

## Contact us!

- Problem with your Job Services Australia Provider?
- Dispute with Centrelink?
- Cut off from your payment?
- Being coerced into Work for the Dole?
- Wasting days on pointless 'job-skilling'?

The Dole Action Group and others are fighting to end the exploitation of the unemployed and their families. Join us and help us help you!

---

### Dole Action Group (Melbourne)

Email  
[doleaction@gmail.com](mailto:doleaction@gmail.com)

On the Web  
[doleaction.org](http://doleaction.org)

Facebook  
[facebook.com/doleactiongroup](https://facebook.com/doleactiongroup)

Twitter  
[@doleaction](https://twitter.com/doleaction)

---

### Anti-Poverty Network South Australia

Email  
[antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com](mailto:antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com)

On the Web  
[antipovertynetworksa.org](http://antipovertynetworksa.org)

Facebook  
[facebook.com/antipovertynetworksa](https://facebook.com/antipovertynetworksa)

---

## Resources

The *Four Corners* investigation can be seen here:

[abc.net.au/4corners](http://abc.net.au/4corners) > Past Episodes > *The Jobs Game*

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/03/victims-britains-harsh-welfare-sanctions>

[blacktrianglecampaign.org](http://blacktrianglecampaign.org)

# Job Services Australia: Profiting From Punishing You



## What are Job Services Australia Providers?

'Job Services Australia Providers' (JSAs) are private companies that are supposed to help unemployed people find work. They are what used to be called Job Networks, and soon will be called the 'jobactive' scheme. Some of the JSAs operating in Victoria are 'MAX Employment', 'Tracy: The Placement People', 'Matchworks', 'Sarina Russo', 'Job Prospects' and 'Wise Employment'. Centrelink forces unemployed people to attend regular meetings with a JSA, or be kicked off the dole. JSAs require claimants to attend boring and pointless appointments, fill out paperwork and attend "training courses". Throughout Australia they've become notorious for being ineffective and worthless and it is no accident that they are this way. JSAs are not designed to help the unemployed – they are designed to punish us and make huge profits at our expense.

## These schemes don't work and they know it

The government claims that JSAs and other measures that punish the poor are intended to 'build skills' or 'motivate' the unemployed to obtain one of the

plentiful jobs that supposedly exist. They speak of 'dole bludgers' and 'job snobs', of 'lifters' and 'leaners'. Politicians and shock jocks blame the unemployed for being unemployed, but what do they know of trying to live well below the poverty line? Have they ever worked for minimum wage in a precarious job, often far away from where they live, with little job security and no long term prospects?

They are being deliberately dishonest. They know that there simply aren't enough jobs. In September 2014 there were 156,000 job vacancies in Australia. At the same time there were at least 750,000 people out of work. If you include those who are under-employed, an estimated 920,000 people in 2014, there are ten job seekers competing for every job vacancy in Australia.

How can these JSAs find work for us all when there's more than ten people for every advertised job? How does sitting in an office for half the week help anybody to build the skills they need to get back into the workforce?

### **Paying the rich to punish the poor**

The federal government spends about **\$1.3 billion dollars a year** on funding JSA providers.

Fraud is absolutely rampant in the world of unemployment services. A recent Four Corners program (23 Feb 2015) described unemployment services as "a system open to abuse where the unemployed have become a commodity. Some agencies bend the rules, others break them." JSAs have forged signatures and paperwork, altered contracts after they've been signed, and even billed the government for work they never even intended to do.

This theft of public resources is overwhelming in its scope. A 2012 report from the federal government's Department of Employment found that only 40% of fees paid to JSAs over the period examined could be verified as legitimate. No government has done anything to punish the offending organisations – but we can!

One of the most popular rorts at the moment is forcing jobseekers to undertake 'training courses' provided by other divisions of the companies contracted as JSAs. Between 2010-2013, these companies billed the government more than \$600 million dollars for running these training courses, but if you've ever taken one, you know very well that they are a waste of time.

The government pays providers according to how 'disadvantaged' the jobseeker is. In other words, the harder your circumstances, the more money there is to be made off of you. This means people looking to get back into work have to go it alone whilst significantly disadvantaged people spend half their lives fulfilling dehumanising participation requirements so the JSAs can keep cashing government cheques.

If the government really wanted to help people into work, they'd make these funds available to pay apprentice workers properly, reverse the massive cuts to TAFE, and fund proper training for jobseekers.

### **This situation is going to get worse**

In the UK, where "austerity" has been in place for five years, a similar but much worse situation already exists. Staff in employment services are pressured to meet quotas of claimants 'sanctioned' or denied access to a payment they are eligible for. Thousands of job seekers and disability support pensioners across the UK have suffered as a result of this institutional cruelty, with thousands forced onto the streets, and millions relying on food banks just to survive. At least 69 disability support pensioners have died after being cut off from their welfare payments, like David Clapson who had diabetes & died in 2013 due an acute lack of insulin. He had recently had his welfare payment cut off due to missing two appointments and had been unable to afford the electricity bills to keep his insulin refrigerated.

JSAs already possess similar powers in Australia – cutting off your payment is called 'breaching' – but the Minister for Social Services, Scott Morrison, has signalled that he would like to extend the power of JSAs to discipline and punish the unemployed.

### **What we can do about it**

Given the amount of control JSA providers have over our lives, this is not a struggle we can engage in alone. It's easy for a JSA provider to breach one unemployed person who dares to speak up but if there are hundreds who stand up to defend their rights, it becomes a major scandal.

The best thing we can do is talk to other unemployed people about what is going on, to speak up about our experiences, and start organising ourselves to fight back together. We are at a tipping point. The current government wants to make life even more difficult for us, as well as attack the pay and conditions of people in work. They see us as a soft target, as people whose rights can be trampled to win votes. ***It's time for us to organise and show them that we're a force to be reckoned with!***

A number of new organisations have formed in response to these ongoing attacks, such as the **Dole Action Group (Melbourne)** and the **Anti-Poverty Network (South Australia)**. These groups seek to bring together pensioners, students, single parents, disability support pensioners and unemployed workers. If you want to find out more, or how to get involved, **get in contact**. We need to know how JSA providers have been treating you, then **work together and do something about it!**