



Australian Government
Department of Employment

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EVALUATION STRATEGY FOR JOBACTIVE

ISBN

978-1-76028-943-0 [PDF]

978-1-76028-944-7 [DOCX]



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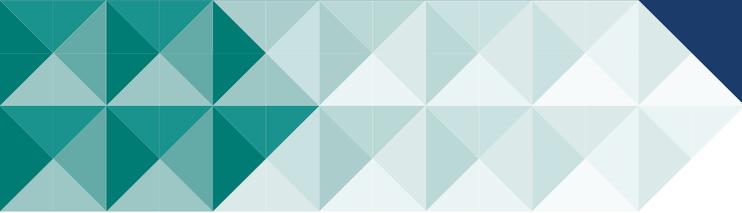
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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government has purchased the provision of national employment services under a flexible delivery model since the introduction of Job Network in 1998. Job Network represented a shift in the role of the Government from direct provider of employment services to a purchaser and regulator. Job Network was replaced with Job Services Australia (JSA) in 2009, with an increased focus on addressing skills shortages and disadvantaged job seekers.

Purchased national employment services have been subject to regular evaluation since the inception of Job Network. Evaluation assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of the program and represents the Government's commitment to transparency and accountability in public spending. It also aims to drive continuous improvement by providing evidence to inform future policy development and program design.

The jobactive model replaced JSA on 1 July 2015. This evaluation will assess the extent to which the stated objectives of jobactive are being met. This evaluation will also contribute to the existing body of research on the national employment services model, including a three phase evaluation of Job Network finalised in 2002, evaluation of Active Participation Model 2003-06 and evaluations of JSA contracts 2009-12 and 2012-15. It is intended that the analysis of evaluation findings will also inform future policy directions.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF JOBACTIVE

The key objective of jobactive is to promote stronger workforce participation among people of working age and help more job seekers move from welfare to work. It is designed to¹:

- ▶ ensure job seekers better meet the needs of employers
- ▶ increase job seeker activation by removing the option of passive welfare and introducing stronger mutual obligation requirements
- ▶ increase job outcomes for unemployed Australians with specific targets for Indigenous job seekers
- ▶ reduce service prescription and reduce administrative burden.

In the jobactive model, employment services are provided by jobactive providers, with job seekers allocated to one of three streams to reflect their individual levels of labour market disadvantage and employment services requirements. Job seekers move into Work for the Dole (or another approved activity) after a period of employment service participation.

There are five services delivered as part of jobactive:

- ▶ jobactive employment services assist job seekers to find and keep a job and ensure employers are provided with job seekers who meet their business needs
- ▶ Work for the Dole Coordinators are responsible for sourcing suitable Work for the Dole activities in not-for-profit and government organisations to help prepare job seekers for the work environment

1 Request For Tender For Employment Services 2015-2020, Section 2.2.

- ▶ New Enterprise Incentives Scheme (NEIS) assists eligible job seekers to start and run their own small business
- ▶ Harvest Labour Services and National Harvest Labour Information Services support the labour requirements of growers in the horticulture industry..

Additionally, jobactive is complemented by a range of other employment services programs and initiatives to assist particular groups of job seekers, including: Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job, Tasmanian Jobs Programme², Job Commitment Bonus³, National Work Experience Programme, Transition to Work, Empowering YOUth Initiatives, ParentsNext and the Youth Jobs PaTH. These programs and initiatives were announced through Budget or Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook processes.

1.1.1 Service Delivery and Employment Services Providers

Central to the delivery of jobactive are the jobactive providers. These organisations are funded to deliver services across 51 Employment Regions in collaboration with other jobactive and employment services providers, Work for the Dole Coordinators, community organisations and other stakeholders.

Under jobactive, providers are required to focus on the needs of both employers and job seekers. For example, jobactive providers need to:

- ▶ understand the needs of employers and the labour market and work with employers to identify job opportunities for job seekers
- ▶ make sure that job seekers are equipped to meet the needs of employers
- ▶ ensure that job seekers meet their mutual obligation requirements, including attending appointments, undertaking job search and fulfilling Annual Activity Requirements.

Under jobactive, providers are also expected to quickly report non-compliance to the Department of Human Services.

jobactive providers have access to a pool of funds, the Employment Fund General Account (Employment Fund), to support job seekers to build experience and skills to meet the needs of employers and get a job. Providers receive an Employment Fund credit when a job seeker commences⁴. The Employment Fund can be used to purchase a range of goods and services focussed on work related items, professional services, post placement support and targeted training.

1.1.2 Streaming

Job seekers are placed into one of three streams (Stream A, B or C) and referred to a jobactive provider. Streaming is based on a person's relative difficulty in gaining and maintaining employment (as indicated by the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI)) and any serious non-job related issues they may have (as indicated by an Employment Services Assessment).

Stream A is for the most job competitive job seekers who require minimal assistance to find work.

Stream B is for job seekers who have vocational issues and need assistance to become work-ready.

Stream C is for the most disadvantaged job seekers who may have a combination of vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment.

Stream A job seekers enter into Self Service and Job Activity Phase from commencement of the employment services whereas Stream B and Stream C enter into Case Management Phase from commencement of the services, except for young job seekers who are subject to the Stronger Participation Incentives, which is

2 Tasmanian Jobs Programme started on 1 January 2014 and ceased on 30 June 2016.

3 Job Commitment Bonus started on 1 July 2014 and will cease on 31 December 2016.

4 With the exception of Stream A job seekers who will attract an Employment Fund General Account credit (paid to their jobactive provider) after 3 months of commencing employment services.

detailed in section 1.1.4. Regardless of which stream job seekers are placed in, employment services assist them to develop a job plan.

1.1.3 Annual Activity Requirement—Work for the Dole

After an initial period of services with a provider, most job seekers are required to undertake Work for the Dole (or another approved activity) for six months of each year as part of their Annual Activity Requirement. The expected hours per week for the six month period vary based on job seeker age and work capacity. Activities in this phase must focus on:

- ▶ providing job seekers with work-like experiences
- ▶ providing job seekers with skills that are in demand within the local labour market, or
- ▶ training relevant to a specific Work for the Dole activity (noting that training cannot be the primary element of the Work for the Dole activity).

At the commencement of jobactive, the initial service period before job seekers entered the Work for the Dole phase varied by stream, however this timing changed as a result of the 2016-17 Work for the Dole Reform budget measure. From 1 October 2016, job seekers of all streams will usually undertake 12 months of employment services to focus on finding a job before moving to the Work for the Dole phase for the first time.

Under jobactive, providers are assisted by Work for the Dole Coordinators who identify potential host organisations, secure Work for the Dole places, organise individual and group based activities and connect host organisations with providers.

Job seekers are placed in either individual hosted places or group based activities. The types of activities that could be undertaken include (but are not limited to):

- ▶ retail work or administration support in not-for-profit stores or organisations
- ▶ rehabilitation works for public parks and roadways
- ▶ gardening or maintenance activities.

1.1.4 Stronger Participation Incentives for Job Seekers under 25 (formerly for Job Seekers under 30)

The 2014-15 Budget introduced a measure to strengthen participation for job seekers under 30 years of age – “Stronger Participation Incentives for job seekers under 30 (SPI job seekers)”. The 2015-16 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook changed the eligibility criteria of this measure. From 1 July 2016, only new job seekers under 25 years of age in Stream A will be eligible for this intensive servicing. New Stream A job seekers aged 25-29 years and Stream B job seekers under 30 years will no longer be eligible and will receive jobactive mainstream services. Existing job seekers receiving intensive services as at 30 June 2016 will be grandfathered.

The 2016-17 Budget Work for the Dole Reform measure affects SPI job seekers as well. Prior to 1 October 2016, grandfathered Stream B SPI job seekers were expected to move into the Work for the Dole phase after six months of employment services. After 1 October 2016 these job seekers will enter the Work for the Dole phase after 12 months of employment services.

Job seekers subject to the SPI measure receive additional services to help them gain work related skills and find a job. These services include appointments with jobactive providers each month to discuss job search efforts and refer job seekers to jobs.

After six months of continuous participation in employment services (including jobactive, the Transition to Work program, Disability Employment Services, the Community Development Program, as well as the previous JSA), all job seekers under 30 years of age who are registered in jobactive, and have mutual obligation requirements, are eligible for the Youth Wage Subsidy.

1.1.5 Job Seeker Compliance Framework

The jobactive model includes a compliance system that attempts to ensure job seekers are held to account if they fail to meet their obligations. This compliance framework complements the increased emphasis on mutual obligation requirements that drive the model.

Key elements of the Job Seeker compliance framework include:

- ▶ a 'no show, no pay' approach under which job seekers can lose a day's payment for each day they fail to participate in an approved activity or attend a job interview
- ▶ immediate suspension of income support payment for non-attendance at appointments with jobactive providers, with payments typically restored, subject to legislation, on attendance at a rescheduled appointment
- ▶ eight week non-payment penalties for serious failures, such as refusal of a job offer and persistent non-compliance, and for Job Seekers who are voluntarily unemployed or who have been dismissed due to misconduct.

1.2 KEY AREAS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JSA AND JOBACTIVE

The jobactive contract lasts for five years, in contrast to the previous three year JSA contracts. This is designed to provide greater stability for jobactive providers and reduce administrative burden.

The jobactive providers service larger regions than providers did under the previous contract. Also, jobactive providers are not contracted as specialists for specific types of job seekers, but they may choose to have formal links to specialist organisations.

The previous four streams (Stream 1 to Stream 4) under JSA have been replaced by three (Streams A, B and C). In addition, changes to the JSCI affect how job seekers are allocated to each stream. Volunteers are limited to one period (up to 6 months) of assistance unless a change of their circumstances makes them eligible for more services.

Unlike previous JSA contracts, where there was no automatic transfer between employment services providers, in jobactive job seekers can be automatically transferred to another provider after they have been with a provider for two years for Stream A and three years for Streams B and C and remain unemployed.

Under jobactive, providers may claim outcome payments at 4, 12 and 26 weeks (rather than Job Placement Fees and outcome payments at 13 and 26 weeks under JSA). Eligibility for education outcome payments is restricted to 15–21 year olds (the upper age limit was initially 17 years; it was raised to 21 years on

1 January 2016) whereas in JSA there was no age limit. The balance between service and outcome fees has changed to place greater emphasis on outcomes and provide a stronger incentive for jobactive providers to achieve them.

As part of the tendering process, providers were required to outline how they would collaborate with other employment services providers (and other stakeholders) to meet the needs of medium and large employers in their region. Their collaboration strategy is required to be reflected in a Service Delivery Plan.

jobactive providers are required to assist job seekers in accordance with the Service Delivery Plan submitted as part of their tender response. There is less prescription in terms of specific service delivery strategies, such as timing of interviews, required by the Department under jobactive than under JSA. Therefore, providers are more accountable for their own service guarantees as described in their Service Delivery Plan, provided that their service guarantees meet the minimum standards specified in the Department's jobactive Service Guarantee.

EVALUATION OF JOBACTIVE

2.1 EVALUATION REQUIREMENT

Program evaluation informs future policy development, drives continuous improvement and innovation and contributes to the Australian Government's transparency and accountability agenda. With the implementation of the enhanced Commonwealth performance framework in July 2015 under the requirements of the *PGPA Act*, evidence generated from evaluation can also be used to support good performance reporting in annual performance statements.

The Government requires the evaluation of jobactive to assess the program's performance within the labour market and broader economic and demographic contexts. In particular, the Government requires the evaluation to assess outcomes at an overall program level, for different job seeker subpopulations (e.g. Indigenous job seekers) and by duration of unemployment. The evaluation is also required to examine the performance of core program elements, for example: the delivery of mutual obligation policy; Annual Activity Requirements, with a focus on the reinvigorated Work for the Dole policy; employer servicing; and reducing administrative burden. Where feasible, some program design aspects of jobactive will also be examined, such as the introduction of the Work for the Dole Coordinators, changes in job seeker streaming, changes in service regions and reduction in the number of providers, and collaboration between providers.

The evaluation will be undertaken by the Evaluation, Research and Evidence Branch (EREB) within Department of Employment and will deliver three reports: an Interim Evaluation Report; a Meeting Employer Needs Report; and a Final Evaluation Report.

Following Government requirements for the evaluation, key measures of program effectiveness will include exits from employment services, off income support outcomes and reductions in income support entitlements associated with program participation. Exits from employment services and off income support payments are used as complementary proxy measures for employment since obtaining employment as a result of employment services cannot be accurately measured from the main data used for the evaluation.

Job seeker engagement in services will be evaluated by examining historical and contemporary rates and duration of exemptions, attendance at employment services provider appointments and levels of non-compliance and persistent non-compliance.

2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The key objective of the evaluation is to determine how effectively and efficiently jobactive meets its aims. This will be assessed by comparing jobactive with predecessor programs as well as drawing on international experience where available. This can be expressed as several overarching evaluation questions

1. How effective and efficient is jobactive in moving participants into employment and off income support compared with predecessor programs? Further, has the introduction of specific targets for Indigenous job seekers resulted in a measurable increase in outcome rates for Indigenous participants?
2. Does jobactive effectively engage employers and prepare job seekers to meet the needs of employers?
3. How effective and efficient is jobactive in engaging job seekers to participate in services and Annual Activity Requirements compared with predecessor programs?
4. Does jobactive reduce administrative burden and service prescription for employment services providers?

In addition to Indigenous job seekers, the evaluation will assess the effectiveness of jobactive in assisting other disadvantaged groups of job seekers into employment and off income support, such as the long term unemployed and the young and mature-age job seekers.

In terms of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of jobactive, the evaluation will consider value for money and program design aspects where possible.

2.3 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The following core programme elements will be evaluated in detail:

- ▶ the delivery of mutual obligation policy with a focus on the reinvigorated Work for the Dole (including the role and function of Work for the Dole Coordinators and Host Organisations)
- ▶ changes to job seeker streaming arrangements
- ▶ mechanisms for increased activation of job seekers
- ▶ meeting the needs of employers
- ▶ increasing employment outcomes for Indigenous job seekers
- ▶ the Employment Fund and the wage subsidies
- ▶ new pricing arrangements and market dynamics
- ▶ program cost effectiveness
- ▶ the impact of the program on employment services providers and its effectiveness in streamlining contract administration and reducing administrative burden.

Where possible, the evaluation will assess the budget measure, “Stronger Participation Incentives for job seekers under 25” (formerly under 30), however, it will be unlikely to be able to isolate the effects of this measure from other changes in jobactive.

There are a number of programs and elements of jobactive that are out of scope for this evaluation. As some of these interact with jobactive, results from other evaluations may be discussed in the jobactive evaluation where relevant and possible. Out of scope elements and programs include:

- ▶ programs with particular targeted groups of job seekers (which are subject to separate evaluations):
 - Work for the Dole 2014-15 in 18 targeted locations (from 1 July 2014)
 - National Work Experience Programme
 - Tasmanian Jobs Programme
 - Job Commitment Bonus
 - Relocation Assistance to Take up a Job
 - Transition to Work
 - Empowering YOUth Initiatives

- ParentsNext
- Youth Jobs PaTH
- ▶ Elements of jobactive not provided through jobactive providers and Work for the Dole Coordinators, including New Enterprise Incentives Scheme (NEIS), Harvest Labour Services and National Harvest Labour Information Services
- ▶ the Star Ratings and Quality Assurance Framework
- ▶ procurement processes and contract management
- ▶ changed arrangements for volunteer job seekers

2.4 REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN IN THE EVALUATION

Consistent with the Government's commitment to reducing administrative burden for employment services providers and employers, the evaluation of jobactive will endeavour to minimise respondent burden for stakeholders throughout the evaluation including streamlining processes, tools and contacts.

2.5 EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND REPORTING

The overarching evaluation questions, presented under Evaluation Objectives above (Section 2.2), will be addressed in three evaluation reports. The Interim Report, Meeting Employer Needs Report and Final Evaluation Report will address different questions or approach the same questions in different ways. This is partly because the reports have differing aims, and partly because later reports will have the opportunity to examine data gathered over a longer period. The overarching evaluation questions are further broken down into detailed questions to be addressed in each of the reports.

2.5.1 Interim report

The Interim Report will be delivered early in the life of jobactive and will provide early information on the model's performance. The report will focus largely on the initial stage of job seeker participation in both the overall program and Work for the Dole. Although outcomes will be examined, the report can realistically only provide a preliminary assessment of outcomes due to the limitation of available data. The interim report will also look at effects of the transition arrangements on job seeker outcomes.

To avoid transition effects associated with the cessation of JSA and commencement of jobactive, analysis in the Interim Report will mainly be based on data for the six-month period from 1 October 2015 to 31 March 2016. However, some questions, such as those relating to entry to Annual Activity Requirements (which should happen six or twelve months after commencement), can only be answered based on earlier data including transition job seekers. Where this is the case, a different data period will be used. The report is expected to address the following specific questions:

- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness of job seeker engagement—overall program
 - What is the volume of job seeker registrations?
 - How does the caseload compare to Australian Bureau of Statistics unemployment figures (in particular, is there a difference in this ratio before and after commencement of 2015, possibly indicating a change in the proportion of unemployed job seekers who engage with employment services)?
 - How long do job seekers take to commence with a jobactive provider after registration? (And how many never commence?)
- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness of job seeker engagement—Annual Activity Requirements
 - How many job seekers undertake Annual Activity Requirements and do they do so within the specified time period?

- How many job seekers undertake each approved activity (e.g. Work for the Dole, part-time or casual employment, etc.)?
- (Where data availability permits) What proportion of job seekers complete Work for the Dole?
- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness in moving job seekers off income support—overall program
 - What proportion of job seekers is placed in employment?
 - What proportion of job seekers leaves income support or has reduced income support reliance?
 - What proportion of job seekers changes their income support payment type?
 - Has the new Indigenous outcomes target resulted in increased off income support outcomes for Indigenous job seekers?
- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness in moving job seekers off income support—Work for the Dole
 - What proportion of job seekers is placed in employment?
 - What proportion of job seekers leave income support or has reduced income support reliance?
- ▶ Reduction of administrative burden and service prescription for jobactive providers
 - What are jobactive provider perspectives on reductions of administrative burden, changed provider roles, changes in streaming and changes to fee structures? In particular, do jobactive providers find the model less prescriptive and more efficient to deliver than predecessor programs?

2.5.2 Meeting Employer Needs Report

The Meeting Employer Needs Report will focus on employer attitudes and perceptions concerning jobactive. It will attempt to answer the overarching question “Does the new service model effectively engage employers and prepare job seekers to meet the needs of employers?” In particular, it is expected to address the following questions:

- ▶ What is the level of awareness and use of jobactive among employers? Has it changed since the introduction of jobactive?
- ▶ What skills and personal attributes do employers require from job seekers? Does jobactive deliver job seekers with these skills and attributes?
- ▶ To what extent are employers satisfied with the suitability of job seekers referred by jobactive providers?
- ▶ What strategies do jobactive providers use to engage employers and meet their needs and how effective are these strategies (in particular, to what extent do jobactive providers collaborate with each other and with other stakeholders, including the promotion of wage subsidies to employers)?

2.5.3 Final report

The final report will provide an assessment of the overall performance of the jobactive model, addressing questions of appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency. Similar to the approach for the Interim Report, where appropriate, assessments will be made for both the overall program and the Work for the Dole program on its own. With more data available for analysis, the Final Report is expected to offer more robust assessments on outcomes, as well as in-depth analyses on individual program elements. It is expected to address the following key questions:

- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness of job seeker engagement—overall program
 - Has job seeker compliance changed with the introduction of new compliance measures under jobactive?
 - How do rates and durations of exemptions and suspensions and inactivity change between jobactive and predecessor programs?
 - How have jobactive provider appointment attendance rates changed?
 - Are there changes in levels of non-compliance and persistent non-compliance?
 - How has the “Stronger Participation Incentives for job seekers under 25 (formerly under 30)” measure worked?

- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness of job seeker engagement—Annual Activity Requirements
 - How quickly do job seekers commence in Work for the Dole once their Annual Activity Requirement arises?
 - How have new compliance measures worked?
 - What are the levels of non-compliance and persistent non-compliance?
 - How has the “Stronger Participation Incentives for job seekers under 25 (formerly under 30)” measure worked?
 - Are there job seekers who remain in services without ever commencing in an appropriate activity, with a focus on Work for the Dole?
- ▶ Efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of job seeker off income support outcomes—overall program
 - What are the off/reduced income support outcome rates for jobactive and how do they compare with the rates under predecessor programs?
 - How long are off/reduced income support outcomes sustained?
 - What is the ratio of expenditure to outcomes achieved and how does it compare to that of predecessor programs? And, broadly, does jobactive deliver value for money (that is, do the benefits justify the costs)?
- ▶ Efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of job seeker off income support outcomes—Work for the Dole
 - How effective is Work for the Dole in moving job seekers off income support or leading to reduced income support?
 - How long are off/reduced income support outcomes sustained?
 - What is the ratio of expenditure to outcomes achieved?
- ▶ Efficiency and effectiveness of program elements of jobactive
 - In addition to the off income support outcomes, what are the other benefits of Work for the Dole (e.g., from the perspectives of job seekers, employers, providers and communities)?
 - Are the components of Work for the Dole effectively fulfilling their envisaged roles in the model, such as the Work for the Dole Coordinators and the Lead Provider?
 - What are the effects of Service Delivery Plans? How flexible and innovative are providers in servicing job seekers?
 - How appropriate and effective are the specific servicing strategies, including streaming, Employment Fund, wage subsidies, and adoption of new technologies?
 - Are there detectable effects of changes in pricing arrangements, service regions, employment services provider characteristics and the extent of collaboration between employment services providers and other stakeholders?

Where appropriate, the Final Report will re-examine questions from the Interim Report using more recent data from a longer period of observation.

2.6 REPORTING TIMELINE

The timeline for production of three evaluation reports is based on the assumption that program implementation has occurred as planned.

Table 2: Reporting requirements and expected completion dates

Deliverable	Date
Interim Evaluation Report	December 2016
Meeting Employer Needs Report	March 2018
Final Report	July 2019

ANALYSIS

The evaluation strategy adopts a flexible approach, recognising that as the evaluation progresses new questions may emerge, while some of the questions identified as important at the outset may become less important over time. As the evaluation progresses its content may adapt to reflect changes to policy or the relative importance of issues and the availability of resources and data. Where appropriate, official Key Performance Indicators will inform the evaluation.

An external expert was engaged to review the planned analytical approach of the evaluation and advise on its appropriateness. The expert confirmed that the approach outlined in this paper is reasonable and consistent with best practice methods..

3.1 ANALYSIS APPROACH

A net impact study (which attempts to determine the difference between outcome rates in the presence and absence of an intervention) is widely regarded as best practice in evaluation. However, due to the universal nature of jobactive, net impact analysis is not feasible at a whole program level for an evaluation of jobactive since neither credible counterfactual exists nor can one be constructed. Net impact studies may be applicable for certain elements of the program where suitable non-participants can be used as “control groups” under certain assumptions.

Instead of taking a net impact approach, the evaluation will generally compare jobactive with predecessor programs, as well as reporting on overall performance. This approach essentially takes job seekers under predecessor programs as a control group in the absence of a better alternative. When making the comparison, statistical regression modelling will be used to account for the effect of changes in the macroeconomic environment and changes in the composition of the job seeker population.

Where possible, data from the three months before and after the introduction of jobactive will be omitted from analysis in order to avoid transition effects which can produce atypical data. This, in combination with the timing of the Interim Report, means that the Interim Report can provide only preliminary indications of outcomes for jobactive.

Consistency and continuity of data between jobactive and predecessor programs will be enhanced through the use of existing data collection instruments such as the Survey of Employers and Survey of Employment Services Providers.

The analysis will be primarily quantitative, supplemented where possible and appropriate with qualitative information.

3.1.1 Key subpopulations

The key subpopulations of interest for analytical purposes include:

- ▶ Indigenous job seekers
- ▶ Job seekers by gender
- ▶ Young job seekers
- ▶ Long-term unemployed job seekers
- ▶ Mature age job seekers (50 years old and over).

3.1.2 Limitations

Potential limitations to the analysis include the following:

- ▶ Data quality issues – Missing or poorly recorded data (for example, missing exit reasons and poorly recorded hours and earnings data) may affect some parts of the analysis.
- ▶ Changes to the programme model that may limit comparability with the previous model, including
 - **Outcomes**—the nature of paid outcomes is different in jobactive, with 4, 12 and 26 week outcomes (rather than Job Placement Fees and 13 and 26 week outcomes). This issue will be mitigated by using Income Support exit or reduction as primary outcome measures.
 - **Streaming changes**—Job Seekers are streamed differently in jobactive, potentially causing some issues with identification of comparable groups of Job Seekers.
 - **JSCI changes**—The Job Seeker Classification Instrument changed under jobactive, compounding with Streaming changes to make the identification of comparable Job Seekers more difficult.
 - **Timing of service phases**—Changes in the timing of Annual Activity Requirements will reduce comparability between the outcomes of Annual Activity Requirement activities before and after introduction of jobactive.
 - **Administrative data changes**—The nature of data collected by the department will undergo changes in line with changes to the employment services model. Not all data previously collected will continue and likewise some data collected under the jobactive will not be available for the previous model.
 - **Changes to data collection that limit comparability**—Noting that the Department intends to maintain comparability to the extent possible, it is nevertheless expected that Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) survey will undergo changes to reflect the changes in the new employment services model, affecting comparability between PPM results before and after introduction of jobactive.

3.2 DATA SOURCES

Data for the evaluation, including baseline data, will come from the Department's existing data collections, including administrative data from the Employment Services System and data from regular surveys conducted by the Department – in particular the biennial Survey of Employers and the annual Survey of jobactive Providers.

3.2.1 Administrative data

Department of Employment administrative data contains caseload information (e.g. job seeker demographics, referrals, commencements and paid outcomes) and payment transactions (e.g. claims for service and outcome fees, wage subsidies and reimbursements) through the Employment Fund.

The Department of Employment also maintains the Research and Evaluation Database (RED), which is constructed from Department of Human Services administrative data and covers income support.

3.2.2 Survey of Employers

The Survey of Employers, conducted within EREB, collects information on:

- ▶ use of, and satisfaction with the quality of, Government employment services and programmes
- ▶ awareness, attitudes and behaviours of employers towards hiring people in key groups of interest, which may include Job Seekers who are mature aged, people with disability, long term unemployed, youth and Indigenous Australians.

The survey conducted in 2014-15 provides baseline data for the evaluation and it will be run again in 2016-17.

3.2.3 Annual Survey of jobactive Providers

It is anticipated that the annual Survey of Employment Services Providers, conducted by the EREB, will continue throughout the contract period. The Department has undertaken an annual quantitative Survey of Employment Service Providers since 1999. The survey aims to seek the views of providers on the quality of support services provided by Department and to gather data around provider experiences and perspectives of employment services.

3.2.4 Job Seeker Experiences of Employment Services (JSEES) 2015-16 survey

The Job Seeker Experiences of Employment Services 2015-16 survey, conducted by the Social Research Centre, gathers opinions of current and previous job seekers on their experiences of employment services providers, including jobactive and JSA.

The survey collects qualitative data through telephone interviews and focus groups. It also collects quantitative data through survey instruments

3.2.5 Post Programme Monitoring (PPM) Survey

Run since 1987, the PPM survey is an ongoing mail and telephone survey run by the Department of Employment that collects information from job seekers who have participated in, or are participating in, Government funded employment assistance such as JSA, Disability Employment Services (DES) and Indigenous Employment Program (IEP). The PPM survey collects data on job seekers' labour market and educational status after employment assistance, as well as job seekers' opinions on the assistance received.

3.2.6 Consultancies

Where required, consultants will be engaged to supplement surveys of key informants.

3.2.7 Other data sources

Other data available, including data from other agencies, may be used to support the evaluation where appropriate, e.g. data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Qualitative data may be collected from key stakeholders such as Employment Provider peak bodies, Work for the Dole Coordinators and Work for the Dole host organisations, where resources permit.

STAKEHOLDERS AND RISKS

4.1 STAKEHOLDERS

A range of key stakeholders will be consulted during the course of this evaluation.

It is anticipated that the policy and programme areas within the Department of Employment, as well as the Departments of Human Services, Social Services, Finance and the Prime Minister and Cabinet will be consulted during the course of the evaluation.

In addition, account managers, employment services providers, Work for the Dole Coordinators and host organisations, peak bodies, employers and job seekers may be consulted to inform evaluation findings.

To the extent possible, the evaluation will aim to incorporate the views of relevant stakeholders.

4.2 RISKS

Evaluation risks will be identified and managed in RiskActive. The risks most relevant to this evaluation have been identified as:

- ▶ **Time pressures associated with reporting**—short lead times and short periods of available data will particularly affect the content of the Interim Evaluation Report.
- ▶ **Resource management, including staff**—difficulty in attracting and retaining specialist staff.
- ▶ **Data availability**—whether the questions outlined above can be successfully answered depends on the availability and quality of the data.

This strategy assumes the Employment Services System under the new contract will collect the same data (in addition to any new data) as to the collected data under the current system. If the scope and nature of the data changes significantly under jobactive or the system changes significantly, this may limit the scope and timeliness of the evaluation. This strategy also assumes that the Department of Employment will continue to have timely access to income support data managed by the Department of Human Services and that this data will remain similar to the current data collected.

