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- Mutual obligations, which were initially suspended for job seekers because of COVID-19 restrictions have been gradually reintroduced as Coronavirus restrictions have eased across Australia.
- These requirements are now being further strengthened to ensure that job seekers have the best opportunity to secure employment as our nation continues to recover from the economic challenges of COVID-19.
- Job seekers will return to compulsory face-to-face services with jobactive providers from early March 2021.
- Job seekers will be required to search for 15 jobs a month from early April 2021, increasing to 20 jobs per month from 1 July.
- From early April 2021, an employer reporting line also will be established to allow reporting of job seekers who are not genuine about their job search or decline the offer of a job. There will also be an increased auditing of job applications to ensure job seekers are making genuine applications.
- From October 2021, job seekers will generally be required to participate in activities including training or work for the dole after six months.
- Mutual obligation requirements have been lifted for jobseekers impacted by Western Australian bushfires until 2 March 2021. No jobseeker will face a payment

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suspension or financial penalty for failing to meet their mutual obligation requirements during this period in the following Local Government Areas:

- City of Swan
- Town of Mundaring
- Shire of Chittering
- City of Northam.

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93 Additional Flexibility for jobseekers DESE 20-March-2020 Nil

<https://ministers employment.gov.au/cash/flexibility-jobseekers>  
<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/gradual-return-mutual-obligation-requirements>  
<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/mutual-obligation-requirements-return-victorian-job-seekers>  
<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/supporting-south-australians-through-covid-19>  
<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/supporting-western-australia-through-covid-19>

The Government announced changes to servicing arrangements lifting mutual obligation requirements (until 8 June 2020) removing the need for face-to-face contact in line with advice from health authorities and reducing job search requirements in line with softening labour market conditions. Further updates announced to this measure 24 March 27 March 22 April 2020 and 14 May 2020.  
 From 9 June 2020 mutual obligation requirements have been reintroduced in a limited capacity.  
 From 28 September mutual obligations will be reintroduced as well as the option for face-to-face servicing and Work for the Dole activities.

**Implemented - Business as usual**

- A range of adjustments to the employment services system have been made throughout the pandemic to provide flexibility for job seekers.
- Mutual Obligations were lifted nationally for a job seekers from 24 March.
- Mutual Obligations were reintroduced in a phased approach from 29 May.
- Excluding Jurisdictional lockdown periods since 28 September 2020 job seekers have been required to participate in appointments with an employment services provider agree to a tailored Job Plan undertake up to eight job searches attend agreed activities (where it is safe to do so) and accept any offer of suitable work.
- Mutual Obligation Requirements have been lifted between 9-17 January 2021 for job seekers in the Greater Brisbane area where the Qld Government had issued a 'Lockdown' order.
- Mutual Obligation Requirements will continue to be monitored to align with Health advice and labour market conditions.
- From 7 December 2020 payment suspensions will be delayed by two business days allowing the job seeker and their provider time to discuss and if necessary address the mutual obligation failure before payment is suspended.
- Job seekers have the option to opt in for face-to-face servicing in addition to the alternative servicing methods. Work for the Dole resumed where activities are available it is safe to participate and all health and safety requirements are met.

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280 Support Job Seekers Accessing Online Employment Services	DESE	24-Jul-20	\$183.1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announced in CEO Investment and CEO letter on 24 July 2020.</li> <li>• Announced in Budget 2020-21.</li> <li>• Published on <a href="http://employment.gov.au/OES">employment.gov.au/OES</a></li> </ul> <p>This measure will enhance and fast-track the Online Employment Service (OES) platform and expand the support services available for digital job ready job seekers. Job seekers in the OES will also be able to access a Digital Services Contact Centre for any assistance they need including support managing their Mutual Obligation requirements. This will allow employment service providers to focus their efforts on those job seekers that are identified as more at risk of becoming long term unemployed and need more support. Job seekers can opt out of online services at any time.</p>	<p><b>Implemented - Business as Usual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As at 31 January 2021, there were 1 303 263 on the jobactive caseload of which 368 559 are being serviced online.</li> <li>• Job seekers who have not found employment will be referred to a provider after 12 months in the OES. Those who undertake study or training can remain in the online platform for up to six months after the completion of their course even if this takes them beyond 12 months. Job seekers with earnings from employment will also remain in the OES.</li> <li>• Enhancements to the digital platform are also being rolled out.</li> <li>• Improved job seeker onboarding for OES. OES job seekers will receive notifications reminding them to approve their Job Plan and complete their Job Seeker Snapshot.</li> <li>• Improved ESAT referral process for OES job seekers – new functionality was added to block commencement and transfer of job seekers that are flagged for an ESAT; and allow the subsequent commencement in or transfer/referral to appropriate services or program when an ESAT is deemed as no longer required or ESAT is finalised.</li> <li>• Improved resume management for OES job seekers to include the addition of a display banner on the job seeker dashboard linking job seekers to upload their resume.</li> <li>• New functionality for transfers out of OES for job seekers based on the number of demerits. OES job seekers will no longer be transferred to a service provider when they have reached 3 demerits. From December, Capability interviews will be conducted by the Digital Services Contact Centre.</li> <li>• Faster Connections Auto Referral to jobactive – new functionality has been introduced to automate referrals to the OES 'gateway' off submission of a claim form. Job seekers who are eligible for provider services will be referred once eligibility is determined through the ISCL.</li> <li>• Email as a formal notification method for OES Digital job seekers – job seekers will now receive email notifications when they have an appointment, job interview, third-party appointment or one-off activity booked.</li> <li>• Introduction of skills matching tools that draw data from the Jobs and Education Data Infrastructure (JEDI) engine with links to the National Careers Institute (NCI) platform.</li> <li>• New search functionality for job seekers to access activities that will help improve their skills e.g. Employability Skills Training, Career Transition Assistance NEIS and Digital Training activities via the jobactive website.</li> </ul>
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323 Flexible Study

DESE

8-September-2020

Nil

<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/cash/mutual-obligation-requirements-return-job-seekers>

This initiative allows participants to undertake study/training in areas of high labour demand and have this count towards their mutual obligation requirements at any time. It includes existing subsidised courses and those offered through the JobTrainer fund.

**On track**

The initiative was announced as part of reintroduction of the third phase of mutual obligation requirements on 18 September 2020 and commenced 28 September 2020. Enhancements to the user experience for job seekers in the Online Employment Service will be made in early 2021 to provide a "pick list" of study training options to complement existing search functionality. Currently this is free text entry.

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446 Mutual Obligations and Servicing Arrangements

DESE

23-February-2021

nil

<https://ministers.dese.gov.au/morrison/morrison-government-commits-record-98-social-security-safety-net>

There are number of changes to mutual obligation requirements to assist job seekers secure employment. These changes reflect the importance of ensuring job seekers are well prepared and assisted to actively take advantage of increased job opportunities as the economy and labour market continue to improve. These measures include:

- Return to compulsory face-to-face services with jobactive providers
- An increase in the minimum number of jobs search requirements each month including quality assurance
- Establishment of an employer reporting line to refer job seekers who are not genuine about their job search or decline the offer of a job
- Stronger Contractual Action to Drive Performance
- New Activity Requirement for job seekers at 6 months in services including training and Work for the Dole
- Online job seekers to complete their Career Profile before receiving Income Support

**On track**

On 23 February provider organisations were sent a direction to return to face-to-face servicing where it is safe to do so from 9 March. This remains the case and face-to-face servicing is on track to return from March 9 with communication to job seekers to be sent out prior to this date.

The initiative to increase the minimum number of job search requirements each month is on track:

- From 1 Apr 1 the minimum job search requirement will increase from 8 to 15 per month
- From 1 July the minimum job search requirement will increase from 15 to 20 per month

The Department will increase auditing of job seekers' job search to identify those who are submitting non-genuine or deliberately poor-quality applications. The establishment of an employer reporting line is on track and will operate out of the Department's Digital Services Contact Centre from April 2021. The Department already uses a range of mechanisms to drive and assess provider performance and compliance however from April 2021 the department will work closely with providers to set out very clear guidance on strengthened requirements for jobactive Provider performance.

From October 2021:

- The New Activity Requirement for job seekers at 6 months in employment services is on track to begin.
- Online job seekers will have to complete their Career Profile before they are paid income support

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## Further strengthening mutual obligations (new activity requirement at six months in employment services)

### Key Points

- On 23 February 2021, the Government announced proposed changes to mutual obligations for jobseekers unemployed for at least six months. This includes a new activity requirement at six months in employment services.
- The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) prepared and certified a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for the proposal. The published RIS is available on the OBPR's online RIS register ([ris.pmc.gov.au](http://ris.pmc.gov.au)).
- The Office of Best Practice Regulation assessed the RIS met the Government's Regulation Impact Statement requirements. The OBPR noted the RIS would have benefitted by greater depth of analysis on the likely effects of the options on jobseekers, providers and host organisations, including the distributional impacts on different cohorts within these groups.
- Stakeholders' views on the proposed options were reflected only in a broader sense of general views on employment support programs. However, stakeholders were not consulted on the specific proposals considered in the RIS.

### Background:

The new activity requirement introduced an additional requirement for job seekers once they have participated in jobactive for six months. Job seekers will be required to participate for up to eight weeks in a compellable activity (such as a short training course, online learning modules, voluntary work or Work for the Dole). This requirement is in addition to job search and the intensive activity that already is required to be conducted at 12 months' unemployment

Shane Johnson A/g First Assistant Secretary	Economic Division	s22
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Consultation	Nil	



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Office of Best Practice Regulation

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Mr Nathan Smyth  
Deputy Secretary  
Department of Education, Skills and Employment  
50 Marcus Clarke Street  
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

Dear Mr Smyth

## **Regulation Impact Statement – Second Pass Assessment – Job Seeker Transition – Mutual Obligations**

Thank you for your letter received on 22 February 2021 submitting a Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) on Job Seeker Transitions – Mutual Obligations for formal Second Pass Final Assessment. I note the RIS has been formally certified at the Deputy Secretary level consistent with the *Australian Government Guide to Regulatory Impact Analysis*.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Department for their constructive engagement with the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) on the RIS, and their willingness to work collegiately to finalise the RIS.

The OBPR's assessment is that the quality of the regulatory impact analysis in the RIS is adequate and therefore sufficient to inform a decision.

To be considered 'good practice' as per the *Australian Government Guide to Regulatory Impact Analysis*, comprehensive analysis of the expected impacts, commensurate with the significance of the problem and the magnitude of the proposed interventions is required. In this regard, the RIS should have included greater depth of analysis on the likely effects of the options on jobseekers, providers and host organisations, including the distributional impacts on different cohorts within those groups. Including more analysis on job seeker characteristics and the outcomes achieved under the current settings for the Government's employment services programs (the status quo) would have elevated the analysis.

In addition, I note that stakeholders' views on the proposed options were reflected only in a broader sense of general views on employment support programs, but that stakeholders were not consulted on the specific proposals considered in the RIS.



The RIS may now be provided to the decision-maker to inform their decision. We would appreciate you advising us when a final decision has been announced and forwarding a copy of the RIS in a form meeting the Government's accessibility requirements. The OBPR will publish the RIS, along with your certification and this assessment, on the OBPR's website at <https://ris.pmc.gov.au>.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Lange', written in a cursive style.

Jason Lange  
Executive Director  
22 February 2021