
Unemployment in the Community 2168 Area

Improving Access to Resources for
People who are Unemployed

*Centre for Health Equity Training
Research and Evaluation*
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Executive summary

In the 1996 Census the unemployment rate in postcode 2168 was 17.9% (excluding Hinchinbrook) which was higher than Liverpool LGA (10.4%) and the Sydney Metropolitan Area (9.4%).

The aims of this report are to:

- ❖ Explore the nature and extent of unemployment in the area
- ❖ Consult with service provider's people and who are unemployed on ways in which services and programs could be most appropriately developed and delivered.

The project that was undertaken had three components:

- ❖ Defining the nature and extent of unemployment in the 2168 area
- ❖ Consultation with unemployment service providers
- ❖ Consultation with people who are unemployed

Nature and extent of unemployment

An analysis of Centrelink data using SPSS found that in March 2000 there were 1690 persons receiving unemployment benefits (excluding 15-21 year olds). Of these, over half of those unemployed had been unemployed for more than 12 months; three-quarters were males; and people from English Speaking Backgrounds and people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds were represented with similar numbers, however the people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds were over-represented.

Views of service providers

The views of service providers were obtained were obtained using semi-structured interviews. Service providers were selected via a mapping exercise at three levels: I) local community organisations such as clubs, churches and resident groups; ii) government and non-government services based in the area; and iii) government and non-government services based outside the area but providing services to the area. Eighteen staff were interviewed from the service providers that were identified.

Service providers identified the youth as being the main priority group, followed by people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds. Service providers identified barriers for each "priority group", as well as general barriers faced by persons who were unemployed. Service providers also identified barriers which may be faced by unemployed persons accessing their

services, such as lack of awareness of services, lack of communication skills, personal factors, and barriers particular to job network providers/Centrelink.

Views of people who were unemployed

The views of 28 persons who were unemployed were obtained using focus groups and in-depth interviews and were analysed qualitatively. An attempt was made to include a range of “characteristics” of unemployed persons that were identified in the analysis of Centrelink data. Participants in the focus groups were selected through local job program and job network providers. Those who participated in the in-depth interviews were recruited through a local job network provider.

Persons who were unemployed felt that they faced several barriers to employment such as: less jobs available now, age (either too young or too old), individual barriers, the attitude of the person’s unemployed, addictions, and having no work history or experience. Several initiatives to improve employment outcomes were suggested such as: intensive assistance on an individual basis, focusing on the attitude of the employer, program development such as exercise programs or business co-operatives, and at the policy level in creating more jobs and transport subsidies.

Similar views expressed by both service providers and unemployed persons

Service providers and unemployed persons both identified several barriers faced by unemployed persons. These included: age, the attitude of the individual, transport, low self-esteem, addictions, training, and problems with Centrelink. Both service providers and unemployed persons felt that there were gaps in services such as inadequate training and inadequate promotion of available services and programs.

Additional views expressed by service providers

Service providers highlighted additional barriers they perceived to exist for unemployed persons such as stigma attached to area 2168 with employers being reluctant to employ residents of the 2168 area, illiteracy/innumeracy, lack of English skills, and privacy issues concerns particularly for those with mental illness or addictions may make it difficult for staff to assist appropriately those in need.

Additional views expressed by service providers

People who were unemployed persons felt that there were fewer jobs available now, and that the government should create more jobs. Persons who were unemployed felt that the attitude

of the employer effected their chance of getting a job. Employers were seen to be able to be “choosey” and to make requirements such as for a driver’s licence and for own transport. The report concludes with several suggestions as to the way forward to address unemployment in the 2168 area. These suggestions include: engaging people who are unemployed in finding solutions, responding to the health and social problems of people who are unemployed, creating jobs, increasing training opportunities, targeting employers, and programs or ideas to address various problems associated with lack of transport.

Acknowledgments

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We would also like to thank and recognise the contribution of those people who were experiencing unemployment, and the openness with which they shared their experiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of a project commissioned by the 2168 Employment and Education Committee, under the auspices of the Community 2168 Project. Unemployment is a significant issue in the community 2168 area, but the extent and nature of the issue was unknown. The development of a profile of unemployment, along with consultation with Service Providers and those currently experiencing unemployment was seen as an essential step in planning appropriate services and programs within the 2168 area.

The Employment and Education Committee expressed an interest to explore ways in which the existing programs and services can effectively meet the needs of those currently experiencing unemployment. CHETRE was commissioned to undertake to address these issues through a short-term project.

In addressing these issues, a project was developed with three main components:

- Component 1: Defining the nature and extent of unemployment in the 2168 area
- Component 2: Consultation with unemployment service providers
- Component 3: Consultation with people who are unemployed

2. BACKGROUND

The State Government established Green Valley, (2168 postcode¹) as a new urban development project in the 1960s. This project was seen as a new model of providing low cost housing to people from low socio-economic background.

At Census 1996², Green Valley comprised 17.3% of the total population of the Liverpool LGA. There were 7,511 persons in the labour force and an unemployment rate of 17.9%, which was higher than Liverpool LGA (10.4%) and Sydney (9.4%). Of the 2168 population, 4.8% of the over 15-year-olds were enrolled in further education, which were lower than Liverpool (7.8%) and Sydney (9.4%). Almost ½ (41.8%) of 2168 population (weekly individual income) earns between \$120 - \$299 per week. One quarter (25.1%) of the 2168 postcode residents was born overseas in a non-English speaking country. Many of the dwellings in the 2168 area are rented (45.9%), and of those being rented, 80% are rented through the Department of Housing.

The Miller Innovative Health Partnership Project Annual Report, 1999 characterised the 2168 post code area in the following way:

- ❖ High levels of unemployment
- ❖ Health problems associated with unemployment
- ❖ Visible drug and alcohol usage
- ❖ High level of public disorder
- ❖ High levels of graffiti and vandalism
- ❖ Feelings of fear in the community
- ❖ Poor maintenance of amenities in the area
- ❖ Increasing discontent in the community about services provided to them
- ❖ Lack of recreational and vocational activities and facilities for young people
- ❖ Increasing number of empty dwellings
- ❖ Poor health status of the community
- ❖ Gradual decline in the quality of building stock in public housing

¹ The 2168 project area includes Ashcroft, Busby, Cartwright, Green Valley, Heckenberg, Miller, Sadlier, Hinchinbrook.

² Excludes Hinchinbrook

3. PROFILE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE 2168 AREA

3.1 Introduction

Although unemployment was known to be a problem in the 2168 area, the actual size and nature of unemployment in the 2168 area was unknown. This section of the report provides an overview of unemployment in the 2168 Area.

3.2 Methodology

- ❖ Originally a list was developed of key organisations working in the area that may have information of unemployment in the area. This included Local Job Network Providers, Working Proudly, Centrelink, Grow Council, Miller Household Survey, and ABS statistics. However these organisations/sources had very little data on patterns of unemployment within 2168 area only.
- ❖ Centrelink data was obtained from Western Sydney Regional and Research Service Limited (WESTIR). The most recent data set that could be obtained was March 2000. Data was analysed using SPSS version 10. This forms the basis of this section of the report.

3.3 Results

3.3.1. Number of unemployed persons in postcode 2168

In March 2000, there were 1690 persons receiving unemployment benefits (Centrelink, 2000). This number represented 16.6% of all unemployed persons in the seven postcodes of Liverpool LGA. However it excludes young people, 15-21 years of age, who may be looking for work. This age group is eligible for Youth Allowance, and this allowance is awarded for multiple reasons, eg. studying, illness and unemployment. From the available CentreLink data it was not possible to separate these categories. However, unemployed persons in the under 21 recipients of Youth Allowance in postcode 2168 (for February 2001), is estimated to be only 16.5% (156/994) whereas students make up 83.5% (788/994).

3.3.2. Age distribution of unemployed persons in postcode 2168.

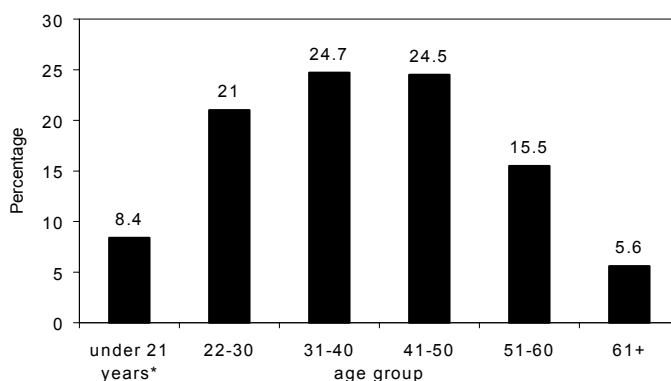


Figure 1 Percentage of person's unemployed by the different age groups in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney based on Centrelink data March 2000.

***February 2001 data.**

- ❖ Almost three fourths of persons who were unemployed were concentrated between the ages of 22 and 50 years. The distribution between these age groups is relatively even.
- ❖ The youth (aged less than 21 years) made up only 8.4% of persons who were unemployed.

3.3.3. Gender distribution of unemployed persons in postcode 2168.

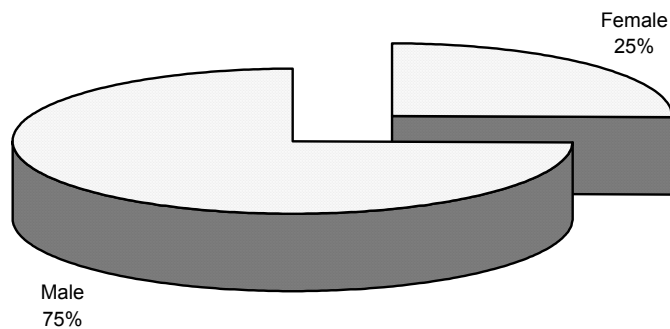


Figure 2 Gender distribution of unemployed persons in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney based on Centrelink data March 2000.

- ◆ Three quarters of unemployed person (n=1260) are males. Females make up only a quarter of persons who were unemployed (n=429).

3.3.4 Ethnic distribution of unemployed persons in postcode 2168.

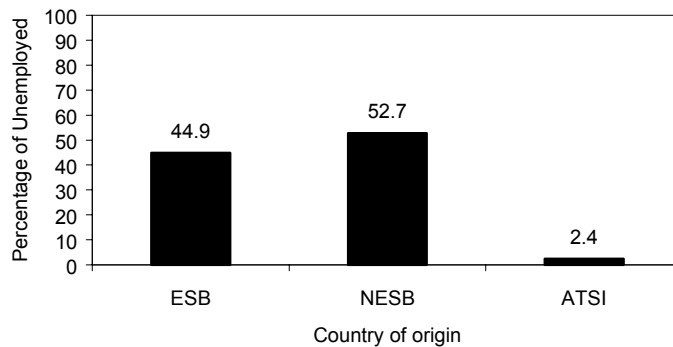


Figure 3 Percentage of unemployed persons by ethnicity in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney, based on Centrelink data March 2000. Ethnicity was deduced from 'country of origin': ESB= English speaking background, NESB = non-English speaking background and ATSI = Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.

- ◆ People from non-ESB were the largest group, making 52.7% (n=890) of unemployed persons. Given that people from non-ESB make up only 25.1% of the population in postcode 2168 (ABS 1996 excluding Hinchinbrook) this data shows that they are over represented in the population of the unemployed.

3.3.5 The duration of unemployment

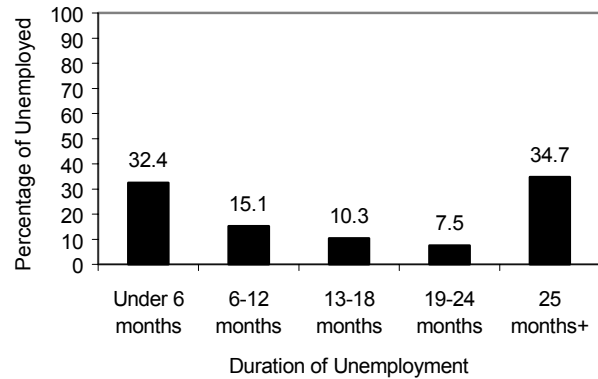


Figure 4 Percentage of unemployed persons by the duration of their unemployment in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney, based on Centrelink data March 2000.

- ◆ Using Centrelink's definition of 'long term unemployment' (ie. unemployed for more 12 months) 52.5% of people who were unemployed were "long term unemployed".
- ◆ Almost 1/3 of unemployed persons had been unemployed for less than 6 months.

3.3.6 Length of unemployment

The duration of unemployment may be used to measure an individual's or a group's experience of unemployment. This section describes the length of unemployment as a relative measure of the extent of unemployment within age, gender and ethnicity groupings.

(i) *The duration of unemployment in the different age groups*

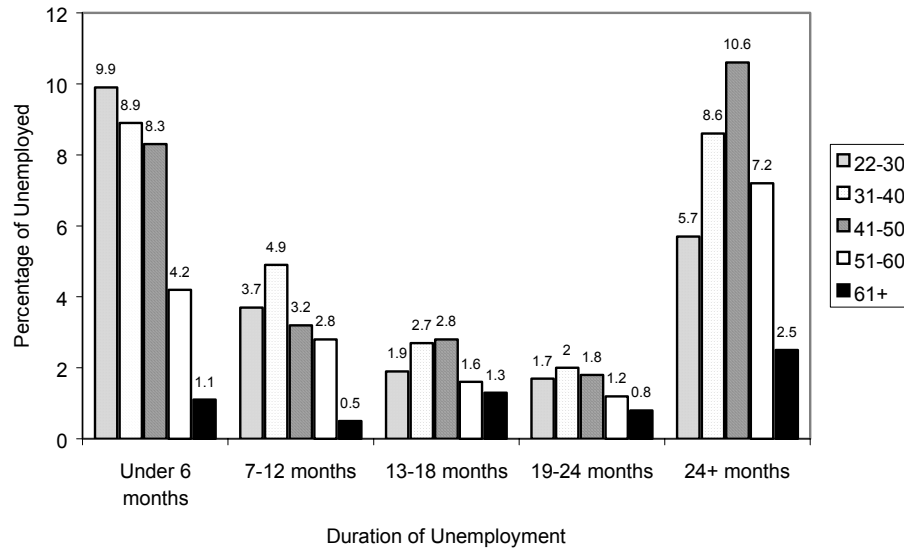


Figure 5 An overall percentage of unemployed persons in each age group by duration of unemployment in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney based on Centrelink data March 2000.

- ◆ Of all unemployed persons, 10.6% were of the 41-50 age group and had been unemployed for the longest period, followed by the 31-48 age group who made up 8.6% of the total number persons who were unemployed.

ii) The duration of unemployment by gender

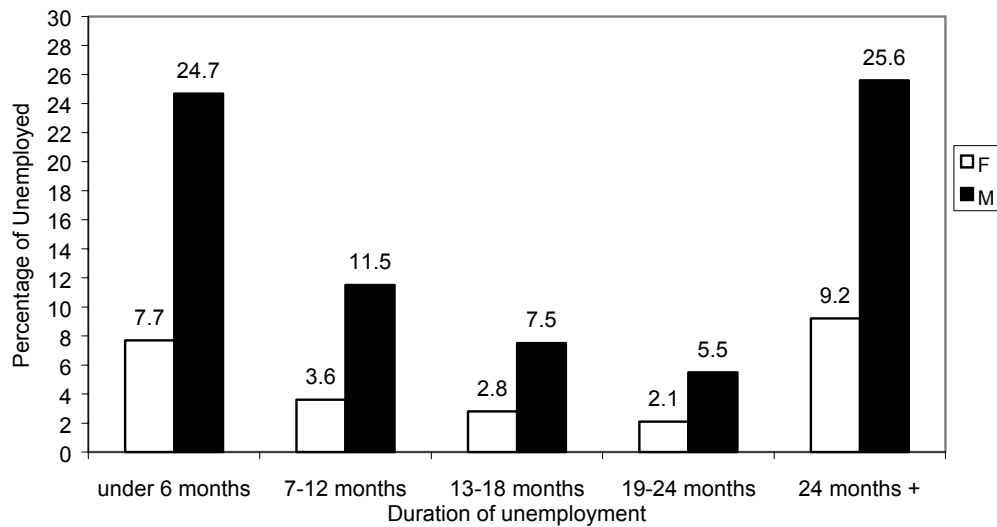


Figure 6 An overall percentage of unemployed persons of each gender by duration of unemployment in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney based on Centrelink data March 2000.

- ◆ Males outnumbered Females in all unemployment duration categories.
- ◆ Nine per cent of all people who were unemployed were females in the 'longest unemployed' category, and 7.7% were females within the under six month's unemployment category.

Table 1 Percentage of each gender across the categories of duration of unemployment.

DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MONTHS	<6	7-12	13-18	19-24	24+	TOTAL
FEMALES	130 (30.3%)	61 (14.2%)	48 (11.2%)	35 (8.2%)	155 (36%)	429 (100%)
MALES	417 (33.1%)	194 (15.4%)	126 (10%)	92 (7.3%)	431 (34.2%)	1260 (100%)
TOTAL	547 (32.4%)	255 (15.1%)	174 (10.3%)	127 (7.5%)	586 (34.7%)	1689 (100%)

- ◆ For both males and females the greatest proportion of unemployed persons were in the '24+ months' category (36% and 34% respectively).

iii) *The duration of unemployment in ESBs, Non-ESBs and ATSI's populations.*



Figure 7 The proportion of Non-ESB, ESB and ATSI over all unemployment by duration of unemployment in postcode 2168, Liverpool Sydney based on Centrelink data March 2000.

- ◆ The highest proportion of unemployed persons in the '24+ months' category (17.9% overall) were people from a non-ESB.

Table 2 The distribution of ESBs, NON-ESBs and ATSIs across the categories of duration of unemployment.

DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MONTHS	<6	7-12	13-18	19-24	25+	TOTAL
ESB	236 (31.1%)	117 (15.4%)	74 (9.7%)	55 (7.2%)	277 (36.5%)	759 (100%)
Non-ESB	292 (32.8%)	132 (14.8%)	97 (10.9%)	67 (7.5%)	302 (34%)	890 (100%)
ATSI	19 (37.5%)	6 (15%)	3 (7.5%)	5 (12.5%)	7 (17.5%)	40 (100%)
TOTAL	547 (32.4%)	255 (15.1%)	174 (10.3%)	127 (7.5%)	586 (34.7%)	1689 (100%)

- ◆ The highest proportions of unemployed persons in ESB and Non-ESB groups were those in the '24+ months' categories, (36.5% and 34% respectively).

3.3.7 Summary profile of unemployed residents of Postcode 2168 from March 2000 Centrelink data (excluding under 21 years)

Total number receiving unemployment benefits

- ◆ The total number of persons receiving unemployment benefits was 1689 persons.

Age, gender and ethnicity

- ◆ The majority of persons who were unemployed ranged between the ages of 22-50 (n=1299), and were evenly distributed within this range.
- ◆ Three quarters of unemployed persons were Males (n=1260). Females made only a quarter of unemployed persons (n=429).
- ◆ Compared to persons from ESBs, persons from NESBs constituted a higher proportion of the unemployed, 44.9% (n=759) for ESBs and 52.7% (n=890) Non-ESBs.
- ◆ Given that persons from Non-ESBs made up only 25.1% of the population of postcode 2168, this data shows that they are over represented in the population of people who are unemployed.

Duration of unemployment

- ◆ Using Centrelink's definition of 'long term unemployment' (ie. unemployed for more 12 months) 52.5% of people who were unemployed in postcode 2168 were "long term unemployed".
- ◆ The 41-50 age group (10.6% overall) were unemployed for more than 24 months, followed by the 31-40 age group (8.6% overall).
- ◆ Males outnumbered females in all unemployment duration categories.
- ◆ A quarter of all unemployed (n=431), were males within the category of 'longest unemployed' (24months or more).
- ◆ 9.2 per cent (n=155) of all unemployed persons were females in the 'longest unemployed' category (24 months or more).
- ◆ The highest proportion of unemployed persons for males and females were in the '24+ months' category (34%, n=431; and 36%, n=155 respectively).
- ◆ A fifth of all unemployed were people from Non-ESBs in the '24+ months' category (ie 17.9% overall, n=302).
- ◆ There were higher proportions of unemployed in the '24+ months' categories for both persons from ESBs and persons from Non-ESB (36.5%, n=277 and 33.9%, n=302 respectively).

Age distribution of female and male unemployed.

- ◆ The largest unemployed Female age group was between '22-30' (32% of women), whereas for Males it was the '31-40 age group' (30.4% of males).

Age distribution of persons from ESBs, Non-ESBs and ATSI unemployed.

- ◆ For persons from ESBs the majority of unemployed persons are from under 40 years of age group, whereas for people from Non-ESBs the age distribution is relatively evenly distributed through 22-60 age groups.

Gender breakdown of unemployed persons from ESBs, people from Non-ESBs and persons of ATSI backgrounds.

- ◆ Males make up three-quarters of unemployed persons in each ethnic grouping.

3.3.8 Limitations of Centrelink data

These data do not include persons not registered with Centrelink or those ineligible for unemployment benefits. For instance:

- ◆ Non Australians who rejoin their Australian spouses are not entitled for a period of time to unemployment benefits. This group may be among the most needy of persons who are unemployed for many reasons (language, culture and adjustment problems),
- ◆ Those who fail to comply with Centrelink diary requirements and mutual obligation activities,
- ◆ Those who may support themselves through illegal means (eg drug dealings, cash in hand activities etc), and
- ◆ Youth who are not eligible for youth allowance because Centrelink does not deem them as “independent”.

Another limitation was that the data provided did not allow for the identification of those who received youth allowance for either unemployment, ill health or studying.

3.3.9 Conclusion

The profile derived from Centrelink data describes a broad picture of unemployment in postcode 2168:

- ◆ Over half were long term unemployed (12+ months)
- ◆ Three quarters were males
- ◆ persons from ESBs and people from non-ESBs were represented with similar numbers
- ◆ But taking the population as a whole non-ESBs were over represented

However, this picture needs to take into account unemployed persons who are not registered with Centrelink.

4. SERVICE PROVIDERS PERCEPTIONS OF GAPS AND DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING SERVICES

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of component two was to obtain the views of service providers on gaps in service use and gaps/barriers to service use and barriers to unemployment for identified priority groups.

4.2. Methodology

Methods undertaken to complete component 2 included:

- ❖ Development of the interview guide
- ❖ Selection of service providers to be interviewed
- ❖ Conduction of interviews
- ❖ Data analysis

Interview guide

Interview questions were developed based on a survey utilised in the “Unemployment is a health hazard pre-conference survey” (1995)³. This was discussed with key stakeholders and modified accordingly. The interviews generally took approximately 40 minutes to complete (Appendix 1).

Selection of service providers to take part in the interviews

Service providers to be interviewed were selected in the following way:

- ❖ A “mapping exercise” was undertaken at the Community and Education Working Party Committee meeting held on 11th April. Members of the committee were asked to brainstorm services that they knew of that unemployed persons in the 2168 area might access. Committee members were asked to “brainstorm” services at three levels: i) local community organisations such as clubs, churches and resident groups; ii) government and non-government services based in the area; and iii) government and non-government services based outside the area but providing services to the area. This complete list was to be used as the basis of a directory of service providers in the area.
- ❖ From this list, a priority list of 11 service providers was established in consultation with key stakeholders. The list included representatives from the following organisations:

³ “Unemployment is a health hazard “ Conference Working Group (1995); proceedings of the 1995 Unemployment is a Health Hazard Conference.

- ❖ Local community organisations
 - Breakfast Club
 - Macarthur college
 - Westside Youth
 - Miller Youth centre
 - Youth refuge

- ❖ Government and NGO based in the area
 - Mission Employment
 - H&H Training
 - Miller TAFE
 - Wesley Mission
 - The HUB
 - Working Proudly

- ❖ Government and NGO based outside the area, providing services in the area
 - Salvation Army – Employment Plus
 - JPET
 - Centrelink

Conduction of interviews

Service providers were sent a letter explaining the background to the study, and asking their participation in the research. The researcher contacted them to arrange a time for an interview. Interviews were conducted face to face or by telephone. All service providers (except for one whose service was not relevant to the 2168 area) agreed to participate

The main researcher conducted all interviews, which allowed for standardisation; and expanded interview notes shortly after conducting the interviews.

4.3. Results

4.3.1 Priority groups

A total of 18 staff from the priority list of 11 services was interviewed. Graph 1 shows their responses to questions about their perceived priority groups of the unemployed. Most respondents answered this question in terms of the priority group for their particular service. Responses obtained (40 responses) were categorised into seven general groups. The youth and people from non-ESBs were the most frequently mentioned priority groups. Service providers then were asked their reasons for identifying a certain group as a “priority” group.

Asking the opinions of service providers was particularly useful in that they were able to respond to the interviews with “big picture” overview. Most were also experienced in unemployment in the area and dealing with issues related to unemployment.

Service providers were asked to identify who they thought were “priority groups” of unemployed persons in the 2168 area.

Table 3 Categories and their sub-groups generated from the interview with 18 service providers to the unemployed in postcode 2168. (More than one response per respondent possible).

Categories	Sub-groups (no of responses)
Youth (15/40)	-All youth (6) -15-20 years of age/16-19 years of age (2) -21-25 years of age/19-24 years (2) -poorly educated youth (1) -Second generation of unemployed youth (1) -Homeless, unemployed under 25 years (1) Youth, non-ESB (1) Youth, ex offenders (1)
people from Non-ESB (9/40)	-Non-ESB in general (5) -Non-ESB males (1) -Non-ESB retrenched males (1) -Non-ESB with Refugee visa status (1) -New people from Non-ESB migrants (<2 years) ineligible for Centrelink (1)
Persons with health problems (6/40)	-Special needs group -addicts to alcohol and drugs (3) -Disability (1) -Mental illness (1) -Ill/injured (1)
Women (5/40)	-Women no longer eligible for mother’s pension/returning to workforce (3)

Categories	Sub-groups (no of responses)
	-Single mothers (1)
	-people from Non-ESB (1)
Second generation unemployed (2/40)	
Retrenched workers (1/40)	
ESB males (1/40)	
Homeless (1/40)	

4.3.2 Reasons given by service providers for each group identified as a “priority group”

Service providers were asked to justify their selection of a group as a “priority group”. This section documents these justifications. The “groups” are presented from most to least frequently mentioned

The Youth as a priority group

Reasons given by service providers for identifying the youth as a priority group can be summarised as:

- ❖ Need for early intervention
- ❖ Need for Psychological support
- ❖ Existence of social factors that adversely affect youth’s opportunity for jobs
- ❖ Need for educational support

Need for Early Intervention

Unemployment service providers saw the need for early intervention as an important reason for considering the unemployed youth as a priority group in the 2168 community. The youth were seen as the “future of society” and to intervene early would cost less in the long run and improve the futures of young people. There was some concern that without early intervention, the youth would be at risk of continued dependence on welfare. In addition, the risk of unemployment leading to involvement in drug culture was expressed.

Need for support

Unemployment service providers highlighted several psychological reasons that the unemployed youth may be at risk of, and were reasons for the youth being a priority group. Some unemployed youth in the area may lack the support of parents, which may inhibit their ability to look for work. This included people from non-ESB youth whose parents may not know of the support available in Australia, and so may not be able to assist.

The youth were seen to be either at risk of losing their confidence through isolation or in having insufficient confidence to look for work. It was felt that young people may lack the knowledge and means necessary in changing career directions, or may be at risk of not holding work. It was mentioned that it was important for youth to know that “they can aspire to their dreams”. It was also mentioned that people from non-ESB youth might be affected by racism.

Social issues

Service providers were concerned that inexperience can make the young more vulnerable to aspects of unemployment. For example: youth are less likely to know their entitlements, they may be less likely to seek help, they may be more vulnerable to possible abuse by employers (eg/ working on trial for a week then dismissed) and they may need to be shown the way including “how to make connections”. Lack of opportunities to gain work experience was also seen as an issue, as was unemployed youth loitering in known drug dealing areas.

Education Issues

It was felt that some youth would find it difficult to find work due to leaving school early, having a poor attitude to education, and low literacy and numeracy skills amongst the unemployed youth of the 2168 area.

Persons from a Non English Speaking Background as a priority group

Reasons given by service providers for identifying people from Non-English Speaking Background as a priority group can be summarised as:

- ❖ Cultural issues
- ❖ Competitive disadvantage
- ❖ Prospective jobs limited
- ❖ Language skills
- ❖ Problems associated with refugee status

Cultural issues

Service providers identified several “cultural” reasons which could define people from non-ESB as a priority group of unemployed persons. For males in particular, it was seen that they

could face more pressure as they are seen to be the main bread winner - with this possibly making them at risk of depression as work may define who they are as a person. In addition it was thought that non-ESB males having to adjust to taking jobs "below them" compared to their job back home would mean they had "more distance to fall".

For women from non-ESB it was highlighted that in some communities it is culturally inappropriate for grandmothers to go out and work, and they have cultural obligation to look after grandchildren. In this way non-ESB women may be restricted in finding employment.

For youth from a non-ESB, it was suggested that the unemployed non-ESB youth might be expected to look after younger siblings, instead of looking for work. This could mean that unemployment benefits received might go to family income, which would lead to lack of independence and financial resources to look for work.

Competitive disadvantage/limited prospective jobs

Service providers indicated that there were several factors contributing to a limited prospective of jobs available or would make it harder for them to compete in the job market. It was mentioned that people from Non-ESBs may have to prove themselves more compared to ESBs ("have to jump through more hoops than ESB"), that lesser quality jobs are available to people from Non-ESBs ("if they get jobs they get dead end jobs"), and that they may have to take a job below their skills. In addition it was seen that people from non-ESBs were at risk of their skills not being recognised here with, for example, "highly qualified professionals working as cleaners".

In addition, the high number of people from non-ESBs moving into the area was seen as a reason for them to be a priority group, as was the difficulties faced for people from non-ESB retrenched males to find work as "positions that are available now are more for the youth in a particular field".

Language skills

Lack of English skills was highlighted as a reason for people from non-ESBs being a priority group. It was suggested that people from non-ESBs might stay with their own families and not learn English and that people from non-ESBs may require more assistance before they can access for example TAFE. The need for English bridging courses was highlighted.

More specifically, it was seen as difficult for retrenched people from non-ESBs to re-enter the work force with poor language skills.

Refugees – asylum seekers

One Service Provider specified that asylum seekers were a priority group. This was due the insecure nature of whether they would remain in Australia and possible perception of employer and this visa, which may lead to racism. This group is also particularly vulnerable as they lack the basics knowledge of “getting around” in a new country.

Persons with health problems as a priority group

Persons with health problems included: the disabled, those with a mental illness, those with an illness or injury, and those with an addiction. Reasons given by service providers for identifying persons with a health problem as a priority group can be summarised as:

- ❖ lack of services to 2168,
- ❖ government policy,
- ❖ problems associated with addictions.

Lack of services in 2168

Service providers mentioned that the disabled were at risk of being neglected and that they need to be given opportunities (for work), and there may not be enough resources in this area (for people with mental illness).

Government policy

One service provider suggested that the fact that people who are ill or have an injury are already distressed emotionally and physically and then have to “jump through hoops for the government” (to prove that they should be eligible for a disability support pension, instead of being required to actively look for work for Newstart allowance) is reason for them to be a priority group.

Addictions (drugs, alcohol, gambling)

The service providers who suggested that those with special needs as a priority group included those with addictions. The reasons given included the impact on the community as well as on the individual. The impact on the family and community was seen as an issue as those with addictions whereby they may “have no social conscience as they are just focused on their next hit, and they destroy themselves”. Addictions were also seen as a strain on health resources.

At the individual level, those with addictions were seen to at risk of other diseases such as HIV, psychosis. In addition it was thought that barriers related to addictions might prevent them from sustaining a job and it would be difficult for them to find consistent full time employment. Those with addictions were seen to be at risk of long term stress. It was also

considered that this group may not tell Centrelink of their problems and that each failure would affect self-esteem.

Women as a priority group

Reasons given by service providers for identifying women as a priority group can be summarised as;

- ❖ problems associated with women re-entering the workforce
- ❖ problems associated with being a single mother.

Women re-entering the workforce

Service providers identified women re-entering the workforce as a priority group of unemployed persons in the 2168 area. They were considered a priority group as they were no longer eligible for supporting mothers benefits, and they may suffer loss of income when going from supporting mothers benefit to unemployment benefits. In addition, women in this category were thought to be at risk of psychological factors related to low self esteem, and /or vulnerability (if have been left by husband). This group may face difficulties in making the transition from home to workplace, (particularly as they may not have worked for 20 years), and they may lack the skills required in today's work place.

Women from non-ESB were seen to be vulnerable as they may still have little English by the time their youngest has grown up and they are ineligible for supporting women's benefit. It was also mentioned that there is a lack of training resources available for this group. Lack of childcare was mentioned as a difficulty that women from non-ESB women might face when looking for work or attending training to get back into the work place.

Single mothers

One Service Provider identified single mothers as they are generally an "at risk" group simply due to the vicious cycle associated with being a single mother, where problems such as unemployment can simply compound the situation.

Second generation persons who are unemployed as a priority group

The reasons given by a service providers for identifying the second generation unemployed as a priority group were: they may have an attitude that they don't like school, they may have a low attention span – perhaps they didn't succeed, they may have no encouragement to succeed, education may have been a bad experience for them or they may have a poor family life.

Retrenched workers as a priority group

The reasons given by a service provider for identifying retrenched workers as a priority group were: retrenched workers can't find a niche to get back into the workforce; the unemployed in the usual retrenched age group may have high responsibilities such as bills to pay; and retrenched workers may be candidates for depression – “they have been employed for 20 years and now they are on the scrap heap”.

English Speaking Background (ESB) males as a priority group

The reasons given by a service provider for identifying males from an ESB as a priority group (although not as high a priority as other groups) were: issues related to transport such as loss of drivers license due to driver unregistered car, drink driving, and criminal records.

The homeless as a priority group

The reasons given by a service provider for identifying the homeless as a priority group was: they move around a lot and can't keep up with job applications; and they are at risk of getting “lost in the system”.

Ex-offenders as a priority group

The reasons given by a service provider for identifying ex offenders as a priority group was: how can they answer the inevitable question: “what have you been doing for the last few years?”

4.3.3 Barriers faced by priority groups in accessing jobs

Service providers were asked to give examples of barriers for each priority group that they identified. The barriers as perceived by service providers are presented in this section.

Barriers faced by the Youth

Service providers identified four broad barriers that unemployed youth face when looking for work. These were:

- ❖ Socio-economic barriers,
- ❖ lack of 'tools' for finding jobs,

- ❖ personal factors,
- ❖ age related disadvantages.

Socioeconomic barriers

Service Providers identified several barriers, which can be grouped as socio-economic barriers faced by youth in the 2168 postcode. These included issues related to stigma of being from the 2168 area, or indeed from the western suburbs. Financial hardships was also cited as an issue that could affect opportunities to find work in terms of transport and the ability to purchase suitable clothing for interviews and for the work place. It was felt that insufficient resources were provided for the youth. The homeless were mentioned as having extra difficulties related to no address for Centrelink payments and having no resources available to prepare for job interview. The stigma of being long term unemployed, (“not good record on your resume “) was mentioned as a barrier for this group.

Lack of tools for finding jobs

Several factors were identified as limiting the youth in the 2168 area in finding work. Some of these related to difficulties in simply not knowing how to go about looking for work including job search techniques and problems with filling in forms. Others related to the lack of work experience and skills this group has simply due to their age.

The gap in training programs was highlighted by service providers as a barrier for the youth finding jobs. The fact that programs such as “Skill Share” were no longer running and had not been replaced by a similar program was seen as a problem as was the fact that existing training programs, (e.g. training being available only for apprenticeships) were seen as being “inflexible”.

Illiteracy and innumeracy were mentioned as a barrier for this group in the 2168 area, as was lack of transport and simply a lack of local industry (which could have provided jobs). Lack of education for early school leavers was mentioned as putting a young person at risk of either no job, or part time work.

Youth from non-ESB were seen to have problems associated with language, they may also not have parental support to help with options. Youth from non-ESB may find it difficult to communicate with parents who may have little English, and they themselves may have little knowledge of their parents language and so may not receive parental support.

Personal factors

Service providers highlighted several factors related to self esteem and low confidence that may be a barrier for a young person looking for work. These included: “loss in confidence may keep them out of employment”, “a sense of hopelessness associated with long term

unemployment”, “a decrease in motivation”, and not coping with rejection and therefore at risk of opting out of looking for work altogether. Additionally, it was mentioned that youth might be at risk of substance abuse.

It was also acknowledged that some youth could have a poor attitude (eg. not wanting to comply with work place expectations) which could prevent them from keeping a job. It was thought that non-ESB youth may have high parental pressure to get a job as their parents may have given up a lot to bring them here.

Age related disadvantage (for the 20-25 age group)

Employees may prefer to train a younger unemployed person therefore paying them less.

Barriers faced by persons from Non English Speaking Background

Service providers identified five broad barriers that people from non-ESB people face when looking for work. These are:

- ❖ lack of ” tools” related to job search or work skills
- ❖ language problems
- ❖ cultural expectations
- ❖ perceptions of others
- ❖ psychological issues

Lack of “tools” related to job search or work skills.

Many service providers felt that people from non-ESBs faced the barrier of their skills not being used or skills under-utilised here in Australia, or that if they found work it would be limited to unskilled labour positions. It was thought that some people from non-ESBs might have been misled that there was a high demand for their profession here, and on finding this was not the case then having to readjust.

Some people from non-ESBs may not be familiar with the “Australian way” of job seeking or for example with using the internet to look for work. Lack of education was also seen as an issue for this group. Additional barriers mentioned included no childcare available and not owning a car.

Language problems

Service providers mentioned lack of English skills, problems in filling in forms and the fact that Skill Share (which used to have literacy and numeracy courses) no longer exists.

Cultural expectations

Some examples of barriers to finding work due to cultural expectations were given. These included: it may culturally not appropriate for grandmothers to go out and look for work – they may have an obligation to stay home and look after the grand children; expectation of older children (17-18 year olds) to stay home and look after younger siblings which would make them unable to go out and look for work; any centrelink benefits may go to the family purse and may not be used to further job search activities. An addition barrier mentioned was the cultural expectation to find a job quickly.

Perceptions of others

The possible preconceptions of employers coupled with little understanding of what these groups need were seen as additional barriers faced by people from non-ESBs.

Psychological issues

It was acknowledged that victims of trauma (refugees) might have a lot to work through before they are able to look for or keep a job.

Barriers faced by persons with health problems/special needs

Service providers identified four broad barriers that persons with a special need face when looking for work. These were:

- ❖ attitude of employers and staff,
- ❖ the nature of the illness or addiction,
- ❖ privacy concerns, and
- ❖ self esteem issues.

Attitude of employers and staff

Service providers felt that employers may be reluctant to employ persons with special needs. Examples of reasons given for this included: employers may have lack of trust and don't want to employ them; employers may have concerns with OH&S issues related to these groups; employers may be concerned about aggravating the illness; and the mis-perception that once someone has been sick they are no longer useful to society. There could also be discrimination in the work place (particularly related to HIV and Hepatitis B). The disabled should not be discriminated against in terms of job availability.

Nature of the illness/addiction

Service providers felt that the nature of the illness or the addiction itself affected an individual chance of getting or sustaining a job. This incorporated problems associated with not taking medication such as getting into fights (people with mental illness) and unreliability. Both employers and employees could be afraid of aggravating the illness.

Privacy concerns

People with special needs may be reluctant to tell Centrelink the nature of their illness or addiction. This means this group may not get access to the most appropriate form of assistance in finding work. The mentally ill could be concerned that if they are honest about their condition that they could be locked away.

Self esteem

As with most priority groups identified loss of self esteem (which could lead to depression and long term stress) was mentioned as an issue affecting this group.

Barriers faced by women

Service providers identified the following barriers that women (those not eligible for supporting mothers benefit) face when looking for work. These were: barriers related to not having worked for 20 years, their age, inexperience, lack of skills, change in technology since when they were in the work force, low self-esteem and self worth issues, transport, lack of childcare available, lack of knowledge in Australian system (non-ESB women).

Barriers faced by second generation unemployed

Service providers identified the following barriers that second generation unemployed face when looking for work. These are:

- ❖ attitude of parents/ lack of role models,
- ❖ unemployment is common in this area.

Attitude of parents

Service providers saw the negative attitude of parents towards work as a barrier to employment of the 2nd generation unemployed in this area. Additionally the parents may not value education (“illiteracy is a huge problem, somehow young people have fallen through the gaps”). In essence the 2nd generation unemployed “have grown up like this, they have seen they can survive like this and with cash in hand for illegal activities so why change?” and “If dad didn’t work, why should I?”

Unemployment is common

Service providers felt that since there were many people unemployed in the 2168 area it was difficult for unemployed people to have the perspective that life could be different.

Barriers faced by retrenched workers

The service providers identified the following barriers that retrenched workers face when looking for work. These were: they may be at a high level in their career, and employers can't afford to pay at that level (an employer will take a younger, less experienced person in preference as they won't have to pay as much) and employers expect that such a person will not last at a lower rate of pay.

Barriers faced by the homeless

A service provider identified the following barriers that the homeless face when looking for work. These were: they face the temptation of drugs which offers them an escape, lack of contactable address and phone number, lack of long term referees (lose contact with people), difficult to present clean and decent for a job interview, when you're living on the street, looking for work is not a priority

Barriers faced by ex-offenders

A service provider identified the following barriers that the ex offenders face when looking for work: they may not be ready to look for work, but they may get pushed into it, a lack of long term goals, have to explain what they have done over the last few years, and the temptation of using drugs.

4.3.4 Other barriers to accessing jobs in addition to those identified specifically for priority groups

Service providers were asked whether there were any additional general barriers (ie not particular to an identified priority group) faced by unemployed persons. These barriers may be grouped under the following headings: transport problems, attitude, lack of knowledge skills and experience; lack of opportunities for training, personal factors and other.

Transport

Transport was seen as a major issue facing unemployed persons. The issues related to public transport included: public transport being expensive for people on unemployment benefits; the limitations in bus routes (eg/ to the main industrial area of Wetherill Park), bus timetables not corresponding to shift work; and the long time taken for travel to areas of employment for eg/ 1/2 hour to Liverpool, 1.5 hours to the city). The fact that unemployed persons may not have a car was also mentioned in light of reducing an individuals access to job search potential.

Attitude

General aspects related to the attitude of unemployed persons being a barrier to employment included: “unemployed people may not want to be told what to do in the work place”, and unemployed people may choose to remain unemployed. The comment was also made that it may be difficult for unemployed persons to see a different lifestyle than what they are used to, which could decrease their motivation to being employed.

Lack of skills/knowledge/experience

Service providers felt that unemployed persons may lack knowledge regarding appropriate presentation for work, Centrelink procedures and available services to assist them in finding work.

Lack of opportunities for training

Service providers felt that it was difficult for unemployed persons to gain work experience, as employers may be reluctant to provide this due to insurance problems. Lack of skills and experience can mean that unskilled workers may only find casual or part-time jobs.

Confusion with Centrelink procedures

Service providers identified several issues they had observed affect unemployed people concerning their interaction with Centrelink. These mainly related to people simply not understanding Centrelink and the procedures and terminology, confusion with bureaucracy, and even the “high number of jobs required to look for per fortnight was setting up people to fail”.

The point was made that ideally it could be good in some cases for unemployed people to start with part time work and then go on to full time work, however the paper work required by Centrelink was a problem.

Personal issues

Personal issues making it difficult for the unemployed to find work included low: self-esteem, morale, and motivation (particularly for the long-term unemployed) and despair. It was also felt the unemployed might fear the unknown (workplace).

4.3.5 Barriers to accessing job service providers

Service providers were asked whether there were any barriers faced by unemployed persons in accessing unemployment service providers. These barriers may be grouped under the following broad groupings:

- ❖ Lack of awareness of services (general)
- ❖ Lack of communication skills/difficult to communicate with required forms etc
- ❖ Personal factors
- ❖ Barriers particular to centrelink
- ❖ Barriers particular to JNPs
- ❖ Other

Lack of awareness of services (general)

One of the most frequently mentioned barriers to accessing unemployment services was simply the lack of awareness that unemployed people may have regarding services available to them and where they can go for assistance.

Lack of communication skills/difficult to communicate with required forms etc

Lack of communication skills was seen as barrier to accessing unemployment service providers. This was seen mainly in terms of difficulties in understanding forms required by the services. Low literacy or poor English skills in general was also seen to be a problem, as was inexperience with using the internet.

Personal factors

Personal factors such as feeling “threatened”, feeling “dumb”, feeling intimidated (by staff – who are working while they are not) and being easily “put off” were seen as barrier to accessing service providers.

Barriers particular to Centrelink

Some barriers were identified that were specific to Centrelink. These included: problems understanding Centrelink forms, a fear of “big brother”, the impersonal nature of the bureaucracy, the fact that Centrelink may not be “client focused” or clients may not feel comfortable at Centrelink.

Barriers particular to job network providers

Possible barriers related to job network providers were in relation to JNPs not having enough time to spend with clients and those providers might have the emphasis on their work on outcomes to employment. In addition, due to the reimbursement system, a JNP may not be willing to spend the time on someone with “multiple barriers”. In addition, since Centrelink is not able to bias the JNP that they send a client to, there is a risk of a client being sent to a JNP that may be the most suitable for the client.

4.3.6 Main issues facing service providers

Service providers were asked: “What do you think are the main issues facing unemployment service providers at the moment?” Depending on the person being interviewed “service provider” was interpreted usually as either Centrelink or Job Network Providers. Alternatively some answered this question related to their own service/program. These issues may be grouped under the following broad groupings:

- ❖ Inadequate promotion of training
- ❖ Inadequate promotion of services
- ❖ Competitiveness between service providers
- ❖ Logistical issues
- ❖ Retaining clients
- ❖ Inappropriate referral related to confidentiality imposed by centrelink

Inadequate provision of training

Inadequate provision of training to unemployed people was identified as an issue facing service providers. This was in relation to: not being able to provide work experience, not being able to offer courses with enough subsidy for unemployed people to be able to do it, and the fact that there is only a training component provided for those on intensive assistance. Also the conditions attached to receiving the benefit could limit the chance to upgrade skills and access training alternatives. Lack of financial resources, which could be used for client training, was also seen as an issue.

Inadequate promotion of services

General comments were made around the need to promote services more, to improve communicating what services have to offer, and the need to target potential clients.

Competitiveness between service providers

Many service providers highlighted the fact that the need to make a profit between service providers and subsequent competitiveness was an issue, which led to little networking between services.

Logistical issues

Various logistical issues such as: Government expectations, high case loads, insufficient staff, high amount of paper work required gets in the way of working with clients were seen as issues affecting Service Providers. In addition, the fact that JNPs are required to report on clients who may breach their agreements, means that sometimes clients can get aggressive to JNP staff when their money has been reduced.

Retaining clients

It was mentioned that sometimes it is difficult to retain clients enrolled in their programs and that it was difficult to know what clients want.

Inappropriate referral related to confidentiality imposed by Centrelink

Service providers found that there were inappropriate referrals due to the confidentiality rules of Centrelink. This was in terms of the limited amount of information that Centrelink could provide a JNP about their clients (which has the potential to disadvantage clients)– and may also mean that staff are unprepared to deal with an aggressive client. These inappropriate referrals meant that some clients could be referred to a JNP where in fact they would benefit better from for example a “community support program” – which focuses more on life skills rather than work. The flip side of course is that some clients do not disclose these issues (for example addictions, mental illness) to Centrelink initially anyway.

4.3.7 Main gaps in services in the 2168 area

Service providers were asked: “What do you think are the main gaps in unemployment services?” These gaps may be grouped under the following broad groupings:

- ❖ Lack of training opportunities
- ❖ Issues related to clients
- ❖ Lack of networking between services
- ❖ Lack of “personal touch”
- ❖ Other

Lack of training opportunities

Lack of training opportunities was seen as the main gap in services provided to unemployed persons in the 2168 area. Some comments were linked to SKILLSHARE or CES labour market programs no longer being available and that there has been no equivalent replacement program. Other training opportunities besides TAFE were not seen to be available, and even there were seen as insufficient courses available at TAFE (“if you miss the twice yearly intake then you miss out”). It was suggested that having shorter modules instead of whole course would be more useful in meeting the needs of the unemployed people in the area. A comment was made that some unemployed people (particularly those for whom school may not have been a good experience) may see TAFE may be seen as a tertiary institution and therefore “out of reach”.

Issues related to clients

Service providers identified several client-related issues that they saw as gaps in unemployment services. These included: lack of awareness of services (JNP) available to help them; not knowing how centrelink works, unemployed not having a knowledge of technology, or not using the touch screens and the routines required to use the services may not suit the lifestyle of some unemployed persons.

Lack of networking between services

Lack of networking and resource sharing and the fact that service may only operate with their own clients was seen as a gap in current services available in the 2168 area. It was suggested that there needed to be links between employers, TAFE, schools etc and more interactions with school (more than just work experience).

Lack of personal touch

It was felt that some organisations might be lacking in the “personal touch” (caring, encouragement and support) and it was recognised that there was a need to “build a relationship with the person rather than an organisation”. There was a lack of programs in the area able to do this.

Employers

It was felt that there was little opportunity for “business mentoring” due to there being not many businesses in the area.

5.VIEWS OF PERSONS CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED

This section outlines the views of people currently experiencing unemployment on: problems/issues in accessing services, gaps in services and suggestions on initiatives that may improve employment outcomes. Persons required by Centrelink to actively look for work as well as those unemployed but not required to actively look for work were interviewed for this section.

5.1 Methodology

Methods included:

- ❖ Development of interview guides: I) in-depth interview; and ii) focus group interview guide
- ❖ Selection of unemployed persons to take part in: I) in-depth interviews and ii) focus groups
- ❖ Conduction of in-depth interviews and focus groups
- ❖ Data analysis

Interview guides

i) In-depth interview guide

Semi-structured questions were developed based on issues raised by service providers during component 2. Questions were also included in an attempt to try and capture the individuals personal experience with unemployment. Questions were sufficiently broad in the hope that “new issues” would emerge (see Appendix 2).

ii) Focus group interview guide

Questions were based on the experience gained from conducting the in-depth interviews. In addition, members of the committee who had offered to run the focus groups, and who had experience in unemployment issues were consulted and their suggestions were also incorporated into the interview guide (see Appendix 3).

Selection of unemployed persons to take part in the in-depth interviews and focus groups

i) *In-depth interviews*

To gain a broad overview of issues related to unemployed persons in 2168, a list of “desired characteristics” was developed from the Centrelink profile.

The desired list of characteristics of persons to interview included:

- ❖ Male, <21 years, non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 22-30 years, non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 31-40 years, non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 50-60 years, non-ESB

- ❖ Male, <21 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 22-30 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 30-40 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 40-50 years, ESB

- ❖ Female, 22-30 years, non-ESB
- ❖ Female, 30-40 years, ESB
- ❖ Female, 41-50 years, ESB
- ❖ Two persons unemployed due to addictions/health problems

This list was circulated to service providers who had indicated that they would not mind being a contact person for this part of the research and who were in a good position to contact the desired people. Service providers were asked to contact appropriate unemployed people on behalf of the researcher and ask them if they would be willing to participate in the study and whether they would allow their phone number to be given to the researcher to arrange an appropriate time to be interviewed. These people were then contacted by phone by the researcher and a suitable time for the interview was arranged.

ii) *Selection of unemployed persons to take part in the focus groups*

Two service providers offered to run the focus groups: Mission Employment and the Breakfast Club. The service providers who had offered to conduct the focus groups were given the above list as an “ideal” to base the participants of the focus groups on. The service providers were responsible for selecting and recruiting participants into the focus group, and for facilitating the focus groups.

Service providers used convenience sampling, whereby they recruited participants from pre-existing groups, which they were involved in. This resulted in one group of job seekers selected from Mission Employment and one group from the Breakfast

Club. One service provider decided to not use a particular group as they were negative about unemployment and the service and as they were involved in illegal activities they were not likely to be honest in a focus group setting anyway.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that as convenience sampling was used, the views expressed in these focus groups would be limited in that they are the views of those who are already using unemployment services. Thus not gaining the views of unemployed people who may not currently be reached by any unemployment program. It is acknowledged that there would be bias as staff involved in implementing that particular service provider facilitated the focus groups. Thus it was unlikely that participants be open about any negative aspects of the service, and indeed likely that they would be verbal in commenting on the positive aspects

Conduction of interviews/focus groups

In-depth interviews

All participants of the in-depth interviews were given a brief introduction to the study, told why they were asked to participate, and how the researcher had obtained their name. All participants were informed that their input was confidential, that their input would be anonymous, and that their name would be changed in the report. Participants were also told that they did not have to answer any question that they did not wish to, and that they were free to leave at any time.

All interviews were conducted by the main researcher, which ensured standardisation. Interviews generally took approximately 1.5 hours. Participants were paid \$20 to cover their costs.

Focus groups

All facilitators undertook a brief training session in focus group methodology⁴ to improve standardisation. Facilitators were given a suggested proforma to say at the beginning of the focus group which included: a brief introduction to the study, confidentiality (informed that their input was confidential, that their input would be anonymous, and that no names would be used in the report); participants did not have to answer any question that they did not wish to, and that they were free to leave at any time (Appendix 4).

⁴ Focus group training methodology was based on chapter 9 "How to run a focus group" from Howe, Degeling and Hall (1993) "Evaluating Health Promotion" MacLennan & Petty Pty limited

Consent was assumed when participants decided to stay and participate in the focus group. Participants were paid \$20 to cover their costs.

Data collection

The main researcher took notes for the in-depth interviews and focus groups. Notes were expanded shortly after the interviews and focus groups by the main researcher. Interviews and focus groups were analysed qualitatively.

5.2 Results – In-depth interviews

A total of 14 unemployed persons were interviewed out of the original list of 16. Three of these interviews were not included in the analysis as it was discovered during the interview that the respondent was not from the 2168 area.

The “characteristics” of those interviewed and included in the analysis:

- ❖ Male, 19 years, Non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 39 years, Non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 49 years, Non-ESB
- ❖ Male, 17 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 38 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 38 years, ESB
- ❖ Female, 33 years, ESB
- ❖ Female, 43 years, Non-ESB
- ❖ Female, 45 years, ESB
- ❖ Male, 31 years, Disability support pension
- ❖ Male, 47 years, Disability support pension

The following themes were generated when unemployed persons were interviewed about their personal experiences with unemployment; and their suggestions as to what could be done to assist them in finding work:

- ❖ The experience of the individual in job search
- ❖ Barriers to employment
- ❖ What they perceived would help them find a job
- ❖ Perception of job prospects
- ❖ The impact of unemployment on the individual
- ❖ The role of the government and unemployment

5.2.1. The job search experience

There were a variety of job search methods used by the unemployed people interviewed. Methods currently used included: word of mouth, newspapers, telephoning from the yellow pages, and knocking on doors. Respondents often commented that they rarely heard the outcome of their application from the employer and they had expected that they would.

Respondents also commented about their experiences with Centrelink. General comments referred to confusion with Centrelink forms for example: "I was completely confused by Centrelink.... however I was a mess the day it was explained (husband and child had recently left her)...it probably was explained.... I was so upset I didn't take it all in". Another separate issue related to Centrelink was the fact that unemployed young people may not be eligible for Centrelink payments as eligibility is based on parental income.

5.2.2. Perception of job prospects in the area

Persons interviewed varied in the amount of time they thought it would take them to find a job (eg/ some thought in the next week, others in the next couple of months even if they had been unemployed for the previous three or more months. Participants also felt that the government was lying (underestimating) the unemployment rate.

- ❖ *Trying to get a job was like "flogging a dead horse"*
- ❖ *"The government is lying about the number of people who are unemployed. The government should do a survey in real areas of unemployment, and not where unemployment rates are comparatively low"*
- ❖ *"The real unemployment figures in this area would be 70% - I don't believe what the government says is the unemployment rate"*
- ❖ *"About 30% of people in the area are unemployed – this would be more the Australian average"*

5.2.3 The impact of unemployment on the individual

Unemployed persons interviewed identified several factors which have impacted on their health, lifestyle and self-esteem since being unemployed.

Health

Comments related to health were related to inactivity and becoming unfit since becoming unemployed. One respondent linked lack of fitness whilst unemployed leading to depression, and suggested that unemployed people should be involved in an exercise program.

- ❖ *“Since being unemployed (my) lifestyle has changed a lot – (I) am not healthy, I have put on weight as I sit at home like a lobster waiting for employers to call”*
- ❖ *“When people are on the dole they get unfit, and people may get depressed (I used to get depressed but now I am exercising I feel better)”*

Lifestyle

Unemployed people said that their life style had changed a lot since being unemployed. This was mainly related to a reduction in income. Examples given for how a reduction in income had affected lifestyle included: not be able to go out as often, and having to live from day to day.

- ❖ *“I can no longer go out as much, I can no longer afford to go to the golf or the footy”*
- ❖ *“I have less freedom”*
- ❖ *“You have no lifestyle when you are on the dole and you just live from day to day”*

One respondent felt that there were more assaults and robberies as the government is paying people to stay home

Self esteem

Many respondents commented on the affect unemployment had on their self esteem. Comments were related to the stigma they felt was attached to unemployment and to feeling depressed since being unemployed. Some respondents felt the need to hide their unemployment status due to the value put on being employed in this society. Other comments were made in comparison to how they had felt when they were employed (happier, not depressed, more pride)

- ❖ *“Just because someone doesn’t have a job, it doesn’t mean they are a low life”*
- ❖ *(Being on the dole) is “degrading and ****”*
- ❖ *“It is embarrassing when people know you are unemployed”*
- ❖ *“Since being unemployed I have been depressed occasionally”*

- ❖ “When you are working you have extra height, you have money in the bank, and you have extra pride”

5.2.4 Perceived barriers to employment

Unemployed people identified several barriers to employment. Generally people responded in terms of barriers specific to their own situation, rather than listing broad barriers applicable to “groups” of unemployed persons. Also, some of the people interviewed found it difficult to articulate the barriers they faced. General barriers identified included: less jobs available now, age, individual barriers, the attitude of the individual, addictions and having no work experience.

Less jobs available now

Many respondents felt that there were simply fewer jobs available now. Some respondents felt that the reasons for this included: advances in technology reducing the need for human labor, the downturn after the Olympics or as a result of the GST, the need for experience (even for jobs where traditionally it was possible to learn on the job) such as machine operator, and that there were just less jobs available in the local area.

Some respondents remembered a time when it was very easy to find work but that now this was no longer the case. This was mainly in reference to “blue collar” positions /factory and labouring positions. It appeared that the availability of these jobs had decreased. Now it was seen that when applying for these kinds of positions it was necessary to already have experience, where in the past that was not the case. One respondent even remembered a time when employers financially rewarded employees for recruiting workers. (“I used to be able to walk straight into a job”).

Some respondents thought that there were fewer jobs available now due to automation and computers, so the need for human labour was reduced. It was also mentioned that there was a reduction in these jobs noticed after the Olympics and the introduction of the GST. With the reduction in available jobs in these areas, it was also felt that employers no longer cared about giving people a job, but rather there was a greater emphasis on making money now. (“..But now everything is becoming automated, and people don’t matter any more, only the dollar does”, “ ‘In the old days, people were looking for workers, and they didn’t expect experience – you only needed about 1 week to learn how to operate the machinery” .)

Some respondents felt that it was up to the government to create more jobs and that there wasn’t enough to go around. The labour market was felt to be highly competitive.

Age

Respondents perceived there to be barriers to employment either due to being too young or too old. The respondent who mentioned being young as a barrier referred to “when you are under 18 years it is hard to get a car, and without a car it is hard to get to interviews”

Other comments referred to a respondent perceiving that now employers would consider them too old and that they would prefer a younger worker that they could pay a lesser wage. One respondent felt that the age of being “too old” to find employment had been reduced from 45 years to 35 years. Others felt that around the age of 40 it was difficult to find work.

Individual barriers

Several barriers to finding work were identified specific to the individual. These included: Not having a driver’s license or a fork lift license. Other factors making it difficult for the individual to find work referred to the difficulties faced by those with a criminal record, (as in employers don’t trust someone with a criminal record), and problems related to addictions. The difficulties with trying to find work while being homeless was also mentioned. Without a base it was difficult to prepare for job interviews, and in fact it may not be your first priority.

Attitude of the person who is unemployed

Interestingly, even though a person themselves was unemployed, they often said the reason why other people were unemployed was their attitude:

- ❖ *“The main problem people face when they are unemployed is their attitude. Basically it (getting a job) is up to the individual and if someone wants a job they have to get out there and get it”*
- ❖ *“Jobs are there if you look, but some people just don’t look”*
- ❖ *“Some people just don’t want to get a job”*
- ❖ *‘...Its just that people don’t want to work...people just need to try hard enough”*
- ❖ *“I know a lot of people who are just not trying to get work, and they can get the pension/dole too easily. I know a lot of people who are claiming sickness benefits and just spending their days at the pub and gambling”*
- ❖ *“Some of my friends want to work so they can take their girlfriends out. Others don’t really care, they can get money from the government from sitting at home, as well as making enough money on the side”*
- ❖ *“I don’t want to bludge, I want to earn money”*

Addictions

Some of those interviewed perceived that drugs were related to unemployment issues. This was seen in terms of “drug addiction can lead to unemployment and unemployment can lead to drug addiction”, and that the “the drug problem (in the area) will only get worse if unemployment stays the same. For those with an addiction, it was seen as a problem when the

addiction affected work performance, thus not being able to obtain a reference or a referee to use in trying to find work “ I didn’t have anyone who could say that I was a good bloke”. Another comment related to drugs was made and that was: –“For those dealing drugs and getting a good income, why would they look for work?”

No work history/experience

Respondents felt that employers required specific work experience before they had a chance getting a job. This was seen as a “catch 22” as it was appeared not possible to get a job without experience, and yet it was not possible to gain experience without a job. Some respondents said they would be willing to work for a trial time without payment so they could gain the experience.

- ❖ “When I am asked whether I have experience I say: “When I work for you I will gain experience” and they say “no, you already have to have experience”

A problem associated with not having a work history was an issue for people who have a criminal/gaol past. This was seen as barrier when employers asked the inevitable question regarding an applicant’s experience.

- ❖ “When people ask where I was educated I have a problem – most of my education I got in long bay”

5.2.5 Initiatives that may improve employment outcomes

To gain participants views of regarding their suggestions as to what in their opinion would improve employment outcomes, participants were asked: What would help unemployed people (you or others) get a job? Most respondents mentioned barriers specific to themselves and their own situations such as a driver's licence or a colleague or referee who would put in a good word. Other initiatives were grouped into factors at: employer, program level and policy level.

At the personal level

The following issues were identified as factors that would help someone get a job: being adequately prepared for a job interview/ applying for jobs (having a good resume, assistance with the Internet, someone to put in a good word, presenting yourself well for an interview); having licences which are essential for a position (eg/ fork lift licence); having a drivers licence/own transport (it was perceived that many employers considered a drivers licence and own transport were essential for an applicant to be suitable for a position, and that being able to get to a work place by public transport was not sufficient, it was also difficult to attend interviews without a car); having a better attitude to work and interviews (see section on barriers related to attitude); and support, encouragement/ and the importance of building up peoples motivation and enthusiasm was also seen as import in helping people get a job.

- ❖ "Without a \$300 suit, a car or a resume, you don't have a chance"

At the employer level/attitude of employer

Respondents identified several barriers to employment that were perceived to exist at the employer level. These barriers included: not being willing to give someone a trial period (including unpaid experience), discrimination for people of non-ESB, discrimination if you are person from ESB trying to get a traditionally "Non-ESB type job", discrimination if you don't have your own transport, employers having too high expectations, and the reluctance of employers to hire someone with a criminal record.

- ❖ *person from non-ESB: "when I ring up for a job and they hear my accent they say sorry the job is taken" [he tells this story: one day he called about a job and was told that the job had been taken. His friend (sitting next to him) who also came from the same country, but whose accent was less pronounced rang 10 minutes later to ask about the same position – they asked him to come in for an interview]*
- ❖ *Jobs require you to have transport – employers think if you don't have a car you may not be able to get there (work) on short notice"*
- ❖ *"Employers need to change their idea that you have to be Einstein to do a job"*

Program level

There were several suggestions made that could be implemented at the program level. Suggestions included: training in technology or retraining into another field, exercise programs for people who are unemployed, and the suggestion that a business co-operative could be established and implemented by unemployed people.

Policy level

Some suggestions made could be implemented at the policy level. These included: creating more jobs (even if they were at the minimum wage, rather than “work for the dole”- which was seen to be a token effort to get what one would receive anyway), the promotion of services (increase awareness) to assist people who are unemployed, transport subsidy, consultation with people who are unemployed, there was also the perception that the government did not care about people who are unemployed, that they were lying about the number of unemployed people in the country, and that there are more assaults and robberies as the government is paying people to stay at home.

- ❖ *“Work for the dole is not a good idea – a person needs to know that they have a real job (even at minimum wage) – not some token effort to earn what they would get anyway”*
- ❖ *Consult the people affected by the issues-“The government doesn’t have a clue to the real issues that people face when they are unemployed, as they haven’t experienced it themselves. The politicians are making decisions even though they don’t know what it is like”*

5.3 Results - focus groups

There were two focus groups conducted. One focus group was formed from members of the Breakfast Club, and the other group was formed from an existing group “job club” at Mission Employment.

The “characteristics” of those interviewed included:

Group	Gender	Age	NESB/ ESB	Education	Type of job looking for?	Length of unemployment
1	Male	17	ESB	High School	Professional	< 6 months
1	Male	17	NESB	TAFE	Customer Service	> 12 months
1	Male	19	ESB	High School	Sales person	< 6 months
1	Male	20	NESB	TAFE	Professional, Clerical	< 6 months
1	Male	28	NESB	High School	Machine Operator	>12 months
1	Female	32	ESB	High School	Sales person	>12 months
1	Male	35	ESB	High School	Machine Operator	< 6 months
1	Male	36	ESB	TAFE	Trades person, labourer	< 6 months
2	Female	19	NESB	TAFE	Professional	< 6 months
2	Male	18	NESB	High School	Professional	< 6months
2	Male	18	ESB	High School	Tradesperson, Labourer	< 6 months
2	Male	58	ESB	-	Machine operator	< 6 months
2	Female	20	ESB	High School	Clerical	< 6 months
2	Male	19	ESB	High School	Labourer	< 6 months
2	Male	17	ESB	High School	Machine Operator	< 6months
2	Male	30	ESB	High School	Labourer	< 6 months
2	Male	50	ESB	TAFE	Clerical	> 12 months

The following themes were generated within the two focus groups:

- ❖ Current job search methods
- ❖ Perceptions of available jobs in the area
- ❖ Resources/services currently accessed by people looking for work
- ❖ Initiatives that may improve employment outcomes
- ❖ Perceived reasons for unemployment
- ❖ Difficulties faced by unemployed persons in looking for work

5.3.1. Job search methods

Participants in the focus groups were asked how they go about looking for work. Various methods were used including: Newspapers, word of mouth, Cold canvassing, Centrelink-touchscreens, Job Network Providers, Internet, Referral by friends relatives, Job Agencies and door knocking.

5.3.2 Perceptions of available jobs in this area

The types of jobs thought to be available in the 2168 area included: factory/industrial work/process work; Builders labourers; retail (Franklins, kitchen hand, Mc Donalds); and in the Public transport sector.

5.3.3 Difficulties faced by unemployed persons in looking for work

Lack of motivation/giving up/lack of confidence

Maintaining motivation and confidence whilst looking for work was seen to be difficult.. Participants mentioned the possibility of giving up, and that “you have to have a strong attitude as you get so many knock backs... (and you think) is it me?” It was felt that years ago, people really wanted to work, now people give up.

The issue of confidence was also seen to be important in relation to undertaking training to become more employable. People may in fact require confidence before they consider undertaking training. The importance of services for the unemployed incorporating encouragement to their clients was discussed. Motivation and support from parents was also seen to helpful when looking for work.

Employers expectations

Employers want to know what you have been doing in the last 6 months. One person suggested that you need to “Just have to lie and get a friend to say you have worked” “They (employers) are the kings and queens and we are the slaves” if they say unsuccessful, you feel put down.

No jobs

Participants in the focus groups felt that there was simply not enough jobs “out there”.

Inadequate knowledge/qualification

It was generally expressed that a lack in qualifications made it more difficult to find work. Even for “storeman type jobs, (they) don’t want you if (you) don’t have computers – everything is based on computers”, and participants felt that they needed assistance with computers.

The importance of formal training “to say on paper that you have qualified – need certificate or diploma” was expressed. One respondent felt that “Australia is big, heaps jobs, everyone here will get a job, if (I) had done TAFE course 3 years ago (I) would have got a job”

Some respondents expressed regret that they had left school too early – that they didn’t know what to do at that time, and that they needed a goal to stay at school.

Government not doing anything

Those attending the focus groups felt that the Government wasn’t doing anything and that the government didn’t help. Some people blamed John Howard for the unemployment problem.

The notion at the government didn’t understand was expressed: “The government doesn’t see as they are not in our shoes” and that the “politicians (should) live on a small income – they don’t understand and they should “get off their high horses and see what it is like”.

Difficulties with transport

Transport was highlighted as a difficulty in looking for work. This was in terms of cost of public transport, with several suggestions made to reduce this difficulty: public transport subsidies, cab charges and reimbursement of public transport costs. Transport was a difficult issue in that employers often require an applicant to have their own transport.

Financial issues

Several aspects of the job search process were said to be difficult due to not having enough money to undertake training, to buy a car, or to purchase a licence.

5.3.4 Resources/services accessed by unemployed persons in trying to find a job

Unemployed persons mentioned several programs or services that they have accessed in trying to find work. These included Centrelink and Job Network providers. Other resources included the career advisors and notice boards at TAFE; High School teachers; various Job Agencies and parents, friends and families. Those from the focus group comprised of participants from the Breakfast Club had used the Breakfast Club and the HUB to assist them to find work.

5.3.5 Initiatives that may improve employment outcomes

The opinions of unemployed persons were sought as to what would help them in finding a job. Participants were asked: “What kinds of things would help people get a job?” and “if you were given money for a program, how would you use the money?” Suggestions were made at the following levels:

At the personal level

There were several factors mentioned at the personal/individual level, which were thought to improve employment outcomes. These included: the importance of a “professional looking” resume with assistance in “wording”; self-esteem, support (like at the Breakfast Club) and encouragement; having a licence (drivers, backhoe licences); having your own car; and having experience in the position (which was thought to be especially difficult for the young).

Participants recruited from the Breakfast Club, felt that the “Breakfast Club “ program was particularly helpful, particularly with regards to the “personal touch” confidence building aspects.

Training

There were several suggestions made relating to the usefulness of training in improving employment outcomes. This included training in using computers and the Internet. In addition, participants in the Breakfast Club focus group suggested that short “workshop” style training could be run within the Breakfast Club setting. Although training was considered important, it was also considered expensive. It was suggested that courses could be run in the areas of computers, forklifts, first aid, OH& S, carpentry etc, what to do if you want to learn a trade? It was also thought that there needs to be more courses at TAFES and that there should be more TAFES. One participant mentioned that she has to go to Hornsby for a course at TAFE.

Transport

Several suggestions were made relating to transport issues that would make it easier to find work. Comments were generally made in relation to the high cost of public transport (“it is possible to spend \$40-\$50 per week if fully looking for work”), and the need for an improved public transport system in terms of timetables and reliability (late buses/trains are difficult), the fact that having own transport is often listed as an “essential requirement” in job advertisements. It was suggested that an “all day travel pass” similar to a pensioners day pass would be a good idea.

Travelling to Liverpool, Bankstown, Parramatta was felt to be OK (if you could get there by direct route), but if you have to change trains then things could be difficult– just a bus ride, also OK to go to Parramatta if there is a chance to get a job. One participant turned down a job in Artarmon as it took 2.5 hours each way to travel. Although others felt travelling to Wetherill Park or Smithfield is difficult.

Nothing can be done- there a fewer jobs available

Some participants felt that little could be done as there is an “open market” for bosses, and they can pick and choose; and that the situation is getting worse year by year. It was felt that

this is no-ones fault – its just the way it is, and that as technology improves, there are fewer jobs available.

Program level

Some participants from the Breakfast Club focus group suggested that more Breakfast Clubs could be established – particularly for the support, the assistance in looking for a job and resumes, and the “help to get you started so you are not by yourself”.

It was also felt that services that were already available to assist the unemployed should be advertised. The suggestion was made that unemployed people could start a business where they could hire people.

It was suggested that programs could be developed where people on the dole could do work required by council such as gardening and cleaning up the area. It was also suggested that courses could be offered through the dole.

5.3.6 Perceived reasons for unemployment

More people looking for work – not enough jobs available

The participants in the focus groups discussed the fact that there were simply less jobs available now (due to more technology, whereas “before everything was more manual and more staff were needed-leading to a feeling of hopelessness”). Employers see a lot of people out there, so can justify what they want – there is lots of competition.

Insufficient skills or experience

Not having adequate skills or experience was seen as a difficulty in finding employment. This included not having the high qualifications such as for TAFE/Uni that are often requested. Experience is required even for jobs like cleaning.

Lack of English skills

Those that don't have much English skills need to do an English course before being able to find work.

Poor attitude / giving up

It was felt that some people didn't want to work. It was also felt that by getting lots of knock backs that people can give up trying and may lack motivation (young people may require encouragement and help from their parents).

Lack of education/knowledge

It was felt that early school leavers have difficulty finding work, as they do not have the education specified for the advertised positions. Some participants recommended that school students should be encouraged to stay at school, as it is easier to get into TAFE if you have done Year 12. It was felt that those who left in year 10 may not have got the support/help to get into the work force – therefore may not be working in the job they want. Counselling at school in terms of determination and confidence was also suggested. Additionally, young school leavers are not prepared for the work force and may take the first job offered to them. It was felt that employers were expecting too high a level of education for the jobs advertised. (“Why do you need the HSC to be a plumber?”)

“If I knew that if I worked hard (at school and) I could get a dishy job and be OK for the rest of my life – communication with teachers would help” and more careers advisers.

Individual factors

There may be a particular reason why an individual may not be getting a job – therefore guidance tailored to the individual may be needed.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The extent of unemployment in the 2168 area

Unemployment is a widespread problem in the 2168 area, with unemployment spanning over all age groups and ethnic backgrounds. Most persons who are unemployed are males, and persons from non-ESBs are certainly over-represented proportionally, although the numbers are the same as for persons of ESBs. The analysis of the Centrelink data indicated that there were 1690 persons receiving unemployment benefits (benefit that requires the recipient to “actively be looking for work”), however it should be acknowledged that the real number of people looking for work would be higher. For example those on other benefits such as “supporting parents benefit” may prefer to be working. Of particular interest are the youth, who comparatively did not appear to be a substantial group in terms of numbers according to the Centrelink data, however the fact that eligibility for Youth allowance is dependent on their parents income may have accounted for this. There may in fact be a large number of youth in the area who are finding it very difficult to look for work, as they are not eligible for unemployment benefits and who may be a drain on their families resources.

6.2 Perceptions of service providers identified “priority groups” as compared to Centrelink data

The perceptions of service providers as to priority groups of unemployed persons, differed to the figures obtained from the Centrelink data. In part this could be explained by many Service providers identifying “priority groups” as their own target groups for their current program or service.

The largest discrepancy between service providers perceptions of priority groups, and their Centrelink figures was for the youth. Most Service providers identified the youth as a priority group of unemployed persons in the 2168 area. However in terms of figures, the Centrelink data indicates that only 8.4% of those unemployed and required by Centrelink to look for work, were in fact youth under 21 years.

It would seem that if taking figures into account only, youth would not be considered a “priority” group. However it must be kept in mind that the eligibility of an under 21 year old for Youth Allowance (which includes payment for unemployment) is dependent on parents income. Indeed (as mentioned above) there may be far more unemployed under 21-year-olds dependent on their parents in the 2168 area, than the profile indicates.

In addition, Service providers indicated a multitude of other reasons (besides numbers) for identifying the youth as a priority group such as: they are the future of society and the benefits of early intervention, psychological factors (such as lack of self esteem), lack of experience making them vulnerable, and a higher risk of unemployment due to leaving school early and associated low levels of literacy and numeracy.

People from non-ESBs were mentioned second in order of priority groups by service providers. This to some extent reflects the analysis of the Centrelink data. Although people from non-ESBs made up 52.7% of those unemployed in the 2168 area, they only make up 25.1% (ABS, 1996) of the population. This indicates that proportionally people from non-ESBs are over-represented in the unemployment figures.

Service providers highlighted several reasons for selecting people from non-ESBs as a priority group. These included: cultural factors, a competitive disadvantage (when compared to persons from ESBs), limitations in jobs they could apply for, and problems associated with insufficient English language skills.

The service providers indicated that those with a special need (disabled, mental illness, the injured or ill, and those with addictions) should be considered a priority group. These groups were not specifically analysed in the profile, as it was not possible to identify them. We do know, however that the 2168 area has an almost equal number of residents on the disability support pension (DSP). It is possible that long-term recipients of unemployment benefits, may now be receiving DSP.

People with special needs have many barriers to employment, and require intensive assistance. Assistance from appropriate services is reliant on the disclosure of personal information that the client may be reluctant to share (for example the mental health, addiction issues). Thus making this group difficult to identify and assist. Anecdotal evidence suggests that addictions are a problem in this area.

Women were identified by five Service Providers as a priority groups, however women made up only ¼ of the unemployed (n=429). Almost 1/3 (30.3%) had been unemployed for less than 6 months, and 55.4% were long term unemployed. Women were seen as a priority group by Service providers mainly due to adjustments required in re-entering the work place when their children had grown.

The 2nd generation unemployed were also considered a priority group. It was not possible to identify using Centrelink data how many people fitted this category. However since this area was established as an area of low cost housing in the 1960s for people of low socio-economic back ground, it could be reasonable to assume that 2nd and indeed 3rd generation

unemployment exists in this area. Service providers, when interviewed, indicated that this was the case.

One service provider identified retrenched workers as a priority group. Although it was not possible to determine the number of people in this category, the majority of unemployed persons (49.2% overall) were between the ages of 31-50 years.

Homeless and ex-offenders were listed as priority groups by the service providers working with them. It was not possible to ascertain the number of persons in these categories in the 2168 area.

Interestingly, although not identified specifically as a priority group by service providers, people from ESBs made up 44.9% of those unemployed in the 2168 area. (Service providers did however identify second generation unemployed, which possible mainly comprises of people from ESB) and ESB males.

6.3 Barriers to employment

6.3.1 Identified by both Service providers and persons who are unemployed

There were some common themes related to barriers faced by unemployed persons identified by both service providers and unemployed persons. Service providers identified barriers particular to each priority group identified as well as additional general barriers which even though they affected unemployed persons in general. Unemployed persons on the other hand, tended to name barriers, which were relevant to themselves and their own experiences of unemployment. The common themes between the two groups included: age attitude of the individual, transport, the importance of support and encouragement, problems associated with addictions, inadequate provision for training and confusion with Centrelink procedures.

Age

Age was seen as a barrier to employment for the youth. This was mainly due to their inexperience, and vulnerability to be taken advantage by the employer. The unemployed people consulted saw age as an issue particularly for the older age groups, where a younger person could be preferably employed at a lower rate of pay.

Attitude of the individual

Service providers indicated the attitude of the individual might prove to be a barrier to employment. Some service providers thought that some unemployed people may not like to be told what to do in the work place and that some people may choose to be unemployed.

Many unemployed persons also mentioned the attitude of the individual could be a barrier to finding work. Most comments were directed to “other” unemployed people who did not want to work, and who were “ripping off the system”. Those interviewed did not see themselves in this category. Other unemployed persons mentioned the importance of attitude in keeping motivated to apply for work, and being able to present well at interviews.

Transport

Issues with transport were mentioned by both service providers and unemployed people. Service providers highlighted the cost of public transport as an issue, as was the limitations to current public transport timetable and routes. The 2168 area being ½ hour from Liverpool and 1 1/2 hours from the city was also seen as a limitation. Unemployed persons also mentioned these limitations. In addition, not having your own car was seen as a barrier to employment, with many employers saying own transport was essential in advertised positions. A drivers licence was also seen as essential to many positions. Some unemployed persons felt that this was a difficult problem to overcome, as without a reasonable income, how could they afford a car? Others thought those employers were being “too picky” in stipulating having to have a car.

Low self esteem

Service providers identified low self-esteem as a barrier for some unemployed people. Although not specifically identified as a barrier to employment by unemployed persons, it was often cited as a symptom (along with depression) of being unemployed.

Addictions

Addictions were mentioned by Service providers and unemployed persons as barrier to employment, and in keeping a job. Reasons were mainly related to unreliability.

Training

Both service providers and unemployed persons maintained a lack of training and experience as an issue affecting employment outcomes. Service providers were mainly concerned that since Skill Share was no longer being implemented that there had not be an equivalent program to replace it. Unemployed persons saw the importance of training in computers. In addition, they often commented that “on-the-job” training was rarely available in jobs today.

Centrelink

Both groups identified that dealing with Centrelink can cause problems for unemployed persons. This was mainly due to confusion with forms and entitlements.

6.3.2 Additional barriers mentioned by persons who were unemployed

Fewer jobs

Many unemployed persons said that there were simply fewer jobs available now. This seemed to be of particular importance for the blue-collar workers, who recalled being able to walk into jobs very easily, and receive on the job training. These types of jobs seemed to be rare these days, with some of those interviewed saying they now required experience and their own transport to have a chance with these types of positions.

Job creation

Many unemployed persons saw the answer as being the government creating more jobs. Some thought work for the dole was a good idea, others preferred the concept of working at a real job, and even it was only for the award wage.

Perception of job prospect – unrealistic expectations as a barrier

Many unemployed persons expected to get a job in the next two weeks even though they had been unemployed for the previous 6 months to 2 years. This unrealistic view puts unemployed people at risk of depression and disappointment.

Attitude of the employer

Unemployed people also saw the attitude of the employer as a barrier to finding work. The employers attitude in relation to transport, special needs/addictions, high expectations, and competition.

The attitude of the employer with regards to transport was seen to be a major issue. Most jobs these days were seen to require both a drivers licence and own transport, and lack of both of those was a considerable barrier. Transport issues were also seen to be an issue in terms of being able to look for work and get to job interviews.

The attitude of the employer was also seen to affect the chances of those with a history of addictions to getting a job. The perceived high expectations of employers in terms of expecting applicants to already have substantial experience was also seen to be a barrier. The high competition for jobs these days was seen as a reason why employers could afford to be “picky”.

6.3.3 Additional barriers mentioned by Service providers

Service providers identified the following additional barriers to employment: stigma attached to area 2168 with employers being reluctant to employ residents of the 2168 area; illiteracy/innumeracy; Lack of English skills (for people from people from non-ESB); and privacy concerns, especially for people with mental illness or addictions, made it hard for people to help those in need.

6.4 Perceptions of Service providers and unemployed persons – gaps in services

Service providers were asked what were the gaps in services in the area, and unemployed people were asked ideally what would help them get a job. The following discussion relates to the overlap in what these two groups said.

Training

Both service providers and the unemployed identified training as either a gap in current services or something, which could help them get a job. Again the absence of Skill Share was seen as an issue.

Service providers as a gap in available services identified inadequate promotion of services. This was echoed by unemployed people who often asked “who is there to ask for help anyway?” (Besides JNP, Centrelink) Competitiveness between services was identified by Service providers as an issue, which could inhibit appropriate referrals. The impact of this may be seen in again in unemployed people not knowing what services or programs are available to assist them.

Issues for service providers

Logistical issues such as excessive time spent on paperwork and not enough time with clients was seen as an issue affecting service offered. Service providers expressed it is sometimes difficult to retain clients, as they may not know what clients want.

Issues for unemployed persons

Additional issues for people who are unemployed included the importance of personal factors such as: appropriate clothes of the interview, transport, and support.

Unemployed person also perceived the attitude of the employer as being a barrier to employment. Unemployed persons perceived that the competitive nature of the Labor markets, employers could be choosy and have high standards. This was reflected in the fact

that an employer could expect someone to have their own transport and experience before giving them a job.

Some people who were unemployed suggested that a business co-operative should be developed by unemployed persons, and in so doing create jobs. Another suggestion was related to the importance of exercise programs.

Many unemployed people commented on the uncaring nature of the government, which did not understand what it was like for them. Several people commented that a person who had actually experienced unemployment should be in government making these policies, instead of decisions made by those who did not understand the situation.

7 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In designing programs or interventions to address unemployment within the 2168 area, there are several factors, such as: stigma, consultation, increase in awareness of services, and a pro-active approach which should be considered. Firstly, it is important that programs do not perpetuate the stigma already felt by persons who are unemployed. Efforts should be made to actively include people who are unemployed in mainstream programs. Secondly, it is also important that persons who are unemployed are consulted on issues that will affect them, and indeed people who participated in this research contributed freely. Thirdly, it may be necessary to increase awareness of services, and encourage co-operation/co-ordination and referral between existing services. Fourthly any approach needs to be pro active – with the need to actively go out and involve persons who are unemployed.

7.1 Engaging people who are unemployed in finding solutions

Experience suggests that involving people in finding solutions to problems has better outcomes and is also likely to make services and programs relevant. One of the problems with people who are unemployed are that they are not an easy to reach group, not homogenous and often disempowered and isolated.

Changing this is not easy, requiring a long term commitment, and might be taken up by:

- ❖ Newsletters to all households on services and activities
- ❖ Employ unemployed people to survey other unemployed people on their needs
- ❖ Forming self help groups of persons who are unemployed
- ❖ Forum with persons who are unemployed

7.2 Responding to the health and social problems of people who are unemployed

Persons who were unemployed outlined several areas in which being unemployed affected them. These included issues related to: health, with particular reference to lack of exercise and being overweight; reduced opportunities for social contact and activities due to less income; and lack of self esteem related to constant knock backs. Drug and alcohol issues were also mentioned as either the cause of unemployment, or as a problem arisen due to unemployment. The stigma of being unemployed was also raised. Those who were unemployed remarked that they may pretend or lie about their unemployment status, or they would

downgrade and say it was “the other” persons who were unemployed who were the “dole bludgers” . Drug and alcohol issues were often mentioned. Underlying problems such as these generally need to be addressed before an individual can attempt to find employment.

Interventions should consider minimising the impact of the “unemployment experience”. Possible priority groups could be the long-term unemployed, and those who perceived they might be a victim of discrimination (racism, ageism, and criminal record). Possible interventions could include:

- ❖ Reviewing how many unemployed people use existing services and identify barriers to use (example/ cost cost of recreation classes)
- ❖ Improving referral between services
- ❖ Setting up programs (eg/ exercise and increasing drug and alcohol services) which address the needs identified by people who are unemployed

7.3 Job creation

Persons that were unemployed felt that the fact that there were no jobs available was a barrier to employment. Persons interviewed and participants in the focus groups felt that the government was lying in terms of unemployment figures, and that the actual number of persons who were unemployed was much higher then the figures given.

One example of a sub group of persons who were unemployed, who perceived there were no jobs available were the “blue collared” workers (processing, factory, labouring jobs) back grounds. This group (generally) had left school before Yr 10 and had found jobs, and moved between jobs easily. In “those days” experience was not required, and training was provided on the job. Knowledge of computers was not necessary. However this was not their current experience now: jobs were perceived to be fewer, experience was considered necessary, as was knowledge in computers.

Possible strategies could include:

- ❖ All local service providers provide opportunities for persons who are unemployed/groups to undertake routine work example lawnmowing for the Department of Housing
- ❖ Establish small business initiatives and co-operatives where groups of persons who are unemployed can work separately or together to gain skills eg/ car maintenance program, “clean-up” for local shops or schools
- ❖ Identify number and type of jobs offered to 2168 residents through Grow, Working proudly to identify any barriers to residents making full use of these programs

7.4 Increasing training opportunities

Many service providers identified that there was now a gap in training opportunities with Skill Share not in operation. Persons who were unemployed also identified this as being an issue. Persons who participated in the breakfast club focus group felt that modules or short course in areas such as first aid, occupational health and safety, and basic computer skills would be useful, and could possibly be held in the Breakfast Club context. Literacy and numeracy were highlighted as important areas to address, and work experience opportunities were seen as a good way to gain experience and to have something worthwhile on the resume.

Possible strategies could include:

- ❖ First Aid and OH&S certificates offered on a regular basis to people in the area
- ❖ Work with persons who are unemployed to identify training needs and other agencies in the area to assist with venues and transport
- ❖ Approach local employers, including health services and schools to provide work experience
- ❖ Develop work for the dole programs with the local community that are seen as relevant to the community and are also able to provide training

7.5 Targeting the employers

Several persons who were unemployed felt that it was the attitude of the employer that was preventing them from finding work. People who were unemployed perceived employers as having expectations that were too high and unrealistic. The fact that employers could specify experience, drivers licence and own transport were seen as difficult barrier to overcome. In addition, some persons who were unemployed felt that they had been discriminated against on the basis of age (old and young), being from a Non English Speaking Background, or due to the stigma of being from the 2168 area. Those with a criminal record, or drug and alcohol issues, felt these barriers to finding work.

Possible strategies could include:

- ❖ Make sure local employers have access to programs that provide support and financial incentives
- ❖ Establish mechanism for referring people for work experience from local job network members

- ❖ An annual award and dinner for local businesses that support work experience for the unemployed.

7.6 Transport

Transport was seen as a barrier in a number of ways: having “own transport” and / or drivers licence was considered as “essential” for most positions; public transport routes and timetables were not convenient; and the cost of public transport was considered too high.

Possible programs:

- ❖ Approach service clubs to run programs to fix up second hand cars
- ❖ Investigate lobbying to change public transport route (particularly to correspond with shift work in the industrial area of Wetherill Park?)
- ❖ Car pooling

8. CONCLUSION

Unemployment is an issue within the 2168 postcode. The profile developed by analysing the Centrelink data may be utilised as a baseline to assist in targeting and planning programs. The views of both service providers and unemployed persons themselves may be used as a resource in designing and implementing possible projects. This research has highlighted a number of issues faced by unemployed persons as seen by themselves, which is essential in conceptualising projects intended to support people who are unemployed.

Appendix 1 - Interview Guide - Service Providers

- ❖ Could you please give me an overview of the whole organisation?
- ❖ Now more specifically, what services/programs do you currently offer the unemployed?
- ❖ I am interested in finding out who you believe to be the priority groups of unemployed people within 2168, why you think they are a priority area, and what barriers to employment may exist for this group.
- ❖ Who (in your opinion) are the priority groups of unemployed people in 2168?
- ❖ Why do you think they are a priority group?
- ❖ What barriers to employment exist for this priority group?
- ❖ Are there any other (general) barriers that face unemployed people?
- ❖ What do you think are the main barriers/difficulties for unemployed people in accessing unemployment service providers?
- ❖ What do you think are the major issues facing unemployment service providers at the moment?
- ❖ What do you think are the main gaps in unemployment services within the 2168 area?

Appendix 2 - Interview Guide - persons who were unemployed

(please note this was used as a guideline only additional issues may be brought up and explored during the interviews)

- ❖ Can you describe your education/training/work history? (Including job search activities)
- ❖ Can you describe your daily routine (including job search activities)? Has this changed much over the time you have been unemployed?
- ❖ What kind of job are you looking for?
- ❖ What are the main problems people face in looking for work?*
- ❖ What are the main problems you personally face when looking for work?
- ❖ Do you have any health issues that make it harder to look for a job?
- ❖ Some people say lack of skills is the main issue in not finding a job, to what extent do you agree?*
- ❖ How do you go about looking for work?*
- ❖ How many jobs have you applied for (during most recent time of unemployment)
- ❖ What types of jobs are available in this area?*
- ❖ Where do people in this area look for jobs?*
- ❖ Where do you personally look for jobs?
- ❖ Who has helped you in looking for work? (including services/organisations) Good points? Bad points?*
- ❖ How easy (or hard) is it to access these programs/services?*
- ❖ Is enough done to help people look for work?*
- ❖ What in your opinion should be done to help people find work?*
- ❖ What kind of help do you feel you would need to find a job?*
- ❖ Who do you think in this area has the greatest difficulty in finding a job?
- ❖ Do people in this area think that jobs are available? If yes, why are people unemployed? If no, what do you think can be done about it?*
- ❖ In an ideal world, what could be done to help unemployed persons?*
- ❖ Have you used the job network services?
- ❖ What services do you know of that provide assistance to people who are unemployed?
- ❖ How do you feel about looking for work?
- ❖ How do you feel about being unemployed?
- ❖ Has this changed over the length of time you have been unemployed?
- ❖ Any other general comments you would like to make about unemployment, or your experience in looking for work?*

*denotes questions to be asked in the focus groups

Appendix 3 – Focus group questions

Our Topic:

To discuss with unemployed persons their views on problems/issues in accessing services gaps in services, and suggestions on initiatives that may improve employment outcomes

- ❖ How do you go about looking for work? (prompt if necessary, eg/ cold canvassing, search in newspaper)
- ❖ What types of jobs are available in this area? (manufacturing, process work, shop assistants, or maybe none)
- ❖ Who has helped you try and get a job? (prompt if necessary: eg/Centrelink, Job Network Providers, TAFE (for training), JPET, Church or community groups, Working Proudly etc) family/friends
How as each of these been helpful/unhelpful?
- ❖ What kinds of things would help people get a job? P: which of these exist in the local area?
- ❖ Imagine you were a health worker given enough money to develop a program or service to help people get a job. What would you use the money for?
- ❖ What do you think the reasons are for unemployment? P: How could these be fixed?
- ❖ What are the main problems people face when looking for work? P: How could these be fixed?
- ❖ In an ideal world, what could be done to help unemployed people?
- ❖ Would anyone like to add anything to the discussion about unemployment, and what could be done to reduce unemployment?
- ❖ Gaps in services provided
- ❖ Suggestions to resolve identified problems

Appendix 4 - Introduction to focus group proforma

- ❖ Facilitators introduce themselves
- ❖ Give a little background to the project eg/ “the aim of this focus group discussion is to talk you about your experiences with unemployment and to ask your opinion on how unemployment services may be improved. Those who provide services to unemployed persons will then use this information to help in planning new services, or improving on existing services.”
- ❖ State the “rules” to the group eg/ “The opinions and views of all group members is important – so it is expected that all will have something to say, one person should speak at a time,
- ❖ people should say what they think and not what others expect them to say, there are no right or wrong answers”
- ❖ Clearly state that “we are interested in the range of opinions & points of view that are different”
- ❖ Assure participants of confidentiality
- ❖ Explain to the participants that “your views will remain confidential. Your names will be changed in the report. Your participation is voluntary, you are able to refuse to participate, and you are free to refuse to answer any questions or to leave at any time“
- ❖ Mention that I (Lisa) will be taking notes
- ❖ Encourage all participants to introduce themselves (if they don’t already know each other)
- ❖ Follow interview protocol
- ❖ Nb/ Not necessary to follow guideline exactly