



Submission to the Senate Education and Employment
References Committee's *Inquiry into the appropriateness
and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation
and evaluation of jobactive*

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Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

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Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services has been working for more than 40 years delivering practical support and advocating for improved policies to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish.

We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference.

Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory where we support more than 57,000 individuals and families annually.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system
- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs including mental illness, trauma, homelessness and complex bereavement
- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees, and disadvantaged communities
- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment
- **Gender Justice.**

The promotion of education, lifelong learning and capacity building is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

Our education, training and employment programs help people who have had limited access to learning, training and job opportunities. Some people have left school early, others may have exited prison. Some people come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and haven't studied or found work in Australia. These groups of people can find mainstream education daunting or hard to connect with. In response, our programs:

- provide practical, hands-on programs to help people learn and train
- support people to take up employment opportunities
- offer alternative options for people on the edge of mainstream education

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which Jesuit Social Services operates and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We express our gratitude for their love and care of the land and all life.

Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee's *Inquiry into the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive*.

The current jobactive system, with its focus on compliance and meeting narrowly prescribed outcomes, is clearly a source of frustration for many jobseekers. An online survey of jobactive users by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), initiated in 2018, found that 73 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied with jobactive and 51 per cent said that their activity requirements were not suited to their circumstances.¹ Jesuit Social Services has seen how, in this type of compliance-focused system, the most disadvantaged and vulnerable are more likely to have their needs go unfulfilled.

The people we work with struggle to overcome social exclusion. Many have little stable employment experience, low levels of basic skills, and a range of other barriers to inclusion. Their experiences of the jobactive system, and our efforts to support them, inform this submission.

As a starting point, we believe that for this group of people, the employment and wider human services system needs to broaden its focus from the narrow aim of securing short-term employment outcomes. Instead, disadvantaged Australians should be supported on a journey to social inclusion that can be measured against a wider range of social outcomes.

We have identified four key areas where reform is needed:

- **Effective support to build people's capabilities** - The compliance-focused nature of jobactive means that many disadvantaged people are not provided with intense, ongoing and meaningful support. We need to rethink the nature of support and relationships between different services, with particular consideration given to the quality of employment services; lower caseloads; comprehensive assessments; offering targeted assistance and post-placement support.
- **Pathways to meaningful participation** - Training, skills development, work experience and opportunities for participation in the community need to be provided. Incentives for providing these must be built into our human services system.
- **Transforming organisations** - The current transactional nature of engagement with employers needs to be replaced by genuine engagement focused on building shared values for disadvantaged people, employers and communities.
- **Welfare reforms** - The most vulnerable people will not succeed without adequate support. Jesuit Social Services endorses ACOSS's campaign to raise the single rate of Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments.

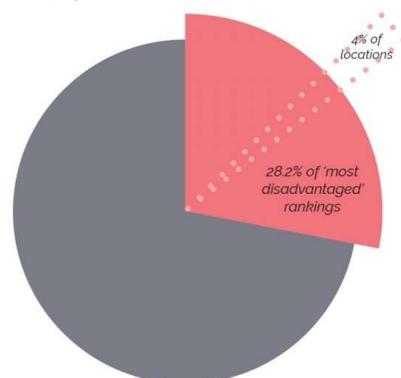
Dropping off the Edge (DOTE)

Jesuit Social Services' own research has demonstrated the concentrated and overlapping nature of disadvantage. Certain locations in Australia experience significantly more social disadvantage than others. In 2015, Jesuit Social Services along with Catholic Social Services Australia released the findings of its fourth DOTE Report,² which found that complex and entrenched disadvantage continues to be experienced by a small but persistent number of locations in each state and territory across Australia.

These communities experience a web-like structure of disadvantage, with significant problems including unemployment, a lack of affordable and safe housing, low educational attainment, and poor quality infrastructure and services.³ In Victoria, for example, just 27 postcodes (4 per cent of total) account for 28.2 per cent of the highest rank positions across 22 indicators of disadvantage (see graphic on right).⁴

Disadvantage tends to occur in a web-like structure of factors that constrain individual life opportunities.⁵ Our research found that those living in the 3 per cent most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria are:

- 3 times more likely to be experiencing long-term unemployment
- 2.6 times more likely to have experienced domestic violence
- twice as likely to have criminal convictions
- 2.4 times more likely to be on disability support.⁶



The persistent nature of locational disadvantage becomes obvious when we compare the findings of our 2015 study with previous studies undertaken in 2007, 2004 and 1999. Twenty five of Victoria's 40 most disadvantaged postcodes in DOTE 2015 were also found to be 'most disadvantaged' in the 2007 study⁷ (the other 15 postcodes did not show significant increases or decreases) and the postcodes in the most extreme categories have been quite consistent over the past 15 years (in 1999, eight of the 12 names in the top two bands were the same for 2015).

DOTE 2015 identified concentrated disadvantage across a broad variety of locations, from remote and rural communities to regional and metropolitan areas.⁸ Growth corridors in our major cities are also at risk of entrenched disadvantage.⁹

Place-based approaches

Place-based approaches have been recognised as an appropriate response to complex policy problems that have multiple interacting causes that go beyond the capacity of any one stakeholder to address.¹⁰ The web of disadvantage can only be broken effectively by a multi-layered, cooperative and coordinated strategy that is owned and driven by the community. It must involve all layers of government and the business and community sectors, reflecting shared responsibility and joint commitment to resolve this entrenched problem. This strategy must take account of the unique characteristics and circumstances of local communities and be sustained over the long term. It should be:

- **Targeted** – Concentrated to specific areas of the most severe disadvantage
- **Tailored** – Meet the community's needs and responding to the unique mix of issues facing the community
- **Integrated** – Recognising the web of multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage
- **Cooperative** – Responses are founded on a strong relationship between government and departmental portfolios, integrated community initiatives and coordination between different levels of government

- **A long term horizon** – A long-term commitment of 20 years to address complex, entrenched disadvantage
- **Community owned and driven** – Community leaders drive the agenda, recognising the strength within communities and work with them to build capacity, generate action, attract external resources, and maintain direction and energy
- **Engaged at the individual, community and national levels** – Recognising the complex interplay of the individual, their family circumstances, their community, and the broader social and economic environment in causing and addressing disadvantage.

Collaborative governance arrangements, devolution of power and decentralised decision-making are prerequisites for enabling the meaningful local community involvement and ownership required by effective place-based approaches. The most effective mechanism for improving the responsiveness of services and effectiveness of outcomes is to increase the involvement of, and control by, communities and locally-based organisations in the planning, coordination and provision of services. The degree to which this is facilitated will determine the success of any future reforms.

Critically, place-based approaches must encompass interventions from birth across the life span, such as early childhood, school, mental health, justice and crime prevention, and building the capacities and resources of local communities.

Place-based initiatives that facilitate access to education, training and employment

The OECD has conducted research into local strategies for youth unemployment, identifying that it is often at the local level that government policies can be integrated and combined with place-based initiatives to provide multidimensional responses to complex problems.¹¹ From its analysis of various case studies and initiatives, a number of key themes and lessons emerged, including:

- put in place the right incentives and success measurement to support collaboration and target action on critical areas
- improve data availability and understand the nature of local skills supply and demand mismatch as a starting point of the local youth employment strategy process
- promote employer ownership and ensure that firms invest in their future workforce
- support sectoral approaches to bring together educational institutions, industry organisations, employment agencies and other government departments to develop career pathways, articulating skills requirements and connecting youth to the local economy, and
- monitor the implementation of programmes and evaluate success.

The Victorian Government's place-based Neighbourhood Renewal program launched in 2002 is an example of a positive initiative that worked across government, in partnership with local residents, businesses and the community sector, and combined social investment, service coordination and community involvement in decision making. A 2008 evaluation of the program found it reduced disadvantage and narrowed the gap between renewal areas and the rest of the state, as well as lowering unemployment, increasing further education qualifications, and raising perceived levels of community participation.¹²

Key elements to engage and support disadvantaged learners

Jesuit Social Services' 2016 paper *Re-engaging disadvantaged learners in education, training and employment*¹³ highlighted four key program characteristics that have been proven to effectively engage and support disadvantaged learners:

- **Intensive and sustained engagement:** strong relationship building; outreach in strategically located areas; quick responses to early school leaving, and working with families.
- **Support for wider needs of the learners:** tailored support services through multidisciplinary teams; engaging students' support networks; strong partnerships between education providers, support organisations and the local community.
- **Flexible learning environments:** flexible learning options; soft entry points; welcoming and supportive learning environments; relevant and interesting curriculum; embedding literacy and numeracy; mentoring and strong peer relationships.
- **Pathways into further learning and work:** volunteering, on-the-job training, career guidance; partnerships between businesses, education providers and local community organisations; continued support for broader individual needs in employment settings.

Jesuit Community College

In response to these issues, Jesuit Social Services, through the Jesuit Community College, provides disadvantaged people with flexible learning opportunities that focus on building their core skills. Importantly, we are embedding pathways into employment and participation in our training and learning programs. We believe that both the employment services and training sectors must enhance their links with employers and better understand recruitment practices of employers and entry points to work.

As many of the people with whom Jesuit Social Services works have limited experience in the formal labour market, we aim to build the capabilities of these people and equip them with the skills to enter the workforce. A key means to achieving this is through the 'living classrooms' of our social enterprises which include Ignite Café in Camberwell, Victoria as well as a supermarket located within the Mt Druitt community enterprise hub in New South Wales.

There are many examples of discrete programs in which training and employers are brought together to provide opportunities for disadvantaged people. Jesuit Social Services is involved in the Industry Employment Initiative, with Social Ventures Australia, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Mission Australia, working with major employers like Coles to ascertain their needs and then train disadvantaged jobseekers and place them into roles. Training begins with the essential skills and attributes needed for work – such as employer expectations, personal hygiene, presentation, understanding routines and work ethic – and continues through to hospitality, customer service skills and first aid. The program also provides each young person with one-on-one support, to make sure the skills they develop address their unique employment barriers.

Case Study: Danielle, Jesuit Community College participant

Since leaving school, Danielle had a number of small part time jobs, but due to anxiety issues, found it difficult to settle.

Danielle lacked direction and did not have someone to support her in taking the next step to finding secure employment.

After coming into contact with Jesuit Community College, Danielle completed its pre-employment program and work experience component where she gained valuable skills and confidence that she now applies in the workplace.

Through the Industry Employment Initiative (IEI), Danielle is now employed at the 5-star Marriott Hotel Melbourne.

“With the support of both the Marriott and the College mentoring program, she believes she has a future. She’s now blossoming in the opportunities she has been given,” says Jane, Coordinator - Community Partnerships.

“It’s a big achievement for Danielle. She’s employed and looking to the future.”

Transforming organisations

We believe that the role of business as an enabler of social inclusion should be more actively explored and promoted. This requires moving away from a transactional relationship between business and disadvantaged people to one grounded in an understanding of the capacity of business to work with organisations and the community.

A key example is our African Australian Inclusion Program (AAIP), formed in partnership with the National Australia Bank, which offers six-month paid work placements, including mentoring and career coaching, to qualified African-Australians. Over 380 participants have taken part in the AAIP across Melbourne and Sydney since its inception in 2009. As we head into our ninth year, more than half of the alumni are still working at NAB. In the last eighteen months, this figure has been above 85 per cent at the end of each round.

A program such as the AAIP not only performs a social good, in broadening the employment prospects of disadvantaged people, but also provides significant benefits to the private sector in opening up an untapped labour market of talented workers and shifting perceptions in a positive way. Building on this success, Jesuit Social Services has developed the Corporate Diversity Partnerships program to help companies connect with a diverse talent pool of qualified people who seek an opportunity to obtain the corporate experience and professional networks needed to launch their careers. We have partnered with the Australian Taxation Office as part of their ‘Opening Doors’ initiative to offer roles across a number of disciplines and also with John Holland, one of Australia’s leading engineering, contracting and service providers to the infrastructure, energy, resources and transport sectors.

The Australian Government should explore how such initiatives that promote social leadership among business could be developed to help open pathways to employment for disadvantaged people, including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities with high unemployment rates.

African Australian Inclusion Program

We provide African-Australians with corporate sector experience

- There are systemic barriers to entry to the Australian corporate workplace for qualified African-Australians – including lack of Australian experience, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of business networks and bias (both conscious and unconscious).
- The program provides African-Australians with the opportunity to showcase their capabilities as well as specific development to become effective, independent professionals working in their chosen field.
- The roles include finance, IT, business administration, business analysis, corporate responsibility, project management, marketing and customer contact.
- Through AAIP, participants:
 - undertake a paid internship in their chosen field
 - immerse themselves in Australian workplace culture and build powerful professional networks
 - receive mentoring to achieve assigned tasks and duties
 - work with a coach to achieve broader career goals
 - at a minimum, obtain a professional reference at the end of their placement

We offer career coaching to ensure job success beyond the program

- With the help of NAB career coaches, AAIP's impact lasts beyond the program itself.
- Participants work with a coach to help them achieve broader careers goals and search for job opportunities both within and outside NAB once the internship is complete.

We collaborate with business for stronger collective impact

- AAIP shows how the social and business sectors can collaborate to achieve a stronger collective impact.
- The program delivers genuine shared value that benefits participants, NAB and the broader community – for example as role models for younger African-Australians.
- AAIP's success has been recognised with several awards, including:
 - Diversity@Work (2010)
 - Melbourne Awards – City of Melbourne (2011)
 - Australian Human Resources Institute Diversity Award (2012)
 - Victorian African Community Award (2013 and 2014)
 - Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence – Business Award (2017).

“The African Australian Inclusion Program is not really about giving me a job – it’s about transforming my life, transforming my household, transforming my extended family and transforming the community I represent.”

Tunde Aibinu, AAIP Participant

Recommendations

Based on evidence of good practice and our own grounded experience of what works, **Jesuit Social Services calls on the Australian Government to develop long term place-based initiatives targeted to communities of greatest disadvantage, that work with community, industry and employers to create sustainable jobs and pathways to employment.**

Building on this foundation, we would like to make the following recommendations in response to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee's inquiry into jobactive:

Providing meaningful, effective support

In the current system, where job providers are focused on moving large numbers of job ready people into employment, care for disadvantaged individuals in their journeys to and through employment is often neglected. Partly this comes down to the inability for relationships to develop between provider staff and jobseekers and for meaningful support to be provided that is centred on building the capacity of people to realise their aspirations and more meaningfully participate in the community.

Informed by our experience delivering learning and training programs to disadvantaged people through Jesuit Community College, including jobactive participants, we argue that the following points should be considered when reviewing the current system:

- **Low caseloads:** caseloads within the jobactive system are high — research by University of Melbourne academics in 2016 found that each case worker had on average almost 150 clients.¹⁴ Irregular meetings with a caseworker who has a high volume of clients is not likely to provide a basis for meaningful relationships or support.
- **Comprehensive assessments:** It should be noted that there are limitations in defining disadvantage within the jobseeker population by reference to scores on standardised assessment instruments which may fail to capture the nuances and depth of disadvantage that is often experienced by jobseekers. It is crucial for the initial assessment of people in the jobactive system to be as thorough as possible to ensure people are placed in the most relevant stream. Inconsistent referrals and a lack of flexibility after the initial assessment are matters of concern.
- **Quality services:** the quality of employment services is crucial to improving outcomes for people seeking work. Jesuit Social Services supports ACOSS's recommendation that a licensing system be introduced, overseen by an independent body, with licenses issued to providers based on a set of quality standards, including suitably qualified direct service staff.¹⁵ Given the proven links between positive relationships and the success of interventions in the human services field,¹⁶ it is crucial to develop a workforce with appropriate skills and personal attributes in order to provide meaningful case management support.
- **Targeted assistance:** the individual needs of jobseekers should be appropriately addressed by suitably qualified professionals. Disadvantaged people are poorly served under the current system where providers service particular regions and are not contracted as specialists for specific types of jobseekers.¹⁷ Specialist providers and intensive support is needed to work with this group of people who may be experiencing a range of personal and environmental barriers to participation. For people newly unemployed, it may be important to frontload support in order to help assist them back into work as soon as possible. This is particularly pertinent given statistics that show a

person's employment prospects decline progressively the longer they have been out of work.¹⁸

- **Effective partnerships:** research has identified that competitive approaches to the delivery of human services provide few incentives for providers to collaborate and share information and best practices.¹⁹ Jesuit Social Services has seen the positive impacts that partnerships between service providers can have on outcomes for people experiencing issues in relation to mental health, drug and alcohol, housing, and contact with the justice and child protection systems. Effective partnerships and joined up working require the investment of resources into developing the structures and processes that incentivise partnerships between services. Options to be considered should include flexible funding models for the delivery of services as well as joined up outcomes for service partners.
- **Post-placement support:** support for individuals moving through the jobactive system, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged people, shouldn't end when they achieve an employment outcome. In our view, providing ongoing assistance to people as they transition into work is vital, as case workers or other appropriately qualified persons can assist to manage issues or concerns as they arise and help people to stay in work.

Clear pathways to participation

Jesuit Social Services has observed the demoralizing churn of people through a range of ineffective programs or short term support that is not sustained. As we have noted in previous submissions on employment services, providers of support should focus on building foundational learning skills and participation in prevocational training pathways that offer clear pathways to inclusion for disadvantaged and marginalised people.²⁰ In addition to labour market outcomes, this approach has other potentially beneficial consequences for participants. In reviewing links between training and employment services programs, researchers have identified a range of other positive social outcomes that result from training, including socialising with other participants; better engagement with the community; reducing isolation; and making connections.²¹

Altering definitions of outcomes from notions of absolute success (employment) to a milestones based system would potentially encourage providers to deliver this type of support. Such an approach could include expanding the range of social outcomes that providers are funded to achieve, such as participation in activities recognised as essential to prevocational pathways; rewarding providers and people utilising employment services for meeting milestones on their journey towards inclusion; and linking up outcomes between different providers across and within services.

A shift away from the current compliance-driven system would necessarily underpin this approach. In 2016, University of Melbourne researchers found that, on average, employment services staff spend a combined 34.6 per cent of their time each week on contract compliance activities or other forms of administration.²² This clearly detracts from case workers' capacity to provide meaningful support to jobactive participants. As one step toward a less compliance-focused system, **Jesuit Social Services supports calls by ACOSS for the default job search requirement, currently set at 20 jobs per month, to be reduced and, if the current model is retained, for other activities such as training to count toward a person's activity requirements.**

Welfare reforms

The most vulnerable in our society will not succeed without broad and intensive support. Nor will they succeed if the welfare system punishes them for not being in work. There has been ongoing underinvestment in the safety net and coordinated measures to lift the most disadvantaged out of poverty. Reducing entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage requires governments to shift away from fragmented policies and programs, which seek to address individual symptoms of the bigger problem.

Addressing this problem is not simply about income or increased benefits. It is a problem that requires comprehensive, integrated and intensive support programs at the local level. Governments will need to shift current approaches and thinking if they are to make meaningful progress on reducing locational disadvantage.

Jesuit Social Services endorses ACOSS's campaign to raise the single rate of Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments. We also support Catholic Social Services Australia's call for elected leaders to establish an independent commission to develop evidence-based benchmarks to ensure that income support payments are adequate for people to live a frugal yet dignified life, and have a realistic opportunity of securing a job.

¹ Australian Council of Social Service (August 2018) Submission on Future Employment Services, p. 4.

² Vinson, T & Rawsthorne, M (2015), *Dropping Off the Edge 2015: Persistent Communal Disadvantage in Australia: Summary*.

³ Vinson, T. and Rawsthorne, M. (2015), *Dropping of the edge 2015*. Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, Richmond and Curtin.

⁴ Vinson, T & Rawsthorne, M (2015), *Dropping Off the Edge 2015: Persistent Communal Disadvantage in Australia: Summary*, p. 5.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷ Vinson, T (2007), *Dropping Off the Edge: The Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia, <<http://k46cs13u1432b9asz49wnhcx-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/DOTE2007.pdf>>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Brotherhood of St Laurence 2015, 'What Next For Place-Based Initiatives to Tackle Disadvantage? A Practical Look at Recent Lessons for Australian Public Policy' <<http://youthlaw.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/What-Next-for-Place-Based-Initiatives-to-Tackle-Disadvantage.pdf>>, p.3.

¹⁰ Australian Public Service Commission 2007, 'Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective', Commonwealth of Australia, <http://www.apsc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/6386/wickedproblems.pdf>, pp.1-4.

¹¹ OECD, 2013. Local Strategies for Youth Employment - Learning from Practice. OECD, Paris. Available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/employment/leed/Local%20Strategies%20for%20Youth%20Employment%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf>

¹² Department of Human Services, 2008. Neighbourhood Renewal: Evaluation Report 2008. Victorian Government, Melbourne.

¹³ <http://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Reengaging-disadvantaged-learners-in-education-training-and-employment-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ Lewis J, Considine M, O'Sullivan S, Nguyen P, McGann M. (October 2016), *From Entitlement to Experiment: The new governance of welfare to work*, p. 15.

¹⁵ Australian Council of Social Service (August 2018), Submission on Future Employment Services, p. 9.

¹⁶ Gronda, H. (2009), *What makes case management work for people experiencing homelessness? - Evidence for practice*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

¹⁷ Department of Employment, *Evaluation Strategy For Jobactive*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Australian Council of Social Service (August 2018), Submission on Future Employment Services, p. 73.

¹⁹ Smith, Rhonda L & Merrett, Alexandra, commissioned by ACOSS and CHOICE, (September 2018) *Competition Policy & Human Services: Where Theory Meets Practice: Ensuring economic approaches incorporate the realities of experience*.

²⁰ Jesuit Social Services (March 2013) *Employment Services – building on success – issues paper*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

²¹ Guenther, J., Falk, I., & Arnott, A. (2008), *The role of vocational education and training in welfare to work*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

²² Lewis J, Considine M, O'Sullivan S, Nguyen P, McGann M. (October 2016), *From Entitlement to Experiment: The new governance of welfare to work*, p. 18.