
Department of Social Services Secretary Briefing

Meeting with Ministers Porter and Tudge 8 August 2017

AGENDA ITEM – DRUG TESTING TRIAL

RECOMMENDATION/PROPOSED ACTION

- **Advise** the Ministers of the status of DSS implementation of the drug testing trial.

TALKING POINTS

- The Department continues to work towards implementation of the drug testing trial and is working closely with your office, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Employment and the Department of Health.
- Preparation for announcements of the trial sites in the coming weeks has been one of the priorities.
 - Your office has been provided with a package of communication materials to support the announcements and the Department's proposed stakeholder engagement plan for consulting with national and local stakeholders at the time of and following the announcements.
- **Subsection 34(3)**

KEY ISSUES

- Kathryn Campbell will also attend this meeting and can provide updates about progress of aspects of the drug testing trial for which the Department of Human Services (DHS) has responsibility. These are the procurement of the drug testing provider, and sourcing medical professionals for assessment of people who return more than one positive drug test during the trial.
- Progress is on track for the implementation elements for which DSS is responsible, including the trial site announcements, stakeholder engagement and legislation.

Trial site announcements

- The current proposed announcement dates for the drug testing trial, as advised by Minister Porter's Office and subject to final confirmation, are:
 - **Mandurah, WA – Sunday 20 August 2017**
 - **Canterbury-Bankstown – Tuesday 22 August 2017**
 - **Logan, QLD – Wednesday 23 August 2017.**
- Communication materials to support the announcements were provided to Minister Porter's Office on Friday 4 August 2017. These covered a general media pack for announcements as well as individual media packs and fact sheets for each location.
- **Subsection 34(3)**

Subsection 34(3)

- A revised version of the comprehensive Question and Answer document for the drug testing trial was provided to Minister Porter's Office on 9 August 2017, incorporating updates to reflect the details of the trial as set out in the legislation, including the use of Income Management, and the trial site announcements.

Stakeholder Engagement

- The Department continues to work with Minister Porter's office on stakeholder engagement, with a copy of our proposed stakeholder engagement plan provided to the Minister's Office on Monday 31 July 2017 (see **Attachment A**).
- It is planned that in the weeks following of the announcements the Department will meet in each location with key stakeholders such as state governments, local councils, Primary Health Networks and peak bodies (e.g. ACOSS, the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians and Australian Network of State and Territory Alcohol and other Drug Peak Bodies). The Department will also hold information sessions at each location with employment services and treatment providers and other identified local community parties prior to the commencement of this measure on 1 January 2018.

Legislation

- The Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs is holding public hearings as part of its inquiry into the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform) Bill 2017* in Sydney on Wednesday 30 August 2017 and in Melbourne on Thursday 31 August 2017.
- Scheduling for the Department to appear at the Committee hearings is still to be confirmed.

Comeback on additional treatment support

- **Subsection 34(3)**

Risk profiling and Data61

- The Department has been working with CSIRO and Data61 to scope how risk profiling could be effectively used as part of the drug testing trial. **Section 47C**

- **Section 47C**

- The results of the trial, with job seekers selected randomly for drug testing, would however provide the statistical information required to develop effective data-driven risk profiling which could be used as part of any broader roll out.

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Procurement

- DHS is responsible for managing the procurement process for the trial as well as the sourcing of medical professionals for assessment of job seekers who return more than one positive drug test and is expected to talk to these issues in the meeting. **Section 47G**
- It is expected that the Statement of Requirements for this procurement process will be finalised to go to market in September 2017.

BACKGROUND

Australian Government measures to reduce drug and alcohol abuse:

- In Australia from 1 January 2018, 5,000 new recipients of Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (other) in three trial sites will be selected for drug testing.
- Trial sites yet to be announced are Mandurah, Perth; Canterbury-Bankstown, Sydney; and Logan, Qld. Site selection was based on available evidence and data regarding drug usage in Australia, drug-associated hospitalisations, local profile and available support services, job seeker numbers, crime statistics, the relative capacity of primary health networks and available treatment options.
- Job seekers will be selected for the trial based on data-driven profiling designed to identify characteristics that indicate a higher risk of substance abuse issues.
- From 1 January 2018 Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance (other) claimants will be required to acknowledge that they may be subject to drug testing as a condition of claiming payment.
- The 2017-18 Budget also included a suite of other measures to help people overcome their substance abuse issues:
 - Ensure that job seekers whose substance abuse prevents them from looking for work remain actively engaged in appropriate activities, including treatment rather than being exempt from all requirements.
 - Change reasonable excuse rules to ensure that job seekers are not able to keep using drug or alcohol dependency as an excuse for failing to meet their requirements rather than seeking treatment; and
 - Allow all job seekers to undertake drug or alcohol treatment as an approved activity in their Job Plan.

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