

Punishment isn't leading to jobs

We all know the impact that work can have on a person's life. It can give people stability and an income that's guaranteed beyond the next pay cheque.

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

Anglicare Australia's [Jobs Availability Snapshot](#), launched this month, aims to show what the job market is like for people who might struggle to land a job – people who get left out of the narrative about our economy.

Our system is failing those who need the most help to find work. These might be people with disabilities, who didn't finish year 12, or older workers who lost their jobs later in life. Our research shows that at least five of these jobseekers are competing for each job at their level.

There aren't enough jobs at this skill level to meet demand in any part of the country. The situation is toughest in SA and Tasmania. In SA, nine of these jobseekers are competing for each suitable job. And in Tasmania, a staggering fourteen jobseekers are competing for each one of these jobs.

These jobseekers aren't just competing with each other. Graduates, laid-off workers, and people who are underemployed also apply for these jobs. Like everyone else, they are motivated to find work.

Over time, we've found that these jobs are drying up. This year, just 10 percent of vacancies didn't call for qualifications or work experience. That's down from 22 percent when these records began in 2006. As it stands, there is no plan to prepare our workforce for the changes we are seeing to the job market.

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

Private providers shouldn't be paid to punish and breach people. Instead, they should be helping them by offering training that are actually linked to jobs – and supporting them to stay in that work once they find it. So it's clear that the Jobactive network is broken and must be fixed.

Importantly, the findings of our Snapshot show Australia needs to invest in job creation. That means creating work that matches people's skills, instead of forcing them to compete for jobs that just aren't there.

And finally, of course, the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance must be raised. Nobody should be trapped in poverty while they look for work.

These changes are urgent. The Jobs Availability Snapshot shows that we are forcing people to compete for jobs that simply do not exist – and are trapping them in an endless cycle of poverty instead.