

Indigenous Employment Policy

GUIDELINES

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Chapter 7: Indigenous Wage Assistance

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The Wage Assistance Management Guidelines provide guidance to Contract Managers and departmental program managers in the application, administration and management of the Wage Assistance program.

These Guidelines are produced and maintained by Wage Assistance and Indigenous Job Seeker Section, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, National Office, Canberra.

Wage Assistance Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Objective and aims

The objective of Wage Assistance is to provide an incentive to employers to provide ongoing employment for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers.

Amount of assistance

Wage Assistance of up to \$4,400 (including GST) is paid over 26 weeks to eligible employers for ongoing full-time work (at least 35 hours per week or as otherwise as defined in the relevant industrial award or certified workplace agreement).

Wage Assistance of up to \$2,200 (including GST) is paid over 26 weeks to eligible employers for ongoing part-time work that is at least 15 hours per week for the period of the subsidy.

Discretion of the Department

The Department reserves the right to decline any application for Wage Assistance funding that in the view of the delegate does not comply with the Guidelines.

Performance indicator

A Wage Assistance placement is considered to have been successful if the job seeker is:

- employed in the subsidised position for the full 26 weeks and
- is still in employment and off income support 12 weeks after the subsidy ceases (as measured under the Post Placement Monitoring Survey system).

2. Related programs

CDEP

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program provides activities which develop participants' skills and improve their employability in order to assist them to move into employment outside the program and to meet community needs.

From 1 July 2006, CDEP participants in capital cities and other centres where there is a permanent Job Network member (JNM) were required to register with Job Network and maintain their registration to be eligible for the CDEP program.

As of 1 July 2007, CDEP providers are eligible to apply for Wage Assistance for job seekers employed in their business ventures. Eligible job seekers are those that have been exited from CDEPManager (ie. Job seekers continuing to participate in CDEP and who are in receipt of a CDEP participant payment are not eligible).

CDEP Placement Incentive

CDEP providers may receive payment under the CDEP Placement Incentive program when their participants are exited from CDEPManager and placed in employment with employers that claim Wage Assistance.

CDEP participants moving to off-CDEP employment are not required to be registered with Centrelink as active job seekers at the time they commence work for the employer to be able to receive Wage Assistance.

Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment Project (CLIEP)

Where an employer has a Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment (CLIEP) project agreement which includes a wage subsidy, Wage Assistance placements must be separate from placements under the CLIEP agreement and not receive CLIEP subsidy funding.

Where the agreement does not include any other wage subsidy funding, Wage Assistance can provide wage subsidies for CLIEP participants.

Job Network

Job Network members are strongly encouraged to use Wage Assistance on behalf of their clients, including in addition to any other incentives or expenditures they decide to make from the Training Account or Job Seeker Account. The combined subsidy cannot exceed 100% of the gross wage of the Wage Assistance participant.

Job Network members are eligible to claim Wage Assistance if they employ eligible job seekers in their own organisations.

Structured Training and Employment Project (STEP) and Structured Training and Employment Project – Employment and Related Services (STEP ERS)

A job seeker cannot receive wage subsidy funding under STEP or STEP ERS, and Wage Assistance at the same time.

Where an employer or a third party has a STEP or STEP ERS agreement, which includes a wage subsidy, Wage Assistance placements must be separate from placements under the STEP or STEP ERS agreement and not receive STEP or STEP ERS subsidy funding.

Where the agreement does not include wage subsidy funding, Wage Assistance can provide wage subsidies for STEP or STEP ERS participants.

Other Commonwealth and State/Territory programs

Wage Assistance will not be paid where the placement is supported by another Commonwealth, State or Territory wage subsidy program.

Australian Apprenticeship Incentives are not wage subsidies and will not disqualify employers seeking Wage Assistance. Other general programs that provide businesses with support, eg for export development, staff training etc may also be used at the same time.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Centrelink

Under its service arrangement with the Department, Centrelink is responsible for issuing Wage Assistance eligibility cards and information materials to eligible job seekers at the point of registration or as required by the job seeker.

Centrelink also checks eligibility and issues replacement cards to existing registrants on request.

Centrelink staff are instructed to direct all enquiries about the Wage Assistance program to the Indigenous Employment Line (1802 102), and to make phone facilities available for this purpose.

Indigenous Employment Line

The Indigenous Employment Line (1802 102) is operated by Telstra under contract to the Department.

The Indigenous Employment Line is responsible for handling initial enquiries from job seekers, employers, Job Network members, government agencies including Centrelink, and from all other members of the public.

DEEWR National Office

Indigenous Employment Program Branch, National Office, is responsible for the overall management of the Wage Assistance program, including;

- approving placements and certifying payments
- providing policy advice on applications and Guidelines
- providing Indigenous Employment Line support, including complaints handling
- handling enquiries from State/Territory offices
- encouraging Job Network members to take advantage of Wage Assistance when placing eligible Indigenous job seekers into jobs
- marketing and publicising Wage Assistance through all appropriate mechanisms and
- providing cards, brochures and forms.

State/Territory Offices

Monitoring reports feed into the applications and payment claim approval process administered by National Office.

Job Network members

Job Network members are key brokers in

- using Wage Assistance to facilitate the placement of Indigenous clients
- promoting Wage Assistance to employers and
- encouraging job seekers to use their Wage Assistance eligibility to enhance their employability.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Job Seekers

To be eligible for Wage Assistance, a job seeker must be

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, that is a person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or a Torres Strait Islander; and is accepted as such by the community in which he/she lives or has lived **and**
- currently unemployed and actively looking for work **or**
- participating in CDEP, and consequently not receiving an income support payment **or**
- eligible for Disability Employment Network services, and registered as unemployed with Centrelink **or**
- registered with Centrelink and receiving an eligible allowance **or**
- if under 21 and not receiving an allowance, registered with Centrelink or a Job Network member.

Ineligible income support payments

Income support payments which are not eligible are:

- Family Tax Benefit Part B, in the absence of another benefit or allowance
- Aged Pension
- Sickness Allowance **and**
- Newstart Incapacitated Allowance.

Prisoners

Indigenous prisoners are eligible for Wage Assistance immediately on release from prison, despite not being active job seekers and not being on eligible income support.

A letter from prison or parole authorities is proof of just released status.

Indigenous prisoners on 'return to work' and 'early release' programs who are eligible for Job Search Training and Intensive Support are eligible for Wage Assistance.

Concurrent placements not eligible

Job seekers are eligible for one Wage Assistance placement at a time. Participants working part-time are not eligible for concurrent part-time placements.

Time period over which subsidy is available

Job seekers are eligible for a total of 26 weeks program assistance in any period of 18 months, which may be used as a continuous period or as blocks of weeks making up 26 weeks of non-continuous program assistance.

Partially used Wage Assistance

Where a job seeker receives Wage Assistance subsidy in non-continuous blocks of time, subsidy will be paid at the full rate for no more than 26 weeks.

Expiry of the 18 month period

The 18 month period during which a job seeker is eligible for a total of 26 weeks program assistance expires 18 calendar months after the commencement date of the first position for which subsidy was paid.

Job seeker re-employed near the expiry of the 18 months

Where a job seeker who

- has either used all of the 26 weeks of Wage Assistance subsidy that is payable for them **or**
- has partially used the subsidy amount **and**
- is employed by an eligible employer in an eligible position at least 16 months after Wage Assistance subsidy was first paid for that job seeker,

the delegate will take all the circumstances into account and seek a waiver if they consider that granting eligibility for the full 26 weeks of Wage Assistance subsidy to the second employer is in the spirit of the program.

Special consideration

Where an employee

- has been working for the applicant employer for a period three months or less in a position that would not have been eligible for Wage Assistance (eg non-ongoing, casual or less than 15 hours per week) and is moved by the employer to a position that could attract Wage Assistance (eg permanent part or full-time) or
- has been undertaking casual work and is not in receipt of benefits at the date of commencing work in an eligible position but has been in receipt of benefits in the recent past three months and is likely to be again in the near future if the employee continues in casual work

the employer's application for Wage Assistance is not to be rejected solely on the basis that the employee is a not an active job seeker.

The employee's Centrelink registration must reflect the employee's and employer's advice as to when the job was commenced and the employer needs to be able to demonstrate the material change to the position through payroll information or similar documentation.

The first 4 weeks of the placement

Where a placement is terminated for any reason during the first four weeks of the placement, Wage Assistance is not paid and the period of the placement is not counted as part of the job seeker's 26 week assistance limit.

Wage Assistance cards

Job seekers do not have to have a current Wage Assistance card to be eligible for Wage Assistance. Eligibility is based on the job seeker's status as Indigenous, unemployed and registered as looking for work.

Eligible job seekers can be issued with a Wage Assistance Card **either**

- by Centrelink for initial issue and Centrelink or a Job Network member for additional employer (brown) cards **or**
- if under 21 years of age and not in receipt of income support, by either Centrelink or Job Network members for initial and subsequent issue.

CDEP providers

From 1 July 2007, CDEP providers are eligible to claim Wage Assistance for job seekers employed in their business ventures. Eligible job seekers are those not on the CDEP schedule (ie CDEP participants are not eligible).

Eligible employers

Employers in the private, public or community sector who offer ongoing full-time employment or part-time employment of at least 15 hours per week for the subsidy period under a normal employer/employee relationship are eligible to receive Wage Assistance.

Host Employment Agreements

An employer that has a host agreement with a CDEP provider is ineligible to apply for Wage Assistance.

However, if the CDEP provider is scheduled to close, the host employer can submit an application for Wage Assistance to the Department for consideration.

Ineligible employers

Employers ineligible to claim Wage Assistance include:

- Labour Hire Companies (LHCs) and Group Training Organisations (GTOs) that do not meet the special conditions below and
- STEP and STEP ERS or Corporate Leaders for Indigenous Employment project agreement employers whose agreement includes a wage subsidy.

Special conditions for Labour Hire Companies and Group Training Organisations (GTOs)

For Labour Hire Companies and Group Training Organisations (GTOs) to be eligible for Wage Assistance, they must:

- be the employer of the employee and employ them on a continuous basis
- provide ongoing full-time or part-time employment. Wage Assistance will **not** be provided for casual employment
- be responsible for the payment of wages, deducting tax and all associated on-costs of employing the employee
- advise the host employer that Department officers are authorised to visit the Wage Assistance employee's workplace to monitor the progress of the employee and monitor compliance with the Agreement and
- visit the host employer on a regular basis to monitor the progress of the Wage Assistance employee.

Permanent employment in the Australian Public Service (APS)

Wage Assistance may be payable where an eligible job seeker is successful in obtaining permanent appointment to an APS vacancy. The APS agency would need to apply for Wage Assistance in the normal way.

Employers that are to be excluded from receiving Wage Assistance

Employers that are to be excluded from receiving Wage Assistance are those who:

- have had their payments withheld during the investigation of a breach of the Wage Assistance Agreement or have had a Wage Assistance Agreement terminated
- are or have been the subject of substantiated complaints by job seekers and/or other interested parties, which are being or have been investigated by the Department or relevant State/Territory authorities or
- have a history of terminating Wage Assistance placement shortly after the completion of the 26 week period

The delegate may need to consider whether it would be an appropriate and defensible use of taxpayer's money and in the spirit of the Guidelines to grant Wage Assistance to that employer. The delegate may also need to consult the Department's Legal Branch in making this assessment.

Discretion to refuse placements

The delegate has the discretion to refuse a placement with an employer where, in the opinion of the delegate, the employer is unlikely to fulfil the terms and conditions or meet the objectives of the Wage Assistance Agreement.

Conditions of employment

The job seeker must be employed under a legal industrial arrangement, made under Commonwealth, State or Territory law for example:

- an Award or
- a collective agreement.

If an employer is unsure about the appropriate terms and conditions for the employment of the job seeker, they should contact the relevant industrial relations authorities for advice.¹

First 4 weeks of the placement - impact on employers

Where a placement is terminated for any reason during the first four weeks of the placement, Wage Assistance is not paid and the termination does not affect future Wage Assistance applications by the employer.

Wage Assistance payable only once if employee continuously employed

Employers may only claim up to one full 26 week subsidy for an individual employee that has been continuously in their employment. For example, further Wage Assistance will not be provided for employees who have been terminated by their employer after receiving their full 26 subsidy and rehired at a later date.

Partially utilised Wage Assistance

An employer may rehire an employee for whom they have received less than 26 weeks of Wage Assistance over a period of 18 months and may re-apply for the remainder of the 26 week period of subsidy so long as the 18 month period is still running, another employer has not exhausted the Wage Assistance subsidy for that employee in the meantime and the other eligibility requirements are met.

5. Eligibility of positions

Eligible positions

Positions are eligible if they:

- involve a normal employer/employee relationship subject to the applicable industrial arrangement and
- are ongoing full-time, as defined in the applicable industrial arrangement, or for a minimum of 35 hours per week if not specified or
- are ongoing part-time as defined in the applicable industrial arrangement and provide a minimum of 15 hours work for the 26 weeks of the subsidy period
- are expected to be ongoing at the time of application. (A vacancy is regarded as ongoing if the employer declares in the application form that they know of no reason why the vacancy cannot continue for at least 12 months) and
- meet the subsidised/non-subsidised ratio requirements, see **Section 6**.

Positions which are not eligible

Positions which are **not eligible** are those:

- that are casual positions ie positions that do not include leave, superannuation & associated employment entitlements for an ongoing position
- which do not guarantee the employee a regular weekly wage (eg commission-based positions, sub-contract positions and positions paid at "piece rates")
- that are not expected to be ongoing (vacant positions created in community or charitable organisations solely or substantially as a result of grants from Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Government are not likely to be eligible on this basis)
- that are paid work experience
- funded under 'Work for the Dole'
- receiving wage subsidy funding from Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Governments

¹ Note: An "industrial arrangement" means a legal instrument, complying with applicable Commonwealth, State or Territory law, which regulates the terms and conditions of employment of employees working in the particular position or a similar position at the workplace.

- under the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme
- under the Green Corps Program
- self employment opportunities
- in private, household employment
- in religious occupations
- where the employer is attempting to 'backfill' an existing Wage Assistance placement that has been suspended because of a breach of a Wage Assistance Agreement
- of a type or character that would be likely to bring the program or the Commonwealth into disrepute, such as vacant positions in the sex industry, or involving nudity or illegal activities or
- that otherwise do not meet the objectives of the Wage Assistance program.

6. Ratios of subsidised employees

Number of subsidised employees allowed.

Wage Assistance is not intended to provide an employer with a substantially subsidised workforce, therefore a maximum permissible ratio of subsidised to unsubsidised employees will apply.

Determining ratios

For the first nine unsubsidised employees the employer is entitled to one Wage Assistance employee for every one unsubsidised employee at the site at which the Wage Assistance employee will work.

For the tenth unsubsidised employee and above the employer is entitled to one Wage Assistance employee for every three unsubsidised employees at the site at which the Wage Assistance employee will work.

The following table shows how to determine ratios.

Number of <u>unsubsidised</u> employees at the workplace	Maximum number of Wage Assistance employees	Total number of subsidised employees allowed
1 to 9	9	9
10 to 12	9+1	10
13 to 15	9+1+1	11
16 to 18	9+1+1+1	12

If the employer is other than a Labour Hire Company or Group Training Organisation, "workplace" means the address or place at which the Wage Assistance employee works, which may be only one of the sites of that business.

The total number of employees of a Labour Hire Company or Group Training Organisation is to be counted as one "workplace", regardless of the number of physical sites at which they work.

7. Application process

Application process

Employers must use the Wage Assistance Application and Agreement form. The form is completed by the employer and job seeker and is forwarded to the Department for approval.

Forms can be obtained from the Department or from the Indigenous Employment Line. Employers can also download the Application and Agreement form from www.wageassistance.gov.au.

Employers can lodge applications online at www.wageassistance.gov.au or fax to 02 62769617.

Application period time limit

The employer must lodge the Wage Assistance Application and Agreement form within **28 days** from the employee's commencing the position.

Applications lodged within one calendar month of the employee commencing work are not to be considered as late.

If an application is received within **three months** of the employee commencing work, the processing officer will check the reason the employer has given for late lodgement. So long as the reason given is reasonable and consistent with the location of the employer and the employee, the nature of the job, common business practices and the recruitment processes (and the employer, the employee at the time of commencing work and the job are all eligible), the processing officer can approve the Application without referring it to the delegate. If the processing officer forms the view that the reason for the application being late is more complex, the matter will be referred to the delegate.

Applications lodged later than three calendar months from the date the employee commenced work are to be referred to the delegate, if mitigating circumstances, particularly those arising from substantiated action or inaction by the Department's agents or service providers, exist.

The employer is then entitled to lodge a letter of appeal outlining any mitigating circumstances they believe the delegate should take into account to:

Wage Assistance
Indigenous Employment Program Branch
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
GPO Box 9879
Canberra City 2601 **or** by fax to (02) 6276 9617.

8. Approval of Applications

The delegate approving applications

When the delegate is satisfied that all reasonable measures have been taken to verify the eligibility of the job seeker, the job and the employer, he/she will approve the application.

Notification of the employer

The employer will be notified by letter that the application has been approved.

Time within which applications will be approved

The delegate will endeavour to approve all routine, fully completed applications within 28 days of their receipt.

The delegate can initiate action to grant a waiver without the employer appealing a decision

The delegate can decide that rejecting an application is not broadly within the spirit of the Guidelines and commence waiver action at the approval stage without rejecting the application and informing the employer of his appeal rights.

9. Review of Decisions

Reviewable decisions

Employers and job seekers may request the Department to review decisions on Wage Assistance applications directly affecting them.

Review process and timing rules

The following table provides information about the review process and the appropriate timing for action.

Stage	Description	Timing
1	The employer, the employee or a Job Network member involved in the placement must lodge a written request with the National Office of the Department.	Within 28 days of the advice of the decision
2	The Review Officer is an officer of the Department; <ul style="list-style-type: none">not involved in the original decision; andequivalent to or above the level of the original decision-maker.	Within 5 working days of receipt of request for review
3	The IEP Review Officer may: <ul style="list-style-type: none">affirm, vary or set aside the original decision; andrecommend a waiver of the Guidelines for consideration by the Delegated Officer	Within 10 working days of receipt of request for review
4	The Delegated Officer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">may approve a waiver of the Guidelines; andmust advise applicant and, where necessary, arrange for the project or placement to be approved.	Within 5 working days of receipt of recommendation (appropriate documentation must be provided).

10. Waivers of Guidelines

Circumstances for waiving Guidelines

Waivers may only be used within the spirit and intent of the program. This will usually involve cases where one or more of the following apply:

- a job seeker or employer has acted in good faith but contrary to the Guidelines because the Guidelines have been misunderstood or a Departmental officer has provided incorrect advice
- a job seeker or employer has suffered or may suffer a financial or other disadvantage as a result of incorrect advice provided by a Departmental officer
- a job seeker or employer technically does not meet the eligibility tests but assistance would be consistent with the overall aims and objectives of the program or

- an employer can offer employment which meets the aims and objectives of Wage Assistance but technically does not meet the eligibility requirements.

Waivers must not be used to overturn or vary fundamental program requirements such as the amount of subsidy. Waivers must be considered on a case-by-case basis and should not be used for blanket exemptions from guidelines (ie, groups of job seekers or employers). The waiver provision must not be used to support, maintain, condone or compensate for poor work practices or inadequate administrative procedures.

Administrative errors

In cases where an administrative error becomes known after the employer has been advised that the application is approved, the Department must advise the job seeker and employer that the placement cannot proceed.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to seek or arrange a waiver.

11. Financial issues

Wage Assistance rates

Wage Assistance provides subsidies at two rates:

- for a full-time position of at least 35 hours per week (or other hours as defined as full-time in the applicable industrial arrangement) Wage Assistance is a maximum of \$4,400 (including GST) over a period of 26 weeks, or a maximum of \$33.85 (including GST) daily subsidy rate for a maximum of 5 days per week; and
- for part-time positions of a minimum of 15 hours but less than 35 hours per week, Wage Assistance is paid at a maximum of \$2,200 (including GST) over a period of 26 weeks, or a maximum of \$16.92 (including GST) daily subsidy rate for a maximum of 5 days per week.

Exception

If the level of Wage Assistance applicable to the position would exceed the rate of pay determined under the applicable industrial arrangement, the subsidy paid is to be no more than the wage paid.

The first 4 weeks of the placement

If the employee's contract of employment is terminated within four weeks of the commencement date, no subsidy is paid to the employer and the job seeker is not regarded as having used any of their 26 weeks subsidy period.

Future access to the program is not affected, for either the job seeker or the employer.

Funding from other sources

Wage Assistance will not be approved where at the time of application it is known that the position will receive another wage subsidy from any Commonwealth, State or Territory government program other than Commonwealth New Apprenticeships Incentives.

Wage Assistance and job seeker income support

Wage Assistance is not payable for any period where the employee is in receipt of

- full rates of Newstart or Youth Allowance or
- any amount of CDEP allowance, other than CDEP leave allowances, where the CDEP organisation verifies that the leave allowance is properly payable and will not continue for more than 2 months.

The employee must declare on the application form that, if they are currently in receipt of income support payments, they will inform Centrelink or their former CDEP that they have commenced paid employment.

Low income employees, particularly part-time employees, may still be entitled to receive reduced income support payments through Centrelink.

The delegate will inform Centrelink if there is reason to conclude that the employee is claiming benefits inappropriately

If at the time the employer lodges a Claim for Payment, it appears that the employee has not notified Centrelink that he/she has commenced work and is still receiving the full rate of income support benefit, the delegate will refer the suspected inappropriate claim of benefits or allowances to Centrelink for its action and provide the full names, address, date of birth, dates of employment, employer's name and address, and note that the employee must declare on the application form that they would inform Centrelink or their former CDEP that they have commenced paid employment. A copy of this email or letter is to be placed on the Wage Assistance case file.

Wage Assistance and taxation

Wage Assistance payments are business income and therefore taxable. Employers can obtain further information from their tax consultant or the Australian Taxation Office.

Acquittal of Wage Assistance payments

Wage Assistance payments are not acquitted by employers.

12. Making Wage Assistance payments

Commencement date for assistance

The Wage Assistance placement commences from the date the job seeker commences work in the relevant position.

If a placement has been approved after the granting of a waiver, the commencement date will be the date the job seeker commenced work.

When employers can claim Wage Assistance payments

Employers can claim Wage Assistance payments either

- as two payments after 13 weeks of employment and 26 weeks of employment or
- as one payment after 26 weeks of employment.

Time limits on submitting Claims for Payment

Employers and employees must complete the information required in the Claim for Payment/Tax Invoice form and submit it to the Department (Fax – 02 6276 9617) within 28 days of the end of the claim period, ie either:

- for 13 weeks from the date of commencement
- for the 14th week until the end of the 26th week from the date of commencement
- for 26 weeks from the date of commencement or
- from the date of commencement; until the date of the termination of employment as long as the period of employment lasts for more than 4 weeks.

Due date for payment of claims

Properly completed Wage Assistance Claims for Payment/Tax Invoices lodged by employers should be processed and paid within 28 days of receipt by the Department.

Daily rates of subsidy

The daily rate of subsidy for full-time positions is a maximum of \$33.85.

The daily rate of subsidy for part-time positions is a maximum of \$16.92.

Calculation of daily subsidy rate where the employee has partially utilised Wage Assistance

Where an employee has partially utilised their Wage Assistance subsidy entitlement, the daily subsidy will be paid at the maximum applicable daily rate and will not be prorated over the period of the second or subsequent placement.

Calculation of subsidy payments

Subsidies will be calculated as the number of days worked during the claim period multiplied by the appropriate daily rate.

Circumstances where Wage Assistance is not payable

Wage Assistance is not payable for any:

- period after which the employee is terminated
- period after which the job is materially downgraded without the consent of the Department
- period for which the employer is in breach of the Wage Assistance Agreement
- unpaid leave by the employee in excess of 5 days (see exception below)
- period for which the employee is entitled to worker's compensation payments
- period for which the employee reverts to full income support or CDEP payments
- gift, bonus or termination payments to the employee
- holiday pay upon termination or
- hours worked by the employee which are more than those agreed to in the Wage Assistance Agreement (eg overtime).

Extension of the period over which Wage Assistance can be paid

If the employee does not attend work for a continuous period of more than 1 week and up to 8 weeks as a result of

- unpaid leave for sickness, injury or family care
- an industry wide shut down or holiday or
- other reasons acceptable to the employer,

the employer can seek to have the Wage Assistance agreement

- suspended for the period of the absence and
- the period, over which Wage Assistance is paid, is extended by the same period.

The employer will need to note the period and the reason on the application form and if the request is reasonable the extension will be granted for the period requested.

The amount of Wage Assistance subsidy will not be increased.

Extended sickness

If the employee is unable to attend work for a continuous period likely to be 8 weeks or longer, the employer should notify the Department and submit a Claim for Payment for the period up to the employee ceasing to attend work.

Once the employee is able to recommence work, the employer can lodge a new application for Wage Assistance. This application would be approved for the remaining balance of the 26 weeks subsidy period.

Workers compensation coverage

Employers must ensure that a Wage Assistance employee injured at work is entitled to the same workers compensation benefits as other employees in that business or industry.

Debt Recovery action if payments are incorrect

The terms and conditions of the Wage Assistance Agreement give the Department the right to recover any overpayment.

13. Placement Monitoring under Wage Assistance

The objective of placement monitoring

The Department's objectives in monitoring of Wage Assistance placements are to:

- improve employment outcomes from funded placements by providing support to employers and employees and
- maintain high standards of financial control and accountability, and to minimise the risk of fraud, or failure to comply with the Contract/Agreement.

Responsibility for undertaking placement monitoring

Monitoring of Wage Assistance placements will be undertaken through arrangements agreed between the National and State Offices of the Department from time to time, taking account of resources and developments in systems and processes.