



# **More Empty Promises**

**An update of the *Empty Promises* report on the  
Textile Clothing and Footwear  
Structural Adjustment Package (TCF-SAP)**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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The TCFUA engaged two independent research consultants to conduct this current research to inform the submissions to the Federal Review of TCF Industries by the Victorian Government and the TCFUA.

The consultants are: Manu Peeters and Tricia Bowen.

The TCFUA also wishes to acknowledge the 80 workers who generously gave their time to undertake a phone survey and interviews used to support this research.

## **Executive summary**

### **Part A: Background to research**

The Australian Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Industry has undergone significant restructuring in the last three decades encompassing tariff cuts, changing government policy and increasing imports, which have led to enormous job losses across the nation. Since 1996 over 40,000 jobs were lost to the sector.

The previous Federal government implemented a \$50million Textile, Clothing and Footwear Structural Adjustment Package (TCF-SAP) in July 2005 to minimise the impact of restructuring on individual workers and their communities. Direct support for retrenched workers is administered through the Job Network, and is intended to provide immediate and intensive support and advice, together with training and retraining which addresses the particular needs and circumstances of TCF workers when they lose their jobs and livelihood.

The Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) immediately recognised the shortcomings in administering the TCF-SAP through the Job Networks. Workers who lost their jobs were continually missing out on the support and attention they needed and Job Networks remained almost universally unaware of the TCF-SAP initiative.

The Union commissioned the *Empty Promises* report, which was released in October 2006 (TCFUA, 2006). This report documented the alarming facts that in Victoria, over the first 13 months of the TCF-SAP, retrenched workers had no way of finding out about the scheme unless the Union told them about it before they lost their job and that when workers did sign up for it they received alarmingly low levels of support.

Recent data released for the Federal Review of the TCF Industries by the new Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR), confirmed how little of the \$50million allocated to the TCF-SAP has been spent on retrenched workers. Of the \$8.5million spent so far, \$6.2million (72%) has gone directly to employers, with the rest, \$2.4million, going to Job Network Providers. Of this only \$404,235 has been spent on 822 workers – an average expenditure of just \$492 as of 18th January 2008. The difference of over \$2million has gone directly to the Job Networks.

### **Part B: Research findings**

In order to update the research data presented in the *Empty Promises* report (TCFUA, 2006), a random phone survey, involving 80 TCF workers from 15 different Melbourne based and regional Victorian based companies was conducted in late June

and early July 2008. Five of this group also took part in extended focus group interviews. Of the 80 survey respondents, 56% were women and 46% were men, with respondents coming from a diverse range of language backgrounds.

The survey focused on gathering information around three key areas: knowledge of and experiences in accessing TCF-SAP support through Job Networks; experiences with training following retrenchment; and experiences in the labour market since retrenchment.

### **Knowledge of and experiences in accessing TCF-SAP support through Job Networks**

Responses collected from survey participants pointed to a strong level of dissatisfaction with the services offered by Job Networks. Of those who did register, 57% said that their Job Network was not at all useful in assisting them to find work. Only 16% indicated that they had regular meetings with Job Network staff. Only 9% said they received help from their Job Network to find a job, only 12% were sent for interviews and only 13% indicated that their Job Network had recommended and paid for some type of training. None of the respondents had received assistance through wage subsidies while only 5% were offered support through reimbursement of travel or other costs.

### **Experiences with training following retrenchment**

It is critical that the opportunity for training be offered early after retrenchment to provide workers with qualifications and skills that will enable them to apply for a range of jobs. Despite this, only 22% of respondents had enrolled in some form of training since their retrenchment. Of those who did no training, 70% said they could not consider training because of the financial constraints it would place upon them. Their priority had to centre upon earning an income to support their families.

### **Experiences in the labour market since retrenchment**

Only half (51%) of TCF retrenched TCF workers looking for work had found a job. However, those who find jobs are re-absorbed back into the workforce in insecure jobs on low pay. Of the women surveyed, 59% had only secured casual jobs with hours that continually changed, while 65% had only been given a verbal agreement on accepting their new position. Only 15% had been given a contract with conditions specified. The picture that emerged for men was little better. Only 28% had secured permanent positions, while 76% of those men who had found work indicated that they were given no contract for their job.

This recent research demonstrates that little has changed for retrenched TCF workers since the release of the *Empty Promises* report (TCFUA, 2006). Retrenched TCF workers continue to face difficulties in accessing TCF-SAP support, enrolments in training programs remain low and they continue to face difficulties in finding secure,

long term employment. However, there has been a recent shift in DEEWR's efforts to provide retrenched TCF workers with more meaningful access to TCF-SAP support, demonstrated by improved departmental documentation to inform workers of their entitlements. The TCFUA welcomes this as a positive step forward.

## **Recommendations**

With reference to the research findings cited in this report, the TCFUA urge the Review to recommend the following:

- Immediate redesign of the Textile Clothing and Footwear Structural Adjustment Package so that it:
  - is solely worker focused
  - delivers immediate, high quality, and flexible support
  - assists retrenched workers financially and through training to find appropriate and secure jobs..
- In order to achieve the above that a redesigned SAP/Worker assistance is implemented to:
  - delink training and job search assistance and limit the role of the Job Networks to job search/placement
  - provide training via TAFE with one-on-one identification of training needs and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC).
  - provide union/community based advocates to assist workers to navigate the system and provide early intervention when redundancies are announced.
- Provision of a non-means tested training allowance to retrenched workers and outworkers to enable them to undertake and complete accredited training courses.

With reference to additional recommendations outlined in the TCFUA Submission for the TCF Review May 2008, the TCFUA also urge the Review to recommend the following:

- Abolish the Restructuring Initiative Grants (RIGS) under SAP and make SAP assistance solely to assist workers and communities effected by restructuring.
- SAP/Worker assistance to ensure criteria for assistance is the worker's Award coverage not the company's SIP eligibility.

## **Part A: Background to this research**

### **Introduction**

The Textile Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industry has undergone significant restructuring in the past three decades. Falling tariff rates, shifting government policy and priorities, and increasing imports have had a dramatic impact on the level of employment in the industry, with a high of 130,000 workers in August 1986, more than halving to current levels of approximately 52,700 workers (TFIA, 2008a). While accurate estimates of employment levels are notoriously difficult in the sector (TCFL Forum, 2002; TFIA, 2008b), especially in view of the prevalence of outworkers (TCFUA, 2008), recent ABS census data show continuing job loss across Australia (48%) from 1996-2006 (ABS, 2008). The two states with the majority of Australian textile workers also suffered the most job losses, with Victoria dropping by 55% and NSW 49% (ABS, 2008).

Prior to the current Federal TCF review, the industry had been the subject of two major reviews since 1997, resulting in a reduction of TCF tariffs and the TCF Post-2000 and Post-2005 Assistance Packages. In its report to the government in 2003 the Productivity Commission, acknowledging the inevitability of further firm closures and job losses as a result of the proposed changes, recommended special labour adjustment support, which, they argued, could be provided through augmentation to the Job Network (Productivity Commission, 2003).

### **TCF SAP (2005-2015)**

In July 2005 the Federal Government launched a \$50 million Textile, Clothing and Footwear Structural Adjustment Package (TCF-SAP) to address the impact of restructuring. While it was created primarily to minimise the impact of restructuring on individual workers and their communities, the TCF-SAP is available to three different kinds of applicants – workers, communities, and firms.

The three elements are:

#### **Support to retrenched workers**

The support available to retrenched TCF workers through the TCF-SAP administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR - previously DEWR) is a commitment to provide them with immediate access to Job Network's Intensive Customised Assistance Support (ICAS). This support consists of a nominal \$1,350 amount available to retrenched TCF workers through the Job Networks' Job Seeker Account (JSKA), to be spent on training or other support deemed necessary to assist them to find work. Like all Job Network clients receiving Customised Assistance, retrenched TCF workers are also entitled to basic employment

advice and ‘employment marketing’ support through a Case Manager and specialist staff.

### **Support to communities**

The Regional Partnerships Program is administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. The projects must include partnerships between the TCF employers, community organisations, and retrenched TCF workers.

### **Support to firms**

Restructuring Initiatives Grants Scheme (RIGS) for employers is another discretionary grants scheme, approved directly through the Minister of Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (DITR), which is designed to assist companies to merge and restructure.

While there have been no funds granted under the ‘Regional Partnerships Program’, (see TCFUA, 2008, pp. 51-52) and the significant problems with the RIGS program have been documented elsewhere (TCFUA, 2008, pp. 41-43), this report focuses on the element of the TCF-SAP that specifically addresses the needs of retrenched workers through Job Network support.

### **Specialised needs of TCF workers**

With the announcement, by the then Industry Minister, Ian Macfarlane, of the new assistance package to be launched in 2005, the TCFUA immediately identified potential shortcomings in the TCF-SAP, including the administration through the Job Network. The Union’s experience with workers has identified that intensive, immediate and customised post-retrenchment support is critical in preparing retrenched TCF workers for re-entering the labour market. There is also support in the academic literature for targeted policy measures intended to ease the problems of ‘labour market adjustment’ (Standing, 1991; Buchanan et al, 1992; Weller, 2007).

Most workers in the industry have little experience in using the internet, or word processor packages and other electronic methods of communication, which are routine aspects of job seeking in this era. Few, with very long term histories in the industry, have experience with formal interviews, written skills tests, new technologies, registration with employment agencies or other contemporary aspects of employment. Many have survived very well with language and literacy skills limited to the particular work cultures and work environments where they have spent their working lives.

The majority of TCF workers have either English language needs or literacy and numeracy needs. Limited English language, literacy, numeracy, IT and job-seeking skills are a major barrier to finding new employment, as are physical ill-health, age and gender discrimination in the labour market, loss of self-confidence, and loss of working community, isolation and depression.



Outworkers, who are significantly affected by the impact of industry restructuring, are at an even greater disadvantage than factory-based workers, as their loss of work opportunities goes largely unrecognised and their isolation in the labour market makes them extremely vulnerable.

The TCFUA raised its concerns about the capacity of the TCF-SAP program to address the specialised needs of retrenched workers with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources (DITR) and the then Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) in early 2005, outlining logistical and quality issues that were likely to arise if TCF-SAP support was made available to retrenched workers through the Job Network system alone.

### **TCF-SAP - DEWR commitment and DITR promotion**

DEWR in early 2005 maintained that labour adjustment was a government priority and gave a commitment that the specialised needs of TCF workers would be addressed through the Job Networks by:

#### **Identifying retrenched workers**

TCF companies with over 15 retrenched workers would automatically contact Centrelink, which would trigger a Centrelink and Job Network response immediately.

#### **Reaching retrenched outworkers and factory workers no longer on site**

Job Networks could learn from 'other parties' how to reach TCF workers.

#### **Providing support and advice**

The Job Network would provide immediate and qualified intensive counselling, training and employment support assistance, and make \$1,350 available to each retrenched worker for a range of supports.

#### **Addressing language and literacy barriers**

The Job Network Intensive Assistance process would automatically involve an immediate language literacy and numeracy assessment and support.

#### **Reaching workers who come from a number of different communities**

Job Network members could pool resources and work together, as well as with other organisations.

#### **Providing ongoing mentoring, training and support in a casualised labour market**

Clients would receive a full six months of ongoing support after placement.

Promotional material from DEWR, available on the then DITR website, stated that the TCF-SAP package would allow the Job Network to spend money from a Job Seeker Account on such things as wage subsidies, increased training, purchase of equipment and transport assistance. Intensive assistance, including training in job search skills,

career advice, work experience, mentoring and face-to-face contact, would also be tailored to TCF workers' particular needs and circumstances.

However, during the first thirteen months of the TCF-SAP's operation, the TCFUA documented, in the *Empty Promises* report (TCFUA, 2006), clear evidence showing that the program had not met either DEWR commitments or the promise of assisting retrenched TCF workers as outlined in the promotional material.

## **TCF-SAP in 2008**

Figures released recently for the Federal Review of the TCF Industries confirm how little of the \$50million of TCF-SAP allocated funds have been spent on retrenched workers (DIISR, 2008). Spending so far has overwhelmingly benefited employers and Job Networks rather than retrenched workers. Employers have received 72% (\$6.2million) of TCF-SAP funding allocated by the Federal Government to 18 February 2008 through RIGS. Job Networks have been reimbursed approximately \$2.4million in that period, with few outcomes (DIISR, 2008).

Only \$155,019 has been expended from the Job Seeker Account, by Job Network members, on training for TCF workers – an average expenditure of \$491.77 per person despite the fact that the nominal allocated amount per person is \$1300.48. No figures have been released yet to indicate what portion of this money was spent on paying for retraining. Overall \$404,234.94 was spent on 822 workers, but the total cost of the program was \$2,417,731. The difference of \$2,013,496.06 has gone directly to the Job Networks (DIISR, 2008).

More recent figures made available to the Union from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), on the state breakdown of job seekers registered for assistance under TCF-SAP, highlight the lack of assistance reaching workers through the Job Network, and the vital role of special post-retrenchment support projects piloted by the TCFUA (see *Empty Promises* report, TCFUA, 2006). Out of 863 workers registered for assistance nationwide as of 25 April 2008, only 40 were from NSW, a state which saw a decline of 49% in TCF workers from 1996-2006 (ABS, 2008). On the last count the TCFUA in NSW is aware of approximately 930 retrenchments from Feb 2005 to Feb 2008 (TCFUA, 2008).

Victoria and Tasmania endured similar dramatic loss of TCF jobs in the decade to 2006 – Victoria 55% and Tasmania 32% (ABS, 2008). In these states, on the other hand, 431 and 178 workers respectively were registered for assistance according to the new DEEWR figures. While these numbers in no way represent the full extent of TCF jobs lost in these states, they are indicative of the benefits to workers of concerted and targeted assistance backed up by advocacy and support, which the Union has undertaken and funded through projects in Victoria and Tasmania since 2005. No such advocacy or support projects have been available in any other State or Territory.

## Empty Promises report

The TCFUA in Victoria carried out research in 2006 to record the significant and alarming failings of the Federal Governments Post-2005 SAP support for retrenched workers in the TCF industries. The *Empty Promises* report encompassed a random phone survey of 110 TCF workers retrenched since the introduction of the latest iteration of SAP, and documented two special post retrenchment support projects with TCF workers retrenched in the research period (1 July 2005 – 30 July 2006). The majority of workers interviewed indicated they had received little or no support under the Government program, and analysis of the data revealed that SAP had failed to address the long-term negative impact of retrenchment on TCF workers.

The report findings were that:

Retrenched TCF workers had no way of finding out about the TCF-SAP unless the Union told them before they left the workplace.

Job Network staff responsible for delivering the package were unaware of the package or the details of its implementation unless the Union notified them.

Retrenched TCF workers, who signed up for SAP assistance through the Job Networks, experienced a disappointingly low level of support. They largely accessed no training or reimbursement funds, very little case management and no active assistance in looking for a job.

The TCFUA experience with retrenched TCF workers showed that:

Keeping workers together as a group before and after retrenchment for support and training resulted in the best outcomes, in terms of confidence, training uptake and long term employment outcomes.

Providing sustained group and individual counselling, training and employment support for a period of twelve months after retrenchment is essential to good employment outcomes.

Workers from the TCF industry often require long term skill development in English language, literacy, numeracy and computer education as well as certificate based courses to maximise their chances of re entering the workforce at a competitive level.

The Union's recommendations in *Empty Promises*, that a revised model of TCF-SAP delivery should encompass: (1) clear and accountable monitoring and public reporting; (2) the funding of independent TCF SAP project officers; and (3) worker eligibility for SAP framed by the work undertaken by employees, not solely the company eligibility for SIP, fell on deaf ears.

The response from the previous Federal government was entirely inadequate – workers have, in the intervening years, continued to lose their jobs, the TCF-SAP is still failing them and, even when it does reach them, it fails to deliver on its promises to meet the real needs of retrenched workers.

The Union therefore believes it is vital at this time, when the industry is again under review, to document the experience of workers who have lost their job, the frustrations felt by those faced with an inadequate (and often absent) response from Job Network Providers, and the poor outcome of the TCF-SAP in providing effective assistance to those affected by restructuring.

The following section outlines the result of yet more ‘Empty Promises’, and makes recommendations for a redesigned Structural Adjustment Package, which is entirely worker focused.

## **Part B: Research findings**

### **Introduction**

The Victorian Branch of Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) recently engaged two consultants to undertake a research project in order to update the information presented in the *Empty Promises* report (TCFUA 2006).

A random phone survey, involving 80 TCF workers from 15 different Melbourne based and regional Victorian based companies, was conducted in late June and early July 2008. These workers had been retrenched in the period August 2007 to June 2008 and represented approximately 20% of the retrenched workers tracked by the TCFUA during that time.

Five of this group of 80 also took part in extended focus group interviews. With participants' permission these interviews were audiotaped.

The survey and interviews focused upon asking retrenched workers a series of questions around three key themes:

- knowledge of and experiences in accessing the TFC-SAP support through Job Networks
- experiences with training following retrenchment
- experiences in the labour market since retrenchment.

As TCF workers come from a diverse range of language backgrounds, interpreters were employed to assist with gathering information from four of the larger language groups: Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek and Macedonian.

A copy of the survey used is included as an appendix to this report.

### **General information regarding survey respondents**

Of the respondents, 56% were women and 44% were men. Of those surveyed, 84% were over 40 years of age, while 56% were over 50.

The language backgrounds of the survey respondents differed markedly. The four largest language groups were; English speaking background 20%, Vietnamese 16%, Chinese 10% and Croatian 9%. The remainder were from a variety of non-English speaking backgrounds. See complete list below:

Language	Number in Total	% of Total
English	16	20%
Vietnamese	13	16%
Chinese	8	10%
Croatian	7	9%
Italian	6	8%
Macedonian	6	8%
Greek	6	8%
Filipino	4	5%
Turkish	3	4%
Maltese	2	3%
Romanian	1	1%
Albanian	1	1%
Arabic	1	1%
Singhalese	1	1%
Portuguese (Brazil)	1	1%
Timorese	1	1%
Lebanese	1	1%
Polish	1	1%
Indian	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

## The findings

### 1. Knowledge of and experiences in accessing TCF-SAP support through Job Networks

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed indicated that they were aware of the TCF-SAP. In fact, 91% said that they knew of the TCF-SAP and their entitlements to immediate support from Job Networks and 82% of these said that they had found out about the TCF-SAP directly from the TCFUA while the remaining 18% suggested they had been made aware of the TCF-SAP through the Centrelink, TAFE or Job Network information sessions organised by the TCFUA.

*The Union organised the meetings when we were retrenched. They came a few times. It was helpful. We'd been retrenched and we needed to know what we could do next. They explained what we could do, classes, training, superannuation, all of those things. They told us about registering for different jobs. That was a relief. I can tell you.*

Of the survey respondents, 58% signed up for Job Network support immediately after retrenchment. The large majority of these registered at office locations in the Western, outer Western, outer Eastern or Northern suburbs of Melbourne, while 13% indicated that they had registered in Geelong and other regional Victorian towns. The Job Networks identified were:

Sarina Russo IPA Salvation Army Employment Plus	Interact AMES Yes West St Lawrence Work Co.	Max Employment Matchworks Tracey Replacement Group
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Of those who did not register for Job Network assistance:

- 11% indicated they were not looking for work because of health issues or choosing to retire
- 7% said they had wanted to look for work through other means such as friends, family or agencies.
- 23% suggested they had found work without registering with a Job Network

Responses collected from survey participants pointed to a strong level of dissatisfaction with the standard of service offered by Job Networks. Several key areas of concern were identified:

#### **Lack of one-to-one support and case management services**

Of those who had registered for support 57% suggested that their Job Network was not at all useful in assisting them to find work and 40% said they'd had no meetings at all with Job Network staff. Only 16% of respondents indicated that they had had meetings on a fortnightly or weekly basis while the remainder said that they had only had one initial interview.

*I asked for help. I went in every week but I never heard from them.*

Case management is the main service that a Job Network can provide to retrenched TCF workers, in that it can link a newly retrenched worker back into the labour market. The lack of case management support provided to retrenched TCF workers who were confident enough to register for the advertised SAP support, demonstrates that career and course counselling, job seeker support and reverse marketing to employers does not take place through the Job Network system, particularly where there is no external advocate.

*A 39-year-old mother of two registered at a Job Network after being retrenched in February. During her first visit she was told that they couldn't help her because she wasn't receiving Centrelink payments. She was told she was welcome to use the computers there.*

*She contacted the TCFUA who immediately contacted the Job Network on her behalf reminding them of the SAP support available to all retrenched TCF workers. The Job Network contacted her again for an interview where she was told they could register her as a sewing machinist looking for work. She told the Job Network she didn't want to be limited to only this type of work and was keen to investigate other job opportunities.*

*But she heard no more from the Job Network so she contacted family and friends for leads. By this stage her redundancy pay was*

*running out and she and her husband were becoming increasingly fearful of meeting their mortgage payments.*

*During this time, she regularly used a friend's computer to complete job searches. On one of these occasions she found a job, listed on the website of her Job Network, which she was very interested in. It was not a sewing machinist position, so she hadn't been contacted by the Job Network regarding this opening. She decided to apply. She prepared her resume, without Job Network support, and was asked in for an interview. She was offered the job and is now working for the company full time.*

### **Poor quality of service**

Only 9% of respondents indicated that they were helped by the Job Networks to find a job. Only 12% said they were sent to interviews.

*I was retrenched in February this year. They gave us four weeks notice. Straight away I went to the Job Network. I gave them my paper work. A woman there said they would take it upstairs and do the photocopying. When she came downstairs, she told me not to expect anything too soon. Then I never heard from them.*

*I had no interview. I didn't hear anything. Then a few days later my friend rang me. She had found a job and they'd asked her if she knew of other people. Straight away she gave them my phone number. They rang me and I went for an interview and I started on the following Monday. But that is not the point. I was lucky enough to get a job through my friend, but if I was not lucky, I might still have no job from the Job Network.*

*I spoke to the Union about this. They rang the Job Network and they said they had no record of me being there. So I went back there with the same papers. I told them that I was there because I knew I was entitled to more benefits, towards study and those things. First she said I don't understand what you are talking about. She said, 'I don't understand a word you're saying.' So I tried to make it clearer. Then she said, 'I can't help you.' She said 'there is nothing for you here.' She didn't know anything.*

One respondent in a regional town also described the severe limitations placed on the quality of service offered by Job Networks that are located in rural communities.

*Because it's a rural community, jobs are limited. Job Networks are competing with each other. There was one cleaning job I heard about but it was with the other Job Network in town. I hadn't registered with them because they only come to town once a week.*



*They just set up this office in this other building for half a day a week. I thought it would be better to register at the Job Network that was in town all week.*

### **Misleading and inaccurate information**

Only 17% of those surveyed received Centrelink payments following their retrenchment. Most indicated they were ineligible because of their redundancy payments or because their spouse was working. Yet many of those who registered at Job Networks were incorrectly informed that they were ineligible for support because they were not receiving payments from Centrelink.

*I went into the Job Network office but they told me because I wasn't receiving Centrelink payments I wasn't entitled to their help.*

Retrenched TCF workers, looking for work, often leave the industry eager, experienced and willing to take work. Yet many of the survey respondents described comments made by staff at Job Networks that undermined their confidence and their enthusiasm in regard to re-entering the labour market.

*The people at the Job Network kept on putting me down, telling me that a woman like me in my 50's should not expect anything.*

### **Minimal referrals to training and course counselling**

Only 13% of those surveyed suggested that their Job Network had recommended and paid for some type of training. One survey respondent suggested that he had asked for training in order to obtain his forklift license but his request was refused. Another described seeking help to get their driver's license and being knocked back.

*My Job Network told me they couldn't help me but said I could use their computers. I don't know anything about computers. I didn't feel I could tell them that, so I asked my daughter for help. I did it all from home.*

A lack of training and support has a significant impact on the range of work opportunities available to retrenched TCF workers. It is critical that training possibilities be identified as early as possible after retrenchment so that they can then apply for a range of jobs.

The majority of TCF workers have either English language needs or literacy or numeracy needs, significant barriers to finding new employment.

*I need a job. The Job Network told me they couldn't find me work and said I'd be better off just improving my English. But I want a job.*

Although many job seekers are regularly told by Job Network staff that their English is not good enough, they are rarely referred to local English language classes. Staff at many Job Networks are often unaware of the range of local English classes available and indeed other courses to assist in building upon employability skills.

### **Minimal expenditure on job seeker support**

Only 5% of those surveyed said they were offered assistance through reimbursement of travel or other costs. None of the survey respondents had received any assistance through employer wage subsidies.

*I needed to buy some special work boots for a job. The Job Network told me the location of a shoe shop where I could buy them but told me they couldn't help me to pay for them.*

Despite the promises of the TCF-SAP package, retrenched TCF workers who sign up for assistance through a Job Network receive little access to reimbursement funds and a low level of support and active assistance in looking for a job.

## **2. Experiences with training following retrenchment**

Retrenched TCF workers who do return to the workforce with no training are often re-absorbed back into the manufacturing sector in insecure, casual jobs. It is critical the opportunity for training be encouraged and offered early after retrenchment to provide retrenched TCF workers with qualifications and skills that will enable them to apply for a range of jobs.

Of the survey respondents, 91% indicated that they had been made aware of their training options following retrenchment through information sessions organised by the TCFUA.

*I'd like to do some training, so I could do something more important. But I don't have many skills, much school you know, to do something better. I was thinking I'd like to do a course for working in a coffee shop or something like that, maybe Food Handling. But I chose computers. I don't know whether I can do training when I am working. But I'd like to get more skills with my English. Sometimes I can't speak well. Sometimes I say one word that doesn't connect properly with the English.*

Despite most survey participants' positive response to the idea of training, only 22% had enrolled in some form of training since their retrenchment – 8 men and 10 women from the total group of 80 survey respondents.

Most significantly, 70% of those who did no training after retrenchment said that they could not consider training because of the financial constraints it would place upon

them. In their words, *'I have to work. I need the money'*. There are families to support and mortgages or rent to pay. Their priority had to centre upon finding work and earning an income in order to support their families.

*I've got to work. My husband works five days a week night shift. We have two kids. My son is 10 and my daughter is 3. We need two incomes just to pay the mortgage and get by. I can't think about training. I'm 39 now and I reckon I've got to be working for at least the next twenty years to support my kids.*

Only 5% of survey respondents said they were thinking about doing some training in the future. A further 10% cited health issues as stopping them from taking part in any training, while 9% indicated they were reluctant to step into a classroom because of their age or perceived lack of English.

*I went to an information session about training but I didn't really want to do much except English. I didn't get much schooling. My family was a big family. I only went to grade six. I'd like to learn a bit more. I'd like to learn how to write a letter. I'd really like to do something for myself. I've never been able to afford to pay for it. I am so willing to learn.*

Of those who did some training, four of the men obtained forklift and/or truck licenses, while the other four men completed a Basic Computer Course. Four of the women enrolled in English courses, two women did a Basic Computer Course, while only four completed vocationally oriented, accredited Certificate Courses.

### **3. Experiences in the labour market since retrenchment**

Of the survey respondents, 77% indicated that they had looked for work since retrenchment. Of this group, 60% were women and 40% men. Women described looking in the manufacturing sector, as well as in hospitality and service industries while the men had looked in the areas of logistics, warehousing, transport and manufacturing. All survey respondents indicated that they had used informal networks, family, friends and work associates in order to find work as well as trying to get help through Job Networks.

Only half (51%) of those who had looked for a job since retrenchment had found some type of work. The survey also showed that the majority of those who had found work since retrenchment had only found casual and unstable jobs.

A bleak picture emerged from many of the women responding to the survey. Of the women who had found work, 59% only had secured casual positions with hours that continually changed. Only 21% of the women surveyed had found permanent jobs.

*I found my job myself. It's ok. It's a job. Five days a week. It's casual and full time. But its one of those jobs where they can say,*

*tomorrow I don't need you anymore. It's like that. But maybe if I work hard or if I have a chance I can stay. But I don't really know if I'm going or coming. It's like that. It's casual. That's the way things are today for us with this casual work.*

The research also revealed that retrenchment has had a significant impact on the pay and conditions offered to many of these women. Of those who had found jobs, only 65% had been given a verbal agreement on accepting their new position while only 15% had been given a contract with conditions specified. The remainder suggested that they were given letters on commencement but no conditions had been specified.

Of the women who had found work, 54% revealed that while their hourly rate of pay was the same, they had lost all conditions, such as sick leave, annual leave and holiday pay. A further 23% indicated that their hourly rate of pay was actually less than it had been prior to retrenchment.

*My new job is not heavy at least. I don't have to lift anything off the shelf. They can't tell me how long it will last. I guess I can just take one day at a time. They said it could be weeks. It might be months. It's hard to get up at 4:30 in the morning. I try to not let it get to me.*

The picture that emerged from the men was no better. Only 28% had secured permanent positions, 76% who had found work were given no contract for their job, 47% said they were earning less since their retrenchment, while only 17% described earning more.

Of those who said they had not looked for work since retrenchment, only 9% described being offered jobs immediately after retrenchment, while 13% cited health issues as stopping them from looking for work.

Many retrenched TCF workers who find jobs re-enter the work force via casual and insecure jobs on low pay. Providing sustained group and individual training and employment support, together with a non-means tested training allowance to enable them to complete accredited courses is essential to good employment outcomes.

## **A way forward**

This recent research clearly demonstrates that little has changed for retrenched TCF workers, since the release of the *Empty Promises* report (TCFUA, 2006). They continue to face difficulties in accessing SAP support via Job Networks. Job Network staff have remained unaware of the package and the details of its implementation unless the Union has notified them. Enrolment in training and re-skilling programs remains poor. Consequently, retrenched TCF workers continue to face difficulties in finding secure, well-paid jobs, while long-term employment outcomes remain elusive.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest there has been a recent shift in DEEWR's commitment to provide retrenched TCF workers with more immediate and meaningful

access to SAP support. Most specifically, significant efforts have been made by DEEWR to ensure all documentation aimed at informing workers of their entitlements under SAP is more accessible, reader-friendly and relevant to the target audience. The TCFUA welcomes these initiatives as a positive step forward.

## **Recommendations**

With reference to the research findings cited in this report, the TCFUA urge the Review to recommend the following:

- Immediate redesign of the Textile Clothing and Footwear Structural Adjustment Package so that it:
  - is solely worker focused
  - delivers immediate, high quality, and flexible support
  - assists retrenched workers financially, and through training, to find appropriate and secure jobs..
- In order to achieve the above that a redesigned SAP/Worker assistance is implemented to:
  - delink training and job search assistance and limit the role of the Job Networks to job search/placement
  - provide training via TAFE with one-on-one identification of training needs and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC).
  - provide union/community based advocates to assist workers to navigate the system and provide early intervention when redundancies are announced.
- Provision of a non-means tested training allowance to retrenched workers and outworkers to enable them to undertake and complete accredited training courses (see section on a TCF Labour Market Program in TCFUA, 2008, pp. 44-50).

With reference to additional recommendations outlined in the TCFUA Submission for the TCF Review May 2008, the TCFUA also urge the Review to recommend the following:

- Abolish the Restructuring Initiative Grants (RIGS) under SAP and make SAP assistance solely to assist workers and communities affected by restructuring.
- SAP/Worker assistance to ensure criteria for assistance is the worker's Award coverage not the company's SIP eligibility.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Phone survey form

Date of interview ...../...../.....

Name .....

Company .....

Date of retrenchment ...../...../.....

Hello I'm ..... and I'm undertaking research for the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union.

The union is phoning people who have been retrenched to see what experiences they have after retrenchment. We are hoping to find out as much as we can so we can improve the situation for retrenched workers from the Textile Clothing Footwear industry.

If you are happy to, I'd like to talk to you about what has happened since you were retrenched. The information I collect today from you will be completely confidential and your name will never be used in relation to the information.

Do you have about 15 minutes to answer some questions? (if not make another time) .....

I understand you were retrenched from .....

I want to ask you about 3 things. The support you received from Job Network, your experiences of training and your experiences of finding work.

### Section A: Receiving support through a Job Network

1. When you left the company did you know that you were entitled to immediate support from the Job Network as a retrenched TCF worker?

Yes       No

If no, go to **Section B**. If yes,

- a) How did you find out about it?

Union  
 Employer  
 Centrelink  
 Job Network  
 Other .....

2. Did you join a Job Network when you left the company?

Yes       No

If No, why not? (**Go directly to Section B**)

.....  
.....  
.....

If Yes,

a) Which Job Network did you join?

(name of agency) ..... (suburb).....

3. When you registered with the Job Network, did you receive extra support straight away or did it take time to recognise you as entitled to extra support?

Straight away       It took time

a) How many weeks did it take after you registered before you received extra help? .....

4. Did you find the Job Network was useful?

Yes       No

If No, why not?

.....  
.....

5. What did the Job Network do to help you? (Prompts) Tick the box

- write your resume
- recommend and pay for training
- find you a job
- send you to job interviews
- call you into the office to discuss your options
- pay a wage subsidy to the employer
- petrol money
- cover the costs of books, clothes, equipment for work
- other.....

a) Did the Job Network refuse any requests that you made for assistance? If so,

What was refused?.....

Why was it refused?.....

b) Did you have regular meetings with the Job Network?

Yes       No

c) How often did you meet with someone from the Job Network?

- weekly
- fortnightly
- monthly
- occasionally
- other.....

d) Did you find the meetings helpful and supportive?

Yes. Why?.....

No. Why?.....

6. Do you receive Centrelink payments?

Yes       No

If No, why not.....

If Yes, how have you found your dealings with Centrelink?.....



**Section B: Training**

1. After you were retrenched did you do any training/courses?

- Yes       No

How did you find about training or courses?

.....  
.....

If No, go to **Question 3**

If Yes,

a) What course/s did you do?.....

b) How many hours was the course?.....

c) Did you get any help finding the right course for you?

- Yes       No

d) If Yes, Who helped you and how?

.....  
.....

e) If you did a training course, did it help you?

- Yes       No

If Yes, How do you think the training course helped you?

.....  
.....

2. Did anything stop you from doing training?

- Transport  
 Financial Issues  
 Language  
 Childcare  
 Casual work commitments  
 Class was full  
 Other.....

3. Are you planning to do any training courses in the future?

- Yes       No

If Yes, What training course is it?.....

**Section C: Employment experiences since leaving**

1. Have you looked for work since you were retrenched?

- Yes       No

If No, answer the following questions:

a) Why are you not looking? .....

b) Are you happy with your situation at the moment? .....  
Can you explain?.....

If Yes,

- a) Have you had any job interviews and if so, tell me about them?  
.....  
.....
- b) What kind of jobs have you been looking for? (specify- factory, cleaning, driving, outdoor, other) .....
- c) How have you been looking? (internet, friends, family, door knocking, labour hire, Job Network, paper).....
- d) How many hours a week do you want to work? (full time, part time, afternoon, around childcare etc).....

2. Have you found any work since you were retrenched?

- Yes       No

If No, move to **Section D**

If Yes,

- a) How many weeks or months did the job/s last?
  - one – two weeks
  - two – four weeks
  - one- three months
  - three- six months
- c) Was the job:
  - full-time permanent
  - full-time casual
  - part-time permanent
  - part-time casual
  - casual with hours that change
- d) Did you get a contract for your job?
  - no, just a letter
  - no, just a verbal agreement
  - yes, but just a casual contract with no conditions specified
  - yes, a workplace agreement with conditions specified
  - yes, an enterprise agreement contract with conditions
- e) Are you happy with your pay and conditions?
  - Yes       No
- f) Are you happy with the number of hours you work? (If no, why?)
  - no, not enough
  - no, too much
  - no, too irregular
  - no-, other.....
  - yes

g) How would you describe your average rate of pay in the work you have done since leaving?

- \$10-15
- \$15-18
- \$19-22
- \$23-28
- Other.....

h) Do you earn more, less or the same as when you were retrenched?

i) What kind of work have you been doing?.....

j) Do you think this kind of work is suitable for you?

- Yes                       No

Explain.....

**Section D: Personal details**

What is your age? .....  Male       Female

What language do you speak at home? .....

What is your cultural background? .....

Thanks very much for your time.

Goodbye.

**Section E: Issues to follow up**

Issues arising for follow up throughout the discussion

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....