



**TRANSCRIPT
OF PROCEEDINGS**

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PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF JOB NETWORK INQUIRY

PROF M.C. WOODS, Presiding Commissioner

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

AT NEWCASTLE ON TUESDAY, 9 APRIL 2002, AT 12.40 PM

Continued from 8/4/02 in Sydney

PROF WOODS: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Newcastle public hearings for the Productivity Commission independent review of the Job Network. I am Mike Woods. I am presiding commissioner for this inquiry. I am assisted in this inquiry by Commissioner Judith Sloan, and I have present with me two staff members, Ralph Lattimore and Ross Wilson. As most of you will be aware, the commission received its terms of reference on 3 September last year and released its draft report on 7 March. The commission is requested to critically examine and comment on the framework for delivering labour market assistance arrangements and advise on areas where the model could be improved. Our full term of reference is available from our staff.

Prior to preparing the draft report the commission travelled to all states and territories. We visited metropolitan areas, provincial towns, rural areas. We talked to a wide cross-section of people and organisations interested in helping the unemployed. We talked to groups from a diversity of backgrounds and met directly with many unemployed, listening to their experiences with Job Network. We have also received over 50 submissions from interested parties. I would like to express our thanks and those of the staff for the courtesy extended to us in our travels and deliberations so far and for the thoughtful contributions that so many have made already in the course of this inquiry.

These hearings represent the next stage of the inquiry, with an opportunity to submit any final written views by 30 April. The final report will be signed by 3 June. I'd like these hearings to be conducted in a reasonably informal manner, but I will be addressing the person who is providing evidence at the time. If there are others who wish to make comments, if they could wait until it is their turn to put forward their evidence, that way we can have an orderly set of discussions and allow each person to put their views to the commission. So if those present could keep that in mind, that will help the afternoon to flow through in a constructive and helpful manner.

At the end of the hearings for the day I'll provide an opportunity, if there are still people present, to make submissions to the commission. I'd like to welcome to the hearings our first participant, Craig Allen, from Job Find Centres Australia. For the record, could you please state your name and title and organisation you're representing.

MR ALLEN: Craig Allen. I'm the branch manager of Job Find Centres Australia. We're in Hunter Street, just up the road here.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much for coming and speaking to the commission. I understand you've had a chance to look at some aspects of our draft report. Do you have an opening statement that you wish to make?

MR ALLEN: Yes, I suppose I just wanted to give an idea of what we do. The Job Find centres are part of a group of companies called Angus Knight. They're an 11-year-old Australian company that's into employment training and development, personal and professional services. Our group of companies is split into those two sides - employment, and then training and development. We have two companies in each of those sides.

From the training point of view, firstly, we have a registered training organisation that delivers certified training packages - qualifications and things like that. That's called the HTC Vocational Institute. Then we have a completely interactive online learning site called Learn Now, where you can get your qualifications sitting at home, online. From the employment side we have, obviously, Job Find Centres, which is a completely private organisation that's part of the Job Network, and also Turning Point, which is a nonprofit organisation. We deliver the community support program, which is to be changed to "personal support program", all over Australia, and it's run generally out of our Job Find centres, and that's really targeting people, helping people with multiple barriers, where employment isn't really the outcome; it's really helping them personally more than professionally.

We've been a member of the Job Network since its initiation in May 98. What I'm going to talk about today - I'm happy to field anyone's questions, but I can only really speak on how our company operates within the Job Network, the service we provide. Locally, in Newcastle, we deliver job matching and Job Search training, so if anyone has any questions for me, can you direct them towards those programs. We don't have an intensive assistance contract this time round.

PROF WOODS: For the purpose of your evidence to us, if you could address my questions initially and then, after you've adjourned from these hearings, if there are people who wish to approach you at the rear of the room, then that would be fine. To the extent that you've had a look at the draft report and draft recommendations, do you have any overall views as to the direction that is being proposed at this stage?

MR ALLEN: At this stage I think some of us are aware that there was an extension to the contract this time around. As I said, I want to talk about how that impacts the Job Find centre locally for local job seekers; really for us I suppose it means that, hopefully, we're capable of delivering an extended service in Newcastle this time around, given that we haven't had a presence in Newcastle before this second Job Network contract. We've got 21 offices all over Australia, and we're one of the leading providers, I think, certainly in outcomes and service levels. I welcome this inquiry because I know that there's a lot of concern out there in the local job-seeking market, and I know that - - -

PROF WOODS: What would you identify as the two or three major concerns?

MR ALLEN: From the job seeker's point of view in this area?

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR ALLEN: Relating to the Job Network or the employment market in general?

PROF WOODS: No, I think if we can keep the conversation basically to the Job Network system, otherwise we're going to have a very wide discussion.

MR ALLEN: I think that some of the things that we've heard around the place have been perhaps - lack of information I see as the biggest one. I know that a lot of job seekers come to us and have been either misinformed on different services in the Job Network, or have felt that sometimes there are providers that they felt could perhaps deliver a better service.

PROF WOODS: Misinformation in terms of what their rights and entitlements are, or misinformation in terms of the capacities of the various providers?

MR ALLEN: Yes, I think more the capacity, what our service is. Out there now there are a lot of service providers delivering programs within the Job Network, and I see quite often our job seekers that come to us need us to sit down and explain how everything works. Sometimes I know that there are some concerns from local job seekers about the process, and obviously I think mutual obligation is something that local job seekers have a few concerns about and their obligations under that.

PROF WOODS: Are you suggesting, say, when they have their initial interview at Centrelink and they get assessed for their eligibility for programs, that there should be more information there? Would that sort of thing help?

MR ALLEN: Yes, I'm not going to speak on behalf of Centrelink.

PROF WOODS: No, but in terms of the process that job seekers go through, is that where more information should be given?

MR ALLEN: I think it could be. I don't know. I think these guys will probably let us know.

PROF WOODS: Just from your perspective.

MR ALLEN: There can always be. I know that Centrelink has a fairly large job. I was unemployed for eight months when I was 18 on the Gold Coast, and the longest

I think I sat in a Centrelink office was for five-odd hours. I was just lucky that the cricket was on TV. I know, being both sides, being part of the Job Network, having a relationship, a professional relationship, with Centrelink - given that they're our only source of referrals for our Job Search training program, and given it's a fully automatic process now - there's just a broad range of programs out there at the moment. Yes, I think that sometimes bits and pieces of information aren't promoted.

PROF WOODS: As a provider, do you think the limit on your capacity should be removed and that you should be able to grow to whatever size according to the number of job seekers who want your services, or does the capacity limit make sure that all providers get at least some numbers of job seekers through the auto referral system?

MR ALLEN: Again, in our experience, our referral numbers to our Job Search training program have been consistent, and they've been good. I don't often look at our competitors' case loads and how many referrals they get into the various programs.

PROF WOODS: But are you at or close to your capacity limit, or are you around 85 per cent?

MR ALLEN: Of?

PROF WOODS: Of your point in time capacity for, say, IA?

MR ALLEN: I don't have intensive assistance, I've got Job Search training.

PROF WOODS: You only have the - - -

MR ALLEN: As far as our current case load, we're at capacity; as far as our contracted capacity, no. We're very, very close to it, but there are a lot of variables in there in the market that we could talk about. Yes, I think that the Australians Working Together, we're looking at how does the Job Network implement that, and before 1 July obviously we'll have everything in place. I think that assessment and referral to appropriate programs will come out of Australians Working Together, so I think that improvements are being made in the area.

PROF WOODS: Is the JSCI, the job seeker classification index - for those who aren't familiar with that term - a suitable way of identifying people's needs?

MR ALLEN: I can't comment locally because the JSCI score doesn't really relate to Job Search training as much as intensive assistance. I understand that there's been a revamp or an overview of how the JSCI score works. I don't know yet how that's

impacted on the effectiveness of referrals to mutual obligation programs or to the Job Network.

PROF WOODS: No, that's fine. The Job Search training activities, is the three-week period the right sort of length of time?

MR ALLEN: Yes, the three-week period can be, and it really always comes down to the provider that's delivering it. Three weeks is the obligation for the job seeker to the provider. Our obligation then is for 13 weeks thereafter, so 16 weeks for us for each individual that comes through Job Search training. Job Find locally, I'm always proud to say that we're by far and away the number 1 provider of Job Search training in this entire labour market region, which New South Wales only has two of.

The stars have just come out, the star ratings - actually I haven't grabbed hold of them; they came out late Friday - and we've got some system problems in accessing them. But four and a half stars was our first milestone rating. Our nearest competitor, I believe, was three stars - that was up near the Tweed coast somewhere - and then locally it was closer to one and two stars. I believe they're publicly accessible, the star ratings.

Three weeks for us has been good. Obviously from the very start we employ people that we feel have a lot of experience and genuine empathy for the unemployed. I don't know whether someone would challenge that, but I feel that Job Find approaches things a little bit differently to a lot of our competitors all over Australia, and that's why we average over Australia a star rating of four for Job Search training.

PROF WOODS: So what are the particular features of your Job Search training program that make it successful?

MR ALLEN: It's a very individualised and flexible delivery module. We also try and structure it but still allow that flexibility. So I've designed it as a module based program where - - -

PROF WOODS: But do you do continuous intake, or do you do - - -

MR ALLEN: Yes, it's a point in time. What we do is chat to each individual and find out where they are, what their strengths are, what they're looking for, and then off our fairly extensive database of local employers we match them with the right people. Last time I had a look, 62 per cent of everyone that came through Job Find was placed into work through Job Search training.

PROF WOODS: Is that after three months or some - - -

MR ALLEN: Yes, within the 16 weeks.

PROF WOODS: How many of those who are referred to for Job Search training actually commence?

MR ALLEN: It was a shade under half.

PROF WOODS: That's above industry average but, even so, that's half at least who, for some reason, didn't come through your door to do the program. What's the reason for that?

MR ALLEN: There are lots of reasons. Our job in assessing job seekers that are referred to us for Job Search training is to have a look at them as an individual and have a look at what their position is. The criterion for Job Search training is that if you're working more than 15 hours consistently or you're a full-time student, you're studying full-time, you're in fact ineligible; when that happens, we exit straightaway from the program.

Also, we know that there are a lot of circumstances that would limit somebody to doing Job Search training that is out of the criteria. So we talk to those people and work out if it really is of any benefit to them. I know, you know, people come to us quite defensive about doing Job Search training. My job then is to try and show them how they would benefit from it, how they can benefit from it. I always find that everyone that comes through is very accepting of the course after the first day, at least because they realise that perhaps Job Find is a little bit different in that we really do focus on individuals and make sure that we're targeting specific target markets as far as employment goes.

I know that really that 40-odd per cent that don't find work within the first three months through our Job Search training program, quite often it's in direct relation to the employment market which, unfortunately in Newcastle, is struggling in a lot of areas, especially in our more traditional industries. I've been in this town for two and a half years and I love the place. I think it's fantastic and has an enormous amount of potential, but I know there's a lot of work to do, that's for sure, as far as employment growth goes, because we've got the second-highest unemployment rate in the state. The only one higher is the mid-north coast. So we've got a lot of work to do, but I have three staff, so we're a four-man operation if you like, trying to make a big impact, or as big as we can, in the local market.

PROF WOODS: Thank you, very much. Are there particular matters that we haven't covered that you want to bring forward to the commission at this point?

MR ALLEN: I don't know. I would like to invite anybody who would be interested in coming to have a chat to me, or come and have a look at our place. The people who are referred to us, the job seekers referred to us, who did commence, age never was a criteria for that. It was individual circumstances; age has never been considered by us. It's other personal or - as far as our contract goes - ineligibility by already working. Obviously we don't stop them. Our job is to find as many people who can work, so if they're already working and it limits them doing the Job Search training course, then we exit straightaway and off they go. Age isn't a consideration.

PROF WOODS: Okay, thanks very much. Are there other matters that you want to put to the commission?

MR ALLEN: Not at this time, no.

PROF WOODS: Thank you, we appreciate your evidence.

MR ALLEN: Thank you.

PROF WOODS: Can I next call Mr Washington Rumeru, please. All three? So it's Mr Washington Rumeru, Ms Vicki Craig and Mr Ray Hampson. I understand you're all happy to come and you will find enough seats. Any more local arrangements amongst the audience that will help our process through the afternoon, but otherwise I'm happy to receive individual participants? If each of you could state your name, and if you do hold any position with any organisation that as well, for the record. Thank you.

MS CRAIG: Vicki Robin Craig. I'm unemployed completely; I'm not working at all.

PROF WOODS: Thank you.

MR HAMPSON: Raymond Hampson. I am also unemployed; not working at the moment.

PROF WOODS: Thank you.

MR RUMERU: My name is Washington Rumeru and I am unemployed.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much. Thank you for coming to the inquiry by the commission. We have been asked to look at how the Job Network is operating. We haven't been asked to solve unemployment, which is a bigger issue, although I'm happy that you deal with some of those underlying issues, but this isn't the forum to solve that problem. But if you could talk about your experiences with the Job Network, what you think is working, what is not working, how you would make some changes, then that can get reflected. We've put out a draft report based on who we've talked to, what we've analysed to date. If you've looked at that, that's fine. If you haven't looked at that, that doesn't matter. What I would like to know is your experiences, what you think is working and what you would like to change.

MS CRAIG: I'm with the Salvation Army, the employment place at Belmont. I find that they are very nice people - - -

PROF WOODS: Sorry, is this for Job Match, JST or IA or - - -

MS CRAIG: I'm in intensive assistance at the moment, but the course I'm doing, the Connections course, I'm actually taken off intensive assistance. But what I've found - I have certain problems. Like, when you call them for a specific thing and they're not available, they don't get back to you. You have to ring them back.

PROF WOODS: They don't ring back within the day, or they just don't ring back?

MS CRAIG: They just don't ring back. When you ask a specific question they can't answer you straightaway. There seems to be a barrier between us and them. The information is not coming to us all the time.

PROF WOODS: Do you find it easier if you actually walk in their door, sit there and talk to them?

MS CRAIG: Yes. You might have to wait - - -

PROF WOODS: If you try and do it on the phone, or if you try to write letters?

MS CRAIG: You don't get an answer.

PROF WOODS: Is the office far away from where you are?

MS CRAIG: If I walk it's about half an hour.

PROF WOODS: That's a fair way.

MS CRAIG: But that doesn't matter. I'm quite happy to walk up there.

PROF WOODS: But you wouldn't want to be doing that - - -

MS CRAIG: Not every day.

PROF WOODS: - - - every time you had a question.

MS CRAIG: No.

PROF WOODS: How far into IA are you?

MS CRAIG: It's about 12 months now.

PROF WOODS: And that was your first time in - - -

MS CRAIG: Yes. I'm just not getting the information, I'm not getting the support. All the jobs that I have actually applied for I found myself and applied for myself. They haven't put me forward for any positions.

PROF WOODS: So you haven't been put in the list of applicants by your Job Network provider for any jobs?

MS CRAIG: Not at all.

PROF WOODS: You're doing your own job search through the newspaper, the radio, friends, contacts, knocking on doors - - -

MS CRAIG: I'm doing that - I'm not knocking on doors, but I'm actually applying. I've got about 14 or 15 jobs in the works at the moment and waiting on replies. But I've done that myself.

PROF WOODS: I mean, have you raised that with your provider, and do they offer a - - -

MS CRAIG: I've told them that I need a job and I need their help to get it, and it just goes in one ear and out the other. So I don't know if they're listening or not. As far as I'm concerned they're not.

PROF WOODS: Have you been on training courses that they have sponsored?

MS CRAIG: I've done a WorkNet program through them.

PROF WOODS: Right.

MS CRAIG: That's where they hopefully identify your strengths and weaknesses and your dream job, but we had two days' full work. The rest of the time we just sat there and talked about nothing.

PROF WOODS: How long was the program?

MS CRAIG: Four weeks.

PROF WOODS: Four weeks, of which you think two days - - -

MS CRAIG: It was a complete waste of time.

PROF WOODS: How long ago was that?

MS CRAIG: June last year.

PROF WOODS: Right, so we're talking nine months.

MS CRAIG: About that, yes, because I started a course at the end of August.

PROF WOODS: Since then, what contact have you had with them? Do they ring you every week or fortnight?

MS CRAIG: None - no contact on their behalf. I've made all the contact myself by ringing them or going to see them.

PROF WOODS: How long have you been unemployed for?

MS CRAIG: December 2000. I should be able to get a job up here with the qualifications and skills that I've got.

PROF WOODS: What is your basic area of - - -

MS CRAIG: Clerical, but I'm looking to get jobs in Sydney or all over New South Wales at this stage. No luck.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS CRAIG: I would really love to stay in Newcastle, but under the circumstances I don't think I can.

PROF WOODS: I will come back to some of those points.

MS CRAIG: Sure.

PROF WOODS: Could you just briefly outline your - - -

MR HAMPSON: I'm on the intensive assistance with Wesley down in Wallsend. I've been on it a good eight months.

PROF WOODS: Is that your first time in it, in intensive assistance?

MR HAMPSON: Yes, but it has taken me 16 months to get onto that. I've been unemployed for two years now. I found casual work myself. In the eight months I've been with Wesley, I've had one job with a company called Mack Corp, three weeks. When the job was done, "Bye, bye." It wasn't a job at all. It was just a casual bit of work. Three weeks after that I get a letter from Canberra, "Congratulations on your job. Will you fill this form out for me?" You know, "How is it going?" What I put on it I can't repeat to you, but it was disgusting what you're sent after three weeks. Then not long after that I got a letter from the CES saying that they wanted to know how much I earned at Mack Corp and I have to report. It's got on the bottom there, a warning. If you do not take your wage receipts within two weeks they will stop your money. To me that was a threatening letter. That's the sort of thing that is happening now.

When I eventually went down there he said apparently it's happening all the time; that's it's to do with government initiative. Every time you get a job at some stage you will have to take in proof of what you've earned. That's the sort of pressure that this government has put on you. As far as the Job Search network is concerned, they put me on a three-week course on how to write a resume, which was absolutely disgusting.

PROF WOODS: Was that Job Search training, that three-week program?

MR HAMPSON: Yes, and you had to go on that.

PROF WOODS: How many useful days or hours - - -

MR HAMPSON: I spent three weeks all told.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR HAMPSON: Two hours, one hour, three hours. It went like that, you know, and then at the end they give you this. This is the sort of crap you get from them, Statement of Attainment - Job Search training with Lower Hunter Employment Solutions Network awarded 18th day of February 2000.

PROF WOODS: But out of that three weeks, how long do you think you were actually usefully being trained?

MR HAMPSON: Not one bit, because I wanted to learn how to do computers. All of us sat there with bits of paper and after the end of the three weeks they turned around and said to me - I was 55 at the time - that I would be all right selling ladies' shoes after being in engineering for 40 years. I would like to ask anybody who owns a ladies' shoe shop, would they employ a man of 55 to start selling ladies' shoes? Absolutely disgusting. That's the sort of crap you're getting from this government. I started with the Job Search - the assistance. After being in engineering for 40 years and hardly any accidents, they tell you to do a course on health and safety. In my job you've got to be health and safety. It's one of the worst jobs you can have. It's as bad as a coal-miner, in the welding game, and they send you on a course to do that. Good, fair enough, you give it a - same as that. It doesn't get you a job. Then you're sent another one to go on building sites. You do another day on that, half a day on that, and they give you another certificate. What for?

PROF WOODS: What could they usefully do for you? What help do you need?

MR HAMPSON: Well, apart from a job - - -

PROF WOODS: We're all looking for jobs - - -

MR HAMPSON: The Job Search network is a scam. They don't help anybody. They make you look that big. It's like going back to school. You don't belong in the top class, you go down to the bottom class and start from there, and you've got to work your way up. That's the sort of system it is. You get no help from it.

PROF WOODS: Does it help you contact employers, or do you find that in fact they're a barrier between you and employers and you'd rather make your own initiatives?

MR HAMPSON: You can't get through to employers any more because they're going through the Skill Hire, and things like that. I'll give you an example. This only happened to me just over three weeks ago - slightly off course.

PROF WOODS: That's all right.

MR HAMPSON: I'll just show you that. See all them on there? They're all the places I've signed up with, all the job centres, okay. I've been with these for nearly two and a half years. I'll give you just one - Advantage. I've been with them for three years; never had one job offer. I phoned them up in February on a fortnightly basis, "Any work in?" "Not at the moment. Give us your name and address," blah, blah, blah. I phoned them a fortnight later, "Are you on our books? You're not on the computer." "I was in there doing a two-hour course, induction - two hours only nine month ago." "Yeah, but you're not on the computer." I said, "Well, I did it. All right, I'll come in again," and waste another two hours, and then she turned around and said, "You've got to make an appointment." I said, "What for?" She said, "To do an induction." I said, "Well, okay, I'll get back to you," and I'm still waiting.

Basically, they've brought all these skill hire mobs in. The whole lot of them are a waste of time. Out of all them on there, what I've told you, and some on the other side, I've actually had two of them that have offered me work - just two. It's the same with Wentworth. I've been with A1, Drake, Employment National, Lower Hunter, Mission Impossible, Salvation Army. The only one I haven't been with is Tamworth because it's too far. Last time I went to Mission, I went from Centrelink to Mission because I've got to. I walked into Mission down in Hamilton and I said, "Any work in for welders at the moment?" "No, go back to Centrelink and have a look on their - - -"

PROF WOODS: Job Search Australia.

MR HAMPSON: I said, "I've just come from there." I said, "I can't afford to go from A to B, and back again. I'm not on 6, 7 hundred dollars a week. I'm only on" - you know, this is what the problem is. They expect you to travel all over the place,

and you've got to go otherwise your money gets stopped, on a measly bloody \$300 a fortnight, or whatever it is.

PROF WOODS: Does that touch screen work?

MR HAMPSON: No. It's the same as what's in the papers. There was a job for a welder, I'll be honest with you, but it was in Tasmania. I mean, I wouldn't be able to get far on my bike to go to Tasmania; it only carries \$3 worth of petrol in it.

PROF WOODS: So Job Match, you're saying, you've got to sign up with a whole lot of people, and they're not ringing you back, so that's the Job Match. The Job Search training, you're saying you'd be lucky to find an hour or two of actual benefit out of that process; you put it slightly more bluntly. Intensive assistance: what are you getting from intensive assistance?

MR HAMPSON: Headaches. You get nothing. I asked them down at Wesley a few months ago, "What's the chance of getting on a computer course?" I might as well have been talking to the wall.

PROF WOODS: I'll give you a challenge to come back to in a minute, and that's to tell me three positive things that could be done that would work.

MR RUMERU: My name is Washington Rumeru. I work with him together a couple of times, because I'm a boilermaker by trade. I also have a qualification as a mechanical engineer, and also I have a qualification as a level 4, occupational health and safety. I'm also studying in my third year in Newcastle University in occupational health and safety, and I can't find a job; it's the same position as him. I put my resume in at least - I tell you exactly - about 50 companies, or more than that, and I haven't received anything successful about my resume. I have a lot of experience in this area for about 25 years, and I also have very high qualifications, and nothing.

PROF WOODS: You're in intensive assistance at the moment?

MR RUMERU: No. I never receive any sort of assistance.

PROF WOODS: When you went to Centrelink were you referred to a provider to help you either with job matching or Job Search training, or - - -

MR RUMERU: The reason is very simple: it doesn't provide any sort of assistance to me because my wife, she's working, but what she receives is not enough because we have three kids and a lot of expenses.

PROF WOODS: Yes. So you're not with a provider, but you're putting in resumes direct to companies, but you're not getting any responses.

MR RUMERU: I never receive any sort of assistance from the government. That's why I'm very worried, and I'm trying to do everything by myself, but I'm unsuccessful. I'm 53 years old. I have a very high standard of qualification, but - - -

PROF WOODS: Can I come back to your challenge first. What do you want done that will help you get a job in your situation?

MR HAMPSON: In my job?

PROF WOODS: In your skill area, short of creating jobs, which is a different argument.

MR HAMPSON: Before all that can begin, you've got to give the people their self-respect back. That is number 1. Like I said before, most of the people who have lost jobs is through government policies, not through their fault, and basically what happens is their guilt comes back on us, but not just on us - it goes on your wife and on your kids. They're guilty. Before you go into Centrelink - - -

PROF WOODS: Whereas it was the firm that closed down, or trade, or whatever was the reason.

MR HAMPSON: Before you go into Centrelink when you've got to sign on that bloody dotted line and fill in all them bloody papers they give you, you are guilty; it's not the other way round. You're guilty as you walk through that door, and you've got to prove you're innocent, and that is the number 1 - where it's got to stop. It's got to start at that door. That is the main policy because once you lose your job and you've got to go and sign on, the stress becomes you and it affects everybody, and they don't make it any better; they make it worse, and that is a fact. Personally, the job centres, myself I think they all should be scrapped.

PROF WOODS: Scrapped is one thing, but what do you do instead? That's what I'm searching for. What constructive, useful thing could be done to help you find or be able to be successful in applying for a job?

MR HAMPSON: The government have got to bring in policies that will apply to the whole of this - and I'm talking about Newcastle and the Newcastle area - to bring people here, companies here.

PROF WOODS: So we're talking regional development.

MR HAMPSON: Regional development. But people don't want to be pushed 60 or 70 miles out into the bush - what's happening now. They're pushing jobs that were in Newcastle, in the centre, outside 40, 60 miles, and the only way you can get to them, because there's no rail link - if you haven't got a car, that's another no-no.

That's what's happening here: they're pushing jobs further and further out, and people just haven't got the transport. There's no train service, or anything like that, to get to these places, and when you get there they want you to work 12, 14 hours a day anyway. They're pushing people away, and it's the wrong way. What they ought to do here - and should have done years ago - is break away from New South Wales and become their own state. That way they would have got more money out of the government.

PROF WOODS: That's a broader debate that I think will take up a little bit too much time this afternoon. Ms Craig, what's your reaction to these points? What do you see as the top one or two things that should be changed or scrapped about Job Network and put in its place?

MS CRAIG: I don't think it needs to be scrapped. It needs restructuring in a way where you have to have the training available and the funding to train. Now, my situation is, all my qualifications are 20 years old.

PROF WOODS: So refreshing old qualifications?

MS CRAIG: I haven't got the money or the time to go to TAFE, uni, or whatever, to get this training. All my certificates, references, all that kind of stuff, are 20 years out of date.

PROF WOODS: But if you're in intensive assistance why can't your Job Network provider get you into TAFE courses?

MS CRAIG: I've asked them to do that for me, and they haven't done it.

PROF WOODS: They would even get a secondary outcome out of that process, so they'd get a - - -

MS CRAIG: I've been telling them that my qualifications are out of date. I need to update them.

PROF WOODS: The TAFE here would do those sorts of courses.

MS CRAIG: In fact, two weeks ago one of the other staff members there was talking to another girl about an administration course, and I said I'd be interested in doing that, 16 weeks at TAFE, but she said I have to finish the course I'm doing now and then reapply for intensive assistance. So I've got to go through all the rigmarole, all the crap, to get back on to intensive assistance, and then I can go on to this administration. It just takes too much time and too much stuffing around to get anything done. So they need to restructure their policies, their way of doing things. They need to have a proper induction.

When you go and say, "I want to register," all you've got to do is fill out this

form, and that's it, and hand in your resume, and then they put you on the computer. They don't job match you. I know there are jobs there, but they haven't matched me up. They need to actually sit down and think about what the unemployed person needs.

PROF WOODS: Are they not matching you because they've got others that they're matching? Presumably they're not letting the job go, presumably they're doing some screening themselves, but the problem is you're not visible on their radars.

MS CRAIG: I'm not being identified as suitable for that position for some reason.

PROF WOODS: You feel you're not getting a chance to make your case to the employer.

MS CRAIG: No, because once you find a job - either on the touch screens or through the newspapers, or whatever - - -

PROF WOODS: You've then got to go back through them.

MS CRAIG: Especially with touch screens. Once you find a job on that and you think you're suitable for that position, you have to contact the provider. You may not be registered with that provider. You have to register with them, and then they will take it from there, but then in the meantime you're wondering what the hell is going on.

PROF WOODS: But in the meantime they've found one of their own IA people and have filled the job.

MS CRAIG: You may find a job and it's gone.

PROF WOODS: How many providers are you registered with for Job Match?

MS CRAIG: I'm only with one at the moment, but over the last 18 months I must have registered with all of them in the Newcastle area, even with Job Find.

PROF WOODS: A fair job in itself, getting around and - - -

MS CRAIG: And I haven't got the money to run around. I had to sell my car because I couldn't afford to run it, so I'm on the buses, which is stressful enough. You may not know, but Newcastle's buses are - - -

PROF WOODS: I don't know about Newcastle's buses, but I do know about buses.

MS CRAIG: So getting on buses and that - and I don't know Newcastle that well - and getting around is impossible, so I'm pretty restricted where I can get a job because of public transport, and I'm willing to stay and willing to do anything

possible, but I would like to stay in the care field, but I need my qualifications and my skills updated, and I've told my provider this and it goes straight across their heads - nothing.

MR HAMPSON: Unofficially - - -

PROF WOODS: Unofficially on record.

MR HAMPSON: Unofficially, a lot of jobs both of us have applied for and not got, we've been told officially that we're too old.

MS CRAIG: Yes, that's another barrier we have to - the older you get, the harder it is.

MR HAMPSON: That's fact, whether you can do the job or not.

MR RUMERU: That's part of the reason to have a lot of qualification, but at the end of the day the company doesn't accept it because I'm 53 years old. I have a lot of experience, a lot of development, but in the meantime they prefer young people, not me.

MS CRAIG: These companies don't want to pay the adult wages. I'm 36. How much time I have in the workforce is about 30-odd years before I retire. I've got nothing saved. I've got nothing and no-one to support me, so I've got to find a job now to save up for my retirement. There's not going to be a pension in 30 years, 40 years.

MR HAMPSON: Mr Howard will look after you.

MS CRAIG: Sure. He doesn't look after me now. So it's crucial now that I get a job that I can stay in for 20, 30 years.

PROF WOODS: So you've got the situation of not being able to build up an asset base for your future retirement. You've got the situation that you've got 10 years-plus of where you want to work, but you can't get the jobs.

MR HAMPSON: We've got very little chance.

MS CRAIG: Very little chance of finding a job because of their ages.

PROF WOODS: Which means also that you're not building up anything for involuntary retirement now because you're not being able to get the job.

MR HAMPSON: Superannuation, stuff like that has gone out of the window.

MS CRAIG: I can type 35, 40 words a minute. I'm computer literate. I can sit down and do a complicated table in Word or Excel, but I haven't got that piece of paper saying that I can do it because it's all self-taught; I had to be.

PROF WOODS: Whereas in your case you've got current trade certificates, presumably, or fairly current certificates.

MR HAMPSON: The way things are, they're not worth what they're printed on.

PROF WOODS: That's right. There are others who have them as well.

MR RUMERU: I apply for a big employer in Queensland - unsuccessful everywhere.

PROF WOODS: Is there anything else? I appreciate your restraint, Mr Hampson. I know from your earlier discussion you have views on many broader and wider topics, but I thank you for confining your evidence to this issue. But are there things, while we do have this moment, to put on the record?

MS CRAIG: There is one thing. I'm doing a museum practice certificate with Connections, which is a private training company.

PROF WOODS: There was somebody else on that course in our group at the moment.

MS CRAIG: Yes, there are a lot of people here that are doing it.

PROF WOODS: There are several, yes.

MS CRAIG: Yes, several. They are doing more for us than the Job Network people are. They are actually treating us like human beings and Centrelink - some of the employment agencies, private and Job Network - they treat you like scum. We are the scum of the earth and once you say, "I'm unemployed," the general public think you are scum. I mean, that's a very general broad view of it all, but - - -

PROF WOODS: But if that's how you feel, then it's relevant.

MS CRAIG: It's how I feel.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS CRAIG: I mean, I go into a shop and I pay my money. I pay for my food, I pay for my electricity, phone, mobile. I pay my way and I've got about \$15 a fortnight to live on after I pay my rent and all that kind of stuff and they don't realise

that we do pay our way.

PROF WOODS: How tough that is, yes.

MS CRAIG: So Connections staff have been supportive, understanding. They give us time to do what we need to do but, you know, they encourage us to do what we need to do and the others don't.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS CRAIG: I've had problems with Connections with the students; not the staff, but the students. I mean, I was in a situation a few months ago where I wanted to change my career path, but I realised that I haven't got four years to spend at uni.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS CRAIG: So I have to fall back in what I know, but doing this course has given me the confidence - - -

PROF WOODS: Good.

MS CRAIG: - - - to actually get out there and say, "Look at me, I'm a human being, give me the help I need."

PROF WOODS: Part of it's the content of the course, but part of it's how they've been treating you.

MS CRAIG: Yes. They're actually giving us some kind of dignity back.

PROF WOODS: That's fundamental.

MS CRAIG: There are problems of course - in any courses, there are problems - but just given me that dignity of being a human being. So, you know, it's good in that way.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much.

MR HAMPSON: I just want to say, the last year I worked, I earned \$53,000 working seven days a week - night work and everything. The following year when I was put off work, I went down to \$13,800 and I got the poverty allowance. Now, to go from that to that and still pay the same bills and then you get all that crap from them on top of that - you've already been kicked in the teeth. You're on the ground and they kick you in every way possible and then they wonder why people fight

back. I'll be honest with you, the last time I was in Mayfield - because they sent me a letter saying, "Your money will be stopped, because you haven't provided us with a tax file number," which they've had for bloody three years - I threatened to go and shoot them all, I'll be honest with you. That's how, when you get that low, this is what happens.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR HAMPSON: They don't understand that, because they've got a job, you know, and they're frightened to lose their job. You know, they're frightened. I got reported, I'll be honest with you. Well, the point is this: the situation should never have arrived and it's happening to a lot of people out there and, when they turn around and they send you on courses like this or Job Search, it's just going on a wild goose chase. It's like a paper chase I used to play when I was a kid when you used to write someone's name on there and you had to follow it, and that's all they're doing. The government is sending you on a paper chase with this, that's all.

MS CRAIG: The other thing is all this stress and worry and concern. It's a health risk.

PROF WOODS: Definitely.

MS CRAIG: I'm diabetic and I cannot afford to be stressed. The stress does affect it. So all this stress and worry and that is affecting my health, in my physical health and my mental health.

MR RUMERU: Me too. I'm in the same position of her. You know, not working, it's created a lot of stress; a lot of worry on my family too.

MR HAMPSON: That's right.

PROF WOODS: Well, it's not just you.

MS CRAIG: It's the whole thing.

PROF WOODS: It's all those who depend on you and - - -

MR RUMERU: But that's why I coming today, here.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR RUMERU: To put our point of view.

PROF WOODS: Thank you. That has been much appreciated. Thank you very much to the three of you.

MS CRAIG: Thank you.

PROF WOODS: I appreciate your time incoming.

PROF WOODS: Could I call forward Ms Rose Ronne and Mr Kevin Norman. Thank you very much. For the record, could you please give your name and, if you are representing any organisation, that organisation.

MR NORMAN: My name is Kevin Norman. I'm 58 and I've worked since I was 14, until three years ago when I got retrenched. I haven't had a position since. I'm not entitled to any social security benefits. I've never had social security benefits. I'm not drawing them and I never have. I'm not entitled to, because my wife works. So I get no assistance with any of the Job Network situations. I've been to them and I've had no referrals whatsoever. In addition, I've applied for over 350 jobs in that time. Out of the 350 jobs, you would get back 10 per cent replies maybe and, out of the 35 replies you might have had back from your letters and resumes you've sent in, you might have had four or five interviews - sorry, might have had 12 interviews in that time.

I'm at a loss here. I definitely believe it's my age factor - 58. I'd like to see the figures on the people over 50 who've got positions, over 55 and over 40. I reckon 58 would probably be half a per cent of the vacancies would have gone to them. I did at one stage - actually it was July last year - I went to a Job Search - I found the job on the Net at home. Position at Cardiff for a - - -

PROF WOODS: This is through Job Search Australia though?

MR NORMAN: Yes. It was apply through the Salvation Army up at Charlestown. I went there and I got an interview. So I handed my resume in over the counter and I spoke to a chap there. He read my four or five-page resume and his comments were, "I needn't ask you any questions. You've answered all the questions here." I said, "This is very good." The position was for two people and they were going to interview 10 people. So I thought at least I might get a show for an interview here. I did notice on his table the file and the name of the company - who it was - so I made some inquiries of my own about that company. It was an industrial supply company, installers and spare parts and sales, which has been my field for 30-odd years. I was qualified as a regimental quartermaster in the army, rank of staff sergeant at the age of 22. So stores I had plenty of training in.

Anyhow I found out the name of this company and, by coincidence, we had a chap at the bowling club - he was an owner of that company. So I waited a couple of days and I went and asked him. I said, "Excuse me" - so-and-so - "have you advertised for two people through the Salvation Army at Charlestown for this position?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Before we go any further, I'm not involved in the - - -"

PROF WOODS: Selection process.

MR NORMAN: "- - - selection committee, because I'm retiring at the end of the month." I said, "That's okay. Can you do me a favour?" I said, "Here's my resume. Would you check at work to see if the Salvation Army in fact faxed it through, because they said I was a very good show out of 10 people, which would be five people," and I said, "Would my resume have met your criteria?" and he come back the next day and I said, "No, we did not receive your resume and your criteria certainly matched."

I don't get any assistance from these people because, as I said, I'm not a value to them. If I was a value to them, a person in my position who has been unemployed for three years nearly, I believe that they would attract a \$10,000 payment for finding me that position. That's the way I read in the paper about it about two months ago. So I'm worth nothing to them.

PROF WOODS: So in effect they're a barrier between you and getting the job.

MR NORMAN: Yes. You go for an interview and the chap or the lady you may see, if you happen to get through for an interview, they're usually 18, 20 - well, not 18, but they seem a bit young.

PROF WOODS: They seem to get younger every year.

MR NORMAN: You just can't get past them. You can't get to the company to give your view, and you just can't get anywhere. My situation is I'm on medication healthwise. It's costing me \$100 a month in medication. I'm on no income - no assistance whatsoever - because my wife works and in fact any assets I do have, like a small redundancy I got when I was retrenched last time, a bit of savings, that's all been eaten away and the next that will go will be my small amount of super I've got. So, by the time I'm 62, I'll have nothing left whatsoever. I've educated four kids - university. I've paid taxes all my life. I've worked since I was 14 and I can't get anything.

PROF WOODS: So you can just see your assets slowly being eaten up to keep up with the cost of living.

MR NORMAN: Yes. That's basically it. As I said, 350 jobs applied for. It's got to be age.

PROF WOODS: Don't go away. I'll come back to those points. Yes?

MS RONNE: Rose. Welcome back to Newcastle. You finally made it.

PROF WOODS: We have travelled extensively through rural New South Wales and other states but, yes, we're happy to be in Newcastle as well.

MS RONNE: I've just returned to Australia after being in the United States for 11 years. I returned in July. When I left, it was CES. When I came back, it's a total fiasco. I wasn't told about this meeting until last night and I rang everybody I know. I don't know that many people, but I said, "Tell me something good about Job Network, tell me something bad," and at first they all said, "Well, it's all bad," but then they said, "Well, there are some good points," but if I could read this that I wrote - - -

PROF WOODS: Please. It will go onto the record and therefore will be on the web site.

MS RONNE: Okay. The web site, I don't know. You get poor quality front desk. You get no back-up service, no communication between agency; example, Centrelink and your Job Network - be it Salvation Army, be it Wesley, be it anybody. You lose respect, you lose dignity, you're humiliated, you're in despair, you're embarrassed, you're angry, you're frustrated and finally you just don't care. You just don't care. All this stuff leads to loneliness, alienation, feeling of inadequacy. You get very suicidal. I tend to. I am very angry. You rage. I know what personal rage is and I am surprised - and I'll go down on the record - that nobody has actually got up and shot somebody in anger. I've heard them in front of me swearing at these people.

You get very resentful. You get resentful at the young lady behind the desk, who's being very nice to you, because she doesn't understand what you are going through, because you're twice her age, because she treats you like a nobody. She doesn't understand that we just didn't come off the last ship that just came in. You know, we've been there and done that and here she is, little pink and perky. You know, we need empathy, we need understanding, we need reassurance. We don't want to feel like we're on the scrap heap. We're not too old. Six months ago, I was in charge of, you know, 2300 tourists. I was in charge of their luggage. I was in charge of their accommodation and that's a very important position.

Here, I'm just totally useless. I really don't expect job service to get me a job. I have no great expectations of them. By the time the job is advertised on the computer, it's gone. It's just gone. By the time it's printed in the paper, it's gone and they don't help you because their incentive is you haven't been on their list long enough because they get paid to put in their friends, somebody who is dressed better, somebody who looks better, somebody who speaks better - not necessarily with experience - but somebody that they approve. I would dare this young gentleman who spoke just before us, the employment person - - -

PROF WOODS: Provider.

MS RONNE: I would dare, if each and every one of us who are unemployed go down and register with this young man - he said 50 per cent of us will get a job. I dare him. It's impossible. I don't know how young people do it. I would not like to be a young person now. What happened to apprenticeships? What happened to the three-year apprenticeship that young people used to go through? Why do we have to be humiliated the way we are? We should have reached the stage where we feel comfortable in our own skin. I resent it.

PROF WOODS: Can I just clarify your situation: you were employed up until six months ago, or whatever.

MS RONNE: To July last year.

PROF WOODS: Mid last year. You've since been through and signed up at Centrelink. You referred to Job Match providers. Have you been through a Job Search training course? You must be getting close.

MS RONNE: I'm actually with Connections as well, which finishes in July and then I go through the whole routine. I have to go and do something else just so that I don't have to tell them every week, "Yes, I've done three." I don't want to be penalised. I'm too old. Don't play mind games with me.

PROF WOODS: So you're going through all that process.

MS RONNE: Surely there's a better way to do this. This is ridiculous. We shouldn't have to do this.

PROF WOODS: What would you do? What needs to be done?

MS RONNE: What needs to be done? This is a very difficult question.

MR NORMAN: I need to be - one, be counted as a statistic. I'm not even counted as that.

MS RONNE: No, you should be treated as a person.

PROF WOODS: You're invisible to the system.

MR NORMAN: Yes, I know, but for them to give me that treatment as a person - I am not even - I mean nothing to them.

PROF WOODS: Because you're outside the system you're not even getting in - - -

MR NORMAN: That's right. And why not? I should be - - -

PROF WOODS: To the potential vacancies.

MR NORMAN: I'm a person who wants to work and I can't even get any assistance whatsoever.

PROF WOODS: You're like Mr Rumeru in that sense.

MR NORMAN: I'm like my last friend, who wants to be upgraded in training. I've done accountancy work. I've been a paymaster for 60 people, but mine was all the Kalamazoo system, and I need a bit more training in some of that.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR NORMAN: For me to go and do that it cost me - I did a course last year and it cost \$350.

PROF WOODS: Yes. Out of your own pocket?

MR NORMAN: Out of my own. There was no job at the end of it. It was a good earner for the company. I did a taxation course and there were 100 people on the course at 350, and at the end of it there was maybe an interview if you got 84 per cent. I got 80 per cent so I didn't even get an interview at the end of it. I got a bit of paper but it's worthless.

PROF WOODS: So that was a private provider who was running that course?

MR NORMAN: No, that was a company, a taxation return company.

PROF WOODS: Yes, okay.

MS RONNE: I've never been for an interview.

MR NORMAN: I couldn't afford to do that because all these jobs - you can go and do a medical course - they're only good for 12 months. You can go and do a security course, and you can go and do this - but there's no job at the end of it. I can't afford to put the money out.

PROF WOODS: Yes, then your qualifications lapse and you would have to pay up

again.

MR NORMAN: Do it again.

PROF WOODS: So you're out of the system and you've got particular situations. You're in the system but you're saying the system isn't - - -

MS RONNE: The system is not working. It's not working for people over 30. Shall I say people over 30? I don't want to go to the Salvation Army and say, "Please, do you have a coupon, a \$10 coupon, a \$20 coupon?" I don't want to do that. I don't think anybody wants to do that. We're not in the Charles Dickens era. This is the next century, for heaven's sake. They get paid. From what I gather the government pays them \$1000, \$500, even \$100 to place people.

They don't place us. Why should they place all of us? We're not young. We haven't got that much going for us. We've only got 10, 20, 30 years. "Let's hire someone very young, inexperienced. They will teach them." I had a very humiliating experience with the Salvation Army. Very humiliating. If I had a gun I would have shot this girl. She was not even 21. She said - I'd been on the books not long, since July, and I brought in my resume, nice and sweet. I never have any worries with people like that. Six months later, about a month ago, I rang her up and I said, "There's this great job that was advertised. I would really like to go for it." "I'm sorry, we haven't got your resume." "Why not?" "We lost it." You know, the great big lost in the sky. "Where the hell is my resume and everybody else's resume?"

PROF WOODS: New staff, yes.

MS RONNE: "The resume, could you do another one?" "Okay." "No, this is no good. This is five pages. This is too long, but we have a book. You pick which wording you like and we will do it." It comes back three weeks later full of misspellings, full of nothing. They leave you with nothing. They strip you of your dignity and respect. You feel like nothing. You just don't feel human. You just don't want to belong there. You just don't want to go back. You only do it because the government will cut off your benefits. That's all they do. They punish you like little children. "If you don't show up on time we will cut you off. If you don't go to the Salvation Army, Wesley, whatever, we will cut you off." I don't know what you can do. I think there must be a way to do it, to get rid of these privatised - - -

MS: Go back to the CES.

MS RONNE: Not all of it back, but some of it. Some of it was good. It wasn't all bad. Some of it was good. You can't get to a company; you can't get to a business.

PROF WOODS: No, that's certainly something we've struck - as we did wander around Australia - is a lot of unemployed people. We've had workshops with lots of unemployed people right around Australia who said that they can no longer get to the company, that the providers are sort of acting as a barrier between them and being able to make their case.

To some extent that's the choice of the companies who, rather than do their own recruitment, decide that they will use a Job Network provider. If the company chooses to do that you can't do much about it, but we seem to have lost that public pool of jobs. There's Job Search but, as you say, by the time you get on it somebody has already done that screening and found somebody on their own IA group who probably has got the job.

MR NORMAN: With some of these companies I know why they're putting it out to Job Search, because in Newcastle the unemployment is that high - there was a job in there that I applied for once - I remember it now, out at Cardiff - in the airconditioning industry. I worked in the last 10 years in the airconditioning industry. They advertised and I applied. I got an interview. It was early in the piece. The bloke said, "I'm overwhelmed. I've had over 300 applicants for this position. The same job in Sydney" - where their parent company was - "had about a dozen." I was lucky; I was one of the 10 who got an interview. I didn't get the job, despite 10 years' experience just recently in that industry. Why? I think because of my age. But people at these companies are giving the Job Network system - - -

PROF WOODS: To do all their screening.

MR NORMAN: The screening because they get inundated by all the people, all the unemployment in Newcastle, and yet we can't get past there.

MS RONNE: I would like to know what they do. You should have a job service person here. What do they do all day in front of those computers? Are they supposed to look after us? What do they do?

MR: It's a success rate. How many people can they employ - - -

MS RONNE: This young man employed half of the people that walked in the door.

PROF WOODS: Can I remind people that we don't capture that sort of thing and we lose - - -

MS RONNE: Okay. The success rate is very low. Regardless of what this young man here said before I've never struck anybody, except this man, here who has been

on an interview. It's very rare. It's lucky that you get an acceptance that you've been - you don't know your resume has been sent out until you get a letter back saying, "Oh, sorry, mate, you missed out on this. You will have to try again. Maybe in six months." So what do you then?

PROF WOODS: So greater transparency, so that they tell you when they're putting your resume into the company.

MS RONNE: They don't.

PROF WOODS: No, but I'm saying if there was some requirement on them to keep you informed of which jobs they've actually put your resume to the employer for, when the employer was making the decision, when the interviews were on, when the results were known - so if you knew that your name and your resume was in the process for that job and wandering through - - -

MS RONNE: Exactly, yes.

PROF WOODS: Then you would at least know what's happening to you.

MS RONNE: It's the not knowing. I would gladly give them 45 cents for a stamp so they can post me a letter and say, "Look, Rose, we sent you on a job and you didn't get it." I would very gladly give them a dollar, or how much a phone call is.

PROF WOODS: Yes, two letters: one to say, "We've put your name in," and the second to say, "Here is the outcome."

MS RONNE: Right, you know where you stand.

PROF WOODS: You've got that helplessness feeling at the moment that you don't know what's happening to you.

MS RONNE: Yes, it's like impotency. You just can't go forward because they're pushing you back. You just can't do anything. It's frustrating.

MR NORMAN: Even the companies who advertise in the paper - I think it should be part of their responsibility to notify people when the job has been filled. Even when they pay for the ad they could be given a code number and they could be saying at the end of the day in the paper a week later, "Position number 649 filled." At least you would know. I'm home every day waiting on a phone calls that never comes. The only calls I ever get are saying, "Hello, we're doing a survey. What kind of house have you got?" or "Do you want to sell your house," or "Do you want to buy something?"

PROF WOODS: That's just what you need, isn't it?

MR NORMAN: You're waiting at home all day, waiting for the phone calls that never come, on the applications. Each one of those applications cost me probably \$1 or \$2, or whatever.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR NORMAN: I can't say much more because this is mainly to do with the Job Network, but to me I'm locked out, so somehow I've got to be allowed to get into it.

PROF WOODS: No, that's a very valid point of view; if you create a system that locks some people out that has got its own problems that we need to look at. Are there any other issues that you particularly want to - while you've got the opportunity - put to the commission?

MS RONNE: I would like to know where this goes from here.

PROF WOODS: In terms of process I was asked, as presiding commissioner, back in September last year to look at the Job Network, whether the basic structure and model of it is a good idea and whether it's working. We then did tours around. We've had submissions from organisations and people. We've put out a draft. We've set some ideas on how changes could be made but we're now going around talking to everybody again - some who have read it giving us ideas, others who haven't, telling us their experiences - we put all that together and then I will report by 3 June to the government. Then they will be required to publish our report and to say what they've done with our report. That will all become very public information to say, "We recommended these things." The government has to then say publicly whether it accepted or rejected and why it did what it did. That's the timetable.

MS RONNE: So there's no requirement for the government to accept anything you report?

PROF WOODS: No, no requirement, but they have to publicly release our report and to publicly say whether they did or didn't. Happily a lot of what we do put forward does get accepted but we don't write it to meet government's policy. We write it to say what we think is the best thing that should happen. Sometimes we write things that government doesn't like to accept.

MS RONNE: So you don't represent any particular party?

PROF WOODS: No, I'm independent. I'm appointed by the governor-general for a period of five years. I'm independent of government. The commission is independent of the government. We're an agency but we are independent. I am appointed; I can't be sacked unless I'm sort of bankrupt or incompetent or go senile, so my independence is guaranteed. I'm not writing this to meet government policy; I am writing it as a genuine assessment by the commission of what it thinks needs to change in the system.

MS RONNE: Because I think everybody needs to be listened to.

PROF WOODS: We do an awful lot of that.

MR NORMAN: Tell Mr Abbott that there's no job snobs in Newcastle. We just want jobs.

PROF WOODS: That's quite evident. Thank you very much for your time.

PROF WOODS: I call Mr Cec Shevells. Could you please state your name and any organisation, if you represent one, for the record.

MR SHEVELLS: Cec Shevells and I represent the Samaritans Foundation.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much. Do you have an opening statement you wish to make?

MR SHEVELLS: Yes. As I say, I'm from the Samaritans Foundation, which is a local social welfare agency covering the Hunter Valley. We're involved in providing services to homeless young people, families and people with disabilities mainly, but we also have a number of emergency welfare centre staffed by volunteers using donations. We provide assistance to people in some kind of financial crisis.

In our region we're assisting about a thousand families every month, people who are dependent on some form of welfare benefits. We don't give out a lot. The average amount we give to a family is about \$30. It pays for a food voucher. All it does is help put food on the table until the next Centrelink payment arrives. As an organisation we've taken a keen interest in employment policies over the years, particularly full employment policies which is what we think we should be aiming for. In the meantime we try to support labour market programs as best we can. We've had a go at most of them, even in a small way the Job Network. We became involved in those interim measures because we've seen how destructive long-term dependency on benefits is for unemployed people, or can be for many.

This has been a particular concern in our region over the past decade with double figure unemployment levels. A couple of years ago unemployment rates went down for a while but the numbers were interesting. The numbers coming to us for assistance didn't change, which indicated to me that when jobs do occur, they're going to families where someone already has a job and we're not doing enough for long-term unemployed people and the more disadvantaged job seekers. It's really hard in the Hunter Valley for low-skilled workers with a less than perfect work record, because they always seem to miss out.

Employers these days check applications so carefully and avoid people who are long-term unemployed or have had a problem in previous employment. You can go to a factory job and you get an application form that long, wanting to know intimate details of you and your lifestyle. Because of those difficulties, that's why I would think labour market programs are important. But people don't just need case management. We're missing out on some of those opportunities that we used to have a few years ago - of paid work experience - whether in the form of job skills programs, new work opportunities or wage subsidies. These programs used to give long-term unemployed people the opportunity - - -

PROF WOODS: Sorry, can you just go back through that little list? Wage subsidies - - -

MR SHEVELLS: Wage subsidies, new work opportunities and job skills programs. They used to give long-term unemployed people the opportunity to apply for a job, with recent work experience and a reference. That's what employers are looking for. The labour market programs are vulnerable because they don't create jobs but they do help long-term unemployed people to come from the back of the queue and give them a realistic chance of getting a job when they apply for one. From my observation, intensive assistance in the Job Network rarely gives you that type of assistance. I'd be interested to see an analysis of how intensive assistance groups spend their money but it's rare for them to spend much on an individual employed person. That's been our experience of people coming to us in financial crisis.

With regard to the Job Network and the focus on outcomes, I think that's okay; but to base payments on outcomes encourages Job Network agencies to make decisions based on income rather than what's best for customers - eg, you put all your attention on the more skilled job seekers, who will get you a better financial return, or you'll push people through short-term jobs which will give you better results but not the unemployed person better results. I think your report - I haven't read it all but I've glimpsed it and I think your report refers to that. I also notice that you're recommending that the Job Search training payment be based on outcomes also. Surely this will mean that Job Search training will put their efforts into assisting the job seeker most likely to bring in a financial return, which is what's been happening with job matching.

PROF WOODS: Just a point of clarification - we talk about a shift in that direction. We don't talk about it only being outcomes.

MR SHEVELLS: Okay. That's a relief. In my opinion, the Job Network system has become far too involved in breaching people. Your report mentions that to get rid of people from their books who are unlikely to get a job and are clogging up the system, the agency might have them breached. If that's what's been happening, that's appalling. Centrelink breaching procedures have been mean and clumsily introduced and I'm pleased that improvements are on the way. Homeless people, people with mental illness, people with literacy problems and very sensitive people have been the unnecessary victims. Some very law-abiding people have been horrified when they've received an unexpected breaching notice in their mail. " It's like acquiring a criminal record overnight," someone once told me.

When I first became aware a couple of years ago of the huge numbers being

breached in our region and coming to us as a welfare agency for financial assistance, I went to Centrelink to find out what was going on. A senior officer told me that Job Network agencies were the most zealous breaches and she'd had to turn down 50 per cent of their recommendations for breaching. The only satisfactory reason for breaching, in my view, is not accepting a job offer. But over the past year, out of the 10,000 breaches in the Hunter Valley, I think about three were for not taking a job.

People are starting to steer clear of Centrelink when they're unemployed and that will save the government money. Many people don't need Centrelink services when they lose their job - they can find a job themselves - but it will cause a problem for some. Just recently I heard of a young person who'd stayed away for 12 months. All her savings were gone before she'd gone to Centrelink asking for help. That's what we're finding for people in financial crisis. Their savings have all gone because they don't want to go to Centrelink, they don't want to get mixed up with all that mutual obligation stuff. I think at Samaritans, in our agency, we try to have a more positive view of people than the authors of the current mutual obligation policies.

For example, at one of our welfare centres in the Upper Hunter, we're using it as a kind of employment assistance centre, where unemployed people can come in, use the computers and the Internet, for resumes and be put in touch with employers. We've contacted employers and found out what skills and qualities they're looking for and passed this information on to local unemployed people, tried to organise appropriate training - although that's difficult with SkillShare no longer there - and then link the two together: employer and job-seeker. Mutual obligation isn't part of this service but we focus on jobs rather than process, which is where we feel the emphasis is with mutual obligation. This is privately funded but it seems to be popular and we hope to evaluate that as an alternative model, perhaps, for helping people in a country town.

In summary, our concerns about the Job Network system are that there's not enough real assistance for long-term unemployed people to get them to have a reasonable chance of getting a job again; there's an over-emphasis on obtaining payments rather than meaningful outcomes amongst Job Network providers and there's an overly harsh emphasis on breaching unemployed people without any due process.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much. Your organisation hasn't tendered for or did tender and wasn't successful for - - -

MR SHEVELLS: We had been part of a national franchise group called Job Futures but only in a small way. We only did the job matching and the job search training but we've pulled out from that and we're focusing more on developing alternatives, which we feel is a better use of our resources.

PROF WOODS: Are some of your alternatives going back to job clubs and SkillShare and those techniques?

MR SHEVELLS: It's going back to unemployed people and asking them what they think and trying to develop services which are responsive for them. I think we're finding that people are much more keen to find work than some of these government policies might indicate. For example, we've got another project where we're trying to develop a work cooperative doing lawn, maintenance, building maintenance in a very highly-disadvantaged area with a very high rate of unemployed people. We had 50 applicants for that job, you know, and people tell me you'll get no-one because people put down unemployed people. Our experience with unemployed people is: what do they want? A job.

PROF WOODS: It's interesting your proposal or what you're developing of a job match, but for everybody and focused on the individual, so you're putting them back in touch with the employers. Are you getting some resistance from employers or are employers asking you to do some of the screening before you put a group in touch with them? What are the dynamics? What's happening there?

MR SHEVELLS: I think it has taken time to get acceptance but our worker goes to visit the employers and takes time to listen to what they're looking for in workers. We're finding that some employers are actually bypassing local unemployed people and bringing them in from out of town. So we're asking them, "What are you looking for?" Then we're meeting with unemployed people and saying, "This is what they're looking for. What do we have to do get you in the race?"

PROF WOODS: To get you to that level?

MR SHEVELLS: Yes, and we're trying to share that information with Job Network agencies, so they take advantage of it. We're actually trying to make sense of the system. "Here's an employer, here's an unemployed person." We're trying to introduce them to each other.

PROF WOODS: And you're funding that out of your own charitable resources?

MR SHEVELLS: Yes.

PROF WOODS: There's no payment attached? You're not getting a payment from employers for finding an employee?

MR SHEVELLS: No. No, we're trying to run it as a pilot program to see if we can make sense of the system. We're trying to keep out of that mutual obligation. We

have people coming to us, anyway. As I say, we get a thousand families a month. They've got no jobs. They're short of money. They're coming here, they're motivated and they say, "We want a job. What do we do?" So we've got a good place to start. They don't need the fines, thank you.

PROF WOODS: No, and I understand your point about how a lot of people would much prefer to run down their resources while they try and find a job before they ultimately submit to Centrelink.

MR SHEVELLS: Yes, that's what's happening. We're finding for those thousand families - you know, we're living in an increasingly unequal society and in our society you tend to need a car and a telephone and a TV and even an Internet. People on low incomes need those things too. When they have a bill they pay it. When they pay the bill, there's sometimes no money left to pay the food bill. It's as simple as that. We just help them out until the next pay cheque comes in. But that's not enough, not for us. That's why we promote full employment. Even in your report - as I say, I haven't read it all - you suggest that we shouldn't expect too much of labour market programs; that what's missing perhaps is welfare reform or labour market reform.

That's not the answer either. That's a mean-spirited approach, if you don't mind me saying so. What we need is a determination to create full employment. We need to consider that the community wants jobs. There's just a report come out - the environment has been destroyed over the past decade. Why aren't we fixing it up? There's plenty of people out there ready and willing to work. We're talking about security guards at railway stations and in hospitals. There's plenty of people to do the jobs. The community want the jobs. The community should pay for it.

PROF WOODS: The community, through taxation, pays.

MR SHEVELLS: Through taxation. We need to start - - -

PROF WOODS: There's also a limit to what you can charge on taxation because that then drags down the economy.

MR SHEVELLS: So you tell me; but does the community want to live in an increasingly divided society or do they want to live in a society - there are some people who think that a more equal society will be more efficient economically.

PROF WOODS: To that extent - and I don't want to get into the broader debate about macroeconomics - let's look at the fundamentals of this program. This is hopefully trying to get those who are long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment able to compete more equally for the same jobs as other people.

That's what the money is being spent for. There's a half a billion dollars going out, so it is about equity, it is about creating a more equal society. The question is: how do you get it to work better? That's what we're trying to explore at the moment.

MR SHEVELLS: Yes, sure.

PROF WOODS: I'm interested that you're developing a sort of side program that can work in a sense in parallel with the Job Network but to the extent it was successful, some of those activities might be picked up by Job Network providers and taken on board as well.

MR SHEVELLS: Yes, that's our hope. We're hoping to have an evaluation done by the university so we can share the results, good or bad.

PROF WOODS: Is this through Newcastle?

MR SHEVELLS: Newcastle, yes. Basically you say long-term unemployed but I don't think the long-term unemployed people are getting a good enough service out of the Job Network.

PROF WOODS: That's some of what we're hearing today. All right, are there any other particular points that you want to raise? I found that quite useful.

MR SHEVELLS: No, that's fine, thank you.

PROF WOODS: Thank you for your time.

MR SHEVELLS: Thank you.

PROF WOODS: We now move to Mr Victor Quirk, if you could come forward, please? Can you please give your name and any organisation you may represent?

MR QUIRK: Hi, I'm Victor Quirk. I'm a PhD student at Newcastle University. I've been CEO of a community based Job Network agency in Melbourne that ironically closed down exactly one year ago today. I've also managed a SkillShare centre. I was a specialist employment counsellor in the CES for six years and I've generally been involved in employment service policy in one shape or another for about 18 years.

PROF WOODS: Thank you. Have you got an opening statement you wish to make?

MR QUIRK: I didn't actually know that the hearing was on today so I didn't really have much time to prepare but I've gone through your review, report.

PROF WOODS: Thank you.

MR QUIRK: There are a few points I'd just like to make.

PROF WOODS: Put on the record?

MR QUIRK: Put on the record, if you like. I think my general impression or the general gist of what you're saying in the report is that there's no evidence to suggest the Job Network has delivered any better employment outcomes or that its employment outcomes have been very substantial at all. You've said that there's limited evidence of any improvements in the quality of job outcomes, or any other outcomes in the system.

PROF WOODS: These are averages.

MR QUIRK: These are the statements that you're summarising in your report.

PROF WOODS: That's right.

MR QUIRK: And then there's argument behind them, and I'm sure you've got debate to get to those points, but I'm just drawing on the broad conclusions.

PROF WOODS: Thank you.

MR QUIRK: You do a very good job in questioning the methodology of the departments, the Commonwealth government's job-seeker satisfaction surveys, where they give the impression that there's overall satisfaction with the Job Network

by unemployed people, and you do a very good job at exposing flaws in their methodology, in which they exclude the opinions of about one-fifth of possible applicants because they said that they can't recall getting any service from a Job Network agency, and on that basis they were excluded from the survey. Now, I think that's a very pertinent point.

Despite the fact that the Job Network was marketed as a way of bringing consumer choice to unemployed people and empowering them, you've done also a very good job at acknowledging that that's not the case. You point out that in most cases, in most situations, people are not given a choice about the services that they are obliged to receive, and you also point out that there's very poor information, so that no-one can make an informed choice about those sorts of things. So that's sort of the gist of some of the things that I've got from going through your report.

I thought it might be useful just briefly to address some of the issues about the dynamics of the market that cause all these negative effects that people are talking about. Basically, the gist of it is that it's a totally cutthroat market when it comes to satisfying the whims of employers, and it almost has no consideration for satisfying and meeting the needs of unemployed people, and that's the fundamental design of the Job Network. It has adopted that particular design model because it supports the notion that if you can drive harder competition for jobs in the economy, it puts downward pressure on wages and, with labour being cheaper, that will reduce unemployment. In a broad, simple way of putting the argument, that is the theory behind it.

I would say that that particular theoretical model, apart from being open to a lot of alternative, rival and contentious views as to whether it would actually work or not, it's also very open to the idea that it really panders to very sectional interests in the community. For instance, just to make it as clear as I can, the issue of why disadvantaged job seekers - and by disadvantaged I mean someone over 30; anyone with a disability; people with literacy problems - have such a hard time getting any placement assistance through the Job Network is that Job Network agencies cannot afford to alienate an employer, and so they pander to whatever prejudice or preconceptions employers have of who's an employable person.

Now, employers are just people; they're not anything special. They are guilty of the same inconsistencies and illogicality, and all the rest of it, that the rest of us are. One of the issues about the CES, for all its sins, was that particularly up until the late 80s, before this heavy business about compliance and imposing - - -

PROF WOODS: Mutual obligation.

MR QUIRK: - - - mutual obligation, and these sorts of things were brought into the

scene, when it was still operating on the basis of the principles laid down in the Norgard and Myers reviews of the late 70s - just incidentally, those reviews said that it totally compromises the efficiency and efficacy of a labour market service, or a labour market intermediary, to have anything to do with welfare compliance, and Norgard and Myers established probably the best period of employment service provision Australia has seen in the period 78 to 86 by the fact that they kept those compliance issues well out of the picture. It's been a fatal error, in my view, since 1987 that there's been an increasing focus on compliance issues, and that's bugged up the whole labour market intervention service policies of the country.

The Job Network essentially was designed to maximise those effects. That's why 386,000 breaches were conducted in the year 2000-2001, according to Senate Estimates. Now, depending on how you understand how many of those breaches were first breaches, second breaches, or third breaches, that either means a quarter or a third of people in the Job Network have copped a breach. Getting back to the reasons why there's no advocacy there, the thing about the CES was the income of the employment service officer sitting across the desk from you when you were applying for a job was not dependent on keeping an employer on side, and so they could bite the bullet and go to bat for you. No Job Network agency - certainly one that's only dealing with, say, job matching as a funding source - could afford to do that and, as a consequence, anybody that's not clearly marketable to employers have their applications binned.

On the issue of Job Search training, in your report you make it very clear that you consider its prime benefit is as a way of producing what you call the compliance effects - that is, Job Search training's prime benefit, and the reason why you're suggesting that it should be retained and made mandatory, is because it generates a huge number of breaches. My agency was a Job Search training provider, and the reason why we're not a Job Search training provider any more is because we had a strict policy of never breaching anybody.

The way the contract works for Job Network agencies is that the quality of an agency - and this was clearly stated in the first contract - is determined by the degree to which it reduces its clients' dependence on welfare. You can reduce someone's dependence on welfare by getting them a job, and you can reduce someone's dependence on welfare by breaching them. So our agency was deemed a low-quality agency because we didn't breach anybody, because in terms of getting people jobs really it was much of a muchness. We were on the same level as every other agency in our area, and the area was Melbourne. The difference between agencies was the fact that some breached and some - well, we didn't breach anyone but, as a consequence of that, we lost our Job Search training contract.

I might just say that our agency was doing something like the gentleman who

spoke before me was doing: we actually ran a free, drop-in job seeker support centre in a 5000 square foot premises, where we had two free phone rooms, a computer room, fax and photocopy services, a tearoom. We did hard copy printouts of every vacancy in Melbourne. We had a touch screen. We had two Internet computers. We had staff that would sit down and write people's applications with them, and the service was open to any person, didn't matter - - -

PROF WOODS: Cross-subsidising that out of your JST.

MR QUIRK: We were trying to pay for that using our Job Search training. We averaged 75 people a day coming and using our services from all over Melbourne. They included people who weren't eligible for the Job Network by virtue of the fact that they were either students or working more than 16 hours a week, or people who did not have permanent residency in Australia.

PROF WOODS: Or people whose spouse had a job and, therefore, was ineligible, et cetera.

MR QUIRK: All the people that are normally excluded from the Job Network service, we provided that service to them. Our agency had to close down exactly a year ago because of the loss of the Job Search training funding, and that's because we didn't breach anyone. The reason why we were an effective service was that people knew that we didn't breach people, and they wanted to come and use our service because we weren't a threat to them. But the issue about pandering to employers, I'm concerned that you're recommending that job matching actually be stopped.

PROF WOODS: I was wondering why you have difficulty with that. I would have thought that that was consistent with your line of thinking.

MR QUIRK: The problem that I have with the inconsistency of it is, the reason why the CES was displaced as a provider of service was the criticism that it was a monopoly provider of the service, and now you're getting rid of job matching on the basis that there are so many alternative sources of that service.

PROF WOODS: No, that's not the reason. That's not the argumentation we've put forward as to why to get rid of it. What we're saying is that at the moment employers are getting a government subsidised service from Job Network providers for Job Match, and we're hearing evidence today - and we've heard lots of evidence elsewhere - that in fact the positions are almost becoming closed out to many people because there is now a Job Network provider interposed between the employer and the job seeker.

MR QUIRK: What you're basically saying is that the purchaser provider model was not appropriate for job-matching services because it has failed to deliver the service.

PROF WOODS: You're broadening the debate out. Can we just focus on this specific issue at the moment, and I don't want to take up the time of the others for too long.

MR QUIRK: No, I didn't want to take as much time as I have.

PROF WOODS: But I do have fundamental concerns about Job Match - that it is meaning that a number of providers who are using government funds for the process are capturing jobs. They are then making them available on a not very transparent basis, feeding job seekers in. We're getting evidence here as well as elsewhere that people don't know if their CV has been put in or not and, where it is in the queue; whether they were successful. So there's not a lot of transparency in that process. But if there was some way of reverting back to job information being a public good that all had equal access to, that might somehow free up the system a little. It seems to be locking down at the moment.

MR QUIRK: What you're saying, therefore, is an argument to me that you should abandon the use of outcomes payments for job matching, job brokerage services, and that it should become a public service.

PROF WOODS: For job matching. No, we're not talking about Job Search training, or IA.

MR QUIRK: It should become a public service.

PROF WOODS: That's what we say. We're saying keep the touch screens in Centrelink.

MR QUIRK: But who puts the vacancies on the touch screens? Who goes out to the employer and gets the details, goes back to their office, types into the computer?

PROF WOODS: At the moment some of those are put in by Job Network providers, but some of them are put in because they're captured off lists that are provided by the newspapers, et cetera, where employers submit them directly to the newspapers, and that information then is also put onto Job Search Australia.

MR QUIRK: Employers that are prepared to pay for the newspaper service will, therefore, get their vacancies, but employers who weren't prepared to pay for their - - -

PROF WOODS: Most of them used to be prepared to pay, but now that we've got Job Network providers who are doing it free for them, it's not surprising that they're not prepared to pay any more. I mean, why would they?

MR QUIRK: Don't you think it would be better to go back to a system where there was impartial advocacy available, so that when a person when into a CES office, for instance, somebody else made the phone call to the employer for them and did their best to try and sell their qualities to that employer and set up the interview so at least they get their foot in the door. That impartiality meant that also when they were screening the person, talking to them about the job, they could be saying to them, "Well, look, you don't really suit this position," and it wasn't because there was a buck in it for them to say that. It was because they genuinely thought - - -

PROF WOODS: It was an honest assessment.

MR QUIRK: It was an honest assessment.

PROF WOODS: If there is some way that you can put forward to us - and perhaps not this afternoon but in a written submission to us - ways of changing the incentive structure so that the Job Network providers were the advocate for the job seeker rather than for the employer, we would be very grateful, because that's the heart of one of the areas we're trying to get to.

MR QUIRK: Could I just say as my closing point that if you wanted to try and improve the Job Network model as it roughly exists at the moment what you absolutely desperately need to do is embrace the free market ideology that's the foundation for it, and that free market ideology says that the consumer is sovereign and, if that's the case, then unemployed people should be given real choices about what services they get, where they go. They should know exactly what they're in for - for instance, the declarations of intent that are part of the intensive assistance contract process should be public documents. These are supposed to be setting out what providers are prepared to do for their clients, and yet it was made "commercial-in-confidence" so that no unemployed person could see it. It's an absurd denial of the theory that underlies this system.

PROF WOODS: Are you happy to acknowledge that our report does actually promote that there should be greater choice and capacity for choice for the job seeker? We're of like mind in that area.

MR QUIRK: Okay, but why does the report also say that it's not appropriate for there to be full consumer sovereignty for job seekers.

PROF WOODS: Well, at the moment, as Job Network is constructed, it has the two roles, exactly what you've been talking about. One is to help the job seeker, particularly those who are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, to have more equal access to jobs, but the second is the mutual obligation requirements and that reduces job-seeker sovereignty.

MR QUIRK: Okay. Well, on that basis - - -

PROF WOODS: That's a given feature.

MR QUIRK: If that's the basis by which consumers - job seekers - are denied power and influence in this system, then you should remove that compliance function in the Job Network - - -

PROF WOODS: I'll hear your argument on that separately, I think.

MR QUIRK: - - - because then the model will work. As long as that compliance business is in there and people are being bullied into doing things, the market system offers no efficiencies, no chance of better improvements of quality. It seems to only be serving specific sectional interests.

PROF WOODS: I think there are some very fruitful areas of debate, but I think, in the interests of the others, if you could put a submission to us, we would be happy to respond to it.

MR QUIRK: Gladly.

PROF WOODS: Thanks very much for your time.

MR QUIRK: Thank you.

PROF WOODS: If I can call forward Mr David Humphries. I understand there are some time constraints. I know all of you are suffering those. Could you please state your name and if you do represent any organisation, please.

MR HUMPHRIES: David Humphries. I don't represent an organisation.

PROF WOODS: Can you, for the benefit of the commission, just give a little background as to what issues you'd like to raise with us today.

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, I have extensive research in the welfare state decline, because I've completed a PhD at Wollongong - - -

PROF WOODS: Congratulations.

MR HUMPHRIES: - - - in relation to the dynamics of these changes.

PROF WOODS: And what was the general topic and is that relevant to what you want to bring forward today?

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, I agree with the last speaker in terms of the compulsory aspect is the key problem, because the nature of the problem tends to suggest that it's a problem of the individual, but any sort of statistical analysis will show that it's a lot larger problem than that and, in a place like Newcastle, the sorts of jobs available are usually only casual. There's a hell of a lot of competition. So I just sort of feel like it's a complete waste of time, the basic orientation - the philosophical orientation - of the Job Network.

PROF WOODS: If you could help me through that a little, I mean, we've got several features of Job Network. There's the Job Match program, there's Job Search training, there's intensive assistance. Is it any particular area there that you're focusing on?

MR HUMPHRIES: No, not in particular - just the broad thrust of blaming the victim, which is I think the key issue here.

PROF WOODS: Yes, and that has to do with the need for self-respect and to not be humiliated and those sorts of issues that we understand.

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes.

PROF WOODS: But in terms of the services that are being delivered - not how they're being delivered, but what the services are themselves - are you advocating any change to their nature or to the incentive structure of providers or the level of assistance?

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, if you're going to have an economic system that produces unemployment and have an environment where you - - -

PROF WOODS: I can't think of any economic system that doesn't produce unemployment. Unemployment exists in a whole range of economic systems, but that's a broader debate.

MR HUMPHRIES: Okay. Well, what I'm trying to get at is you could have some type of assistance, but it's based on a person going along voluntarily to a service. Have those service providers there for sure, but make it entirely voluntary.

PROF WOODS: So you're considering a lot more choice by the job seeker to choose what services they want to take that they feel may be of help to them.

MR HUMPHRIES: Yes. The problem is that they try to make out that you're getting helped, but to really be helped is to seek it out yourself. I mean, just to sort of say, "Well, we're going to help you and we're going to make you be helped," I mean, it's quite a confusing set of symbols there.

PROF WOODS: We have put forward in our draft report suggestions that there be some element of choice by job seekers as to whether they accept intensive assistance or continue with other programs like Work for the Dole. Is that along the lines that you were thinking?

MR HUMPHRIES: No, I don't agree with work for the dole at all. You see, what's happening now in the political scene, if you look at how this current government - and I'm not entirely blaming them either, because the mutual obligation policy was brought in under the Keating government - treats, for example, refugees, how it treats those in work, how it treats those out of work, there's a consistency. So if they let one aspect slip - for example, on refugee policy - then there's going to be an uproar in terms of these other areas. So they tend to apply a similar harshness to all those groups.

PROF WOODS: If I can get to the nub of what you're putting to us today, it would be separation of the obligation function or the compliance function from the assistance function and that the assistance be something that the unemployed could draw on as and when they felt that it would benefit them.

MR HUMPHRIES: I think they should be more clear about what are the causes of unemployment, whether it is a problem of people lacking initiative or being lazy, but there's sort of some suggestions that it's the fault of the individual. Other times, people will say, "No, it's globalisation, it's de-industrialisation." So it would be instructive, I think, for the government to come out and say, "Well, this is the cause

and this is how we're going to fix it."

PROF WOODS: Well, I don't think there's any one cause. I mean, there's the global, the national and then there's the regional economies and each one has different impacts. Some regions in Australia are growing very strongly at the moment, but they happen to be in industries where there's high demand and there are cycles and structural changes. So it's not a simple, "What is the one cause of unemployment? Let's solve that one." Coming back to Job Network, I'm just not quite sure what you're putting forward to us in terms of how we can help through our thinking of what changes you want to make to the Job Network system or whether it's beyond redemption and throw it out.

MR HUMPHRIES: Well, if you look at the high representation of religious groups in the Job Network, I think this is another key problem too, because if you look at the history of welfare before the rise of the state, churches basically provided welfare for those who didn't have any other support. That meant living in accommodation similar to a large barn, being fed food scraps. So I'm a little bit concerned that some of the indications of the Job Network today are sort of going towards this pre-stateism in terms of welfare provision.

PROF WOODS: And so you'd be advocating that only private providers be successful for tendering for Job Network or are happy with a mix of not-for-profit and for-profit providers? Where does your argument lead?

MR HUMPHRIES: I don't support any of the tenets of Job Network at all. That's my position.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR HUMPHRIES: If that is not instructive in terms of your paradigms, I can't help that.

PROF WOODS: No, that's fair enough. Are there any final points you want to bring forward this afternoon?

MR HUMPHRIES: No, I think that's about it.

PROF WOODS: Appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

PROF WOODS: Next on my list is Mr Neil Latham. No? All right. In which case, Mr Phil Pettet - Phil is here? You nearly lost your spot in the queue.

MR PETTET: Sorry about that.

PROF WOODS: No, that's all right. You have people looking out for you. Could you please give your name and if you represent any organisation.

MR PETTET: My name is Phil Pettet and I represent the organisation of the unemployed.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR PETTET: First of all, I'd like to thank Mr Woods for agreeing to come up here today and I'd like to thank Sharon for organising it, wherever she is. She's gone. I've just given you a brief written description that I would like to read out. On a personal basis, I'm married, one child at home. I've been unemployed since December. The general comments are, as I consider that one of the best skills that I have gained in the last 25 years of employment is the process of system analysis and system implementation, I consider myself to be in a good position to offer a constructive view under a number of different angles. There is no one fault within the Job Network system, but from all aspects of the system and personnel - including government requirements of service providers - the service providers, the unemployed and the employers themselves.

The Job Network system in principle does have merit. However, there seems to be a number of situations that cause more problems and waste time, not only for the unemployed but for the service providers also. A situation example: this is basically my personal situation. A person finds themselves unemployed and having worked for some time within the one organisation or company, they find themselves in a situation that, when they apply for unemployment benefit, they are forced to spend their liquid assets that may have been saved over time and entitlements that have been earned over the years. This person has paid taxes over the years, saved money, invested in private superannuation and, when they are told they need to dispose of this hard-earned money, they become irate and annoyed. This puts them in the wrong frame of mind and they reject the system from the first instance.

In anyone's situation, there is almost - in most cases - a sense of loss that ends up in depression after losing their job, which only escalates the problem of being unemployed and finding themselves in a system that is difficult to work with. At the time of applying for Newstart allowance, you are given a job-seeker guide to fill out and return when you hand in your first benefit form. It indicates the contacts you have made or attempts you have made for seeking employment. This is a scam, as

you - to my understanding - can put anything that you want. Is the information that's entered investigated by Centrelink? I would not think so. I do not believe that there are enough resources to check on this information provided. On the other side of the coin, I do not believe that the contacts would appreciate having their busy day interrupted by investigators from Centrelink asking questions regarding Mr X asking for a job. I would also consider that this might be a breach of the Confidentiality Act.

The next stage is to register with an unemployment service provider, such as Mission Employment. The first contacts at most of these service providers are the same scenario. You take in your resume, fill in a form and the provider employee will download the information into a so-called database. So now we are registered and we have a job-seeker ID number and off you go into the big wide wild world of Job Search. This now brings us to the methods that you can use to find work. The local paper: positions vacant are of course limited, but it does give you the chance to deal with the employer directly. The Australian Job Network: this network, as I have found, is in fact the best single method for finding job contacts. However, it does have its faults, which I'll explain later.

Door knocking: this is non-productive to a point and very time-consuming and can become costly, in regard to printing resumes and the cost of transport, but the very best way to stumble into a job. Word of mouth or recommendation of a friend: it has been admitted to me by a senior member of a service provider that in most cases, with low to medium work-skill positions, it is by way of recommendation by a mate you will find employment.

Employment service providers: it has become evident very quickly that employment service providers are either too busy dealing with one-on-one cases, or offer much more than the use of a phone or of a PC to access the Net, or they are just not interested. For a person that is not on intensive assistance, the service provider only becomes a contact to apply for the position found on the Net or in the newspaper. I consider that in some cases the provider is in fact more of a hindrance than a help in relation to interviews, due to the fact that you can only plead your case so you speak to the representative of the service provider rather than directly to the employer. In this case the employer only gets to see your resume. The service provider has not got the time to go over every recommendation with the employer, so the time and effort put in by both the job seeker and the service provider is wasted. Once again, this situation leads to more depression in the job seeker as he/she feels that he or she has done their best and they did not get to see the employer.

Employment agencies: in my experience I have found that in obtaining full-time work the employment agencies are in fact the best method for getting work, as they are your employer and their business relies on you as their representative, and

they expect you to do the right thing. Let's look more closely at the Australian Job Network. As I have stated before, the Job Network is a good system in principle but it does have its setbacks. If a job seeker is to obtain access to either the Job Network via the Internet or a touch-screen terminal, a job seeker is able to search the service. This is all fine, well and good. However, to my knowledge the network updates either every 20 minutes or every two hours, so unless you are prepared to stay at a Centrelink office or at the office of a service provider, you will miss out on jobs that become available through the day.

The other main downfall with this system is that when a job is closed by the service provider it is taken off the network, but when the provider returns to the same position to update the file for whatever information, the position is in fact reactivated, appearing as a new position on the Net. The job seeker sees this as a new position and applies for it, only to find that the position had been closed yesterday. Once again, the only person to benefit from this is Telstra, as phone calls are being made for no good reason and time again is being wasted for the job seeker and the service provider in dealing with persons applying for what they think is a new position. This then makes the job seeker feel let down by the system, and the service provider is annoyed as their time is, once again, been wasted.

I'm slowly beginning to develop methods of getting around most of these problems. I consider that I am one of the more fortunate, in that I have more life experience, greater responsibilities than someone of a much younger age and therefore having more incentive to return to the workforce. I know of younger people that do not have transport, Internet access or the skills that come with experience, yet many employers want juniors with years of experience. These creatures do not exist.

Within the employment service provider system there are a number of loopholes; one in particular is that the provider assigned to a person for long-term unemployment gets paid a bonus for getting a long-term job seeker work. I am under the understanding that the longer this person has been unemployed the bigger the bonus is paid. This, in itself, is an incentive for the provider not to help a person who is short-term, or is not on intensive assistance. In all fairness to the providers they are, in most instances, very helpful - in particular today, which I've noticed, and I don't know why. Then it becomes a cutthroat business in a very large web. The best service all unemployed or providers should use is a single-type database provided by the government, but instead each provider business has their own independent database designed for or by themselves. In other words, a standard database should be used.

In addition, to save time and for better information input, the job seeker should be the person to input the information into the database at the provider's office or on

the network at home. The job seeker then could download the information into a diskette and take it to another provider to download into their database at another office. This would then standardise the information from one provider to another.

Training: as a person becomes longer unemployed it is required that these persons do additional training. I know that people do training from basic skills to university degrees and they are not able to gain employment due to the basic fact that they have no hands-on experience. We now have a catch-22 situation. What is the point of doing any training, when you get nowhere doing this training and not gaining employment? You once again become depressed after putting in an effort to improve yourself and get no results. That has basically been my personal experience and the impressions of a number of people that I've spoken to who have done quite a bit of training. They just don't seem to be getting anywhere with the system itself.

PROF WOODS: Thank you, that's quite a thoughtful set of points and we will incorporate that into the evidence of the commission, provided you're happy that we do so.

MR PETTET: Yes.

PROF WOODS: Thank you. I was quite interested in your comments there about job searching. You highlighted particularly the Australian Job Network, or Job Search Australia; that you find that's probably the most complete single source of information for you. You're quite right in the sense of multiple entries for the one job starting to appear, because of the nature of the process or in fact the number of different providers capturing that job and putting it on as well, so there is confusion there. You know, what constitutes a real job and what constitutes a whole series of multiple looks at the one job?

We've been doing this through the inquiry ourselves, of just going in and - I travel out through western New South Wales a fair bit, so I know some of the areas - and you look in and you find an employer puts a job on, then you find a provider puts a job on and you know it's exactly the one job. It looks as if there are two jobs there, but there is only the one. If that employer wants to put themselves on, that's good because you know who to put an application to. But if the provider puts it on and they've closed a loop with the employer, then you've got to go through that provider and they not be the one you're registered with.

If you're an IA of a different provider then there are different incentives and you're putting up a lot of difficulties in the road of actually getting to put your name and face in front of the employer. So, yes, we are very interested in ways of making that system work more efficiently, in that it represents real jobs, that there is some way that you can more easily capture any updates so that when jobs become

available - in our own recommendations we talk about the importance of the continued mechanism of an Internet web site and the Centrelink touch screens and things. We see that as quite crucial. Any further thoughts that you may have on how to overcome some of the problems with that system we would be very interested in following through.

MR PETTET: In fact I put a submission to Kelly Hall not long ago regarding free Internet access for the unemployed. In a nutshell, the government would provide a single server for each state and there would be a 1800 access number that anyone with a Job Search number can get into, and if that person does not have their own computer at home then the federal government would provide second-hand computers from their old workstations. Those computers could be modified in such a way where they can't access internally from home. That was the submission I put to Kelly probably three months ago when we had the forum here.

PROF WOODS: If you still have that information could you also send it to us?

MR PETTET: I haven't got it on me, but I do have it at home.

PROF WOODS: No, I don't mean now.

MR PETTET: I was going to bring it in actually. It has been put forward.

PROF WOODS: We will give you our card and you can submit it to us.

MR PETTET: Right.

PROF WOODS: But we are interested in how to make that information base more accessible to the unemployed; not only those who are in the system, but, you know, those of you who are outside the system, but still wanting to put your name forward to an employer; that this can be a more valid and up-to-date system. That's helpful and we appreciate that.

You then talk about training. You talk about - and as we've heard today and at other times - that people with qualifications can lapse, that they need their new tickets and the like, but they can't keep forking out for those themselves. They don't have the income to keep refreshing those certificates so there is a need there to upgrade skills and to retain currency of skills tickets, certificates and the like. We take that on board. You then talk, more interestingly, about the catch-22 of if you're focusing on your skills how do you get experience, because the employer wants both. They want a competent person, but they want a well-experienced person.

MR PETTET: That's right.

PROF WOODS: In fact they would prefer somebody with 10 years' experience who is about 16.

MR PETTET: That's right.

PROF WOODS: In your words.

MR PETTET: I've seen those ads, and I'm sure most of the people here have seen it themselves.

PROF WOODS: Yes. We understand the point you're making there quite clearly. The training issue - Job Network providers get front-end payments for signing on somebody and they get outcome payments if the person is successful getting employment, so there is funding available for training. What we're trying to work out is what is happening to the incentive structure that stops a lot of that training from happening. We've had people come forward saying, "My provider has never sent me on a training course, but I've got these skills. They might be five, 10 or whatever years old. I need them updated. Why can't I go on a training course?" That's a very good question.

MR PETTET: It's unfortunate you weren't here this morning. Two of the friends I had with me - - -

PROF WOODS: I was, but several thousand feet above you.

MR PETTET: One person in particular is constantly doing training courses of various types, mostly machinery. The other fellow has primarily had problems with service providers not quite doing the right thing by him. As far as training goes one of the biggest problems I would consider in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley is that there are not enough apprenticeships, and there would I expect be a need for a better incentive scheme for companies to employ apprentices. There is a shortage of tradesmen in Newcastle and that shortage is getting larger. A lot of tradesmen are actually going out of their trade and going into other services.

We're trained, as far as minimal skill is concerned - things such as forklift driving, computer skills or things like that - there are a lot of people out there with those sorts of tickets, a lot of people with that sort of experience, and it's a higher cutthroat business trying to get a job with minimal skills. I consider myself to have quite a large skills base and I'm finding it difficult to get work in the field that I want, simply because I haven't got the written qualifications for that particular position.

PROF WOODS: I wasn't quite clear from this where you are in that process,

though. You've been through Job Match?

MR PETTET: The only thing I have achieved since last December was actually getting Newstart.

PROF WOODS: Right.

MR PETTET: Actually, I've gone back and asked for intensive assistance and I was rejected.

PROF WOODS: Not yet eligible.

MR PETTET: No.

PROF WOODS: Got to downgrade your skills further before you become eligible.

MR PETTET: That's right, and he actually did that. He did downgrade my skills to try and make it look better, and it didn't work.

PROF WOODS: Yes, all right. It must be getting late in the afternoon, but I won't pursue it. We've touched the training; we've touched the database - are there any other areas while you have the floor?

MR PETTET: No, nothing in particular. I just wanted to sort of try and emphasise things from a varied point of view.

PROF WOODS: No, that's quite helpful, and if you could provide us with a copy of that other information that you put forward we'd appreciate that as well.

MR PETTET: Yes, sure.

PROF WOODS: Thank you for your time. In the interests of sanity, can we call a very short break.

PROF WOODS: I appreciate your patience while we had a short break. Shall we continue and I call forth Mr Colin Whelan, please. Thank you, if you could give your name and if you do represent any organisation, please.

MR WHELAN: Colin Whelan, long-term unemployed.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much. Do you have an opening statement?

MR WHELAN: Yes, actually, I do. As I said, my name is Colin Whelan. I'm long-term unemployed. We're all here today to talk about the private Job Network in a town which has 12 per cent unemployment rate and why the Job Network isn't working.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR WHELAN: There appears to be an agreement that all long-term people are at a disadvantage - that's what in most of the reports I read it seems to be - but what do we actually mean by "disadvantaged"? Well, you could say they don't really have any real disposable income. In many cases they don't have good clothes for job interviews. Also, a lot don't own cars. Now, people here today have mentioned they're having trouble registering their car and that. Well, I haven't had a car for 10 years. Really, how can we expect anybody with no disposable income to own a car? If we do, we're really dreaming. I won't go into all the financial expenses of what it costs to run a car and to keep a car on the road, but in my case, being 45 and on a single benefit of \$183.50 a week, there's no way that I can do that. By the time I pay my utility bills and buy food, electricity, gas - you know, really it doesn't work.

Also you can see where it actually creates further problems. Other people here today have mentioned it. More and more businesses are actually choosing to use labour hire companies. In my experience of labour hire companies, they're not really going to employ anybody who is long-term unemployed. These days you've got to possess a lot of the induction certificates in the various industries. For somebody in my age group - there was a time when I actually worked in all these heavy industries - I know a lot about health and safety and how not to get hurt and I'd been around.

Also, I suppose, a lot of labour hire companies now prefer to employ tradesmen, and actually use the tradesmen to double up. What I mean by doubling up is they need, say, an electrician and an electrician's mate; Well, these days they actually employ two electricians and those two electricians go on the job. That actually cuts out what you'd probably call - it used to be termed quite a few years ago - a semiskilled labourer. The same with the boilermakers. They'll send two boilermakers now, the labour hire companies, and one will work as the boilermaker's assistant, the other will be the boilermaker. Plus, they can alternate and, quite

honestly, both of them can weld, both of them can read plans and the like.

So really, basically, a labour hire company for a long-term unemployed, say, semiskilled labourer without a car - because they don't have a car - and a lot of people forget here, without a car a labour hire company's mission statement is that they're going to provide fast, reliable service. Now, to give you an example, I live in Mayfield. If a labour hire company rang me up and asked me to go to Hexham Pipe and Steels, I've got to walk. Because I haven't got a car I've got to walk from Mayfield to Waratah station and wait on a train. Now, not every train stops at Hexham. Really, they're not going to use me because I can't get there. If I had a car I would be from Mayfield to Hexham in probably 15 minutes. Without a car it could take me three hours, the way the trains run, because as I said, not all stop at Hexham.

Basically most long-term unemployed people without resources in the labour market today are cactus. They're really not what a private employer is looking for because they don't have the actual resources. It's only my personal opinion. I don't have any evidence to back this up, but poverty seems to be actually excluding now a lot of unemployed people from the job market because they don't have cars and the like and they actually live in poverty. As some people will tell you, and I think some of the reports I've read will actually say, it can accumulate your problems. Just things become accumulated.

A lot of people will probably remember about in August of last year, one young guy got breached. He'd been on the Work for the Dole scheme and he got a letter to go for an interview but apparently he didn't have any money to go for the interview. It showed a picture of him. He'd been without food or whatever, because some unemployed people are - either you can call it too proud or whatever, but he didn't try and sort the problem out quickly, so eventually I actually went to the Newcastle Morning Herald. What I did was that I wrote a letter to the paper myself. I'd like to read that out. It was after that happened. It spurred me to actually write a letter. The editorial is entitled The Jobs in Black and White, from Colin Whelan.

For 20 years Australians have allowed politicians and business leaders to embrace neo-classical economics and as a result our lives are controlled with this narrow ideology. Economics, with its man-made laws, has seen many of our people of working age thrown on the scrap heap never to work again.

Why do the Australian people continue to accept an economic system that creates poverty, discrimination, alcoholism, drug use, family breakdowns, crime and violence? It matters not that we have politicians who have volunteered to roll back, roll forward, do backflips with pike. This circus act won't fix the social problems their policies have created. The seeds have been sown but it's not too late to poison the harvest, if we

do it now.

The Australian people can equalise opportunity and allow our citizens to obtain the highest possible value. All Australians must demand a constitutional bill of rights, and item 1 on the list should read, "Every Australian of voting age has a right to a full-time job that pays more than enough money to cover the cost of living." Surely that is not asking too much.

Actually, not many people wrote back and either criticised me or agreed, so I don't know what the full response to that letter was.

As some people have said here today, being unemployed you are meant to feel like a second-class citizen and possibly even the scum of the earth. But if we are going to pause for a moment, I think really we've got to step back in time and have a look at unemployment. Unemployment in Newcastle - it never used to be that way. There was a time in Newcastle when I didn't know anybody who wasn't in permanent, paid work. They received sick leave, holiday pay, long service leave and they had job security. Some people used to call it a job for life - in other words, they could actually plan their life. They had financial security to make their dreams come true. You know, things have changed, haven't they?

I suppose basically it's really time to talk about the early 90s when we go back to the labour market programs when I first became unemployed and actually entered into the labour market. I brought it along with me - I did a course that was actually through the job train - as it says here, I'll just read it out to you: punctuality, it was unfailingly; cooperation always given; criticism - being criticised, usually accepts it; integration - how I got on with my fellow workers quite well; appearance, appropriate; appropriate and effective communications; repetition, how I tried - you know, how I even performed it. Repetitive work - I seemed to enjoy it; I seek help from the correct sources and I usually maintain a high standard. I work constantly without waiting for direction; persistence, always good. Readiness for employment, that's very important - this was 1991 - it said now. I suppose basically considering I'd been working in the field - that I'd done a job train course on - for 20 years and it would be pretty sort of funny if I wasn't actually ready to do it.

PROF WOODS: Can I ask what that field was?

MR WHELAN: That was actually just a broad based metal course, you know.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR WHELAN: In between 1991 and 1994 I continued to knock on doors, make phone calls and write letters asking for employment. At the present moment I'm actually on the dole diary, where I must go and knock on doors and I've got to find eight places. Most people react reasonably polite. Some people aren't, you know.

Maybe, as some people said, they can feel belittled and myself, personally, I've been around a long time and I'm probably pretty hardened to it. I can just take the abuse.

Then in 1994 we started talking about Working Nation. You know, it sounded good at first, but the more I heard about it the more concerned I actually got, because there were rumours floating around that many of these so-called training providers would line their pockets with gold and only supply the unemployed people with substandard training. It goes without saying that I participated in Working Nation. I spent the next six months training in advanced office skills. Now, out of 15 people that started the course, I think from memory there were only seven of us who finished. I finished the course. It says here:

Punctuality: outstanding; appearance and suitability for the job: outstanding; cooperation: outstanding; initiative and resourcefulness: above average; quality of work, accuracy and neatness: outstanding; team member: outstanding; ability to learn and retain information: outstanding.

They even gave me a personal reference which they didn't have to do, because that wasn't part of the deal. I'd just like to read it out:

Colin Whelan undertook two work experiences at Concept Corporate Communications in November.

This was 1994. I don't even think they exist any more:

During that time we found Colin to be highly cooperative and able to complete any task asked of him. Some of the duties performed included filing, typing, banking and database entry. Colin was also able to assist our cameramen on location shoot for a television commercial and log data from camera tapes. Colin worked well as a member of our team and performed diligently unsupervised. We are pleased to give this reference and feel he would be an asset to any company.

So as you can see, the unemployed, we did the training. But I put out basically three main problems which were wrong with Working Nation. I suppose basically it was an 18-month course and we had to do it in six. Most people at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder with a lot of problems can't do 18 months in six months. That's nearly impossible. Also, no specialised teachers. What I actually mean by that - and it's happening probably more and more today - you're getting people coming out from the industry to teach. Now, that may work with people who haven't really experienced a great deal of problems in life, but if you haven't actually got the specialised teachers it becomes difficult.

To give an example, an analogy of driving a car: there will be some people who say, "I just can't teach my son. I don't know why he can't do this." It's possibly

the same with this. These are industry based, they pick the job up really quick; they may even be a lot more intelligent than the unemployed; after all, they had a job and they work in the industry. Finally, there were really no jobs after all - there wasn't. This is only my opinion again - everyone really knows the Liberal Party really doesn't seem to be a friend of the old working man, poor old working man or woman, and I don't think they really like the unemployed.

Some people have actually talked about Work for the Dole. When you talk about Work for the Dole what did Work for the Dole actually remove? Has anybody thought about what Work for the Dole has actually removed? It removed a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Most unemployed people are in poverty. They haven't got any money. They will go on a job for six months. But to try and give you an example: if I was to go on a Work for the Dole scheme and the day before I started my washing machine packed it in, after six months worth of work I still don't have enough money to buy a washing machine.

If we go back to what I was saying about a car, when cars are starting to actually become more essential for jobs for the way the labour market is moving, well, you go on a Work for the Dole scheme for six months, you don't make any money - I'm not saying in six months these days you would be able to buy a car, because let's not forget most long-term unemployed people don't have credit ratings and it's very hard to actually borrow money. That seems to be another problem.

I suppose basically when this report first came out I remember actually somebody saying, "What a historic document." When someone says to me it's an historic document, I want read it. I got the phone number and I rang the minister of employment office in Canberra and I got a copy sent to me. He said, "Oh, look it up on the Net." I said, "I haven't got a computer." They sent me the copy.

I suppose basically, if you look at it this way, to the best of my understanding Patrick McClure is the CEO of Mission Australia, isn't he? To the best of my knowledge. Realistically the underlining theme of this is to make the Job Network more money, so why wouldn't that be a conflict of interest? You've got somebody to actually write a document telling the government how "you can give us more money". It should be a conflict of interest. I've never heard anybody saying that.

PROF WOODS: You will be happy to know we have no conflict of interest.

MR WHELAN: Okay, yes. Also on page 5.1 of your report it states, "The most important program element, intensive assistance, generates a small positive effect for participants." Basically the reason I said that - because also in the report they talk about the long-term unemployed having no motivation. As I said, once again on page 5.1, you're saying that basically intensive assistance generates no real positive

effects. You've got to say, "Well, why wouldn't the job provider say that?" They're not going to blame themselves if their policies aren't working. They've tendered.

PROF WOODS: But this isn't from the Job Network providers.

MR WHELAN: No, it's from you.

PROF WOODS: This is the evidence that we've seen.

MR WHELAN: That's right.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR WHELAN: You've said it's not working now, but also on the same thing they'll say the unemployed have no motivation. Why wouldn't they say that? They don't want to blame themselves. Why not blame the unemployed? Let's face it, we get blamed for a lot of things, don't we? You're saying the net effects of job matching on job seekers is difficult to ascertain. You also said the net effects on job prospects for Job Search training was also small. They're getting paid to do that, aren't they? It's not working and they're blaming me.

PROF WOODS: That's why we're here.

MR WHELAN: Yes, but as I said they're - I'm saying "blaming me" - they're blaming the unemployed as a group because, let's face it, they're not going to blame the government because the government pays. They're not going to turn around and say, "Hang on a second, this is all the government's fault. Oh, we've got to blame the unemployed." What can we really do? We just really have to cop it sweet. The thing I've also noticed is if you're unemployed people can say what they want about them, or any of us, and get away with it. I don't know whether you can slander a whole entire group of people in one hit, but certainly it's discriminatory, and when it's written down, in most cases it's libel, but everyone gets away with it. We seem to be able to be that group in the community now where you can say what you want and we can't do anything about it - yes, actually.

According to my opinion, unemployment is probably going to get worse. Like yesterday the ANZ Bank reported a 9 per cent drop in job ads and this morning's news in Newcastle, ANI actually closed down, so we're actually going to have a lot more jobs in Newcastle. Once again, back to these two reports: the more I read them - and let's not forget I'm unemployed; I really don't have any education - probably some people have PhDs here. If I have a PhD it's in the university of life. It's about the only place - - -

PROF WOODS: You found our report and you've looked through bits of it, so thank you for that.

MR WHELAN: It seems to me we seem to be trying to get the unemployed - to actually institutionalise them. What I mean by that, you would go on a Work for the Dole scheme, okay, you didn't get a job; you will go back to maybe intensive assistance. Nothing really happens there. "Go and do this. Don't finish it." It seems to me we seem to be getting a group where, bang, you're institutionalising - trying to institutionalise one group. That's only my opinion as I read through the reports. I can look through the literature and try and actually read it creatively.

If we want to go back to when I lost my job - I lost my paid job basically because I was no longer productive. I couldn't perform. We ran out of work. I heard you ask other people what really should be done with the private Job Network. I think the situation - to see if it works, is - okay, the unemployed will go there but if they don't get us a job, quite simply they don't get paid. Let's see then how long the private Job Networks keep their doors open. If I go back, we're getting blamed; make no mistake about it, we were getting blamed for programs that weren't working.

Okay, don't pay the private Job Network providers unless they get you a job, and not something that's sort of - not an interview. I suppose I should go back and deal with interviews, and this actually started back with the screening interview. That's where you're under intensive assistance and you go there, "We've got a job but you've got to be interviewed." You actually go to their other officer where you get interviewed as a screening interview. That's the interview you have when you're not having an interview.

As somebody once point out, what can a young job provider or the young guy that was sitting there earlier - I don't know how old he was - what can he really ask me about that job when he's never worked in it? They're asking you other questions like, "Have you a car?" They know you haven't because you've told them already, but you can see what I mean. It's a case of playing the game. That's all it is. You go there for that job interview; you know you're not going to get it. It's the screening interview.

That actually started back when they had this thing in Newcastle called the CES Business Office. It was actually the CES and they moved into a CES Business Office where you would actually go there and have the screening interview. As I said to somebody else, public money pays for the private Job Network. However, they're not really there to look after us. They will look after the employer first, who pays no money to get that service provided for them. The whole thing with that is, okay, they'll look at me. "Oh, 45, jeez. Hasn't worked for a long time, has he?"

They won't send me - and that's the whole thing. They're now not really a provider service for the unemployed; they're providing for the employer.

I suppose basically, finally - as some people have mentioned in the thing - they've been impressed. Some people actually mentioned they felt like killing themselves. It's probably a good time to point out I attended a conference here recently on protection of human genetic information. You've probably going to say it when you're under stress and so forth and there's probably a very good chance that if you're going to have any health problems they're going to be fast-tracked, because if you're continually getting put under pressure all the time that's basically making life more challenging than what it probably should be.

PROF WOODS: And if you're trying to make ends meet all the time.

MR WHELAN: And trying to make ends meet, it becomes a lot more challenging and some people said they would hate to be a young person today. I tell you what, so would I, especially when one of them kills themselves every day. I want to know of any research or any statistics that have been done, whether or not they've been unemployed at the time and they've been put under a hell of a lot of pressure to perform, because let's face it, if you fail in school today you will fail in life.

Then you've got all these further problems. I don't think it's really any good, and some people are saying basically how their mental health is actually suffering. One in five teenagers now suffer from mental illness and I'm just wondering whether there is any link to all of this. All of these statistics have actually been taken or researched.

PROF WOODS: Certainly the link between unemployment and stress is well established. Whether the link between the suicides and the proportion of unemployed, I don't have that information.

MR WHELAN: Some people have said because they have felt humiliated in the Job Network and things like that - there's another thing which Centrelink actually provided to me recently. I don't know if anyone here has heard of it, your job contract where you actually can't do a cold canvass. Employer Contract Certificate is the name of it. You can't do a cold canvass, or a canvassing phone call, it actually has to be an interview. I rang the hotline and I said, "Listen, this is actually going to make it a lot harder to comply." I thought, "This is going to breach a lot of people. This is going to actually make it a lot harder to comply." I said, "If I write a letter a lot of employers won't write back. If I ring on the phone, sometimes you've got an interview on the phone, I may not have exactly what that employer is looking for."

Somebody asked me once when I applied for a truck driver's job, "Who have

you been driving for?" I haven't driven a truck for anybody. Straightaway he didn't want me, so I rang up for a truck driver's job - Employer's Contract Certificate - straightaway, I mean, I'm on the phone, I've got to say to him, "Listen, can I come around and get you to sign this?" He's not going to bother with that.

I said, "What's the best way around it?" They said, "Go to your Job Network provider and apply for a job through there and they will have to sign it." Okay, I touched the touch screen, there's a job on the screen for a cleaner, which didn't say you had to have your own transport - because don't forget I haven't got a car - I raced to the Job Network provider and gave it to them and said, "Am I on the list?" They said, "Yes." I pulled out the Employer Contract Certificate and I said, "Can you please sign this?" "Oh, we don't sign them." I said, "You don't sign them? But why?" They said, "We've been actually instructed - we've no contract with Centrelink to sign this, so we don't sign them." Great.

As most people know, someone has actually said, we've been signing forms and forms and forms for Centrelink all the time. I drew up my own declaration which basically reads "On 28/11/01, Mr Colin James Whelan, born on 17/10/56" - I gave my address and made out like I applied for the whole lot and then I wanted a Centrelink person to sign it. I had "I," - full name, which was their name - "employed by Centrelink and hold the position of" - can verify that I applied, because I said, you know, "If you check the computer." She wouldn't do that. Said, "I'm not there, I don't know." I said, "Well, make a phone call and find out." She wouldn't do it, wouldn't sign it. The whole thing was, I've got to sign all their documents. She said, "No other unemployed people do this." I said, "Well, if I'm like this, who made me this way?"

I don't want to get breached. That's the only money I've got, so it seems to be basically really everything they get you to do is, "Have I don't this properly? If I make a mistake I'm gone." As you said, you got caught by fog and you couldn't get here this morning. If that happened to me at Centrelink, bang, I'm gone. I'm going to the Salvation Army for food tickets. There's no leeway with us. You can ring up someone and say, "Oh, jeez, I'm stuck in fog. I can't get there."

PROF WOODS: And they'd say, "Newcastle? You've got to be kidding."

MR WHELAN: I said that. I said, "What, he's in fog?" But the whole thing is if I did that to Centrelink now I'm gone totally. So you can see we've got no leeway for anything. As I said, we're definitely second-class citizens, and getting further treated like scum. You asked somebody else, "What do you think should be done?" It seems to me quite plainly that for long-term unemployed people, if they want to rebuild their lives, you need an affirmative action program for long-term unemployed people of a certain age if you want them to get back in the workforce, and I'm not

talking about Work for the Dole schemes, I'm talking about a proper paid wage because you've got to be able to rebuild your life.

As I said, there's no point going to the Work for the Dole scheme for six months. You're still broke when you come out of it. You're not rebuilding your life. You've actually got to have an affirmative action program. Now, if you're not going to do that, then you're not serious. If you're serious about it, especially in Newcastle where the unemployment rate is continuing to rise, they're the two things that I've recommended to you; if they were done, you'd see a difference.

PROF WOODS: You've clearly put a lot of thought into what you were going to put before us today.

MR WHELAN: I didn't have much time to do it. It's basically from experience.

PROF WOODS: That's all right. I appreciate there are others waiting, but can I indulge in a question. It's at a personal level, and you can choose to answer or not. You've been unemployed for 10 years. You clearly are reading widely and continuing to seek out the answers. What do you see your next 10 years being? When you look forward from now to the next decade, what do you see?

MR WHELAN: For me?

PROF WOODS: Mm.

MR WHELAN: I honestly think when you're caught up in this situation, you're just really trying to survive from day to day. Let's say some people have been to university and so forth. At 45 I really don't want to sign on a HECS scheme, for a starter, and go further into debt, plus being a rigorous academic environment and, with all the other problems that you've got, trying to actually concentrate there. I think what's got to be accepted for long-term unemployed, especially in the older age group, they've really got to go into the job market with the skills they've got and obtain the extra skills in that job market. But trying to actually train somebody up from, "Oh, is that a computer, is it?" it's too late. They've really got to go into the workforce with the skills they've got.

Now, there was a time when BHP was in full bore. People would come out, migrants, and they didn't speak English, but they could still get a job. I worked at BHP. When I arrived there - I'm a native speaker of the language - I was made a crane driver because I could read, write and understand English. Also another thing there, there were people, well, if there was one job they couldn't do, that was all right; there was always someone else that could do it. But these days now, when you're in the workforce, if you can't do the full 10 jobs, it's, "See ya later."

PROF WOODS: You haven't quite answered my question. You don't have to. I'm not pushing you or prying, I'm just curious.

MR WHELAN: No, I know you're not trying to push me on it. I suppose basically you've got to really play it by ear. Quite clearly this isn't going to work. When I go back to intensive assistance they usually give you a sheet of paper with name, business, who you saw; I'll do it all again. Well, it didn't work. Basically, unless, as I said, they put an affirmative action program in for people of a certain age and certain disadvantages, I don't think I can see myself taking part in the paid workforce, so I'll just be basically trying to avoid being breached as often as I can, I suppose. It's a case of just trying to wing it.

PROF WOODS: Hang it together and avoid being breached.

MR WHELAN: That's basically it, yes. You've got to try and play the game, and that's what probably most of us here, if they're honest, would admit: you've really just got to play the game. It's not going to work, but you do it anyway. You know it's not going to work, but if you don't do it you get breached. Like I said, this isn't going to work - no way in the world - but, as you can see, I've been doing it because if I don't do it, well, I've got no recourse because I've been given a task and I had to perform it. As somebody said, it's not productive and it's definitely a waste of time.

As I said, I knocked on one door and I said to the guy, "Excuse me. I'm unemployed. I'm just trying to feel out the job market. Are there any jobs here?" "No." Now, really by rights I would have turned and went straightaway if I didn't have this, "But could you please give me your first name?" I suppose some unemployed people really risk even being assaulted or being spoken to in a bad way and, as somebody said, they will just have a bad day and they will snap, and then you're looking at bringing psychiatrists in to say, "Well, why is this happening?" Last night I was watching Lateline. They're bringing in anti-bully legislation. Now, some people may say, "You're being bullied." But this isn't going to work. I suppose, basically, if a job comes my way I'll take it, but I don't really get a great many offers.

There's one more thing I really should mention. These are standard employment forms. Now, when you've got a question here, especially when you've been in heavy industry all your life, "Have you or your family" - not even just you and your family, "ever worked in any of the following: chemicals?" I was in heavy industry. Yes, I've been exposed to chemicals, dust - BHP, yes; noise, yes. I had a lot of trouble actually hearing what was going on because the acoustics in here aren't all that good. Asbestos: yes, I've been exposed to asbestos too; heat: blast furnace, yes; radiation: there was a small bit of radiation around the area, so straightaway that's going to exclude you.

As I said, with the protection of human genetic information, both my parents died of heart disease, and it says here, "Do you or your family ever suffer" - well, I'm pre-genetically - - -

PROF WOODS: Disposed.

MR WHELAN: Yes, so when you've got stuff like this it even complicates the matter. There was a time when you used to go for a job, you really weren't asked a lot of questions. You knocked on the door, "Got a job here?" and you got it. You didn't have endless courses teaching you how to search for a job that wasn't there. You started work straightaway; you made your appropriate wage. I saw an ad in the paper the other day, "No experience? You don't need it. We'll give you the experience," but it was the Australian Army. I don't think they're going to take a 45-year-old man in the Australian Army now.

Years ago, when you went for a job, you learned on the job and you actually got paid to learn, and this is all gone now. As someone said, they want you to have that much experience before you even get there and, if you haven't got it, you won't get it; you won't get the job. What happened to starting in a firm, prepared to learn, prepared to have a go, and get paid to learn? While you're making money you can start to see your life getting better. You're getting more motivated.

Somebody actually talked about young people. When I was young, when I got my first job I learned to save money. I bought myself a car. I did all that work. Young people these days, they don't get that opportunity. They don't even learn what money is, and even going on the Work for the Dole scheme, they never really appreciate what it's like: "Okay, I can put \$50 of my pay away in the bank." On a Work for the Dole scheme they can't do that.

PROF WOODS: Thank you. I'm conscious that some others have been very patient all day.

MR WHELAN: That's fair enough.

PROF WOODS: I very much appreciate the thought you've put into the material presented, and thank you for answering my other question. Good luck with your future.

PROF WOODS: Is Mr Jim Meek still with us? Thank you for waiting. Would you please give your name and if you're representing an organisation.

MR MEEK: Jim Meek. I don't represent any organisation.

PROF WOODS: Do you have a statement you wish to make?

MR MEEK: Yes. I haven't been in full-time employment since being made redundant by State Rail in 1989, and I've been on intensive assistance since July 2001. I'm a qualified truck driver with a HC-class licence and a clean record. I've completed 22 weeks of a hospitality course under the old CES structure, and I've got work as a cleaner. To date I have succeeded in having the Job Network provider, Mission Employment, assist in completing the necessary courses to update my hospitality skills - that is, responsible servers of alcohol; responsible conduct of gambling certificates. To date, the network provider has not referred me for one job in the hospitality industry.

I have since requested that they assist in helping me obtain a forklift driver's ticket with the response, "We have 20 other clients with a forklift ticket who we cannot place in a job. If you want a certificate, you pay for it, and if you get yourself a job, we will reimburse you the cost of the course." Yes, I felt with my skills as a truck driver a forklift ticket would be a further asset in obtaining a job, and I've also noticed in recent papers that there have been quite a few jobs that require both tickets.

A further proposal by the case manager was for me to purchase or lease a carrier vehicle in an effort to find work as a self-employed courier. There was no suggestion of how I was to finance the venture and no proposal for me to complete a course in business management studies to assist me in running a private business successfully. The attitude was, "Get yourself a van and get yourself off my books." The next suggestion was, "Take up full-time university or TAFE study."

Today has been the latest blunder by this crowd to get me work. I was contacted last week and advised to attend the network provider's Cardiff office dressed for an interview, but I was given no background as to the type of job I was to be interviewed for. On presenting myself at 9 am this morning I was advised that there were no interviews to be conducted, but there was going to be an information session that would take place in reference to positions to be filled at a whitegoods warehouse for sales personnel and storepersons. I have never worked in retail and I have never worked as a storeman, so I don't even meet the criteria.

The Job Network provider, Mission Employment, has never referred me to one position for which I am qualified. They have referred me to unknown jobs, their

advice to me being, "I have referred you to a job, but I cannot tell you who it is, what it was, or what you'll be doing," never getting any feedback as to the outcome of whether I got the job. You never get anything back. They have not job matched me with any employer who has contracted them to refer prospective employees, including State Rail, for whom I worked for over 22 years. There was a job actually in the paper last year, and I applied for it. When I'd gone down to put in the information program, it was Mission Employment who were the network provider given the jobs, but they never referred me to that position. I really expect a higher level of professionalism from them than I am receiving.

All the positions that I have applied for have been on my own initiative and I've been criticised in the quality of my letters that I've been writing away, and they pick out little mistakes like you've got to set it up a certain way and doodad and doodad. There was one indication where she said that when I missed out on one interview, it was probably my attitude or the way I was looking at the interviewer. So, you know, what chance have you got? I'm registered with four other network providers. They ring me up and they'll say, "Come out to do an interview," and they'll say, "Yeah, you should be pretty right for this job." You never hear anything back from them.

PROF WOODS: They are actually ringing you and identifying positions?

MR MEEK: Yes. Well, they don't tell you where it is. They don't tell you what it is or where it is.

PROF WOODS: No, they don't tell you, but they at least go through some process. Has that been happening much?

MR MEEK: No, not a real lot, but you do get it.

PROF WOODS: But you get some?

MR MEEK: You build your hopes up - like the same as this morning. You get up. You say, "Well, righto, I'm in with a chance here." Then you get out and you find out it's just a session. There was a whole heap of other people there.

PROF WOODS: And it's not in your trade.

MR MEEK: Well, the woman that was running it said, "Is there anybody here who doesn't know what they're here for?" I put my hand up and I said, "Yeah, I haven't got a clue what it's about," because I was expecting to be interviewed. She said, "This is like the whitegoods stuff." I said, "Well, I've never done any of it." So she said, "Well, you might as well leave because you're not going to be suitable for it

anyway." I said to her, "Well, am I going to be breached by leaving?" She said, "No," but I've got no - well, I don't know. I might still get breached for this. I signed their attendance book.

Even other work - like, I was with a labour firm and got a bit of work through them. Then the work just got less and less and less and you talk about people that are employed and people that aren't employed and, because the work got so bad, such lacking in work, I had to go and get a separation certificate. The morning I was there, the office girl was there and she was taking my particulars and she got real upset. They'd run out of chocolate biscuits in their little bickie tin. She got really upset with that. And here I am, I'm getting a separation certificate. I've got no work and she's complaining that she's got no chocolate biscuits. That's the sort of - well, you can't help that, you know? But it doesn't help you. That's about all I've got to say, except that the Job Network just does not work.

PROF WOODS: You were saying 89 was when you - - -

MR MEEK: 89 I got laid off from the railway.

PROF WOODS: And you've been through all the Working Nation program and now through Job Network provider.

MR MEEK: Yes. I've got bits and pieces of work, yes.

PROF WOODS: How many times have you been through intensive assistance, or is this just your first?

MR MEEK: Twice.

PROF WOODS: This is your second time around.

MR MEEK: Yes.

PROF WOODS: If you'd had the choice at the start of this second time, would you have said, "Thank you, yes, I'll do it. It might help me," or would you - - -

MR MEEK: No, I'd have rather not got caught up in it, but you don't have any choice. They put you on it.

PROF WOODS: You don't at the moment, no.

MR MEEK: Then you have to sign their mutual obligation thing, which is one-sided. You're always in terror - I suppose you could say terror, if you wanted to

pick a word - of doing the wrong thing and getting breached.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR MEEK: Because I do get a little bit of work here and there and so does the wife. I've had them ring up over a taxation declaration that I'd put in for a job that I was going to. Well, it looked like it was going to be a job and it finished up that I got one shift and it petered out. They've rung me up and said, "This taxation declaration form you've put in," and I couldn't even remember what it was for; anyway we worked out what it was. It was this one particular job. So I said, "Will I hear from you people again?" She said, "You want to hope you don't." That was her on the phone - this is a Centrelink person. "You want to hope you don't because it means you're going to be in strife if you do." Now, I was only asking her a question.

PROF WOODS: You've identified a number of criticisms of your Job Network provider, let alone treatment by some in Centrelink. Have you gone through the complaints mechanism?

MR MEEK: No.

PROF WOODS: Is it not worth it? Do you fear that that would sort of create an impression with them that might lead you to being breached more often or it's just not worth it or it's too hard or it wouldn't do anything anyway?

MR MEEK: No, nothing is too hard. It's the fact of, if you do, if you stick your neck out, you're liable to get it chopped off and you don't even know who's going to do the chopping. I noticed Channel 3 came here earlier this afternoon when you were interviewing somebody else. I went down the back and I said, "Well, you're not putting me on the TV, mate," because you don't know where this is going to go to. You all had your backs to it but if I was sitting up here, I would have been on NBN at 6 o'clock tonight. Now, imagine what my Job Network crowd would do if they saw that. Here I am, lagging them in. I'd be breached for sure, you could bet. They'd find some way of breaching me.

PROF WOODS: Okay, so the complaints system really isn't an option to you.

MR MEEK: I don't think it is. There was some other little thing went wrong there the other year and I had to go in. I'd partly breached something; I don't know what it was. I hadn't renewed my commitment for job application apparently. Anyway, I said yes I had because - if it's a little bit further back you say, "Did I? I'm presuming I did." Anyway, when I've gone in, I've gone into the office and they've said, "You're not going to be able to see anybody today." I said, "Well, they're going to cut my dole out." Anyway, there just happened to be one woman that was spare there so she

said, "All right, I'll give you the interview. You can do it now. You're due for an interview anyway." Then she got out the form. I said, "Well, you don't forget signing something like that." I said, "Yes, I did fill that one in" - I said - "and it would be only a couple of months or so."

You get caught up in their system, and it was some person from Brisbane that rang. Like, they're not even in Newcastle. They're ringing from up there to say that you didn't put in your form, because it comes out in their computer. You say about going into the complaints department. I think it just gets all caught up in red tape. There's too much paperwork goes on. Okay, you've got to have paperwork, I know that; but once you get too involved in it, you're just going to get snowballed by it. So that's why I don't bother. I follow their rule as best I can and just hope to Christ I don't get breached.

PROF WOODS: All right, thank you. Are there any other particular points you want to raise while you have the opportunity?

MR MEEK: No, nothing that comes to mind. I suppose I'll wake up 3 o'clock in the morning and, "I should have brought that up."

PROF WOODS: Well, you can write to us anytime you wish, preferably this month, so that we can take it into account. Literally, if you do - - -

MR MEEK: If I get breached, I'll write to you.

PROF WOODS: As well - but even if you don't, if you just wake up with a good idea, it would be much appreciated. Thanks for your time.

MR MEEK: All right, then. Thank you.

PROF WOODS: Ms Suzanne Hudson.

MS HUDSON: My name is Suzanne Hudson and I don't work for any Job Network. It's probably appropriate that I am following this gentleman because I have actually been through the breaching process. I have been unemployed on Newstart for over five years. Previous to that I was on a single-parent pension. When I went off that, that's really when the nightmare started. It was difficult enough raising children on a sole-parent pension as well. That's when the nightmare started. I've been in intensive assistance three times.

PROF WOODS: 12-months, full course each time with the previous two, or close?

MS HUDSON: Not quite because I've had work - well, actually, yes, I suppose I have. But I've had work the last time and actually it stopped after the 13 weeks. Then that job petered out from about 35 hours a week to two three-hour shifts a fortnight. I find the Job Network has been nothing but a nightmare. I have not been helped. All I have had happen to me is being breached. My health has suffered over time, the stress and everything that you go through, especially when you get that letter. As someone said earlier, you feel like, when you open that, that you have committed a crime and you have, because you have committed a crime under the Social Security Act.

PROF WOODS: Yes, and must suffer a financial penalty for it.

MS HUDSON: At the time I was working but it was still a shock and it was still terrible, and also the reason why I was breached was because I did not attend an interview with my Job Network provider on a certain day. That was what was in the letter from Centrelink. That was the first I'd heard of it. My Newstart was actually stopped. The breaches were in place and all this garbage that the government goes on with and Amanda Vanstone and Tony Abbott about, "You get plenty of time to query your breaches before they're put in place, and put your case across," that is absolute garbage. My Newstart was actually stopped. Luckily I was working, so I was only receiving \$8 a fortnight from Centrelink anyway at the time, plus I was getting a bit of maintenance from my ex-husband so that sort of stopped me from being absolutely destitute.

When I rang Centrelink to find out why I was breached when I did attend that interview, they said, "We don't know. You'll have to ring your Job Network provider." So I rang my Job Network provider and she said, "Because you didn't attend an interview at Cessnock," for this WHIP program that I was made to go to, which is another one of these garbage, waste of time programs. You know, they got telemarketers in to look up job interviews. I was working voluntarily at the legal centre over here because that was an area where, if you had legal training and

experience, you could possibly get temporary work doing legal work. So a friend of mine worked there and she said, "Look, we had a volunteer here who actually got a job at the uni."

PROF WOODS: Yes, networking.

MS HUDSON: So I was doing that. So I didn't have any legal experience and I was going to a legal TAFE course but you have to do the 12-month office administration course first. I have done that. I can type 77 words a minute on the computer. You know, I was a secretary. I've done office administration. My communication skills are perfect. I didn't need to go through and do all of that again. All I needed to do was the legal two-month course to help me eventually get a job perhaps in the legal centre. So when I told Toni that - and what I found with the three times that I went - the first time it was through Centacare, the Catholic lot.

First thing she said, "Well, how can we help you?" I said, "That's what I'm here for. You tell me" - even back then - "how I get over the age barrier, how I get over long-term unemployment. I chose to stay at home with my children for years and my husband was on a good wage. I didn't need to work. When we got divorced and I was off the sole-parent pension, I was long-term unemployed. Then of course I get to a certain age. I can't do anything about my birth certificate. I was born in a certain year at a certain time, that's it." "Well, I don't know what we can do, really." So, of course, you do go through the agreement thing and then I didn't hear a thing from them, so that was that. I'd just look for work and then - - -

PROF WOODS: For the 12 months of IA?

MS HUDSON: Yes, and then I actually - - -

PROF WOODS: Didn't hear a thing from them?

MS HUDSON: No.

PROF WOODS: So you were classified through the JSCI as being IA eligible?

MS HUDSON: At the time, yes.

PROF WOODS: You had a provider, they signed you on - - -

MS HUDSON: And nothing.

PROF WOODS: They wrote letters, made phone calls to you?

MS HUDSON: I think I got a couple of phone calls - "How are you going?" - but no help from them.

PROF WOODS: Would you consider yourself to have been parked during that time?

MS HUDSON: Yes, I was. Then I actually got a job through a friend, doing telemarketing at the Wine Society. I really liked that work and I tried really, really hard to sell and I lasted for five months but the more sales I got, the more they seemed to want and I just, in the end, couldn't cope. Then my next one was with Mission Impossible - as that other chap who's gone said - and at the time I was working at the Wine Society but I still had to be registered because it was only temporary. She said, "Is it all right if I let the Wine Society know that you're registered with us?" So I did. So she got real pally-wally with the supervisor at the Wine Society who started to recruit people through them and then she was also discussing me with the people there at Mission Impossible.

Then when I was getting to the stage where I just couldn't take any more and the supervisor was also harassing me because I got the job through a friend who was - the supervisor - they didn't like each other, so she was out to - nothing I did - you know, I just was not good enough. The pressure was really getting to me so I rang my case manager at Mission - whatever. I said, "If I don't get my sales up by the end of the month, they're going to get rid of me. Please, get me a job." She said, "Oh, yes, we know all about that. Kim was in here talking to our receptionist." So they were discussing my confidential situation with Kim from the Wine Society in the public area, which I really was not impressed with.

She also said, "What can we do for you?" They didn't give me any suggestions of how I could get work. The only suggestions that I found in the whole three Job Network cells is that they make you go and register with every other agency. That was the only information they actually gave me. Everything else I suggested, they'd write down in your activity agreement before you signed it. So she did say there was an interview coming up with Amber Tiles. Then I got a phone call a few days later saying, "No, sorry. They're not taking us on now." I said, "Why?" She wouldn't tell me. So I never had any interviews.

The only interview I actually got was through this WHIP program. When I said I wouldn't go up to Cessnock at first - this is when I got breached - I said, "I don't have any legal experience, it's 60 kilometres away. I've got an old car which is about to fall apart. What is the point of sending me up there when I don't have legal experience? I'm working over at the legal centre to get that experience to do the course eventually and possibly get work then." "No, you have to go. If you don't go, you'll be breached", and this is the attitude she had towards me, and I said, "Well, I

will go then. It's a waste of time, I'll take a picnic lunch." I couldn't help it. You know, "make a day of it, take a couple of friends". And she said, "That's a very negative attitude. I'm not going to send you to that." I said, "Well, don't you dare breach me because I have said I will go for that interview. Okay? It's a wild goose chase but I said I will go." So that was the end of that. Then I actually applied for a job in an aged care centre at Tinonee Gardens.

PROF WOODS: All right.

MS HUDSON: I got it myself. I got the job. I rang them to say I got the job, and she wasn't there, so I said, "Pass it on to my case manager." I didn't hear back, I was really flat out learning the shifts and getting into the job. I had to go and see her on 21 June. When I got in there, the first thing she did - she took me into this room and sat me down, threw these things down on the table and said, "Go out there and look at those jobs, and arrange to go for these interviews." That's how she spoke to me. She raved on for about five minutes, and then I said, "Well, excuse me, Toni, there's no need." And she said, "Why?" I said, "I've already got a job." "What, what? How long have you had a job?" I said, "Over a month. I did leave a message with you I had the job." She said, "Where? And how many hours?" I told her, and she said, "Well, there's no need for these then, is there?" and she just threw them over there like that.

Then the next minute, as I said, I got the letter from Centrelink saying that I was breached, that my Newstart had stopped, and I was penalised till December or November, or something. That's when I rang up Centrelink and they said, "Get back to Toni." So I did, and she said, "It's because you didn't attend that interview at Centrelink." I said, "That is not what is on the form - on the letter. It says I didn't attend the interview with you. Could you please straighten it out." She said, "That's not what you were breached for. You were breached because you didn't attend," and I said, "I've explained to you that that is not what the breach is for. It's here in writing. I rang the call centre, I've spoken to someone there and actually got their reference number. That is what I have been breached for, not anything to do with this Cessnock thing." So anyway, she said, "Ring Centrelink." So they were just passing the buck between the two of them.

So I rang Centrelink back. She said, "We'll get back to you tomorrow if we don't get back tonight." Didn't get back to me tonight. Next morning hadn't still got back to me by 9.30, so I rang Centrelink back. They still didn't know, they said they'd ring me back. So I rang back again, "I haven't heard." "Oh, the chap that's supposed to be speaking to you is speaking at this job centre. He'll be back to you." Didn't ring back, so I rang back again. This is going through the call centre, this is not just going to Mayfield, and this is taking me all day. And I'm getting quite irate.

PROF WOODS: Yes, going through the menu.

MS HUDSON: I had a shift that afternoon as well, so I was getting quite angry. Then finally I got through and he just parrot fashioned what Toni had told me - "You got breached because you didn't attend an interview at Cessnock." I said, "Excuse me, that is not why I was breached. I was breached because I did not attend an interview at IPA and I did attend that interview. I want an explanation." He just kept repeating, "You did not attend an interview at Cessnock," and that's how he was speaking - this psychological thing of working you up, not explaining anything to you, getting you worked up. In the end I was almost in tears. "It's all right for you in your cushy job." That was all I said to him - hang up. He hung up on me.

Anyway, I got in touch with Allan Morris's office and he said, "This is happening to a lot of people. It's terrible." I said, "Yeah, well, I'm lucky, I'm working and I have got a bit of money coming in," but for people - what happens to them? They go on welfare if they've got no money; simple as that. Anyway, I thought I'm not going to pursue this any further. I'm working anyway and it's just too hard to get through. Then my job slowly but surely petered out because they decided to cut back on staff, and I started to get very worried about this breach, and I was still supposed to go and see Toni. By this stage the relationship between my case manager and myself was getting very bad, as you can imagine.

I had another appointment coming up. It was on the same day that I had a doctor's appointment, to do with a medical thing. I said, "I can't attend that day." She said, "Why?" I said, "It's a medical thing. I've got an appointment." I didn't have to tell her what it was. She demanded to know what it was. I said, "I don't have to tell you that; that's my business." She said, "Get in here at 9.30 tomorrow morning." I said, "Excuse me, I'm not coming back in to see you, Toni. I'm sorry, we are not getting on. This is not working. I have a right under the Social Securities Act to change case managers. You have done nothing for me except get me in trouble with Centrelink. I am actually working at the moment and paying taxes. I do not deserve this. You did nothing to help me get that job. I got it all under my own steam. I don't know why you put that breach through, and so late after it actually supposedly happened."

Now, this didn't happen until after the interview on 21 June, and this other thing happened, with Cessnock, in May, and it was only after this interview that I'd had with her that she put that breach through, and Centrelink mistakenly took it that I didn't show up for the interview. So that's why that mistake was made. So anyway, I just said, "I'm sorry, I can't." She kept demanding I go in and see her and I said, "No, I'm sorry, it's only going to end up in me getting into worse trouble by probably hitting you or something," so I hung up on her. She put a second breach through, so I got the next letter saying, "Yes, you've been breached until next year." So I rang

Allan Morris's office again and spoke to Sharon there, and she said, "That's terrible. We'll try and find out why."

Then Allan Morris put a survey out about Job Network, and in the meantime I had written to Centrelink, Mr Beisty who was the manager there, explaining what had happened to me with IPA and the mix-up with the interviews and that I did say that I would attend Centrelink, blah, blah, blah, and I've got all these letters here.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS HUDSON: Actually that letter was read out at the grievance debate that Allan Morris read to parliament in December 2000. Anyway - I've lost the plot. Where was I? I've lost it now.

MR: You wrote a letter to Simon Beisty.

MS HUDSON: Yes. Didn't hear anything back, so when Allan Morris was saying about the Job Network, I ticked very bad, very bad, very bad, very bad, because in the three job nets I'd been to, this intensive assistance, the whole diary and everything - just round and round in circles, and the jobs that I actually did get, the occasional jobs - - -

PROF WOODS: You got yourself.

MS HUDSON: - - - I got myself. So then I said, "Look, I'll attach this letter that I sent to Mr Beisty rather than explain. It's all said in this letter." Then I got a call from Allan Morris saying, "Would you mind if I take this matter up on your behalf? I'm just so stressed out, so disturbed by what has happened to you, and expecting you to go up to Cessnock, anyway, and the circumstances of that." Then it went on from there and he actually said, "Do you mind if I take your case up on behalf of yourself?" I said, "I don't mind. I can't do anything." Actually I did try to go through the complaints system. Mayfield didn't have a clue about the forms. I went into Centrelink here in Newcastle; they didn't have a clue about the forms. Then I rang up the hotline again about the form, and she said, "Yes, we can send you out the form." She sent it out to me straightaway. I didn't actually send it in then because Allan Morris took it up on my behalf. I also rang the hotline number for the Job Network. They just taped it; didn't hear another thing back.

Then I wanted to find out what happened when you rang the Job Network, so I applied for a letter and they sent it, and in the meantime I went back to IPA to speak to the manager about Toni and what had happened, and they said, "We'll give you another case manager." At that time the second breach was being put through and he did not tell me that the second breach had been put through. The second case

manager talked nonsense, you know, for the whole of that interview. A week later I got a phone call saying, "You're no longer under intensive assistance with us because you've been working over 13 weeks." So everything they had put me through - just like that.

In the meantime Allan Morris was trying to get to the bottom of what happened with Centrelink, and the horror, horror, horror story was the letter that Mr Beasley - Mr Beisty, I said Mr Beasley, but he was really a nice chap. I actually got a personal apology from Mr Beisty at Centrelink, and when he realised what had happened he was very nice, and he actually became a compassionate human being with me, anyway.

But Allan Morris after he investigated the two breaches - I've got a cataract in my eye, so my sight is not that well. But the difference between before and after the breaches - when I had made those series of phone calls to Centrelink on the day when I said, "your cushy job" which is the only abusive thing I probably said, that's what they put down on my file; that I was argumentative and abusive. So for people trying to find out why they were breached, especially if they've turned up for interviews and things like that, that's what they put down when you try to get any information out of them. If Allan Morris had not intervened on my behalf, nothing would be done. As soon as he intervened, that's when Mr Beisty actually became a real person and got involved. I don't really think he would have if Allan Morris hadn't got involved on my behalf.

So the letter that he sent to Allan Morris was saying that, "The accounts of these two phone calls indicate that Mrs Hudson was argumentative and abusive to the staff at Mayfield Centrelink. As Ms Hudson had not provided a clear explanation for her noncompliance with the activity test, the CSO determined that IPA's recommendation should be invoked." That's just part of the letter. I mean the other part goes into the supposed reasons why I was breached.

PROF WOODS: Yes, sure.

MS HUDSON: This is what was said after Allan Morris got involved:

I received correspondence during early September 2000 from Ms Hudson outlining her concerns in respect of the first breach. Having read her complaint I considered that her concerns may have been valid and immediately referred her complaint to an area support officer for closer scrutiny. When your office contacted me on 20 November 2000, I became aware that this matter had not resolved and I took immediate steps to expedite it.

I contacted Ms Hudson on 22 November 2000 and arranged for her case to be reviewed by the original decision-maker, and then further contact with Ms Hudson clarified the circumstances regarding the breaches. The first breach was revoked because it was originally imposed for a failure to attend a job referral when in fact a referral was never made. Centrelink was not informed of this fact by IPA.

That was the Job Network.

The second breach was revoked because the ODM considered that there were extreme circumstances warranting the customer's nonattendance at the interview with her case manager. Based on the customer's previous experience with her case manager Ms Hudson felt let down by the service provider. It was determined that it was not unreasonable for her to refuse to deal with this person.

So that was the two things from that.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS HUDSON: Then I said, as it went on from there, Allan Morris in his grievance debate asked me if he could use the letter in that session. I also feel in the media they have a lot to answer for. They only ever present one side of arguments, highly and totally in favour of the Liberal government, especially Channel 9. I was actually rung up by Tim Rushworth or someone from that Sunday program, and I told him what happened, and they were going to do this investigation on their Sunday program on the Job Network. I spoke to him probably for about 40 minutes. The next week who do they have on the show? Amanda Vanstone lying through their teeth about breaching, saying, "They are given plenty of opportunity to defend themselves before the breaches are put through. Their Newstart is not stopped until we are absolutely certain that they did commit the breaches," blah, blah, blah, blah. Nothing was ever put on about the truth, about people like me in our situations. So that's where it went. Then the grievance debate came up of course and that was that.

Then my job petered out in 2000. I did a university degree while I was on the sole-parent pension. I only ended up doing my degree because my daughter got anorexia. That is another thing: when you are trying to bring children up virtually on your own, work, whatever - do everything, be a super-mum and a super person - it's really hard. Her condition was life-threatening, so I did not get to do my Dip Ed at the time, and in the meantime I thought, "Well, just go back and get a real job." I just wasn't even getting her through that. It took another two years to really go back and even think about doing teaching, doing the Dip Ed. So that's when I applied to try and get back in doing office work. Of course, the age barrier - no way. I applied for that many jobs it wasn't funny. Then I did the telemarketing and I'm not a good salesperson - according to them I'm not - so that petered out. Then I decided to go

and become a personal carer in aged care because there were jobs there. I did SkillShare courses - not SkillShare, TAFE courses to get into that.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS HUDSON: I did all this off my own bat. A friend told me there were jobs there, so it wasn't the Job Network provider or any of those; they never advised me to do any of this. I did the TAFE course and I was actually getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning to do work experience, 6 o'clock till 3.00 for no money, giving people diabetic needles and everything because that was what I was told I had to do, and it ended up in two sleepover shifts and you got paid three hours for that. That was what I got from there and then the next job that I did get at Warabrook Gardens was through the TAFE people - - -

PROF WOODS: All right. Yes.

MS HUDSON: - - - that were running the course, not through the Job Network providers, not through anyone. She knew people in the industry, so she got us the jobs and we did the courses and I lasted there for nearly three months, because I ended up with a neck injury and I had to stop.

PROF WOODS: All right.

MS HUDSON: Then I did cleaning for a while through Dial an Angel. Then I decided to try to go back and do my Dip Ed. No, then I got the job at Tinonee, sorry, as a cook-cleaner there and that was really good. It was perfect. It was near my home. I was actually earning heaps of money. I was able to get a computer for my children to do their uni studies. I was able to get stuff done around the yard, the house. I was really starting to feel like a person again, even when all this breaching stuff was going on. Then I lost the job. It petered out. So I decided to go back to uni to try and do my degree. By that stage, my health was in a really bad way. I have this cataract. I can't afford to get that done, because I'm not in private health. And my back: I've got osteoarthritis and I feel that everything I've been put through has got a lot to do with that disease getting worse.

PROF WOODS: The stress.

MS HUDSON: Stress from it. So I can't do cleaning and heavy lifting or anything like that. I can barely bend my back. I've got spurs in my feet. I've got osteoarthritis in my toes, so I can't stand on my feet for long periods of time. I can't do a lot of close work at the moment, because of my eye, till I get that done. So I lasted about a week in doing Dip Ed and then I was just wandering around almost having a nervous breakdown till some girl caught me and said, "What is wrong with you?" Tears

streaming down my face. Took me in to sit me down and said, "Think about it for a week." I just couldn't do it. So then I transferred over and started to do honours in English for one semester. Thought, "Where is this taking me? My eye is killing me. I can't do all this close work anyway. It's not going to end in a job." So I didn't sign up for a second semester, because I've already incurred quite a large HECS fee.

PROF WOODS: HECS, yes.

MS HUDSON: That's how it goes.

PROF WOODS: Hangs over your head.

MS HUDSON: And then this year I was told I had to go back into the intensive assistance and that young chap that was here - I actually had to do a three-week course through them. The first day we sat there. He actually said, "You're here because Centrelink has sent you here. We get about 130 people through here a week. We probably place about eight." I wasn't here for what he said. This is what we were told. Eight people, he said, and he said, "They're young people usually and they're quite often not in Newcastle, because it is almost impossible to get work in Newcastle. People like you in your age group - unfortunately you're in a 'parked' area. You are the baby boomers. The government has known this situation was going to occur for about 20 years and they have not done anything about it. You are just scapegoats. You are caught in the middle. You'll never get jobs. They know it. Everybody else knows it, but you're here because, if you don't come to do this course, you get breached."

Now, that's what he stood up there and told us that morning. Then we were there for about an hour and a half. We had to go to this course for three weeks. In the meantime I was going to see my doctor to get a certificate to say I couldn't do it any more, because of my eye, but I couldn't get in to see my doctor for another week. So I had to do this for a week, otherwise I would have been breached again. The second day, he didn't show up. We had to show up. Sitting there, myself and this other over-40-year-old, goal-setting, and the girl came in and said, "Can I help you with anything? Do you understand it?" and I said, "Excuse me, I have got a degree double major in English literature and history. I've also started honours and got distinctions in all the three things that I did."

PROF WOODS: Semesters, yes.

MS HUDSON: Yes. "So, please, I think I know how to fill this out." It was such rubbish, you know, it was laughable. Goal-setting? I thought, yes. Job? A life? Good health? Money? Status? Thank you, you know. Anyway, so we had to fill that out, then we went home. So that's two days wasted. The third day, he didn't

show up again. No, the third day he did show up, sorry, for an hour and a half. Most of that time on the phone, because the girl that was supposed to be doing this course had left the week before and he was doing two jobs. So he was on the phone most of the time we were sitting there.

Okay. The third day, which was a Thursday, he didn't show up. So that's another day wasted. The fourth day, we had to come in for mock interviews. I have decided to take control back of my own life. I thought, "What have you been doing most of the time for the last 10 years? Writing. You're at uni doing your own, like, creative writing." I thought, "There, try to make a living out of writing." So that is what I've been trying to do. So I'm in the Romance Writers of Australia and there was a competition. Because, in the publishing industry, if you don't get it right in your query letter and your synopsis, they don't even want to see the manuscript. If they're not even interested after the first line on your query letter, they don't want to see the manuscript. So I thought, "I'm not wasting my time doing these stupid mock interviews," and I told him that. I said, "I will bring that letter in and you can go through that letter with me, because that is my interview, because if I can get a contract I can make money out of this."

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MS HUDSON: So we went through the letter and he just had one little comment to make about it and then he said, "You know what I want you to do next week? I want you to come in and ring up every publisher and send this letter off." He knows nothing about the publishing industry. You do not send multiple manuscripts to publishers. You send one at a time.

PROF WOODS: One at a time, yes.

MS HUDSON: You can send different manuscripts to different publishers, but not the one. I didn't even argue with him. I said, "Okay." Then I went to see my doctor. So she gave me the medical certificate, but even that did not satisfy Centrelink. I got two forms in the mail - one for her, one for me - and I had to go to see her and she had to verify everything that she'd said that's wrong with me from my record. And I said to my doctor, "Gee, Centrelink don't even believe you either now. They don't believe me that I really have all these problems and they have to even make you verify what you've said in that medical certificate." So that is it for me. That's what's happened to me over the last five years. So I can honestly say to you - - -

PROF WOODS: You've been very busy.

MS HUDSON: - - - Job Network sucks. Sorry. End of story.

PROF WOODS: No, you've had an amazingly busy period.

MS HUDSON: Look, one funny little thing. I'm sorry, even the Labor government, if they get back in, no more training. As I said, this is mine. I've got a degree. I've got TAFE certificates. I've got, like you, all kinds of certificates. I mean, look at it. It's almost as big as I am. You know, it's ridiculous. It doesn't work. If you don't get the experience - I applied for a call centre job with Impulse Airlines and you had the right to ring up to ask why you didn't get the job. They had over a thousand people apply and they only took people with no more than less than six months experience in that.

So that was the thing, but I had to laugh, because in the paper a couple of weeks ago there was an article - it's somewhere in here - that people want to work until they're 70. They're going to raise the pension to 70, because people want to work till they're 70. This is Amanda Vanstone again saying this. Now, can you imagine all these 70-year-olds fronting up at Centrelink with their fortnightly forms, and the queues. Well, I'm afraid what they're going to have to do is get ramps, because half of them will be coming in their wheelchairs and their walkers to front up with their two-weekly form and they're likely to get breached because how on earth are they going to get around to apply for all these jobs that you're supposed to apply for?

What they're really saying is, "We can't afford the welfare system any more. We haven't got enough people working to cover this and the baby boomers," and that's literally what this young chap was implying too. And what really scares me at the moment is Mr Costello, "We have our defence budget. We're going to have to cut back very drastically in other areas in the budget." Well, I wonder what that area is going to be. It will definitely be in the welfare sector and will definitely affect people like us and all I can say is Woolies had better start putting a bit more money on their trolleys, because there's going to be a lot more of us homeless, living with all our possessions in the Woolies trolley, sleeping out of cardboard boxes under the bridges like they do in the Yankee Doodle Dee land over in America, because that's what happens over there, and they have virtually got rid of the welfare system and that's the track we're heading down and I don't know what's going to happen.

PROF WOODS: Thank you. You have done a lot of things in that period and we're grateful that you - - -

MS HUDSON: All except get a job.

PROF WOODS: Well, no, you've actually also had jobs. Thank you.

PROF WOODS: Mr Reg Waddell?

MR WADWELL: Wadwell.

PROF WOODS: Wadwell, yes. Yes, I'm getting there. I do apologise.

MR WADWELL: Reg Wadwell is my name. I'm unemployed, have been for some time. I've got a little bit of a spiel I will read out here - - -

PROF WOODS: Please.

MR WADWELL: - - - and then we'll go on. Just something I addressed. On the survey that was done back in 2000 headed by the then Right Honourable Allan Morris it was stated in Hansard - it was headed the Grievance Debate dated 4/12/2000 - that more than 60 per cent wanted not only to be heard, but were quite happy to put their name to paper, I definitely being one. Then we went on with a meeting with Sharon Greerson and Newcastle workers. It was headed Employment Forum 27 February this year. It's quite clear to me and all that attended that things have not only not got any better, but in fact I believe they've got worse.

After being out of work since mid-2000 - yes, I know for some of us that's not very - I'm one of the lucky ones; you've been out a lot longer. Let's see. It seems to me that, no matter what qualifications you have, it does not matter. You are over the hill once you reach the ripe old age of 40 or 50, you know. At 50, well, forget it. You pick up the paper, check the touch screens, apply for what jobs you know that you are suited for, to no avail. The majority of jobs are through these so-called job agencies who, when you go in to register or apply, spin you all the bull under the sun but, when it comes down to the nitty-gritty, you haven't got a hope in hell of getting the job.

I spoke to one agency the other day, after being on their books for nearly 12 months. I asked why I had not had any reply to any position I applied for. I was told the same old story, "Well, we have so many applicants," and so on and so on and this goes on all the time. Yet the same ad appears a week later in the paper. Where do you go? When I first applied with them for a position, I was told not to worry if I was not successful this time - "We will definitely find you something." The person on the other end of the phone, I think, must have nearly fell off the chair. "No" - she said - "we would never have said that." I said, "Well, you did."

This is the kind of thing you are up against all the time and, at the end of this month, I unfortunately am one of the guys that's got to find registration for my motor vehicle if I intend keeping it on the road. That's in excess of 500 bucks. I don't know where I'm going to get this from. I've also got to get tickets - OH and S and

traffic control and things like that - if I intend going into the construction industry. More expense. You know, one thing or another. It seems to me that there are a lot of problems out there and I don't know where they're all heading.

I think a lot of it did start when the industrial relations bill was passed - I think Mr Peter Reith might have headed that at the time - where you can't - with hiring people full-time because, once you put them on, you're at wits end to try and get rid of them. So it makes it very very hard, no matter what you do. I mean, I've heard stories of people being in there that have turned around and put something in their pocket and took it out the door. Well, that's stealing, "But I wasn't told." So what happens is that they can get away with it, sort of thing, but these are the sort of things we're up against. I'm 52 years of age. I tried to get into TAFE this year to do a computer course - "I'm sorry, we've got three pages too many of people that want to do these courses. No, you'll have to come back and apply again the next semester or next year or something like that."

PROF WOODS: Are you applying through a Job Network provider or at your own cost?

MR WADWELL: At my own cost.

PROF WOODS: Are you in the Job Network process?

MR WADWELL: I am in the Job Network process, intensive training I'm not, because I've been lucky to pick up a couple of weeks work here and a couple of weeks work there.

PROF WOODS: So you've done Job Match and JST?

MR WADWELL: Yes, I have.

PROF WOODS: But not IA?

MR WADWELL: No. I did do it for a while but then once I - - -

PROF WOODS: You got some work and therefore you're out.

MR WADWELL: - - -got a position it then puts you back down the bottom rung of the ladder, so you've got to kick off again.

PROF WOODS: Yes, you start again.

MR WADWELL: You've got to be unemployed for so long.

PROF WOODS: Sure.

MR WADWELL: I apply for jobs all the time, which we all do, I know, and you get back - now for some reason or another we're starting to get replies, or I am anyway, but they're worded very similar, "Dear Reg, blah, blah, blah. Thank you for your application but I regret", and once you read that you say - well, that's the sort of thing you're getting back. It's a spiel which appears to be coming out all the time.

PROF WOODS: Can I ask: are you applying for those directly to employers or are those jobs being identified for you by your Job Network provider?

MR WADWELL: Very very little jobs through Job Network provider.

PROF WOODS: But a lot of employers are only using Job Network providers, aren't they?

MR WADWELL: Yes.

PROF WOODS: So are you having to apply through a Job Network provider or direct for these ones?

MR WADWELL: Through the paper mostly. Job Network providers, you ring them and you ring them and, as I've said, they do not get back to you. You ring them and say, "Why?" I even have put it into practice now, when I get letters like this back, I then get on the phone to the employer and say, "Well, was it the fact that I worded my resume wrong? Did I do something wrong?"

PROF WOODS: "Was something missing?"

MR WADWELL: "Or was something" - "Oh, no." They're very very nice.

PROF WOODS: Just a better candidate.

MR WADWELL: But you're not - you know, you're either - - -

MR: First-class candidate is the word they use in - - -

MR WADWELL: Yes, well, that's one, or you're overqualified, or something like this. I've even put in some of my letters to them, "Money is no object." I mean I will work for the basic wage.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR WADWELL: But it's getting back a bit of self-esteem, to get you out of bed of a morning and say, "Hey, I've got a job. Great. I can pay the bills." I'm engaged to be married. I'm from the old school. I can't go any further, and that's not good. It's not fair on my fiancée. She is saying, "Well, why?" I say, "Well, you're working. I'm not allowing you to keep me," and unfortunately that's a personal side of it, but that's just my thing, and that's what is going to happen. As far as Centrelink goes, when I asked them once about whether I could have a look at my files, three months later I'm still asking under the Freedom Act.

I did get them, they're a good two inches thick, and as you read through them - because I'm very up-front; I don't sort of cut corners, I say what I believe - "He has an attitude problem. He has an attitude problem. He was rude. He was this; he was that." What are you supposed to do? I mean you go there, you ask for something, and you try - maybe it's my mannerism, but I mean that's me.

I don't believe in beating around the bush and, you know what I mean, a lot of them, unfortunately, you go in - if they've had a bad night or they've had a fight with their boyfriend or their girlfriend - I even said to one of the lasses there one day, "Don't you really want to be here?" She said, "Oh, no, I've got a bit of a hangover." I said, "Well, why the hell don't you go away and let someone have a job like me?" These are the things you've got to come up against and it doesn't make you feel good. You're downgraded. I feel like I'm walking around with a neon sign, "Hey, don't come near me, I'm unemployed," or something like this.

PROF WOODS: Then if you can't register your car and keep that on the road, then you've lost an awful lot of additional mobility.

MR WADWELL: I've lost that, that's right, and, as one of the other gentlemen said, the public transport system has just been revamped and you hear nothing but complaints. It's worse than it ever was now. People have got to get up half an hour earlier because they've got to walk that extra 20 minutes to get to work on time for where the bus stops to let them off and stuff like that, and it's becoming - I don't know.

PROF WOODS: So you were unemployed in 2000?

MR WADWELL: In 2000. That's where I last was employed full-time.

PROF WOODS: But you've had some bits and pieces.

MR WADWELL: Since then I've had bits and pieces, where you get a bit of casual work here. They don't even tell you now - - -

PROF WOODS: How long it will last for.

MR WADWELL: - - -"Look, I've got three months; I've got six months work, for you. Come in today, we've got a job for you. Come in the afternoon, or two days, three days. Oh, don't come back tomorrow, come back in a couple of days time." You cannot plan your life.

PROF WOODS: Let alone know what income you're going to get.

MR WADWELL: I mean if you were told, yes, you had a contract, sort of, whether it be written or verbal, three months, six months working, you can say, "Okay, fine." Coming towards the end of that or during that time you can work your way around so you can try and get some respectability back into your life.

PROF WOODS: You would also have some indication what income you were going to be receiving.

MR WADWELL: You would. You certainly would, that's right, and you would know then. You could say, "Okay, great." You know, "I need an appliance." One of the gentlemen said a washing machine broke down. You can say in that time, "Okay, fine."

PROF WOODS: "If I put aside so much I can get - - -"

MR WADWELL: "I could put away so much at a time and I can maybe look at that," for your own social life, if there's such a thing as social life for us. It doesn't exist, does it, really? I mean let's face it, it just really does not exist. I get, what, just over \$200 a week. That's what I get with my rent assistance and everything else. By the time you pay out what bills you've got and stuff like that I'm sometimes left with about \$15 to buy food out of, and often if you're crook or something like that, and different things, it doesn't go far. This is the thing we're up against. We're bashing our heads up against the brick wall all the time.

PROF WOODS: With the bits of employment that you are able to secure, that's through your own initiative, are you building up a network of employers who know that you exist and that - - -

MR WADWELL: I'm trying to do that but there's only just so much work that - - -

PROF WOODS: What area, sorry?

MR WADWELL: Mainly in industry, light industry and stuff like that. Yes, that's

what I'm looking at. Yes, that's basically what I'm trying to do but - yes, okay, a lot of the time there's nothing. They look at a contract coming up; the contract doesn't come up. So that's fair enough. You try. You do everything you can but just to no prevail. It's the old saying, "As one door closes another one opens". One door closes, you open it up, there's another, there's another, there's another, but there doesn't appear to be that one which is going to open and it's becoming harder and harder and so downgrading, and none of us are getting any younger, unfortunately, through no fault of our own. Baby boomers, as this lady said. Sure, we're all in that area, a great era - fantastic - but it's now - - -

PROF WOODS: Not at the back end.

MR WADWELL: Not at the back end, no. That's about what I've got for you.

PROF WOODS: I appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

MR WADWELL: No problems, thank you.

PROF WOODS: Good luck.

PROF WOODS: Mr Steve Bailey, apologies for cutting you off earlier but it just makes life easier if we go through one by one and we can have an orderly process.

MR BAILEY: I've got probably four to five issues.

PROF WOODS: If you could sit down, give your name, and if you do represent an organisation.

MR BAILEY: No, I don't. I'm a nurse myself, several years looking after people in nursing homes in the Newcastle and Sydney area.

PROF WOODS: Your name for the record?

MR BAILEY: Steven Bailey.

PROF WOODS: Please.

MR BAILEY: I would like to discuss this issue of Job Network. I think it's disgusting what is happening in the community in general. I think they breach people unnecessarily. I think it's illegal, on the grounds that I have had a very serious breakdown with these Job Network people where I've been threatened by Social Security to go and join a Job Network joint. If you don't get that, you get cut off the dole. That creates family problems, health problems, blah, blah, there. You go to these Job Network people, you sign a contract to say that you've joined these people.

They're supposed to provide you jobs. They don't send you for any interviews. They don't ring you back. They don't send you a letter saying, "You have failed for the job," blah, blah. I was speaking to the Salvation Army Plus this morning - I'm on intensive assistance through those people; I've been there two weeks now - I found that all these organisations are linked together. All these organisations are linked to the Social Security, everyone of them, but they are not linked together. This is why you're getting a massive big fight in the community of all these Job Network people, all fighting for different people to "come and join here, come and join there". This is how they're making their funding apparently. Every person they sign up they get 4 or 5 hundred bucks. When they get a job they get more money on top of that.

I've come down to where I've just started to get on intensive assistance. I've been asked to sign this form here, which I refuse to sign - which therefore I will probably be breached and cut off the dole - on the grounds that on the back of these forms - this is intensive assistance - on one example, "The Salvation Army Plus permission to check my references required by an employer." Nobody has got problems with that. Number 2, "Salvation Army Employment Plus permission to

attend my residence in order to continue to provide me with employment services." That's an invasion of privacy.

If people do not sign this they're breaching. For 2, when they get breached, that might be an 18 per cent, first one. If there's a second I think it's 50, and I think a third one is 100 per cent, and it puts people on the street. This is disgusting what is happening to the community in Newcastle, and Australia-wide - not just Newcastle. This probably- the form - is New South Wales legislation, I suppose, through the government.

PROF WOODS: Commonwealth.

MR BAILEY: Commonwealth, all right. I've got to discuss that. I think as therefore I will be breached I have got the entitlement to come up to a review with an independent review officer through the Social Security, as this gentleman here was talking and that lady there was talking. Now, an independent review officer they are not. They are internal review officers; they are not external and they are not independent. They are employed through the Social Security. So therefore these internal review officers go and see Michael Beisty as an end result. Michael Beisty says yes or no. As for the breach, therefore, this poor customer, this poor unemployed person, has been breached, hasn't got a leg to stand on. He has got no other avenue of complaint, and this is where you poison - a lot of hate, hurt, low self-esteem and nastiness in the community.

These breaches are disgusting, what they're doing to people. It's destroying families, it's destroying the community, it's creating no employment, and I think something has got to be done about it. I think it has got to be reviewed, especially this internal review officer. Independent review for the Social Security has got to be reviewed straightaway. It should be external. External means that that person - - -

PROF WOODS: Independent of the organisation.

MR BAILEY: Exactly right. This is the breakdown with this review system for the Social Security. That's through the Job Network. I've worked for the dole. I would like to talk about it.

PROF WOODS: Yes, please.

MR BAILEY: I've just finished working for the dole; six months over at the Anchor Hotel, going through the Salvation Army Employment Plus.

PROF WOODS: What was the job that you were doing?

MR BAILEY: That was a landscaping job, putting garden beds in, blah, blah. I had a very big problem with this. I felt that I was in danger and I feel there's a lot of other people in danger, where you were getting possibly psychiatric patients and drug addicts, alcoholics, that aren't getting assessed, or drug results or drug tested, or even a urine test. You're mixing very dangerous people in with normal community people, and this is wrong. This is going to create problems. It has created problems already. Some people don't turn up. Some of these women are going for sexual harassment claims, which they're entitled to, and as for this Work for the Dole I really do think it's scab labour. I really do think it's unnecessary.

I really do think that the people are creating low self-esteem, where it seems to me that management of companies are turning everything into casualisation. People are getting the attitude where they do not want to work casual, because there is no stability and security, so therefore the Social Security are putting these people on Work for the Dole, and I don't blame these people for not working casual any more, because there is no security or stability in your life. You work up to three months and you get the sack.

There's a big scheme going these days where these people are working three months, getting the sack; laying him off, and putting somebody else on for three months. So therefore that saves the employer holidays, sickies. Therefore the employee hasn't got a leg to stand on. They will sack you as soon as you open your mouth about occupational health and safety issues, if you feel there's some grievance in the workplace itself. The employee hasn't got a leg to stand on because they are a casual. The other person is a permanent employee, so therefore who goes? A casual goes. Keep the permanent employee, troublemaker, "because I can't sack him because he's going to sue me through industrial relations". So this is why, I feel, the casualisation in Australia - and I do believe it's through Peter Reith when he did start this over here at the dockyard in Sydney; it started after that - is destroying the country and something has got to be done about this casualisation and, yes, that's about it.

As for this intensive assistance, I've just had a big problem with the Salvation Army. I refused to sign this on the grounds that I haven't got a contact telephone number for these people to ring me back on the jobs. I've asked these people if it's possible to supply me a mobile telephone so these people can ring me back for a job. Apparently I've got funding through intensive assistance; there's money there for me to improve my job prospects. How am I supposed to improve my job prospects when these people aren't willing to hand out the money to help me improve my job prospects.

I've got a bit of a problem down there. I've just spoken to Sharon this morning about it and she spoke with a fellow at Salvation Army Plus. I don't know what the

result was. I think people are getting more harassed and more intimidated through this Work for the Dole and intensive assistance, more than gaining anything out of it. I think they're threatening people to get off their bum and come into their offices and go on Work for the Dole, but if they don't do this, they're getting cut off the dole. Now, this is wrong. That's my grievance there with the intensive assistance.

I think that these people are playing God, which they shouldn't be. I don't know if they're trained in PR work, I don't know if they've done courses in public relations. They could have been just employed straight off the bat, like anybody else. I think they should have trained people doing the Job Network jobs, social workers maybe, possibly a counsellor, just to help some of the hard cases out. Instead of putting them all in a basket and forgetting about them, get someone out there who can really help these people.

PROF WOODS: There certainly is a strong correlation between the quality of the staff at the Job Network provider and the outcomes they're getting. There are lots of surveys that show that.

MR BAILEY: They're possibly untrained, unskilled, and I feel that they're putting on the young people these days to pay lower wages - you know, 18-19, 17-18. They're not putting on experienced people, those in their 40s to 50s who have been there, done that and know what people are going through; you know, as this older gentleman and lady here. I feel that his lady here has been intimidated for social security approved by Allan Morris, the MP. I think she has got a very good case of intimidation.

MS HUDSON: (indistinct) like to sue them but you can't sue the government for defamation, which is what it was.

MR BAILEY: Well, you can sue them. But it's not a matter of money, it's a matter of standing up for your own rights.

PROF WOODS: Personal dignity.

MR BAILEY: Yes. As for these Work for the Dole programs, I think that's very dangerous. I think you've opened yourself to compensation claims by putting schizophrenics, alcoholics, drug addicts - put them all in one basket, send them doing a job, and next minute there's a blue on and some bloke gets hurt. Therefore the poor bloke who gets hurt hasn't got a leg to stand on because he signed the contract to work under the people. I think that has got to be reviewed. As for this, I feel in Sydney, Newcastle, Australia, there's no full-time jobs any more.

I think the management of these companies have got the idea of whacking

everyone on casual, like I said a minute ago, and it's a scam and I think they're all doing it these days, which is bad for the country. The country is going down. People, including mental health problems, marriages are breaking up and families are splitting up, and this is why I think the employers have got the impression now they're too scared to put people on full-time because they're too scared because there are going to be compensation claims going.

This is why now you've got another going where these employment agencies are sending everyone out and do occupational health and safety tickets. That's not to cover yourself; that's to cover the employer. So therefore when you do stuff up you're responsible for it because you've got your occupational health and safety ticket. So all the blame goes back on the employee.

PROF WOODS: What industry were you in previously?

MR BAILEY: Nursing.

PROF WOODS: That's right.

MR BAILEY: It's happening in the nursing game, too; it's happening in every game. You'll find that a lot of these people are now on 12-month contracts. Even these people, the Job Network people, they're on 12 months.

PROF WOODS: Are there vacancies reappearing there or are your qualifications lapsing?

MR BAILEY: I've got a grievance with nursing. I could create possibly 10,000 jobs tomorrow. I feel that you have a matron, you have a deputy nursing matron, a nursing unit manager and a fire officer - one, two, three, four. They're all highly professional registered nurses. I feel that they're secretarial-managerial profiteers for nursing home owners like Bob Moran, where Mr Moran himself owns 90 per cent of them. I feel that they're on a bandwagon, I feel they've got the union backing them up. I feel you can get secretaries out of colleges, whack them in nursing homes, teach them how to do managerial, hire, fire and stock ordering, RCIs, medication review, blah, blah. That's all there is in a nursing home. Therefore, get these registered nurses out of nursing homes, whack them back in your public hospitals and therefore you're going to fix the health problem.

I've seen a job description of a registered nurse in a nursing home. I've worked in nursing homes for many years. On a job description of a registered nurse in a nursing home they aren't even entitled to give your mother and father a drink of water. Now, that's pretty bad, isn't it?

MR: Can you repeat that? I didn't hear it.

MR BAILEY: On a job description of a registered nurse in a nursing home they are not entitled to give your grandmother or your grandfather a drink of water. They don't have to give them nothing. This is very bad. I'm not saying this off the top of my head, I can prove this; I've got documents at home.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR BAILEY: I feel that it's happening in all the workforce, all different areas not interested in nursing. In the hospitality industry, it's all turned to casual; no stability, no security. It's creating massive problems in the community. People are getting the attitude now in Australia, why work casual 20 hours a week when you can get the dole for 20 hours a week? Do you know what I'm saying?

PROF WOODS: Yes, creating a welfare poverty trap.

MR BAILEY: Managements know this. So that's why they're going to say, "Well, if you're really keen, you'll take a job for 20 hours a week." The people aren't keen to work these days for 20 hours a week; they want their 38 hours a week with stability and security, and that's what it all comes down to - buying a home and looking after your family.

MR: Keeping your car.

MR BAILEY: As that gentleman said, yes. I've just had an argument with my case management officer down at the Salvation Army where I've just asked him to be replaced regarding the funding of this intensive assistance. These people can't tell me how much money I've got there for my intensive assistance. They won't put it in the right avenue where I need it to improve my job prospects. I haven't got a contact telephone number. I owe Telecom \$400. I need a job to pay \$400 to get my contact telephone number. So therefore this fellow down here at Salvation Army said to me, "Okay, Steve, we'll be able to get you a mobile phone and we'll take it out of the intensive assistance money." Now, he's mucking me around and they're up and down and they're saying to me, "We'd like to get to know you a bit more, Steve," and I said, "Excuse me, mate, if you want to get to know me personally, give me your address and I'll come around see you on a Saturday."

I don't need to know these people personally, and this is the problem; they're digging in too much. They're digging into people's lives too much, which is unnecessary and instead of looking on the one track as in finding them a job. That is all these people are there for. They are not there to stick their nose into your private life. They're not there to create new low self-esteem, they're not there to intimidate

you; they are there to get you a job and that's it. As for this, the bottom line, the Salvation Army is commissioned to provide employment services - to go to my residence. That's a total invasion of privacy on my behalf. I don't need these people to come around and tell me about my jobs and about my life. I think something has got to be done about it. I don't know if you're the man to talk to about what is going to get done about it, but I think something has got to be done about this because it's creating a very hostile attitude in the community. It's causing a lot of hatred and nastiness towards a lot of young people.

You'll see in the streets of Newcastle that there are a lot of people walking the streets from the age of 25 to 40 that are unemployed, with low self-esteem, probably turning to drugs and alcohol because they cannot get a full-time job. It all comes down to management. Instead of whacking these people on casual - most of these jobs are stereotype jobs anyway, so you can pick them in a week and then be on them for the next 50 years. Employers know that. But they're still putting the scam on - put them on casual. Now, for four people a year, you're saving thousands of dollars, and something has got to be done about it. Something has got to be done about this casualisation; it is really destroying this country. It wasn't like that 10 years ago. 10 years ago you used to get all these fellows working on railways, councils, blah, blah, blah.

The government has cut back so much money on the railway, the councils and everything. They've got to lay off hundreds of blokes - not just 10 or 20 or 30; it's hundreds. Therefore you're creating mass hysteria in families. They're losing mortgages, they're losing their homes, they're losing their wives, their husbands; their children are running away on the streets because there's unrest in the house. Something has got to be done and I think the only way to do it is for somebody to stand up to these so-called management companies and put their foot down on these people to give the community a fair go in the workplace. I could talk for hours. But something has got to be done about it.

As to this Work for the Dole, I think it's a waste of time. I think what's going to happen in the long run, in probably a two or three-year track, that you will probably find that you're going to have 50,000 on Work for the Dole but no jobs for these people to do. So are they all going to get breached by Social Security because they can't go and do their - this is going to get squashed, this Work for the Dole, I can see it. Probably in the next two or three years you won't have Work for the Dole, but therefore I got told too, in probably in five to six years you won't even have the pensions.

This country is really making it hard for the poor. We're possibly starting to turn into a Third World country. I feel that it's all right for people who have - it feels to me, as a young person in the community, I feel that these people are pushing me to

go to university to get a degree and be a so-called professional. That's only a title. I feel that the person who hasn't got a degree knows a lot more about PR work and the job themselves than what the person with the degree does. I feel the person with the degree in organisations like these Job Networks teaches them how to be snakes. I think in a lot of ways, as in manager and money, as in treating people - to be honest, treating people like shit and making massive profits for these Job Network joints.

You'll find that if all these Job Network joints around Newcastle were linked together, you wouldn't have all these people running around joining all these damned different places. Therefore the problem I now have is I go to these machines. I look up a job. It comes out on a bit of paper and it says, "20 hours a week plus. Therefore ring IPC at Gosford." Right. I ring IPC at Gosford. They say to me, "Excuse me, Steve, are you registered with us?" I say, "No, I'm not really."

PROF WOODS: "Come down to Gosford."

MR BAILEY: "But I'd like to go for this job interview." They say to me, "Well, you'll have to register with us before we can send you on this job." "Excuse me, that's unnecessary, I'm already registered at the Salvation Army Employment Plus." Therefore they want you to register there because they know there's cash coming; they know there's money coming as soon as they put your name on their computer. Next question, sorry, "Excuse me, if I'm not registered there, which I don't want to be, I'm already registered somewhere else, could you please give me the name and address of this employer and I'll go and approach them myself for the job?" They say no. What apparently the thing is they've got a contract - - -

PROF WOODS: They have an agreement with the employer.

MR BAILEY: - - - from these Job Network joints to the employer to say, "We're not going to divulge your address" or blah, blah. This is the big problem. This is what's causing a lot of problems in the community; they're getting lost, confused. Therefore these Job Network people aren't writing letters back to people, telling them they have the job, they haven't got the job - they're not even ringing them up. It's disgusting. It really is bad. I don't know if they're getting a bit of a chip on their shoulder because they've got to do some jobs and they're looking down at everybody else.

PROF WOODS: Yes.

MR BAILEY: This is right, sir. It's not right what's happening and somebody has really got to stand up and have a shot at management and have a shot at business owners in general to give the public a fair go. Don't put them on casual. Put them on casual for two weeks and then give them a full-time job. You'll find these days that

people are so desperate to buy a home that they will stay in their full-time job. They don't want compo claims because they know they're not going to get the next job, so they will stay in their job as long as they can, do the best they can and, therefore, they're going to come out winning in the end.

But management doesn't look at it that way. They'll put you on for three or four months; soon as you open your mouth about an issue, you're out the door, or your shifts start to get cut back from 25 to 15 hours, right down to five hours and you may as well walk out the door then. This is what's happening in Newcastle, this is what's happening in Australia, and it's not right. Somebody really has to stand up and say something, and something has to be done.

PROF WOODS: Shift reduction is certainly something that has been brought to our attention on a number of occasions, where people have had their shifts cut back, cut back, to a point where rather than be sacked they have walked out because it just hasn't been viable.

MR BAILEY: The problem is with the Industrial Relations Commission of Australia, when a person gets sacked from their job they can go for unfair dismissal from Industrial Relations. All they can claim, after 15 or 20 years' working, is a lousy six months. That's disgusting, after a person has worked 20 years, been sacked unfairly, the employer doesn't want him back - he'll say, "Stuff you. See Industrial Relations." The Industrial Relations Commission says, "All you can claim here, son, is six months." Where's your future economic loss? You're getting paid for your past economic loss through that six months, but your future economic loss has gone. You have nothing left as your job, because the employer doesn't want you back because you're a bit too smart - well, it's not that you're too smart; you know your job too well, more than the employer. This is what's happening, and it's bad.

PROF WOODS: We are wandering well outside the ambit of the Job Network, but I do appreciate your views anyway. You've thought very carefully about them.

MR BAILEY: What will be done after all these people have been spoken to? What do you do?

PROF WOODS: Our process is that these hearings continue. We'll be in Melbourne tomorrow. People will send in further submissions to us, hopefully by the end of April so that we can take them into account and, please, if there are any further thoughts that you have, we would certainly welcome hearing from you. Then we will finalise the report and submit it to government by 3 June, and then the government is required at some early stage after that to both publish the report and to publish their reaction to the report.

Whether they agree with it in full or in part or not at all, at least the process is transparent. They must publish the report and they must set out their response to the matters. The Productivity Commission sometimes recommends things that the government agrees with in full; probably more often the government agrees with in large part but not all; on the odd occasion, the government doesn't agree at all.

MR: You said you're sort of going away from the Job Network. Unfortunately it - - -

MR BAILEY: No, it's all in the basket.

MR: It's all intertwined around life.

MR BAILEY: That's it.

PROF WOODS: The commission totally understands that employment as such in terms of that large issue is fundamental and jobs are fundamental to people's lives, but it - - -

MR: (indistinct)

PROF WOODS: I don't wish to debate with the gallery in the sense that that doesn't get captured on our record and it's therefore not available for all. The point I was making is that you have legitimately identified your experiences, the things that you find wrong with Job Network and have gone into the more fundamental issues of employment and the effect of that on people, and we agree with that. We understand that - - -

MR BAILEY: Yes, but I think these Job Network people are sitting on the basics and not getting down to the fundamentals, because they don't want to know about them. They don't want to help you really. All they're worried about is their pay packet on a bloody Friday afternoon and stuff everyone else. That's what it really comes down to. If you walk in there and say you've got a degree as a doctor or something - anybody - you'll get a job straightaway. There are two different markets in Australia. You've got your unskilled where managerial are trying to turn you into multiskilled, so therefore instead of employing you for one job they employ you for 10 different jobs in the one job. But, therefore, once you get a university degree, you can stand up and say, "Excuse me. I don't want to do that any more. I can just do this one thing," like being a parliamentarian or being a doctor or a nurse.

Companies these days want untrained, unskilled, multiskilled people. They don't want to train people any more in these jobs. Training has gone out the window. I don't know why. I think myself that manufacturing corporations are just giving up

on training. I don't think they're interested any more in training people because there's probably too much of a turnover. Fair enough, it's not the employee's fault; he might not have liked the job. But surely the employer can give that bit of stability and security in the workplace and therefore you will find a lot of people will stick to their job. No-one wants to work these days, mate, nobody, on a casual basis. What's the use of working 20 hours a week when you can get the dole for 20 hours a week at 220 bucks? Therefore, this country is going down the tube.

All you're going to find in the future is all these people working full-time and all these people unemployed, and it's going to create massive problems. Therefore, it's telling all these people here to go to university. Half these people are probably intellectually disabled, they've probably got psychiatric problems, mental problems, blah, blah, and can't cope with that sort of area. But what do you do with these people? You can't just throw them out in the street? You have a look around the streets of Newcastle. From the age of 25 to 40, your old men - this is a disgrace - are walking the streets dirty and filthy and whatever.

I've seen blokes picking up cigarette butts in the streets of Newcastle. This has never happened in Newcastle. I've been here for 25 years. This has only happened in Newcastle in the last couple of years, I suppose. There are more people homeless, living on the streets of Newcastle, because of casualisation. I feel that if you look at your job market screens at the moment, 99 per cent of the jobs are for 16, 17-year-old people because these employers will pay them lower wages, but they can still do the same job as what a 40-year-old person can do. Yes, it's just not right what is happening.

PROF WOODS: I think the day is drawing to a conclusion. Thank you very much for your evidence. It's much appreciated.

MR BAILEY: I think something has to be done, mate, and someone has really got to stand up and really give it to the government, for a start. I'd love to go down there and give it to them but I haven't got that bit of ticket to get in the front door, or a university degree.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much. I notice there's no-one left in the audience who hasn't already spoken, so I won't invite any further people who wish to come forward because there's no-one left to come.

MR BAILEY: What happens to this then? What will happen to these talks?

PROF WOODS: That's what I identified earlier. We will conclude our report by 3 June and then that will go to the government and they will be required to publish the report and to publish their response to the report.

MR BAILEY: The whole problem in society these days is coming from casualisation. It is creating massive problems, one after another. This is where your report should start from - casualisation. Social Security - and this is disgusting - are threatening people to sign these forms - "If you don't sign this form, you will be cancelled off the dole. If you don't agree with this, you'll be cancelled." What happens here, sir, when I don't sign this tomorrow? Do I lose my dole on Friday, so therefore I'm nearly on the street, not to pay rent? I haven't got a leg to stand on, if not. I will say, "Okay, I'll take this to the tribunal." "Hang on, before you do that, I'll give you a chance. We'll go through your independent review officer." Sorry, the independent review officer is internal, they're not external.

PROF WOODS: You've made your point, Mr Bailey. I do understand it.

MR BAILEY: Yes, thank you.

PROF WOODS: Thank you very much for your time.

MR BAILEY: Thanks for your time.

MR: Mr Commissioner, can I just ask if the transcription for the review will be available publicly?

PROF WOODS: Yes. All evidence will be available. You can either get it directly off the web site or you can purchase copies of it in hard copy for those who don't have access to the Web. I hereby adjourn the proceedings.

AT 5.23 PM THE INQUIRY WAS ADJOURNED UNTIL
WEDNESDAY, 10 APRIL 2002

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