This cannot simply be reduced to job placement alone.

All forms of economic and social participation need to be recognised. A person's volunteering may improve their work-readiness while increasing the community's social capital. Such activities must be seen as inherently valuable as well as being a stepping-stone to work-readiness.

Conclusion

The St Vincent de Paul Society supports the improvement of the Job Capacity Assessment tools and looks forward to a wider participation framework for Australians with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Falzon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr John Falzon
CEO
National Council of Australia