



# JOBS AVAILABILITY SNAPSHOT 2019

 **Anglicare** Australia  
*in every Community*

Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot was first published in October 2016.

Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot attempts to show what the job market is really like for those facing the greatest barriers to work – those who may not have qualifications or experience to draw on, those trying to re-enter the workforce after a long break, or those living in regional or remote areas.

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Anglicare Australia is a network of independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value. With a combined expenditure of \$1.59 billion, a workforce close to 20,000 staff and 9,000 volunteers, the Anglicare Australia Network contributes to more than 50 service areas in the Australian community. In all, 1 in every 20 Australians access Anglicare services throughout the year. Our services are delivered in partnership with people, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas.

Anglicare Australia has as its Mission “to engage with all Australians to create communities of resilience, hope and justice”. Our first strategic goal charges us with reaching this by “influencing social and economic policy across Australia...informed by research and the practical experience of the Anglicare Australia Network”.

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# J O B S   A V A I L A B I L I T Y   S N A P S H O T   2 0 1 9

## Contents

|                          |           |  |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>Executive summary</b> | <b>4</b>  | <b>Policy implications</b>                                   | <b>14</b> |
|                          |           | From poverty and punishment to people-centred support        |           |
| <b>Introduction</b>      | <b>6</b>  | Helping every person participate, valuing every contribution |           |
|                          |           | A Job Guarantee  |           |
| <b>Methodology</b>       | <b>7</b>  | A Universal Basic Income                                     |           |
| Job classification       |           | Not one or the other, but working together                   |           |
| Job advertisements       |           |  |           |
| People seeking work      |           |  |           |
| <b>Snapshot findings</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>Conclusion</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| Jobs advertised          |           | Recommendations  |           |
| Ratio of people to jobs  |           | References   |           |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anglicare Australia Network knows the impact that work can have on a person's life. It gives them stability and an income that's guaranteed beyond the next pay cheque.

But more than that, work also helps people develop their identity, establish their life, and set themselves up for retirement. It's an anchor that allows people to look after themselves and their families, to plan, and to make decisions for their future.

Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot aims to show what the job market is like for people who might struggle to land a job. These might be people with disabilities, people who didn't finish year 12, or older workers who lost their jobs later in life.

The results show that the job market isn't working for everyone. It's failing those who need the most help to find work. In our sample month of May 2019, just ten percent of vacancies were suitable for someone who didn't have qualifications or work experience. We found that at least five jobseekers with barriers to work are competing for each these roles across Australia.

The Snapshot includes a breakdown of State and Territory figures, and finds that there aren't enough of these jobs to meet demand in any part of the country. The situation is especially dire in South Australia and Tasmania. In South Australia, nine of these jobseekers are competing for each suitable job. In Tasmania, there are a staggering fourteen jobseekers competing for each of these jobs.

These jobseekers are not just competing with one another. Recent graduates, retrenched workers, and other applicants with greater skills also apply for these roles. Like everyone else, they are motivated to find work.

To make matters worse, a staggering 1.16 million Australians were underemployed in our sample month. Feedback from services across the Anglicare Australia Network tells us that many of them will also be applying for these jobs. This makes our methodology conservative, as competition for vacancies is likely to be much fiercer than the Snapshot shows.

Over time, we have found that these jobs are drying up. This year, just 10 percent of vacancies did not require qualifications or work experience. That is down from 22 percent that were available when records began in 2006. As it stands, there is no national plan to prepare our workforce for the changes we are seeing to the job market.

In the face of these findings, it is clear that the Jobactive network is failing people who need the most help. It is taking people an average of five years to find work, and at the same time, they are languishing on a Newstart payment that has been frozen at dangerously low levels. The system is punitive, but many people who are breached and punished by their Jobactive provider are later found to have done nothing wrong. Some are being cut off from payments altogether.

The findings of this Snapshot point to a clear need to invest in job creation. That means creating work that matches people's skills, instead of forcing them to compete for jobs that just aren't there.

It is also clear that the Jobactive network is broken and must be fixed. Private providers shouldn't be paid to punish and breach people. Instead, they should be helping them by offering training that are actually linked to jobs – and supporting them to stay in those work once they find it. And finally, the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance must be raised. Nobody should be trapped in poverty while they look for work.

These changes are urgent. If we do not change course, we will go on forcing people to compete for jobs that simply do not exist – and risk trapping them in a cycle of poverty.

## Recommendations

Anglicare Australia calls for:

- 1** An immediate increase in the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance. People seeking work should not be trapped in poverty. An independent commission should set and index these payments to ensure they meet growing costs of living.
- 2** Wider access to the Disability Support Pension and Disability Employment Services. Tens of thousands of people with disability are stranded on Newstart. This is forcing them to look for jobs without proper support. Restoring access to the Disability Support Pension, and giving automatic access to specialist Disability Employment Services, would help them look for work.
- 3** Urgent reform of the Jobactive Network. That means an end to punitive approaches, and investing in tailored, person-centred support.
- 4** Direct job creation programs that match the skills of those looking for work. These programs should also respond to need in the community.

# INTRODUCTION

Anglicare Australia's Jobs Availability Snapshot aims to show what the job market is really like for people who don't have qualifications or work experience to draw on. It compares government data on the number of people with barriers to gaining work in the Jobactive<sup>i</sup> system, with the number of suitable online positions advertised in the sample month of May 2019.

The Snapshot provides insights into the experiences of people who have barriers to gaining and staying in work, and invites reflection on whether current policies are supporting them.

There are many hurdles that can make it harder to find work, such as leaving school early; taking time out of the workforce to care for someone; having restricted hours available; living in an area with few jobs; or living with a mental illness. Older workers who lost their jobs late in their careers also struggle to find work again. The number of older people reliant on income support is increasing, as some industries decline and ageist perceptions lead employers to think that older workers are "untrainable" or "expensive". Research also shows that the longer people are unemployed, the longer they are likely to remain so.<sup>1</sup>

Many of these jobseekers look for jobs that call for fewer qualifications and less experience to get a foot in the door of the job market. But as the labour market changes, jobs are becoming more complex and highly-skilled. Other positions have been declining over the past decade.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Jobactive is the Australian Government funded employment services network, consisting of for profit and not for profit providers.

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At the same time, Australia's safety net is being more and more tightly targeted by the Government. Mutual obligation requirements continue to become more punitive, while penalties are increasing. This approach is most clearly seen in the privatised Jobactive network, which has been breaching people carelessly and arbitrarily as part of a policy based around demerits and penalties.<sup>3</sup> These policies assume that people are responsible for their own exclusion, and that there are enough suitable jobs for those who need them.

The Snapshot sheds a light on the reality of finding work for those caught up in this system, and on a failed approach that seeks to punish people instead of helping them.

# METHODOLOGY

The Snapshot compares data on the number of people with barriers to work with the number of suitable advertised positions in a sample month. May was chosen as the sample month because it falls outside cycles that alter job availability, such as seasonal work. It is also a typical reporting month for publicly available government statistics on the labour market.

The Snapshot draws on three federal government data sets:

- » The **Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations** which is a typology of all potential positions in the labour market by the qualifications and skill levels required, and experience;<sup>4</sup>
- » The **Internet Vacancy Index** which examines the distribution of currently advertised positions, by skill level;<sup>5</sup> and
- » Jobactive caseload data associated with the **Jobseeker Classification Index**, used to classify people accessing government funded employment services according to the barriers they face to entering the workforce.<sup>6</sup>

As the government has released more information related to these three data sets, Anglicare Australia has continued to adapt our Snapshot methodology. This year the number of suitable positions advertised was based on analysis released in the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business' Vacancy Report. Our previous methodology

was designed to be conservative. The Department's report is based on a more detailed level of jobs classification data than has previously been available. We expect this is more accurate than our previous calculations. This changing methodology means that the Snapshot findings are not directly comparable to previous years.

## Job classification

The Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) categorises the different types of jobs available in the labour market and the skill level they require. It lists each job type according to five skill levels:

- 1: Bachelor degree or higher qualification, or at least 5 years relevant experience
- 2: Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma or Diploma, or at least 3 years relevant experience
- 3: Certificate IV, Certificate III with at least 2 years training, or at least 3 years relevant experience
- 4: Certificate II, Certificate III, or at least 1 year relevant experience
- 5: Certificate I, compulsory secondary education, and/or on-the-job-training.

The Snapshot focuses on Level 5 jobs as these are best suited to people looking for entry level work.

## Job advertisements

The Internet Vacancy Index (IVI) collates job vacancies advertised online across Australia and rates them according to ANZSCO skill levels. It counts online job advertisements posted on SEEK, CareerOne and Australian JobSearch during the sample month. While the IVI sometimes includes duplicates where a single vacancy appears on multiple job sites, it can also mask the number of vacancies such as when a single advertisement is placed for a bulk recruitment round.

These variations do not affect the reliability of the IVI in measuring shifts in employment,<sup>7</sup> which continues to be used the Government to measure vacancies. The Snapshot uses the IVI to calculate the number of suitable jobs nationally, and in each state and territory.

## People seeking work

The Snapshot uses data provided by the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business on the number of people in Stream C within the Jobactive network to measure the number of people with barriers to employment looking for work.

Jobseekers on Newstart must have an assessment through the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) to gauge the level of difficulty they face in gaining work. This information determines the level of support they receive from the Jobactive network. According to their score on the JSCI, people are categorised into streams of employment support within the Jobactive network. Stream C is for those who need the most support to find and keep work.

The Snapshot is conservative in estimating the number of these jobseekers, as not every person experiencing disadvantage accesses government employment services and qualifies for Stream C. It should also be remembered that more highly-skilled jobseekers also apply for Level 5 jobs for a variety of reasons (for example, due to underemployment). The number of people looking for jobs at this level almost certainly exceeds the number of people classified as Stream C.





**The Snapshot compares people who have barriers finding work with vacancies at their skill level**

# SNAPSHOT FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the total number of people looking for work, including those classified as Stream C in the sample month of May 2019.

Table 1. People seeking work, May 2019

| People seeking work  | National total |
|----------------------|----------------|
| People unemployed    | 704,700        |
| People underemployed | 1,160,700      |
| Jobactive caseload   | 619,956        |
| Stream C caseload    | 99,942         |

Sources: ABS Labour Market Figures Seasonally Adjusted<sup>viii</sup> May 2019 and the Labour Market Information Portal May 2019

The figures show there is a large number of people, particularly the under-employed, that may be competing for the same positions as those who are in Stream C. The Snapshot's ratio of people to the number of vacancies is therefore likely to be conservative.

Stream C jobseekers made up 16 percent of the total caseload in May 2019. This was the same proportion as one year ago. However the total number of people in Jobactive, including those in Stream C, has decreased every year since we released our first Snapshot in 2016. In contrast, the number of underemployed people has steadily increased. This suggests many of the jobs available to this cohort are casual or insecure.

Table 2. People seeking work, May 2016 to May 2019

| People seeking work  | 2016      | 2017      | 2018      | 2019      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| People unemployed    | 726,400   | 711,900   | 714,600   | 704,700   |
| People underemployed | 1,054,700 | 1,120,500 | 1,113,800 | 1,160,700 |
| Jobactive caseload   | 778,676   | 739,153   | 673,768   | 619,956   |
| Stream C caseload    | 138,812   | 124,385   | 110,735   | 99,942    |

Sources: ABS Labour Market Figures Seasonally Adjusted<sup>viii</sup> May 2016-2019 and the Labour Market Information Portal May 2016-2019.

## Jobs advertised

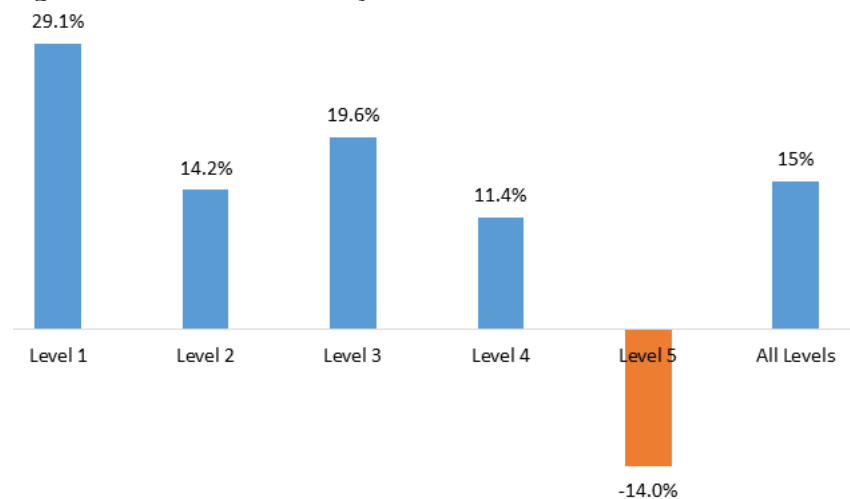
174,000 jobs were advertised in May 2019 on the IVI. Of the 174,000 jobs advertised, only 10 percent were classified at the lowest skill Level 5.

Table 3. Proportion of jobs advertised by skill level, May 2019

| Vacancy skill level | National total | National percent |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Level 1             | 69,800         | 40%              |
| Level 2             | 16,900         | 10%              |
| Level 3             | 22,000         | 13%              |
| Level 4             | 46,600         | 27%              |
| Level 5             | 18,200         | 10%              |
| All vacancies total | 174,000        | 100%             |

Sources: The Vacancy Report May 2019, Labour Market Information Portal

Figure 1. Trends in national job advertisements 2014-19



Sources: *The Vacancy Report May 2019, Labour Market Information Portal*

The findings illustrate changes in the labour market with a consistent fall in the number of Level 5 jobs available. As the labour market shifts away from primary industries towards a more service-based economy, there has also been a shift towards higher skilled jobs. Over the last two decades, jobs at the highest skill level (Level 1) have comprised 45.3 percent of total employment growth. By contrast, jobs at the lowest skill level (Level 5) comprised only 8.6 percent of total employment growth.<sup>8</sup> This trend is expected to continue.<sup>9</sup>

## Ratio of people to jobs

When comparing the number of people in Stream C to the number of vacancies, we find that for every Level 5 position, there are more than five people competing for each job. Table 3 then shows the ratio of Stream C participants to Level 5 vacancies in each state and territory.

Table 4. Ratio of people in Stream C jobactive to jobs advertised by region

| Region             | People per job level 5 |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Australia          | 5.49                   |
| ACT                | 1.75                   |
| NSW                | 5.02                   |
| Northern Territory | 3.99                   |
| Queensland         | 5.95                   |
| South Australia    | 9.11                   |
| Tasmania           | 13.89                  |
| Victoria           | 3.96                   |
| Western Australia  | 7.42                   |

The shortage of suitable jobs for those in Stream C can be seen across the country, but jobseekers in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia are doing it especially tough. Tasmania is on a long journey to lift educational attainment, and has long struggled with unemployment and underemployment.<sup>10</sup> The South Australian and Western Australian results appears to show the impact of the declining manufacturing and mining sectors, which is taking a toll on people seeking jobs at this level.

It is clear from these findings that there is strong competition for a shrinking number of jobs. The Department's own data shows employers receive an average of 19 applicants for each of these jobs. Only three make it to the interview stage of recruitment.

Over half of employers considered relevant experience to be essential for lower skilled vacancies,<sup>11</sup> yet many people lack recent work experience. This highlights the Catch-22 many jobseekers face getting a foothold in the workforce.

Evidence also shows that people with higher qualifications are working in lower skilled jobs. This, along with broader competition from those who are underemployed, is putting more pressure on jobseekers' ability to compete.<sup>12</sup>

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**There is more and more competition for a shrinking number of jobs**

# POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Snapshot findings show that those in greatest need of support from the Jobactive network are facing the greatest competition for work. With these jobseekers spending an average of five years looking for work, it is critical to explore the failures of the system and how they could be fixed. This year, Anglicare Australia sought a demographic breakdown of people classified as Stream C within Jobactive. This information is shown in Table 5. Many in Stream C will have a mix of these attributes, as jobseekers can be recorded against multiple cohorts.

Table 5. Demographic data of Stream C and all Jobactive participants

| Demographics     | Across Stream C |         | Across Jobactive |         |
|------------------|-----------------|---------|------------------|---------|
|                  | Numbers         | Percent | Numbers          | Percent |
| Female (15+)     | 43,178          | 43      | 312,605          | 50      |
| Youth (under 25) | 11,268          | 11      | 113,713          | 18      |
| Mature Age (50+) | 27,085          | 27      | 173,669          | 28      |
| Indigenous       | 16,440          | 16      | 72,605           | 12      |
| Disability       | 68,347          | 68      | 171,605          | 28      |
| Refugee          | 10,586          | 11      | 32,477           | 5       |
| Total numbers    | 99,942          |         | 619,956          |         |

Sources: Labour market information portal, including downloads from their website. Jobseekers can be recorded against multiple cohorts.

Table 5 shows that groups of people who are known to experience higher rates of vulnerability are over-represented in Stream C, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people who first settled in Australia as refugees. Of particular concern is the over-representation of people with a disability. This is likely due to the changes in eligibility for the Disability Support Pension (DSP), which have seen more people forced off the payment.<sup>13</sup> A recent analysis from ACOSS and Jobs Australia shows that a growing percentage of people on unemployment payments are over the age of 45 or have a disability.<sup>14</sup>

The failure of the Jobactive system can be seen in the number of people languishing in stream C for an average of five years. This is defined as extreme, long-term unemployed. Just over 19 percent (129,000) of Jobactive participants were extremely long-term unemployed in May 2019, up from 14 percent in 2016.<sup>15</sup>

The rate of long-term unemployment has doubled from 0.7 percent in 2009 to 1.35 percent in 2016. The proportion of unemployed people who were long-term unemployed has climbed from 13 percent to 23 percent. The growth in long-term unemployment has been universal, affecting all demographics.<sup>16</sup>

Each of these factors points to the urgency of overhauling the Jobactive network and income support system. In the face of the stark evidence that there are not enough suitable jobs, and that people are not being properly supported by employment services, we cannot continue to punish people for systemic failures.

## A penalty is not a job

The failures of the Jobactive network must be considered alongside growing obligations and harsher sanctions for jobseekers. The Targeted Compliance Framework which was introduced in July 2018 brought in rigid penalties such as payment suspensions and cancellations that Jobactive providers, rather than Centrelink, can administer without review. Of the 744,884 participants in welfare-to-work scheme last financial year, 581,866 had their payments suspended. However, more than one in five people who had their payments suspended were found not to be at fault.<sup>17</sup>

There is widespread anecdotal evidence of Jobactive system errors showing that many people are being penalised without having done anything wrong, and suggesting that many are unfairly enduring a loss of income as a result of a flawed system.<sup>18</sup> Some reported being breached for missing appointments that had not even happened yet. Others were breached after Jobactive providers refused to reschedule appointments that clashed with training, job interviews, or even casual work. This is a microcosm of a unique aspect of Australia's social security system – the punishment of people for flawed, mistake-prone systems.

Put simply, breaching someone does not help them gain a job. Yet over the last two decades successive Governments have made receiving welfare far more conditional; and at the same time have moved to limit the quantum and extent of assistance offered to people who are unemployed. The irony has been that with the adoption of the terminology of “mutual obligation”, governments have focused on

increasing the obligations of vulnerable citizens, while reducing the commitment of the state to provide genuine assistance to people out of work.

The introduction of the Work for the Dole scheme in 1997 meant people who were unemployed could be forced to work in order to receive income support. Since then obligations have been continually expanded, with reforms in 2006 applying mutual obligations to sole parent carers, people with disabilities, mature age jobseekers, and people who have been long-term unemployed.

Government aims with these conditional welfare reforms have been to ‘incentivise’ people into paid employment. The increased obligations and sanctions are intended as a ‘stick’ to motivate this behaviour. But the evidence shows that the vast majority of people receiving welfare already want to work, and are very motivated to find work. This was firmly expressed by the Government appointed Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel in their report “I Want to Work: Employment Services 2020”,<sup>19</sup> developed in close consultation with people receiving unemployment benefits.

The problem is not motivation. As this Snapshot highlights, there are simply not enough suitable jobs for people who need the most assistance to get them. The Jobactive system is failing in its mission to give them support. It is time to stop punishing people for system failures, and instead focus on the obligations of the Australian Government to take care of its citizens.

## Punishing people has failed

Increasing obligations and sanctions for people has also failed overseas. Longitudinal research has found that increasing welfare conditionality in the United Kingdom has been “largely ineffective” in facilitating people’s movement into the paid workforce.<sup>20</sup> Mandatory activities and strict sanctions for non-compliance did not produce positive change for vulnerable people receiving income support, and for a substantial minority there were strong negative effects. While sanctions did little to enhance people’s motivation to prepare for or seek paid work, they routinely triggered negative personal, financial, health and behavioural consequences.

Research in Australia into the experience of single mothers found that the Welfare to Work reforms have not increased women’s participation in employment. Instead, they exacerbated financial insecurity. Poor implementation, excessive compliance and punitive behaviour from jobs services providers made it harder for women to become self-reliant and eroded their motivation.<sup>21</sup>

In both of these studies it was found that increasing obligations for people who are unemployed makes it much harder for them to look for

work. People’s experiences were that employment service providers were focused on managing their compliance, instead of supporting them to find work. This also created hardship, with support becoming generic and of poor quality, and fair exemption policies not being applied. Instead, personalised employment-focused support rather was found to be much more effective in helping people into work. This reflects the experience of the Anglicare Australia Network supporting people who engage with employment services.

Rigid welfare conditionality teamed with harsh penalties has also been found to undermine the resilience and agency of people who are looking for work. We know that a strengths-based approach, which builds on the interests, skills and capacity of people, is the most effective.

It is time for Australia to abandon these failed punitive policies, and instead reinstate employment services that support people, and invest in creating jobs for the many missing out.



Research shows that the  
Welfare to Work reforms have  
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## Spotlight: How our system fails people with disability

On paper, Australia has several systems for supporting people with disability to find and keep work. But in fact, Australia has very poor rates of job participation for people with disability.<sup>33</sup> In recent years Governments have restricted access to the DSP, so that more people with disability are reliant on the much lower Newstart payment. At the same time, Governments have failed to ensure people with disability have access to specialist assistance to find and keep work through the Disability Employment Services (DES) scheme.

Even though the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is meant to help people achieve their aspirations, there have been ongoing problems in getting employment goals recognised and funded in NDIS plans.

Anglicare Australia Network member EPIC Assist (EPIC) is a leading provider of disability employment services. They report that there have been persistent issues with the Employment Services Assessment administered by the Department of Human Services, which places people in employment streams. For people with disability, both the design and administration of the assessment are flawed. This helps explain the very high numbers of people with disability classified as Stream C in the Jobactive network, rather than being given access to specialist support through DES.

The result of these government policies is that more people with a disability are in highly precarious living circumstances struggling to survive on Newstart. They do not have access to specialist disability employment services, and many are at risk of losing payments due to harsh sanction schemes. Another glaring gap is of any major government program designed to actively create jobs for people with disability.

The Australian Government must urgently rethink how it supports people with disability to find and keep work. With 68 percent of those in Jobactive Stream C identified as people with disability, there is clearly a systemic policy failure that needs urgent attention. Restoring broader eligibility for the DSP, giving all people with disability automatic access to specialist DES, and funding employment preparation needs through NDIS plans should be the first steps.

## Raising the rate of Newstart

The Jobs Availability Snapshot's simple numerical comparison destroys the myth that there are enough jobs for people who need them. The punishingly low level of Newstart and related payments are stopping people from looking for work, not least because it is putting people at increased risk of homelessness.<sup>22</sup> This, combined with the extended time thousands of people are finding themselves reliant on it, shows that Newstart and related payments must be raised to match the cost of living. As Anglicare Australia and many others have argued, Newstart and related payment rates should be set by an independent commission,<sup>23</sup> and reviewed regularly so that people can afford decent housing, eat, look after their health, and seek work.

It is now unconscionable and an act of wilful denial to pretend that Newstart can cover basic needs. One in ten family households has one or more unemployed parent,<sup>24</sup> which is why raising Newstart is the most powerful thing that the Government could do to lift children out of poverty.<sup>25</sup> It has been more than two decades since Newstart was raised. With overwhelming community and business support for it to

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The punishingly low rate  
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from looking for work



be increased, the Australian Government must prioritise raising Newstart in the next Federal Budget.

## Restoring access to the DSP

Changes to the eligibility and assessment of the DSP have left thousands of people with disability stranded on the much lower rate of Newstart, which is inadequate for anyone, and even more so for people with disability. This is causing extreme hardship, and is forcing people to look for jobs without proper support. The eligibility criteria and assessment processes for the DSP must be overhauled to give people with disability access to a proper adequate income.

## Urgent reform of Jobactive

The findings of this Jobs Availability Snapshot underline the urgent need for the Government to embrace the recommendations of its own review into employment services.<sup>26</sup> The most crucial of these is to fund person-centred and tailored support for people with barriers to finding and keeping work. This support must be built on seeing the whole person, and responding to their strengths and aspirations as much as their obstacles to success. It must also provide support to people once they have found a job, to ensure it is a lasting opportunity.

For years, Anglicare Australia has been calling for this shift in the way our country supports those with the greatest challenges to finding work. We know from the evidence that such an approach is successful. A study of employment support across the Anglicare Australia Network found that a person-centred approach, built on acknowledging the circumstances and ambitions of the jobseeker, delivers more positive training and employment outcomes than a "jobs first" approach.<sup>27</sup>

We have been recommending that this approach be adopted for Stream C jobseekers since our first Jobs Availability Snapshot in 2016,<sup>28</sup> and we have made subsequent submissions to employment services reviews that remain relevant.<sup>29</sup> With the value of this approach recognised by the Government's own employment services review, there is no reason to delay implementing and funding these changes.

## **Access to employment support**

It is nonsensical to have the specialist DES program in place, and not give all people with disability automatic access once they are looking for work. Redirecting funding from Jobactive providers into an expanded DES program that supports all people with disability accessing government income payments would be an easy and obvious reform to current employment services that could be implemented quickly. However, while implementing these changes would be a major improvement in employment services for every person needing personalised assistance, there is far more to be done.

## **Committing to job creation**

In our Jobs Availability Snapshots of 2017 and 2018, we raised the need for the Australian Government invest in jobs creation strategies. This year's results plus the Department's own trend data showing an ongoing decline in the number of Level 5 jobs only emphasises that need. We have proposed a two-pronged approach.

One is to specifically support people into areas of job demand such as disability and aged care work, where it is suitable and meaningful. We provided case studies of successful approaches in our 2017 Snapshot.<sup>30</sup> The second is to broaden the conception and value of work and participation in our society beyond the narrow definition of employment. Anglicare Australia believes that everyone's participation is valuable and that the positive benefits of a sense of meaningful contribution should be available to everybody. These contributions are not limited to paid work, but encompass volunteer roles, participation in sport and creative pursuits, education and training, environmental care, community activities, and health and wellbeing activities. We call for an expanded understanding of contribution beyond simple economic terms, and for increasing creativity in our approach to welfare. Our 2018 Jobs Availability Snapshot proposed both immediate changes to employment services to encompass this change, and trials of Basic Income and Jobs Guarantee schemes to test it more deeply and structurally.<sup>31</sup> The evidence is overwhelming that publicly funded jobs are just as good for society as those that are privately funded.<sup>32</sup> They lift people out of poverty, enable them to provide for their own needs and others, circulate money through the broader economy, and boost tax revenues. It does not make sense to spend hundreds of millions on a punitive system when there is a well-known and clear jobs deficit, particularly for people with barriers to work. This money could be much better spent on direct job training and creation in areas of known current and future demand.



**This is the fourth year that the Snapshot has used the Government's own data to show that its approach is not working**

# CONCLUSION

This year's Jobs Availability Snapshot shows that nationally, there are more than five people needing entry level work for every suitable vacancy. It marks the fourth year that Anglicare Australia has used the Government's own data to show that its approach to supporting vulnerable people into work is not working, and needs urgent reform.

The Government's own review of employment services, whose policy recommendations mirror ours, gives us cause for some hope. Now is the time for concrete commitment to employment services reform, including addressing the glaring flaws in the support offered to people with disability.

Even better would be to see it matched by a bold and nation-building commitment to lift people on government incomes out of poverty by raising the rate of Newstart and related payments, and funding government-led jobs creation.

It is not a question of choosing between funding and economics, because the economic return of supporting people into work benefits all of us. It is a question of compassion, and what our collective dream for a better society looks like. Surely it is one that values the contribution of every person, supports us all to build our capabilities, and ensures the strength of our communities by helping everyone participate. We hope that come our next Jobs Availability Snapshot, we will be documenting evidence of government steps to make that dream a reality.

## Recommendations

Anglicare Australia calls for:

- 1 An immediate increase in the rate of Newstart and Youth Allowance. People seeking work should not be trapped in poverty. An independent commission should set and index these payments to ensure they meet growing costs of living.
- 2 Wider access to the Disability Support Pension and Disability Employment Services. Tens of thousands of people with disability are stranded on Newstart. This is forcing them to look for jobs without proper support. Restoring access to the Disability Support Pension, and giving automatic access to specialist Disability Employment Services, would help them look for work.
- 3 Urgent reform of the Jobactive Network. That means an end to punitive approaches, and investing in tailored, person-centred support.
- 4 Direct job creation programs that match the skills of those looking for work. These programs should also respond to need in the community.

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