

Questions on Notice – Carina Garland, Assistant Secretary VTHC

“You said once disadvantaged jobseekers get a job they are more likely to be exploited. If you have any hard data around that that you could furnish the Committee with, not necessarily now, I think the Committee would be grateful to receive that, because if that is an issue which you have observed, then it is something that I think would be valuable for us to consider”

As our submission highlights, there are some groups who are most likely to be disadvantaged jobseekers. These include underemployed workers, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) workers, migrant workers, workers with disabilities and women workers. The rates of unemployment and underemployment for these groups can be found in our submission.

While there is not one measure associated with job seeking and exploitation at work, the evidence suggests the groups most likely to be affected by unemployment or underemployment are exposed to exploitation such as wage theft or gendered violence. Below is a brief recap of the differing types of exploitation within the labour force faced by these groups.

Young people are more likely to be engaged in casual, insecure employment. They are also one of the groups of workers most likely to be subjected to wage theft, as 1 in 5 young workers are paid less than the minimum wage.

Migrant workers are also subjected to gross wage theft; with 1 in 4 international students, and 1 in 3 backpackers reporting being paid less than \$12 an hour.¹ Industries that are largely dominated by migrant workers, for example, fruit and vegetable picking, and farm work are exposed to wage theft; with 15% of workers earning \$5 an hour or less, and 31% earning \$10 an hour or less.² Similarly, gig economy workers are largely migrant workers. Here, 3 in 4 riders are subjected to wage theft, with some being paid \$6.67 an hour.³ Migrant workers are also more likely to be employed through labour hire, a system rife with exploitation.

A&TSI workers are subjected to Commonwealth sanctioned wage theft through the Community Development Program. These workers are on unemployment benefits, and forced into ‘work for the dole’ programs. They are paid \$11.60 per hour, well below the minimum wage, and are not covered the Fair Work Act or OHS regulations.

Workers with disabilities can be subjected to a similar form of Government endorsed discrimination, through the Supported Wage System. This allows disabled workers to be paid according to their capacities. For example, a worker with a disability can be paid 70% of their wage if they’re assessed as having 70% capacities.

Women workers are subjected to gendered violence in the workforce; 64% of Victorian women workers report being subjected to some form of gendered violence at work. Further, 19% of Victorian women resigned from a workplace because they felt unsafe.⁴ The international Trade Union Congress (ITUC) also reports that worldwide 35% of women experience direct violence in the workplace and between 40–50% experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment.⁵

¹ Berg, L. & Farbenblum, B, *Wage Theft in Australia: Finding of the National Temporary Migrant Worker Survey*, November 2017

² *Ibid*

³ Young Workers Centre & Transport Workers Union (2018) Snapshot: On Demand Food Delivery Riders Survey

⁴ Stop Gendered Violence at Work Report: Women’s Rights at Work Report (2016) Victorian Trades Hall Council

⁵ ITUC: Statement on the occasion of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 24 November 2015, accessed <<http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-statement-on-the-occasion-of>>

Re the Armadale Youth Intervention Partnership – “Are the extra services, the structures that are around that employee, delivered through the employer or through a case manager? How does it work exactly?”

The Youth Intervention Partnership (YIP) specifically targets young people who are at risk of becoming engaged with criminal activity. It begins with an Intensive Engagement program, where there is typically one youth worker to five at risk young people. The young people are engaged in designing the program, which runs for about a year and can be a range of activities from sports, to excursions and classroom learning. The aim is to establish positive relationships and for the youth worker to draw out the aspirations and barriers of each participant.

From here, the participant, who self identifies areas for development and is assessed by the youth worker, undergoes tailored programs. These include life skills, access to resources and education engagement. While each of these programs are administered by a relevant service provider, the youth worker who holds the pre-existing relationship with the participant is involved and sometimes takes part with them.

This program began in the City of Armadale in Western Australia in 2014, and has now been extended to the South East Metropolitan region of Perth.⁶

VTHC considers this a good model for mentoring, particularly for vulnerable groups who may be undergoing a traineeship or be working after unemployment, as it is based around the needs of the disadvantaged participant, and brings together a range of organisations.

“Do other states and territories apply that same policy? Is there any other state that does that?”

The Indigenous Youth Mobility Pathways Project (IYMP) is a program with a similar structure, administered by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Young Aboriginal people undertake apprenticeships alongside support programs that aim to address barriers. VTHC notes the program only has specific locations, which do not necessarily meet Aboriginal students in their communities.⁷ A Victorian equivalent could be amended to run where students live.

⁶ Youth Intervention Partnership Model, November 2017

<<http://www.youthpartnershipproject.org.au/uploads/files/publications/YPPs%20YIP%20Model%20Nov%202017.pdf>>

⁷ <https://iymp.com.au/>