

Long term unemployed: barriers and approaches to optimise return to work outcomes

Author: Suzanne L. Cross, Monash University

Introduction

The Australian 'Jobactive' employment model helps job seekers find work (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). In 2019, three quarters of a million job seekers were receiving benefits under the employment services scheme (Australian Council of Social Service, 2021). Whilst unemployment is a global concern, the proportion of long term unemployed (LTU) job seekers is of critical importance to social and economical welfare (Australian Government, 2021a, 2021b; Cassidy, Chan, Gao, & Penrose, 2020; Commonwealth of Australia, 2018; Flatau, Galea, & Petridis, 2000; Social Ventures Australia, 2016). LTU is defined in research as being unemployed for a period of 52 weeks or longer (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). With nearly half a million of the job seekers (64%) defined as LTU job seekers in Australia there remains important opportunities to improve the employment rates of individuals that are experiencing long-term unemployment (Social Ventures Australia, 2016).

The 'I want to work, Employment Services 2020 Report' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018) details the findings of an expert panel from the perspectives of over 1,400 jobseekers, employment service providers, employers and community groups. Potential areas to help long-term unemployed (LTU) job seekers were highlighted, these included providing more choices on how to apply for work, changes to the digital/online job application processes and providing strong performing employment support services with system flexibility for a personalised, user-centred approach.

Integrating LTU job seekers back into work is a global priority. The European Union has 10.9 million LTU job seekers and committed €86 billion in supporting job seeker activation measures between 2014-2020 (Campbell & Mercer, 2017). In response, the European Union has adopted Recommendation on best practices for the integration of the long-term unemployed (LTU) job seekers into the labour market (European Union, 2016a). The European Union acknowledges that barriers to reintegrate back into work are diverse and importantly, that they often cumulate over time, making re-entry into the workforce more difficult to achieve as time unemployed increases (European Commission, 2019).

As part of the European Employment Strategy, the European Social Fund (ESF) Transnational Platform encourages learnings across borders through thematic networks, learnings and expertise to help identify (through profiling and outreach) and reduce the barriers experienced by LTU job seekers and integrate them into employment service provisions (Campbell & Mercer, 2017; European Union, 2018). The nine thematic networks include employment, youth, skills, inclusion, governance, migration, social economy, partnerships and simplification, and importantly and additionally gender and social innovation (Campbell & Mercer, 2017). It is viewed that the duration of unemployment is of high importance across Europe, with LTU job seekers having half the chance of employment than short term unemployed counterparts - the transition from LTU to employment (rather than even longer term unemployment) is expressed as a crucial priority (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Identifying and addressing barriers experienced by LTU job seekers

To help tackle the phenomenon of long term unemployment, vulnerable groups and the barriers they commonly face have been identified in various pieces of literature. The most vulnerable groups in becoming LTU as identified by research are people with low skills or qualifications, third-country nationals, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged minorities and young or old job seekers (Bouget, Frazer, Marlier, Peña-Casas, & Vanhercke, 2015; Campbell & Mercer, 2017; European Commission, 2019; European Union, 2016a; Singley, 2003). Research from Australia and New Zealand reports the same trends in vulnerable LTU groups with the addition of job seekers from indigenous backgrounds, sole parents and regionally located job seekers (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018; Singley, 2003; Social Ventures Australia, 2016). Australian statistical data from the Reserve Bank of Australia also identifies males as having increased likelihood of being LTU job seekers than experiencing short term unemployment or employment (Cassidy et al., 2020).

Research agrees that strong performing employment support services should provide identification of job seekers needs and interventions to LTU job seekers that recognise the importance of measures such as training, job incentive and job creation (Campbell & Mercer, 2017; Dean & Aggett, 2013; European Commission, 2019; European Union, 2018; OECD, 2015, 2018). A review of practices overseas revealed that mixed component models and labour market policies (LMP) interventions are associated with a decrease LTU rates (OECD, 2018). Interventions should consist of records of activation rates (the amount of LTU job seekers that participant in LMP measures) and coherence between active and passive labour market policies (OECD, 2018). Mixed and tailored interventions should aim to address all potential impacts and barriers of long term unemployment (Australian Government, 2021a; Bouget et al., 2015; Campbell & Mercer, 2017; Commonwealth of Australia, 2018; European Commission, 2019, 2021a; European Union, 2016a). Efforts to identify and address the multitude of barriers experienced by the heterogeneous group of LTU job seekers often cut across diverse policy and service boundaries and requires an integrated/multidisciplinary approach that incorporates both hard and soft measures (European Union, 2016b).

Addressing hard measures alone is widely regarded by literature as a less effective approach than the inclusion of both hard and soft measures (Campbell & Mercer, 2017; European Commission, 2021a; European Union, 2016a). Hard measures include job seeker activation / engagement, employment, education and training as a result of participation in Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). Soft measures relate to the 'distance travelled' towards the more concrete measures (hard measures) of obtaining employment. Such soft measures are considered in literature as being intangible, subjective, a matter of degree rather than absolute, dependent on individual job seeker needs, and immediate, as they are considered necessary 'stepping stones' to achieve or build on during the journey towards sustained employment (European Commission, 2019). These include outcome measures from guidance, training employment interventions, such as skills in demand, job search, individual coaching and activities involving employers (European Commission, 2019) as part of the journey towards employment. From an economical viewpoint, it should be acknowledged that LMPs do not necessarily result in job creation but they play an important role in improving economic performance by making a larger number of job seekers job-ready and more skilled for when extra jobs become available (Jeff Borland, 2000).

From a broad perspective, soft measures include a range of behavioural, interpersonal and practical work-focused skills (European Commission, 2019; European Union, 2016a; OECD, 2018). Indicators of intangible soft measures such as levels of attendance, improved time-keeping and improved

communication skills can suggest strongly that motivation to work has increased (European Commission, 2019; IPAR, 2021).

Important behavioural skills that may be barriers to securing employment include emotional competencies, self-efficacy, confidence, behavioural attitude, coping skills, motivation and health awareness (Bouget et al., 2015; European Commission, 2019). Interpersonal skills may also need further development, such as communication skills, the ability to work in a team or get along with other people, coping with authority and individual presentation/appearance. In addition, important practical work-focused skills that may be in need of development for many LTU job seekers are organisational/time management skills, problem solving/analytical skills and career management skills such as job search and/or application abilities (European Commission, 2019). Finally, systematic barriers are also part of the holistic LTU job seeker experience. System structures and requirements may create additional barriers for LTU job seekers in terms of access to services and funds. These include the employment services support procedures such as activation policies, structuring on benefits schemes, financial costs of interviews, courses, employment, insecurity in a new job after leaving the benefit system, structuring of Key Performance Indicators and provider funding (OECD, 2018).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reviewed the activation policies of nine country studies and identified three core elements in assisting LTU back into work: motivation to work, employability and opportunity to gain work, that should be addressed from a mix of hard and soft measures in Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP). The importance of measuring job seekers' motivation to work in gaining sustained employment is supported by the Australia programme Positivum™ (IPAR, 2021). Positivum is a holistic assessment tool and health coaching program that aims to address soft measures such as beliefs and perceptions about work and overall health, to improve employment outcomes (IPAR, 2021). The soft measures of the programme aim to involve both the employee and the employer and include topics such as; values and goal setting, health benefits of working and living/working with a health condition using self-management techniques (IPAR, 2021). A holistic approach to enhancing employment prospects is also reported in White Papers of the European Union with recognition of the need for adaptation of services based on individual job seeker's needs (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Best practice treatment/intervention strategies to help LTU job seekers back to work

Europe

The adoption of European Union Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed (LTU) job seekers into the labour market (European Union, 2016a) have guided many best practices across Europe. Recommendations acknowledge the variety of barriers faced by LTU job seekers and the need to identify most vulnerable groups early. These include job seekers with complex health issues, disabilities, criminal history and employment disillusion. Recommendations also recognise the potential affect that long term unemployment can have on job seekers in relation to social exclusion, inequality, an erosion of skills, a higher incidence of health problems and increased household poverty. The Recommendations aim to guide structures of employment support services to meet these needs by integrating the LTU job seekers back into the labour market through personalised assessments and tailored approaches. Services required will vary amongst the diverse group of LTU job seekers with overall beliefs and perceptions critical in activation/participation of LMP interventions (IPAR, 2021). The aims are to foster good and relevant skills and competences, address

skill shortages, provide smooth transitions from learning to work and for continued employability (European Union, 2016a).

The recently introduced best practice LMP interventions by the European Union (2016) have resulted in positive employment outcomes for LTU individuals in most European countries with additional expenditure on training, employment incentives and job creation (OECD, 2018). Findings from a European feasibility study support activities that are based on both hard and soft measures as a best practice to integrate LTU job seekers into work. It suggests that multiple outcome indicators (soft measures) along the journey to employment can help to determine the employment outcomes and the effectiveness of ALMPs (European Commission, 2019). The study identifies that skills are developed that aid in the progression towards sustained employment. These include: practical, work focused skills, career management skills, organisational skills, thinking and analytical skills and personal skills and attributes (European Commission, 2019). Some unintentional soft measures that aid in determining the effectiveness of ALMPs include improved well-being, improved self-esteem, improved career self-efficacy, improved resilience, hopefulness and perceived progress towards employment.

Employability is also increased through recovery measures aimed to improve physical health, mental health and approaching skill enhancements with a tailored focus (e.g. to build confidence and positive personal attitudes) and skills (e.g. training or vocational programmes such as work placement or work trials) (Campbell & Mercer, 2017). Other services, based on individual job seeker assessment may also be provided through a tailored approach. These include a broad range of services that attend to specific needs such as migration integration and debt counselling (Campbell & Mercer, 2017). In addition, strategies should include job search assistance, digital/IT education or assistance and effective job matching and job creation. This is supported by the ESF Transnational Platform, which recognises that LTU job seekers are a heterogeneous group, and that a range of services addressing both hard and soft measures are required to integrate LTU job seekers back into work (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Literature indicates that expenditure relating to long term unemployment should be based on enhancing RTW opportunities and decreasing LTU rates from a holistic perspective, with an emerging focus on 'one-stop shop' services that provides multidisciplinary interventions. The European Social Policy Network study 'Integrated Support for Long-term Unemployed in Europe' brings together the experience of 3 countries and their provision of services through 'one stop shops' that provide a single point of contact to help provide consistent services and benefits based on the individual job seeker's needs (Bouget et al., 2015). Whilst 'one stop shops' have emerged as the most integrated model, it is emphasised that co-ordination between employment, social assistance and social services is required and that any efforts of one stop shops to integrate LTU job seekers into employment support services should clearly be embedded into the policy framework to ensure job seeker's needs are met (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Belgium

In Belgium, My Career for Partners (Mijn Loopbaan voor Partners: MLP) was developed as a digital system to follow up job seekers progress by the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service. The main goal was to enable employment support services to track individual's progress towards employment, directly linking (soft and hard measures) to ESF indicators and output goals. The stakeholders are the job seekers on one hand, and the partners in education, job coaching, training deliver, counselling and employers on the other hand and use of the system by all stakeholders is free

of charge. All jobseekers are obliged to register on the MLP, employment counsellors invite job seekers for initial assessment and tailored employment support services are provided. All invitations and participations are recorded. Skills, experience and competencies are updated– creating a digital resume. Permission of job seekers has to be granted to external organisations to access job seeker files. The information on job placement feeds directly into ESF to provide hard measure output from a population perspective but the system tracking also allows for the design, modification and delivery of sustainable interventions to LTU. Ultimately, it provides indicators of where barriers are and how well the system is addressing them (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Finland

Although Finland's expenditure is relatively low on LMP measures their success in LTU decline in numbers is partly contributed to a significant training measure. The FI-17 Self-motivated studies is supported by unemployment benefit. Unemployment insurance (UI) consists of two different components in Finland: i) basic benefit, UI (after 400 or 500 days) or if you are not entitled to it, can claim labour market support (LMS) and is both comprehensive and flexible (OECD, 2018). Finland included 16 LMP measures in the LMP database in 2016. In addition to individual case management services, seven of the introduced measures combine 95% of the LTU job seekers:

1. FI-17 Self-motivated studies supported by unemployment benefit (vocational qualification training whilst receiving benefits).
2. FI-6 Labour market training
3. FI-10 Employment subsidy, private companies
4. FI-9 Employment subsidy, municipalities
5. FI-8 Temporary government employment,
6. FI-36 Rehabilitative work experience, and;
7. FI-11 Start-up grant (feasible business ideas).

Finland also applies integrated employment support services models to LTU job seekers through 'one-stop shops'. Finland employment services recognise that LTU job seekers are often faced with multiple barriers to employment, hence integrated services that can offer a range of services in a better placed to assist LTU job seekers than a single agency (Campbell & Mercer, 2017). It is also noted that one-stop shops also have the added benefit of reducing stigma for LTU as they service a range of clients and not just vulnerable job seekers.

Germany

In Germany the percentage of LTU job seekers dropped from 2006 to 2017 from 5.7% to 1.6% of the labour workforce, respectively. A large part of the success in reducing long term unemployment rates in Germany has been attributed to labour market reforms (Hartz reforms) in the period 2003-2005 that included more effective placement and support services and measures but also a reduction on unemployment benefits with stricter eligibility criteria.

In total , Germany had 39 LMP measures and 6 individual case management services to benefit LTU job seekers (OECD, 2018). Whilst 11 out of the 39 had a high number of LTU job seekers participating in the intervention, three measures had a particular focus on LTU. These included the DE-114 'Perspectives 50plus' program, DE-131 ESF program and the other was the DE-119 Model project 'community work'. Germany introduced individual case management services, support for further vocational training, Perspective 50plus (to assist older job seekers aged 50-64 years), integration subsidies (wage subsidies to employers for placing LTU job seekers with complex barriers), job finders

grant, community work and the ESF-funding program (DE-131) that provides ‘acquisition managers’ to act as the interface between job seekers, coaches, job centres and employers for LTU job seekers with complex barriers. The acquisition managers role was to recruit employers for the programme to offer jobs to the job seekers in the target group and advise employers on the various aspects of the programme (OECD, 2018).

The DE-119 Model project ‘community work’, ran from 2011 to 2015 on a voluntary basis of jobcentres. The project consisted of two phases; the activation phase of six months and the employment phase that lasted up to 36 months. The activation phase aimed at integrating job seekers in the labour market. Services included; counselling/assessment, placement activities, skills development/promotion. The employment phase included ongoing coaching support. Importantly, the activation phase was not funded federally and was covered out of jobcentres regular budgets. Funding was subsidised for the employment phase only. Evaluation of the DE-119 Model project by Brändle and colleagues revealed that job creation through the scheme was short term with jobs often unable to provide skills and experience relevant to the primary labour market, a decline of motivation and work/compensation imbalances (OECD, 2018). It did, however, improve job seekers social integration and interactions. This project evaluation suggests that although the activation stage was successful the project failed to meet a cost-benefit assessment due to the structure of the employment phase. Holistic approaches need to ensure that they are aligned with job creation measures, they provide relevant skills, they encourage jobseekers to continue to pursue employment opportunities (rather than feel ‘locked in’ to the intervention) and that the compensation offered should encourage the behaviour of actively seeking sustained employment.

Portugal

Reforms to employment services support in Portugal between 2011-2015 also included a programme for the modernisation of the Portuguese public employment service (PES) Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP), with a strengthened activation framework to improve the job readiness of jobseekers (OECD, 2018). Portugal also has a three-tier unemployment benefit system. Unemployment Insurance (UI), Unemployment Social Allowance (USA) for those not entitled to UI and lastly Social Insertion Income (also known as rendimento social de inserção; RSI) for those that have great economic need and, importantly, is subject to participation in active measures (OECD, 2016).

In 2015 Portugal’s strategies for addressing barriers faced by job seekers included 64 measures/components in the LMP database, the highest in the EU (OECD, 2018). In addition to having a high number of Labour Market Policies (LMP) interventions in comparison to many other countries Portugal also has a high number of interventions that are “mixed approaches (OECD, 2018). When compared to Finland, Bulgaria, Germany, and Hungary, Portugal has the highest activation rate amongst LTU job seekers. Furthermore, nearly one third of Portugal’s expenditure on LMP measures was spent on LTU job seekers in 2015-2016 period. Employment incentives are the most widely available LMP measure in Portugal. These passive LMPs provide subsidies, tax deductions and hiring support to employers to encourage the hiring of LTU job seekers (OECD, 2018). An evaluation of five different LMP measures by Costa Dias and Varejão in 2012 found that when comparing measures of ; internships, direct job creation, support for hiring and entrepreneurship, education and training courses and modular and continuous training, employment incentives (support for hiring) was revealed to have the highest impact on probability of employment one year after participation, followed by internships and direct job creation (OECD, 2018).

France

Cité des métiers operates as a one-stop shop for employment service support by providing a multidisciplinary support team. In Marseille, depending on your need and after an interview with an advisor, the Cité des Métiers offers you access to the PARCOUREO platform to help you in the construction of your plan (La Cité des Métiers, 2021). Partners include PES, universities, public and private human resource service and social NGOs. Partners provide their services free of charge to help build job seekers professional future. Counselling, professional services, documentation on employment, IT resources, and vocational training and education are offered by Partners (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Other countries

Ireland

The case management/one-stop shop model of Intreo, is the product of full scale managerial and front line service integration of employment offices with previously separate benefit payment services in Ireland (European Union, 2016b). The service from Ireland's Department of Social Protection that was established in 2012 that offers a single point of contact to provide a more streamlined approach. The intention of Intreo is to link the payment of income support to the assistance provided for employment to improve life chances through personal progression plans. Failure to engage in regular scheduled components such as skills/training strategies can lead to a reduction or cessation of benefit payments. Registration into one of Intreo's 'Pathways to work' programs provides job seekers with access to job information, job clubs, financial advice, training support grants and opportunities to access the National Internship Scheme, JobBridge (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

Ireland's Momentum's 'deliver-outcome-based funding model' was to bridge the gap between the disadvantages/barriers of the short term unemployed and the LTU. The Momentum Programme Momentum focused on developing self-confidence and providing good-quality work placements and training to give participants the opportunity to start over (European Commission, 2021b). A total of EUR\$10 million from the ESF funded private, non-profit and state agencies so they could develop and deliver support to people in need of work. It was designed to target the needs of LTU job seekers by addressing some of the soft measures (skills provisions, training). Essentially, the program demanded that the trainers source the work placement for the job seekers; the aim being to help job seekers showcase their skills to potential employers. Following the placement, job outcomes had to be at least two consecutive months in duration to ensure that the person had a chance of ongoing sustained employment. Providers were obligated to deliver in-demand skills training at a local level and then a duration of placement or further skills training/education (European Commission, 2019). With revisions to the model ensuring that premiums were paid when those with most barriers met either soft or hard measures, with a particular focus on placements. As a result one third of job seekers secured employment (European Commission, 2019). At a time when LTU job seekers were typical in the Momentum Programme innovative methods were used to further improve employment prospects for young people (these included mixing age groups in training sessions and altering training approaches). On evaluation of the success of the programme, participation were met at 6,500 job seeker and 52 percent of participants that started the programme were 'signed off' the unemployment register by the end of the project period. Success is largely attributed to sufficient funding and quality job placement (European Commission, 2021b).

Netherlands

The establishment of the Centrum for Werk and Inkomen (CWI: Work and Income Centre) from the Dutch reform of 2002 created an organisation to coordinate the work of existing agencies and clarify the role division between municipal service providers and the PES. As with other members of the European Union, unemployment benefits are available. Initial unemployment benefits are paid out at 75% of the average wage you've earned over the last 12 months (the current month not included), and 70% after two months, depending on your circumstances (I amsterdam, 2021). The Dutch labor law system for dismissal is particularly unusual, as it is very protective of employees: in most cases, the employer needs permission from the labour office, known as UWV WERKbedrijf, or the court to fire you (Expatica, 2021).

United Kingdom

One tool examined in the ESF that acknowledged the importance of soft measures such as informal learning processes was the SOUL Record tool that was implemented in the United Kingdom (European Commission, 2019). Researchers collaborated with six local voluntary and community organisations to study the learning process, map soft measures/outcomes achieved and create a prototype model called The SOUL Record to measure them. The model was then trialled and refined based on the findings (Anderson, Harriet Foster, & McKibben, 2012). The Soul Record Tool measures more than 80 soft measure outcomes and comprises three flexible tools; questionnaires, worksheets and observation sheets, supported by a user guide and a results package. Soft measures are grouped into three areas; attitude, personal/interpersonal and practical. Scores are tallied from answers to 21 statements as a way to provide baseline and end-point scores and to identify areas where job seekers require more support. The SOUL Record is a useful resource for both one-to-one work and group work in employment support services. It is suitable for projects where face-to-face contact with jobseekers is available over a period of time, assisting in establishing and developing relationships, particularly, with vulnerable jobseekers (Anderson et al., 2012).

The United Kingdom have also implemented a number of programmes to reduce the barriers of vulnerable LTU job seekers with an aim to place them in sustained work (Outcomes Star, 2021; Purvis, Smith, Lowrey, & Dobbs, 2006). The Workstep Programme in the United Kingdom is part of a broad range of schemes funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that is also aimed at assisting vulnerable job seekers. It focusses on helping job seekers with disabilities by addressing the associated complex barriers to support sustained employment (Purvis et al., 2006). This programme aimed to address some barriers through the funding of new approaches and processes to be able to better accommodate job seekers with a disability. The two distinct models of delivery within the program are via work within a supported business (a business already engaged) or via a supported placement with a mainstream employer (a business with new support).

Work Outcomes Star is another tool implemented in the United Kingdom to measure and support change in vulnerable job seekers (Outcomes Star, 2021). The Work Outcomes Star is based on empowerment, collaboration and integration and measures job specific skills, job search skills, stability, basic skills (e.g. language, numeracy), social skills for work and challenges (European Commission, 2019). Another initiative in the United Kingdom designed around vulnerabilities of visually impaired job seekers is the Enabler Project (Saunders, Douglas, & Lynch, 2013). The project that was carried out by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Actions for Blind People and the Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR). Measures were taken at baseline to categorise jobseekers and provide support. Categorisations included: work entry, transitional, long term and potential levels. Although the program evaluated was small on scale,

advantages were found 12/14 (71%) of job seekers achieving positive changes in their personal circumstances; of these changes were 21% now in paid employment, 21% in secured full-time education courses and 50% benefitted from voluntary work as the first important step on their journey into paid employment (Saunders et al., 2013).

New Zealand

A review of recent international evidence for the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation in New Zealand identified numerous barriers (Singley, 2003). These included: Personal Barriers (Poor health and disability, mental illness and psychological distress, learning disabilities, substance abuse and dependence, attitudes, criminal convictions, transportation problems), Family Barriers (care giving, domestic violence and abuse, Social and Community Barriers (lack of access, poorly developed social networks, geographical location/transport), Work-Related Barriers: Individual and Structural (Labour demand, discrimination and ineffective job search and Benefit System Barriers (financial disincentives to employment, inadequate social service support and case management, lack of awareness of employment support services (Singley, 2003). The review also acknowledges that transport, care giving and financial insecurity if job did not work out were common barriers amongst LTU job seekers (Singley, 2003). In addition to job seekers with multiple complex barriers, job seekers that were younger or older or Maori were likely to remain LTU. Those unemployed for more than two years reported disincentives of the benefit system, lack of qualifications, overall discouragement, perceived discrimination, lack of available jobs in the local area, limited mobility and age as barriers. The review concludes that the barriers are complex and varied amongst LTU job seekers and approaches should be tailored to be effective (Singley, 2003).

Australia

Research in Australia from as early as the 1980s has explored the role that psychologists, sociologists and epidemiologists have in identifying the inter-linkages between unemployment and soft measures such as mental health, attitudes and behaviour and unanimously agree that unemployment is a collective issue with collective solutions (Caswell, Marston, & Larsen, 2010; Flatau et al., 2000; Marston & McDonald, 2008).

A 'help and hassle' approach has been implemented in the Australian Job Network that provides help in terms of employment assistance and training and sanctions for non-compliance, such as stopping unemployment benefits (Marston & McDonald, 2008; Mead, 1986). The 'help and hassle' model approach was designed to promote job readiness (Mead, 1986). It addresses skill development as well as promoting positive work habits and improving self-efficacy with an aim of sustained work an outcome (Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, 2000). Self-efficacy is a component of behaviour that is derived from role models, practicing a skill or behaviour, receiving encouragement and support from others and developing self-supportive emotions (Bandura, 1977). The employment support services currently in place in Australian are not optimally structured to be able to address the multiple and complex barriers that are often experienced by LTU job seekers.

Government funded health interventions are currently unavailable for LTU job seekers wanting to RTW in Australia due to the privatisation of employment services sector over 20 years ago (1998). Privatisation led to a movement away from a Public Employment Service (PES) and into a 'quasi-market' Job Network model where private and non-profit groups bid for employment service contracts (Caswell et al., 2010). Some of the services to support the measures that assist the

placement of LTU job seekers into work may be somewhat neglected. Payment for managing a job seeker is in terms of outcome payments, often making additional journey or milestone services costly to the job seeker or providers and hence, less accessible.

Greater expenditure on employment and related services to address the barriers faced by LTU is likely required. Australian economist Jeff Borland (2011) expresses that unemployment analysis should go beyond the rate of unemployment to understand labour supply and labour demand and take into account the proportion of LTU job seekers and how they may continue to contribute to the ongoing costs of an employment system.

Currently employment support service providers are paid by the Australian Government when a job seeker has been placed in employment for a period of 4, 12 and 26 weeks and payment is weighted on employment disadvantages. The cost for applying a holistic RTW approach to increase RTW opportunities, including associated health interventions, is currently not covered by the government at the time the LTU job seeker is trying to RTW – intuitively, when they are most likely to need it.

A past review of the Australian Labour Market suggests that whilst existing models of job search counselling and assistance and wage subsidy programs are relatively effective in assisting unemployed who are less disadvantaged, a new model is needed to assist those unemployed with higher levels of disadvantage (Jeff Borland, 2000). In Australia the efforts of employment support services for LTU job seekers are generally aimed at the measures of ‘building self-confidence to find work’ and ‘success in finding work’, such as the ‘Work for Dole’ scheme (Marston & McDonald, 2008). When a job seeker first engages with the Australian Job Network they are classified in terms of needs by a the Job Seeker Classification Instrument. This instrument assigns needs and allocates services within heavily regulated key performance indicators and contracts and is likely to place LTU job seekers in the ‘intensive assistance’ category (Marston & McDonald, 2008). Researchers acknowledge that classification whilst helpful making distinctions between individuals and within individuals, it may also create a marginal field for discretion and/or negotiations about the best individual approach for each job seeker (Caswell et al., 2010). Less generic approaches, courses and more job seeker autonomy were also recommended as ways to build confidence and self-control rather than unintentionally lowering self-esteem. Currently the ‘one size fits all’ activation approach may refer LTU job seekers to courses for which they already have the skills or have previously gained the skills through Job Network, reducing motivation to participate, adding little or no value to the job seeker and and potentially having an detrimental affect on self-efficacy.

A longitudinal study in Australia that was funded by the Australian Research Council and Jobs Australia followed 75 job seekers over a 3 year period to get preliminary results on how the Job Network model was performing (Marston & McDonald, 2008). The study collected job seekers’ perspectives on the effectiveness of the Australian LMPs on improving self efficacy and employment outcomes. The research revealed themes of perspectives where the system had room for improvement (Marston & McDonald, 2008). These included a need for a more personalised approach that makes the job seeker feel value, access to a skilled employment consultant/case manager, a shared understanding of the importance of time (job seekers time, employment providers time and time unemployed) and a need for continuous service that builds on skills for LTU job seekers rather than repeating the cycle of ‘intensive assistance’. What emerged from the study was the profound need to address the psychological state of LTU job seekers. Job Network processes were reported as counterproductive in effort to improve self-esteem, self-control and motivation. (Marston & McDonald, 2008).

After changes in government and employment services systems Job Services was introduced in 2009/10 Job Services Australia (JSA) and the Disability Employment Services (DES) was created to help provide targeted assistance for job seekers with a disability (J. Borland, 2011). JSA integrated the Job Network, Placement Employment and Training program and includes new categories to characterise job seekers' in terms of their disadvantages, the timing and type of services they will receive (J. Borland, 2011).

Various government consultation initiatives have previously recognised the importance of providing holistic approaches to the integration of LTU job seekers back into work (Australian Government, 2021a; Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). The Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare performs data analysis to provide insights into how the system is working and informs innovative ways of helping more Australians to live independently of welfare. The overall aim is to invest early in job seekers (particularly those at risk of long term unemployment) with a focus to assist them to find work and improve their overall wellbeing (Australian Government, 2021a). Baseline data was recorded at commencement of the scheme and the 2018 Valuation Report to indicate expenditure areas of benefit schemes. The report also highlights new areas of expenditure that help identify disadvantaged job seekers. Indicators have been added to the system to record activations on geographical location in relation to the socio-economical status and refugee status. The model acknowledges that it captures the different risk characteristics from a population level perspective but does not reflect all the factors that may result in different outcomes for individual job seekers (Australian Government, 2019).

The 'I want to Work' outlines views on key principles to underpin a future system and the recommendations to Government to implement them (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). Principles outlined as best practice recommendations include those from a job seeker perspective and these recommendations include a system that provides an assessment that focuses on what job seekers are good at, to provide job seekers with control of how to find work, to provide useful activities work preparedness and to offered tailored approaches based on needs (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). Furthermore, the consultations draw on the need to connect LTU job seekers to other social services and provide them with personalised plans to address the barriers: to provide 'enhanced services'. Recommendations for LTU job seekers include dedicated funding to solve local job seeker barriers which can be accessed without the red tape (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). Digital analytics also has potential to free up further resources for LTU job seekers by applying Digital first: Self-service via digital platform for digital literate job-ready job seekers, and Digital plus: Access to providers for job-ready job seekers who need help with digital literacy or other practical barriers.

A review of Australia approaches revealed that there is a paucity of employment models that incorporate the holistic wellness of RTW individuals due to the privatisation of employment support services but report from the European Commission acknowledges that researchers in Australia understand the value of both hard and soft measures in applying a holistic approach to ALMPs. A related evaluation was conducted on disengaged young students by framing success as 'distance travelled' and providing flexible learning options (Thomas, McGinty, Riele, & Wilson, 2017). The evaluation found that holistic approaches that include soft measures, such as wellbeing and engagement, can impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes and overall completion of education (certifications and credentials). The programme also committed to providing post-programme transitional pathways to students. These findings of the discussed research and the Recommendations of the European Union relating to the integration of LTU job seekers into the labour market (European Union, 2016a) suggest that a programme such as Positivum™ would encourage important skill development and provide soft and hard measure benefits to the Australian Job Network (IPAR, 2021).

Conclusion

In summary, international literature suggests that the barriers faced by LTU job may be reduced by integrating multidisciplinary soft and hard measures into employment support services, including prevention measures (such as profiling). The most effective efforts in reducing long term unemployment include targeted and tailored approaches to the needs of LTU job seekers. Best models include a risk identification measures that target job seekers with low skill level, skill erosion, health issues, poverty and homelessness, gender inequalities, disabilities, minority vulnerabilities, criminal history and those discouraged and with low self-efficacy and confidence (Campbell & Mercer, 2017).

This review of literature is not exhaustive of the existing evidence on the barriers faced by LTU jobseekers but highlights trends in barriers and current best practice approaches being implemented in various countries to address the issues of long term unemployment. It is noted that interventions to address the gaps of services are still being refined across the globe, and should continue to be evaluated and modified. The findings of the review suggest that barriers to LTU job seekers are common across countries. Barriers to LTU job seekers are predominantly reported in literature as more than a shortfall of hard measures such as skills, education and training, but also incorporate other issues that need consideration, such as behavioural skills, interpersonal skills, practical work-focused skills, vulnerable demographics and family demands, to help secure sustained work. Individual assessments should be part of the employment support service with the provision of a variety of tailored services made available to LTU job seekers. Furthermore, it is recognised that LTU job seekers are likely to remain in LTU should some of these holistic measures be overlooked.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, C., Harriet Foster, H., & McKibben, J. (2012). *The SOUL Record - A New Tool For Measuring Soft Outcomes* Retrieved from <https://evaluatingimpact.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/soul-record.pdf>
- Australian Council of Social Service. (2021). A national advocate for action to reduce poverty and inequality and the peakbody for the community services sector in Australia. *Faces of Unemployment 2020*
- Retrieved from <https://www.acoss.org.au/faces-of-unemployment-2020/>
- Australian Government. (2019). *30 June 2018 Valuation Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.dss.gov.au/review-of-australias-welfare-system-australian-priority-investment-approach-to-welfare/2018-valuation-report>
- Australian Government. (2021a). A holistic approach to welfare. *Annual Reports*. Retrieved from <https://www.dss.gov.au/publications-articles-corporate-publications-annual-reports/a-holistic-approach-to-welfare>
- Australian government. (2021b). Welfare expenditure. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-expenditure>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Borland, J. (2000). *Labour market models of unemployment in Australia*. Melbourne, Vic.: Melbourne, Vic. : Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, The University of Melbourne.
- Borland, J. (2011). *The Australian Labour Market in the 2000s: The Quiet Decade*. Retrieved from <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/conf/2011/pdf/borland.pdf>
- Bouget, D., Frazer, H., Marlier, E., Peña-Casas, R., & Vanhercke, B. (2015). Integrated support for the long-term unemployed in Europe: A study of national policies. *European Social Policy Network (ESPN)*. doi:10.2767/60943
- Campbell, M., & Mercer, A. (2017). Tackling Long-Term Unemployment: The Role of Integrated Services. . *White Paper 1. Employment Thematic Network. European Union*.
- Cassidy, N., Chan, I., Gao, A., & Penrose, G. (2020). *Long-term Unemployment in Australia*. Retrieved from <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2020/dec/long-term-unemployment-in-australia.html#:~:text=Currently%20around%20one%20in%20every,for%20%20or%20more%20years.>
- Caswell, D., Marston, G., & Larsen, J. E. (2010). Unemployed citizen or 'at risk' client? Classification systems and employment services in Denmark and Australia. *Critical social policy*, 30(3), 384-404. doi:10.1177/0261018310367674
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2018). *I want to work, Employment Services 2020 Report*. Retrieved from <https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/final - i want to work.pdf>
- Dean, A., & Aggett, K. (2013). Tackling Long-Term Unemployment Amongst Vulnerable Groups - OECD LEED Programme.
- Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business. (2000). *Evaluation, Stage One: Implementation and market development*. Retrieved from Canberra:
- European Commission. (2019). *The feasibility of developing a methodology for measuring the distance travelled and soft outcomes for long-term unemployed people participating in Active Labour Market Programmes: Final Report*. Retrieved from Luxembourg: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8228&furtherPubs=yes>
- European Commission. (2021a). Long-term unemployment *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion*. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1205&langId=en>
- European Commission. (2021b). Momentum: Effective support for long-term unemployed people. *Regional Policy, Projects*. Retrieved from

- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/ireland/momentum-effective-support-for-long-term-unemployed-people
- European Union. (2016a). *Council recommendation of 15 February 2016 on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market* (2016/C 67/01). Retrieved from Brussels: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32016H0220%2801%29&qid=1456753373365>
- European Union. (2016b). *Issues emerging from combining active and passive measures for the long term unemployed – the design and delivery of single points of contact*. Retrieved from Luxembourg: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dan_Finn/publication/313115503_Issues_emerging_from_combining_active_and_passive_measures_for_the_long_term_unemployed_-_the_design_and_delivery_of_single_points_of_contact/links/5890bc3292851cda25689d8b/Issues-emerging-from-combining-active-and-passive-measures-for-the-long-term-unemployed-the-design-and-delivery-of-single-points-of-contact.pdf
- European Union. (2018). *Tackling Long-Term Unemployment through Risk Profiling and Outreach: A discussion paper from the Employment Thematic Network*. Retrieved from Luxembourg: http://praha.vupsv.cz/fulltext/ul_2172.pdf
- Expatica. (2021). Dutch labor law and employment contracts. *Working in the Netherlands: Labor Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.expatica.com/nl/working/employment-law/dutch-labor-law-102521/>
- Flatau, P., Galea, J., & Petridis, R. (2000). Mental Health and Wellbeing and Unemployment. *Australian economic review*, 33(2), 161-181. doi:10.1111/1467-8462.00145
- I amsterdam. (2021). Unemployment benefits in the Netherlands *Working in Amsterdam: Employment law & benefits*. Retrieved from <https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/work/employment-laws-and-benefits/unemployment-benefits>
- IPAR. (2021). Services. *Positivum: A Guide forward*. Retrieved from <https://ipar.com.au/services/positivum/>
- La Cité des Métiers. (2021). A range of tools to orient yourself throughout life. *Orientation - Training*. Retrieved from <https://www.translatetheweb.com/?from=fr&to=en&ref=SERP&dl=en&rr=UC&a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.citedesmetiers.fr%2f>
- Marston, G., & McDonald, C. (2008). Feeling Motivated Yet?: Long-term Unemployed People's Perspectives on the Implementation of Workfare in Australia. *The Australian journal of social issues*, 43(2), 255-269. doi:10.1002/j.1839-4655.2008.tb00101.x
- Mead, L. (1986). *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*. New York: Free Press.
- OECD. (2015). *Strengthening public employment services: Paper prepared for the G20 Employment Working Group*. Istanbul, Turkey. <http://www.oecd.org/employment/Strengthening-Public-Employment-Services.pdf>
- OECD. (2016). "Portugal 2016", *Country specific information for the OECD*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/benefits-and-wages-country-specific-information.htm>
- OECD. (2018). *LMP interventions for the long-term unemployed, In-depth evaluation*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/LMP%20interventions%20for%20LTU%20-%20in-depth%20evaluation.pdf>
- Outcomes Star. (2021). How the Outcomes Star™ works. Retrieved from <https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/about-the-star/what-is-the-outcomes-star/how-the-outcomes-star-works/#:~:text=%20How%20the%20Outcomes%20Star%E2%84%A2%20works%20%201,1%20to%205%20%E2%80%93%20they%20are...%20More%20>
- Purvis, A., Smith, L., Lowrey, J., & Dobbs, L. (2006). *WORKSTEP Modernisation Funds evaluation*. Retrieved from

<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2130/1/WORKSTEP%20modernisation%20Funds%20Evaluation%20Sheffield%20DWP.pdf#:~:text=WORKSTEP%20is%20a%20supported%20employment%20programme%2C%20aimed%20at,who%20with%20the%20right%20support%20can%20work%20effectively.>

Saunders, A., Douglas, G., & Lynch, P. (2013). *Tackling unemployment for blind and partially sighted people: Summary findings from a three-year research project (ENABLER)*. Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-social-sciences/education/victar/enabler-report.pdf>

Singley, S. G. (2003). *Barriers to Employment among Long-term Beneficiaries: review of recent international evidence*. Retrieved from Christchurch, NZ: https://monash.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?query=any,contains,Singley%20Barriers%20to%20Employment%20among%20%20Long-term%20Beneficiaries:%20A%20review%20of%20recent%20international%20evidence&tab=default_tab&search_scope=au_everything&vid=MONUI&lang=en_US&offset=0

Social Ventures Australia. (2016). *SVA Perspectives, Employment*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialventures.com.au/assets/Employment-Perspective-web.pdf>

Thomas, J., McGinty, S., Riele, K. t., & Wilson, K. (2017). Distance travelled: outcomes and evidence in flexible learning options. *Australian educational researcher*, 44(4), 443-460. doi:10.1007/s13384-017-0239-6