



PSA Submission to the Welfare Expert Advisory Group

November 2018

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About the PSA

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 68,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities), state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

The PSA represents close to 4000 people working in the Ministry of Social Development with members working in all areas of the organisation. Like other New Zealand citizens, PSA members and their families access MSD services at various times throughout their lifetime.

People join the PSA to negotiate their terms of employment collectively, to have a voice within their workplace and to have an independent public voice on the quality of public and community services and how they're delivered.

The PSA is an affiliate of the NZ Council of Trade Unions and supports its submission to the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG).

Recommendations

1. The PSA welcomes a re-write of the Social Security Act to reflect a more compassionate and non-judgemental approach to welfare provision, and to acknowledge our collective responsibility to ensure all members of our community are able to live with dignity.
2. In particular PSA supports the:
 - abolition of the sanctions regime;
 - recognition in legislation that work is not always available, and that people may have caring responsibilities, or physical and mental health needs that means work is neither possible nor desirable.
 - Increases in benefit rates to enable people to live with dignity and security
 - changes to abatement rates to allow people to earn more money from wages without punitive claw backs of state transfers
 - an emphasis in legislation on **decent** work,

3. The PSA supports increase in basic benefit levels to ensure that people can live in dignity in their communities and enjoy full social and economic participation. Benefit levels have been suppressed for many years, with the intention of “incentivising work”. This policy fails to recognise that for many people work is either unavailable or impossible and has caused significant inter-generational hardship and suffering.
4. The close relationship between social security and employment relations frameworks requires a consistency of principles, values and approaches. Amendments to the Employment Relations Act to strengthen collective bargaining and worker protections should be supported by the WEAG as an important corollary of its ambition to design a welfare system that supports the social and economic wellbeing of citizens.
5. The review of the welfare system needs to consider the changing nature of work, in particular the likelihood that there will be a reduction in secure employment as the role of technology expands. Innovative social protection approaches - such as increased investment in the social wage (universal low cost public services) and the UBI - should be investigated by the WEAG to ensure the welfare system is fit for the future of work.
6. Improvements need to be made to workplace culture and practice at MSD to enable people working there to deliver high quality social security services. In particular the PSA recommends the abolition of unhelpful performance measures that focus on quantity of outputs rather than the quality of service and a reduction in case-loads to allow case managers to deliver comprehensive case management services.
7. Too often our members bear the brunt of public frustration and anger when welfare services fail to meet the needs and expectations of our communities. As public servants our members are highly motivated to help the people they work with, but their ability to do this can be hindered by unhelpful legislation and systems, and underfunded services.
8. Ensuring that there is sufficient staff at MSD, that staff aren't over-worked, and that they are supported and empowered to do their job will be critical to the success of any welfare reform. The insights and voices of those who deliver our social security system must be heard and respected in the design of future welfare services.

“I consider that I work for the public of New Zealand. Sometimes I am uncomfortable with a process or procedure that may be implemented in my agency if I can see that it benefits the agency rather than the customer.”

PSA member at MSD

“This is about being proud of the mahi you are doing and owning it, because in my line of work the stigma is already there from years of dis-service & it is up to me to not fight this stigma but correct it through the mahi I do with whanau, Iwi & Hapu. It means people & communication”

PSA member at MSD

General comment

9. The PSA welcomes the Government's review of the welfare system and the opportunity to contribute to this review. Our interest in the welfare system reflects the collective expertise, experience and insights of our members working to deliver welfare services, as well as the union's broader interest in social and economic justice and strong public services.
10. The PSA supports a fair and compassionate social security system that enables people to live with dignity and to enjoy full social and economic participation, regardless of their employment status.
11. We would like to see that the people working in the design and administration of a compassionate social security system are well supported in their work, are empowered to be innovative, and to have their voices heard at all levels of the organisation.
12. In our 2017 Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Social Development we outlined our priorities for the portfolio which included:
 - Moving towards a workplace culture that values the **quality of relationships** between Work and Income staff and the people that they support, and organised according to the principles of High Performance High Engagement;
 - Legislative and policy changes to support a **compassionate and respectful** social security system that is focused on quality and enduring outcomes for people, including those who are unable to work; and that is designed with a concurrent commitment to **full employment**;
13. Our submission to the WEAG discusses key changes that we think are required in the areas of workforce and workplace, and in policy and legislation in order to achieve the Government's intention to restore fairness and accessibility to the welfare system.
14. We then answer the six questions posed as part of the WEAG consultation process. Our answers to these questions are based on a survey of PSA national delegates working in MSD.

Workforce and workplace

15. PSA has a strong delegate structure within MSD including: site delegates, national delegates, national delegate convenors, and a joint MSD-PSA Leadership Team (PSALT), all overseen by the PSALT convenor. The PSALT convenor is a fulltime role focused on PSA-MSD business. They work with delegates and members across all areas and engage with MSD on both a strategic and operational level.
16. PSA engagement with MSD is outlined in *The Agreement for Modern, Innovative, and Productive Public Services in the Ministry for Social Development*. This document details our various levels of engagement with MSD, from service managers and site delegates, to the MSD Chief Executive and PSA National Secretaries.

Unhelpful performance frameworks

17. Our members in the Ministry of Social Development are motivated by a strong public service ethic and the desire to contribute to positive outcomes for the people who use their services. The 2016 PSA Workplace Dynamics Survey showed that workers employed in the government social services sector scored highest for public service motivation across the public service¹.
18. For our members delivering front-line services in Work and Income, their ability to focus on the **quality** of the services they deliver is undermined by unhelpful performance measures that emphasise **speed and quantity** of interactions over **quality**. For example, in the contact centres, telephone calls must be completed within 5.35 minutes. Our members feel that this emphasis detracts from their ability to determine the totality of a person's needs and assist them accordingly.
19. Similarly, our case manager members are concerned that their high-volume case-load (our delegates report that most case managers are expected to carry a case load of 121 people) is inconsistent with the delivery of quality case management. Performance metrics for case managers emphasise the number of job placements rather than the quality of job placements – i.e placement into good, secure work.
20. Our members would prefer lower case-loads that would enable them to assist people into sustainable, quality employment. They cite the significant variance between standard case-loads (1:121) and those of the “intensive case management” project (1.40), which is delivered to those people who have been identified as targets under the Ministry's social investment activities. Ideally, our case managers would like to be able deliver intensive case management services to all of the people who need them. They are also keen to ensure that people transition into employment that is **enduring** and **high quality**.
21. Ultimately the current performance framework in place at Work and Income may be inefficient and ineffective for both the organisation, the workers, and the people who use its services. We believe that the emphasis on quantity over quality has been strongly influenced by the desire of the previous Government to drive down the numbers of people in receipt of a benefit in order to lower fiscal expenditure. While we agree that the social and economic wellbeing of people is generally enhanced through employment, we would like to see a shift in the political environment that acknowledges the importance of **decent** employment as well as the importance of providing comprehensive social security to people who are unable to work.

Health and Safety

22. The health and safety of our members at Work and Income remains a priority. Our key concerns relate to work-load, the exposure of our members to unacceptably high levels of verbal assault, and the ever-present risk of physical harm. In the 2016 calendar year the Ministry of Social

¹ Plimmer, Geoff and Clara Cantal (2016), *Workplace Dynamics in New Zealand Public Services: a survey report prepared for the Public Service Association (PSA) Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi*, available at <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/som/clew/publications/2016-workplace-dynamics-survey-report.pdf>

Development recorded a total of 4002 security incidents, 468 of which were categorised as Serious and Critical.²

23. While structures and practices are in place to involve our members and delegates in health and safety forums, there remains room for improvement in terms of genuine engagement with our members' concerns across the organisation.
24. We have expressed to managers at MSD our strong preference that security services should be provided "in-house" rather than contracted out to external providers. This is consistent with the PSA policy that argues that public services are best delivered by people directly employed by public service agencies. Direct employment of security guards would enable better integration of security guards into teams, the consistent deployment of the same guard(s) to an office, and training that is fit for purpose.

Policy and Legislation

Social security legislation

25. The political underpinnings of our social security legislation have a strong impact on the organisational culture and management practices at Work and Income. The current policy settings have led to an emphasis on quantity of output rather than on quality human interactions between Work and Income staff and the people they work with.
26. This can have a harmful impact on the working conditions of our members and their relationship with the public. As the front-line face of policies that are sometimes punitive and unfair, our members are often blamed for political settings that are beyond their control. This can have damaging effects on the relationship between our members and the people they working to support. The PSA leadership team has met with beneficiary advocate groups to gain insights into each other's needs and challenges.
27. A re-write of the Social Security Act is timely. The principles need to be re-shaped to reflect a more compassionate and non-judgemental approach to welfare provision, and to acknowledge our collective responsibility to ensure all members of our community are able to live with dignity. In particular PSA supports the:
 - abolition of the sanctions regime;
 - recognition in legislation that work is not always available, and that people may have caring responsibilities, or physical and mental health needs that means work is neither possible nor desirable.
 - Increases in benefit rates to enable people to live with dignity and security
 - changes to abatement rates to allow people to earn more money from wages without punitive claw backs of state transfers.

² Ministry of Social Development (2017), "Work and Income Security Incidents", retrieved 6 December from <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/media-releases/2017/security-incidents.html>

28. We consider that the principles of social welfare expressed in the 1972 Royal Commission's review of the Act are worth revisiting in any re-write of the legislation.
29. We would also like to see the goal of full employment reinserted into the Government's policy framework and are very supportive of the Labour Party's commitment to this policy³.
30. Importantly, a change in the philosophical underpinnings of the Social Security Act - which posited a more compassionate and supportive role for the state in the provision of social welfare - would establish the underpinnings of an improvement in the working conditions of our members.

Employment relations and the future of work

31. There is a strong relationship between social security and employment relations regulatory frameworks. Transforming our social welfare system will require concomitant reform of employment relations legislation to ensure consistent and compatible principles, values, and outcomes. Ideally both frameworks would work in concert to ensure that all people have access to work that is suitable, secure and fairly compensated and to adequate and comprehensive state support when work is not available or possible.
32. Our current social security and employment relations settings are far from this ideal. The requirement that people in receipt of a benefit take any job - regardless of suitability or conditions, and on threat of sanctions - has had the effect of increasing labour market flexibility. This was also the intention and effect of changes made to the Employment Relations Act under the previous Government⁴: wages, conditions and employment security have all suffered as a result.
33. The commitment from this Government to amend both these frameworks provides a good opportunity to ensure that they have consistent goals and outcomes.
34. The review of the social security system also needs to take into account the likelihood that the nature and availability of employment will change in the future. The likely reduction in the demand for labour as technology plays a greater role will require a welfare state that is able to support people through employment transitions and ensure that those with reduced employment have sufficient social protection.
35. Consideration needs to be given to the welfare approaches that will mitigate the impact of decreasing work. These include ideas such as a Universal Basic Income and/or the "social wage"

³ Robertson, Grant (2017), "Speech by Grant Robertson: The Future of Work and Labour's Economic Vision", 4th July 2017, accessed 10 December at <http://www.labour.org.nz/speech-by-grant-robertson-the-future-of-work-and-labour-s-economic-vision>

⁴ Wilson, Margaret (2016), "Challenges for a New Regulatory Environment", paper to the 2016 Conference on Labour, Employment and Work.

whereby universal, low cost access to essential public services such as housing, child care, medical care and transport can compensate for reductions in income.

WEAG questions for consultation

36. The following sections respond to the WEAG's six specific questions for consultation. They are based on the survey responses of 18 PSA national delegates working in MSD.

What do you think is working well with the current welfare system?

37. Most respondents were able to identify some aspects of the system that are working well. A common theme of the answers to this question was that people can access the basic support that they need, and that the system is providing a basic safety net as intended.

38. Some specific examples of things that are working well included:

- phone engagement
- increased accessibility through online functions
- the variety of assistance that is available
- the extra support for people entering the workforce, including assistance for people with medical needs "who need help to get work"
- the winter energy payment, increases in benefits, and payment cards
- recent changes to Accommodation Supplements which made it "a lot easier for clients which high rent needs, however landlords have started to increase rent costs because they get more benefit. The clients are missing out again."
- Improved relationships with external and internal partners and "being open and honest with our communication with all departments".
- work brokers

39. Some answers focused internally with someone noting that the "the innovative office layouts and the case managers pay scale" as positive. Another person noted the PSA's presence within MSD as something that is working well.

40. A small number of respondents weren't able to identify anything that is working well within the current system.

What do you think is not working well with the current welfare system?

41. There were some common themes to respondents' answers as follows.

42. The cost and availability of **housing** was identified as a significant problem that affects clients and staff.

43. **Benefit levels** were seen by many respondents as too low, particularly in the context of the high costs of living. One person noted that "if we increased the amount they received weekly

perhaps it could avoid things like needed multiple food assistance, going into negative balances etc...People are reliant on W&I to provide everything because they are unable to provide for themselves on the minimal benefit payment. Clients struggle to pay for basics like rent and power let alone having to purchase food or have other necessities like medical costs covered”.

44. Respondents noted a number of **unnecessary and complicated procedures and rules** that create hardship for clients, stress for staff and inefficiencies in the system: “the system sets up staff and clients to fail”. One person noted that “the whole system (from societal thinking, to legislation, to the administration process, into delivery and then public perception) is all geared towards making things difficult for client to receive support/assistance.”
45. Some of the procedural problems identified were:
 - Stand-downs – “these should be abolished”
 - “TAS should be automatic for accommodation”
 - The Disability Allowance should be a “standard average rate of payment and should only be assessed and costs verified when over the standard average (this this would clear out thousands of transactions from the Super Q).”
 - 52-week re-applications, which were described as “punitive” and an example of the “outdated legislation.”
 - The “one-size fits all” approach which doesnt cater to people’s individual needs.
46. The **interface between the welfare system and labour market** was also identified as problematic. Some specific concerns related to the “marginal” gap between benefit rates and low wages. Low wages and the costs associated with working trapped many people in poverty and didn’t make the move into paid work “worth the effort”. Abatement thresholds were also a concern.
47. A number of respondents identified problems relating to **insufficient staff**, both at the “front of house” and in processing online applications and in call centres. “People deserve to be seen by people.”
48. The combination of understaffing and unrealistic and **unhelpful targets** was also of concern to respondents. One person stated: “I also don't like how we are expected to meet targets which are higher than the year before with reduced staff. How can we give good service if we are under pressure, under staffed and under paid”?
49. Another person noted that call centres needed more staff to handle the rosters and that they “need their time measure gone as they now have more complex callers and actions to do for front of the house. Call waiting times is debunked now and measure is obsolete”.
50. The **treatment of staff** was another concern. People felt that they are the target of public blame when the system and the legislation fail people. They were also concerned about their right to privacy and security and to not have their identity revealed. Some felt there was a lack of respect from management and that their voices and experiences were not valued by the organisation. This was “insulting” for those who had had experience of the benefit system but

were told that they “didn’t understand”. There was also some discomfort with MSD branding itself as “Ministry of Change” which was “confusing not only for staff but more so for clients”.

51. The lack of innovation with regard to working hours and flexible work arrangements was also a concern.
52. A respondent commented that there was an inconsistency between organisation-wide management hype - such as staff being told they are “doing a great job on doogle” - and individual performance management processes, which they failed. They felt this was ‘dishonest’.

What do you think could be done better?

53. Respondents had many suggestions for improvements that could be made to the system. Some of these were very detailed and have been attached verbatim as Appendix One. Overall, feedback indicates that the system could be simplified and improvements made to facilitate easy access to the system. There was a call for a more sophisticated approach to the welfare system which would entail comprehensive case-management and tailor-made services and benefits to meet the needs of individuals. Again, people’s access to affordable housing was highlighted as an area where improvements need to be made. Delegates also called for increased benefit rates and the and the removal of punitive features of the system.
54. The need for increased staff, working with greater support and better working conditions (including wages) was also highlighted. The response from delegates indicates that they’d like to do more for the people they work with but require more resources and more staff to do this.

What level of support do you think should be available through the welfare system?

55. The PSA supports increase in basic benefit levels to ensure that people can live in dignity in their communities and enjoy full social and economic participation. Benefit levels have been suppressed for many years, with the intention of “incentivising work”. This policy fails to recognise that for many people work is either unavailable or impossible and has caused significant hardship and suffering.
56. Our delegates provided a range of answers to this question. Specific recommendations on increases to benefit levels included:
 - a 20% increase;
 - “the highest level at all times as this is people’s lives”
 - enough to cover the basic necessities of life.
 - better financial assistance tailored to the individual not the benefit type. This would see the base benefit being topped with “extras” for children, medical help etc.
57. Respondents also provided some suggestions for services that they thought should be available. These included:
 - Advice on appropriate services, such as disability and health services;
 - Budgeting services;

- Mentoring, goal setting, positive leadership and empowerment courses;
- Better monitoring of emergency housing to ensure its safe for people.
- Compulsory “getting ready for work courses”

What values do you think should underpin the welfare system?

58. The vision for social security expressed by the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security was underpinned by the values of egalitarianism, inclusion, justice and inclusion. The PSA supports the reintegration of these values into our social security system.

59. Delegates told us some of the values they’d like to see underpinning the social welfare system.

These included:

- Value and respect staff
- “Every client and child must feel valued and have access to the support they need to contribute to their community. And feel safe in doing so.”
- Fair support and quality service
- That welfare is “time-limited” and “people need to live within their means”
- “That we value life - and that we want the people of New Zealand to be successful; work hard and give back to future generations. Setting tamariki up for success.”
- “Child safety - Respect of clients and staff - Preservation of client dignity - Simplicity - the current system is so complicated that even Case Managers disagree on key issues”.
- “We should value He Tangata. - I think the values that MSD have currently are a great start, but it needs to be put into action. Support people on their journey into work/health etc.”
- “The Treaty of Watangi principles and our love for the nation and the people.”
- “Mana manaaki, Kotahitanga and Kia takatu tatou”.
- “The whole of society needs to take care of those who need assistance - one of MSD 'values' is 'We Help New Zealanders to be Safe, Strong and Independent' - I think that is a pretty basic line to work to - it shouldn't be aspirational, it just should be the minimum way things are.”
- “the welfare system has to be set up to help the unfortunates that society had failed, - the jobless, unwell or homeless of society.”

Have any other comments to make about the current or future welfare system?

60. Delegates provided a range of responses to this question. A strong theme to emerge was the urgent need for greater investment in staff at MSD. Ensuring that there is sufficient staff at MSD, that staff aren’t over-worked, and that they are supported and empowered to do their job will be critical to the success of any welfare reform. The insights and voices of those deliver our social security system must be heard and respected in the design of future welfare services.

61. Responses to this question included:

- Stop decreasing our numbers of staff. Housing has had a huge impact on all areas of the ministry and having less staff is not sustainable.
- It's messy and It's gone on for too long.

- MSD is anorexic. We operate in a culture that at breaking point for it's staff. High work demands and low staffing numbers. We are not machines give us back the resources to be able to give our public the service they deserve.
- Good luck - the cost of living and living in areas such as Auckland is very expensive. I worry how people with tamariki are coping to put kai on the table.
- Talk to the people affected - listen to the people effected - ask the people who are delivering the service and who hear the clients speak every day about their struggle. The people behind the desk and on the phones understand a lot about what these clients are going through and what needs could be met better - actually listen.
- Thinking smarter about the building opportunities in the future. - - What about our iwi/hapu who received payouts? What are our maori leaders doing to invest into our people. The disparity continues for our people so what are they doing to help the Government. - - People + Land + Money = Opportunity
- Happy staff are able to better assist our clients.
- Currently the system is structured in such a way that is makes getting assistance more difficult. In future, it NEEDS to be soon, we've gone too far without fixing the broken system and the cost is increasing far beyond what our country can afford (not just monetary terms).
- New Zealand used to have nil unemployment this was because government departments were used to employ the unemployed, NZ Rail was over staffed as were road services etc, - This was deemed as uneconomical but hind sight must teach us that even though there are not these jobs available now these roles made these individuals get up in the morning and report to work, giving a sense of belonging and being cared for. - Instead of being outside looking into mainstream society or living on the dark side -
- Society has enabled people to be less responsible for themselves and more dependent on the State, I think we as New Zealanders have become too politically correct and this is also enabled many people to take advantage of the system – this needs to stop. I think there needs to be more accountability by the beneficiary, whilst there are some people who don't have the capabilities to look after themselves, there are a lot who could be doing more to help their situation

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Appendix One: suggestions from PSA/MSD delegates about what could be done better

Our submission has incorporated the responses of PSA/MSD delegates to the questions in the WEAG survey. In addition, the detailed responses from some respondents to the question on what could be done better are presented verbatim below as they offer valuable insights on potential operational improvements to the system.

Respondent one:

Listen to your staff - 2. Stop asking us what we do. Are you kidding? MSD created our positions and set the expectations? - 3. Give us staff so we can support our clients and our colleagues - 4. Train our Case Managers before throwing them on the floor - 5. Give us receptionists. We are busy enough without taking a knowledgeable CM away for 1 day to be on reception duties. - 6. Reduce work queues - 7. Reduce communication lines - 8. Get rid of Client queries - 9. Give more time for the Contact centres so they can help clients because they have time - 10. No more Walk ins or maybe ring the earphone before referring this causes more issues for frontline. - 11. Send UCB to Oranga Tamariki - 12. Flexible hours 4 day weeks 12 hour days - 13. Sick leave - make unlimited or unspecified - 14. Add a clause for long term illness. We have had staff members who have gone through many health issues and need to be supported not disrespected and tossed out. - 15. Fix CMS!! My gosh this is doing things to my mental health. - 16. Stop rewarding bad behaviour when it comes to clients - 17. Stop overturning our decisions use the right channels. ROD, in house methods are sometimes not within process or legislation. Makes us feel like we are stupid and just plan wrong which is so undermining and embarrassing. - 18. Fix MyMSD we refer our clients but it doesn't work. - 19. Stop using Wednesday brief for training should be for staff to plan or make sure things are doing okay onsite. - 20. Wednesday brief should start at 8:30am not 8:00am as we at 8:30am starts are losing 30mins of pay and expected to stay until 5pm. - 21. Train your managers. We get different ways of approving hardship, leave etc. Be consistent. - 22. Senior managers to attend PSA regional meetings. We matter too....or send other managers to cover. - 23. Get rid of the New Business window, this causes undue stress for staff and clients. - 24. Get rid of the NZS National queue, give it back to the region's and hire staff to meet the demand of our senior clients. - 25. Separate housing this is too much - 26. Sort Emergency Housing. Landlords/HNZ should allow family to stay when the need is there. Homelessness is out of control. - 27. Family tax should only be paid by IRD - 28. Work and Income have too many fingers in the pie we have aspects of IRD, HNZ, DHB, OT, Corrections reduce simplify. - 29. Hire more Maori staff - 30. Get to know your community - 31. Honour the Treaty of Waitangi - 32. All Maori should be able to attend Hui.

Respondent two:

Hardship approval sign off needs to be gone. Only time staff should need sign off is when the client has nil entitlements. - 2. When hardship is for power,rent or medical costs when they get DA we should be able to apply redirection to meet this living costs from then onwards. Why bother f/up with redirection forms. - 3. When granting/reviewing AS if they qualify for TAS it should be auto granted/reviewed with AS grant/review. The letter should alert client if they have essential hire purchases then they should bring in the agreement and complete

personal details form for inclusion. 20 day rule applies for appln still. - 4. Those sites that missed out on allocation of receptionist budget to their site as their staffing numbers were below 10 are given this so CM can go back on the floor full time and interview full time. - 5. Centralised Services need to be training quicker and with all the work going to the back of the house. This is so we use the huge resource we have to alleviate high work loads when they happen for this side of MSD.

Respondent three:

The current government have the policy of 'Earning, Learning, Caring or Volunteering' and sometimes there just isn't ability for someone to do one or more of those things, this is definitely where the welfare system is necessary. - - 1. legislation change - increase benefit rates - 2. legislation change - increase supplementary rates - 3. legislation change/ministerial direction - be less punitive and offer more support - 4. policy change to reflect legislation - 5. MORE STAFF and more time for appointments to do the whole situation assessment not just the band-aid one touch, this is because of the number of different entitlements to test eligibility for, partly because there are more to test, but because the client group are in significantly more hardship/complex situations (health, mental health, housing, expenses, etc etc) - 6. full training for all staff on new process/entitlement for ALL 'products' offered - 7. replace welfare administration software used by MSD, currently it is written as YES/NO for entitlement when more often than not the assessment would be 'maybe' and related to training of staff many people with less experienced are only trained in the software rules, not a full assessment so will say 'NO' because the calculator said no, rather than knowing the 'MAYBE' questions / answers to get entitlement, plus often aren't trained in assessing all the products/entitlements so don't know that they are to check for another payment type - 8. LESS PRODUCTS/ENTITLEMENTS to test - I believe in the late 1990's/early 2000's there were about 10 payments types that a combination of could be tested. NOW there are more than 10 times that number and no one knows about all of them so need to hand off activity to other people (that is if they know enough to know to hand off) - 9. Senior client staffing and work management - I know it is out of scope and Superannuation is not a benefit - however the number of senior clients is increasing and the staffing is either static or reducing (not replaced on staff leaving MSD), but not just the number of clients is increasing so is the complexity of the situation for these clients - once upon a time they would sign on, and wouldn't be back for 8-10 years, now they sign on and are seen at least 3 monthly because they have a number of additional supplementary payments attached.

Respondent four

A more strategic and practical approach to assisting people getting into work that takes into consideration the changes in the labour market, like casual hours, contract work where essentially the person is self-employed, I think the system needs to be more adaptable/geared towards helping people equally, not those just going into salaried or wage situations - updated regularly to keep abreast of all the current labour market changes with the different ways of remuneration. - - More options of compulsory short courses for school

leavers and people under the age of 25 years old – make it compulsory to work for the benefit, more compulsory course options for sole parents. More apprenticeships to be offered to youth who are not academically keen - - I also think that there needs to be a stricter criteria for the people working within the realms of the welfare system, there are a lot of employees who are not really suitable and the things they do or in some cases don't do are never addressed. I also think more professional training should be utilised and also an expectation of more professional behaviour by staff – i.e. customer service, professional protocols when working in a public facing environment. - - Benefit should be time bound for Job seekers for eg Job seeker benefit should be granted only for 6 months with all support and training put in place to get the Job seeker a job - For the Sole parents ; Training and work experience in the industry they would like to work - Govt should have a scheme offering subsidies to challenge medium to large size employers to train and employ our clients and pathway them into full time work. - Contracted Providers who provide a training service with an outcome of a job, should be accountable for the work they do and only paid for that work. - Clients with mild to moderate disabilities (mental or physical) should also have time bound benefits of one year with support of training and work experience after 3-6mths.

Respondent five:

1. Full time reception in all front sites. - 2. Case Manager left to do interviews etc only and not reception. Unless covering for leave. - 3. Staff numbers are increased to manage the work demand. Stop given staff multiple roles to do. Hire resources to manage all the work required at site level. - 4. Appointment times need to be extended we are now working with high needs clients. It's suppose to be full service and end to end processing. This can't be done how we work now as times are too short and paper work piles up for staff. Which creates walk ins. - 5. MSD needs to have 2 hours daily for processing work. Queues will never be managed unless time is allocated during their normal working hours. Staff are not robots they will stress and high leave will happen if we don't take the pressure of their working day.