

Axe falls on job agencies

HARRISON TIPPET,
CHAD VAN ESTROP

Four Geelong providers lose govt contracts

ALL four of Geelong's employment service providers have been axed by the federal government, putting hundreds of jobs at risk and threatening to disrupt thousands of unemployed jobseekers, a peak body has warned.

New contracts have been quietly awarded across the country for providers to deliver employment and skills services in a national shake-up of the sector, which rebrands the Jobactive scheme as Workforce Australia – a “front door” for employment and skills

services launching July 1. As a result of the consolidation of services, the majority of existing providers had been dumped across the country, including Geelong's four providers – MatchWorks, APM Employment Services, G-Force and Workskil Australia, the National Employment Services Association warned.

Workskil on Wednesday confirmed it would be closing offices at Corio, Geelong and Waurn Ponds, and aiming to support 18 existing staff mem-

bers, while the remaining three providers declined to confirm the loss of their contracts.

The Geelong Advertiser last week revealed G-Force and MatchWorks had failed to retain their contracts – with MatchWorks staff warning the company now faced up to 300 redundancies.

On Wednesday NESA chief executive Sally Sinclair questioned the need to turnover an estimated 80 per cent of existing providers, leaving workers in the sector “disillusioned and upset” and facing lay-offs.

Ms Sinclair also warned jobseekers faced the possibility of service disruptions as they moved to new providers setting up in regions where existing services had been dumped.

“That’s a large-scale disruption, which would potentially effect hundreds of thousands of jobs seekers and thousands of local employers,” she said.

“We’re getting a lot of reports from organisations who have been really strong performers in their communities for decades who are losing

their contracts. I’d question whether that is good disruption.

“Just to disrupt for the sake of disruption I think is destructive. I’m not sure what objective that achieves.”

Two new providers instead appear set to be parachuted into the region to replace the axed providers, with atWork Australia Employment Services and Sureway Employment and Training announcing their new Barwon region contracts on Wednesday.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has repeatedly declined to confirm the loss of contracts since the Geelong Advertiser last week revealed internal emails from MatchWorks confirmed the failure to retain local contracts. Staff, who asked to remain anonymous, warned MatchWorks faced “significant redundancies” with about 300 employees expected to be impacted.

A DESE spokesman said the department could not discuss matters relating to purchasing activities “to preserve the probity of the purchasing process”.

YOU TOO CAN HELP KIDS LIKE MALU

TAMARA MCDONALD

THE family of Belmont's Malu Hunt is once again getting behind the Good Friday Appeal, after the active three-year-old was the face of the campaign last year.

Shortly after his first birthday, Malu started having seizures, leading to tests that revealed the right hemisphere of his brain had not developed properly.

He was diagnosed with infantile spasms, a rare type of epilepsy in children, which affected his movement and speech.

Malu underwent complex brain surgery at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) in July, 2020, that disconnected half his brain to minimise the impact of the debilitating seizures.

“Everything's going really well,” mum Erin Johnson said.

Malu has not had a seizure since leaving hospital after the surgery, and has started three-year-old kinder, which he is “absolutely loving”.

Ms Johnson said while Malu did not have a lot of use in his left arm, he was undergoing therapy. His vision is also affected.

But this doesn't stop Malu getting active – he loves soccer, riding his bike, bouncing on the trampoline and going to the beach.



Malu Hunt with mum Erin and Chiara Macleod ahead of their You Yangs yoga fundraiser for the Good Friday Appeal. Picture: Mark Wilson

“He blows us away every day, we never knew what to expect, we’re amazed with what he’s achieved,” Ms Johnson said.

Ms Johnson said the family was “always grateful” for how the RCH had helped them.

On April 12, Ms Johnson is holding

a fundraiser for the Good Friday Appeal with friend Chiara Macleod.

Ms Macleod, owner of Charlie's Pals, which runs healthy programs for young people, will provide kids a fun yoga session on the day.

Parents are asked to bring a yoga mat for their child and make

a donation to the Good Friday Appeal. After the session, the kids will be encouraged to have some nature play.

The yoga session will be aimed at kinder and primary school-aged children, but all kids are welcome. RSVP is not required.

The event will be held between 10.30am-12.30pm at the Big Rock picnic area in the You Yangs on April 12.

People can also donate online at: fundraise.goodfridayappeal.com.au/fundraisers/malusmates/malu---s-mates



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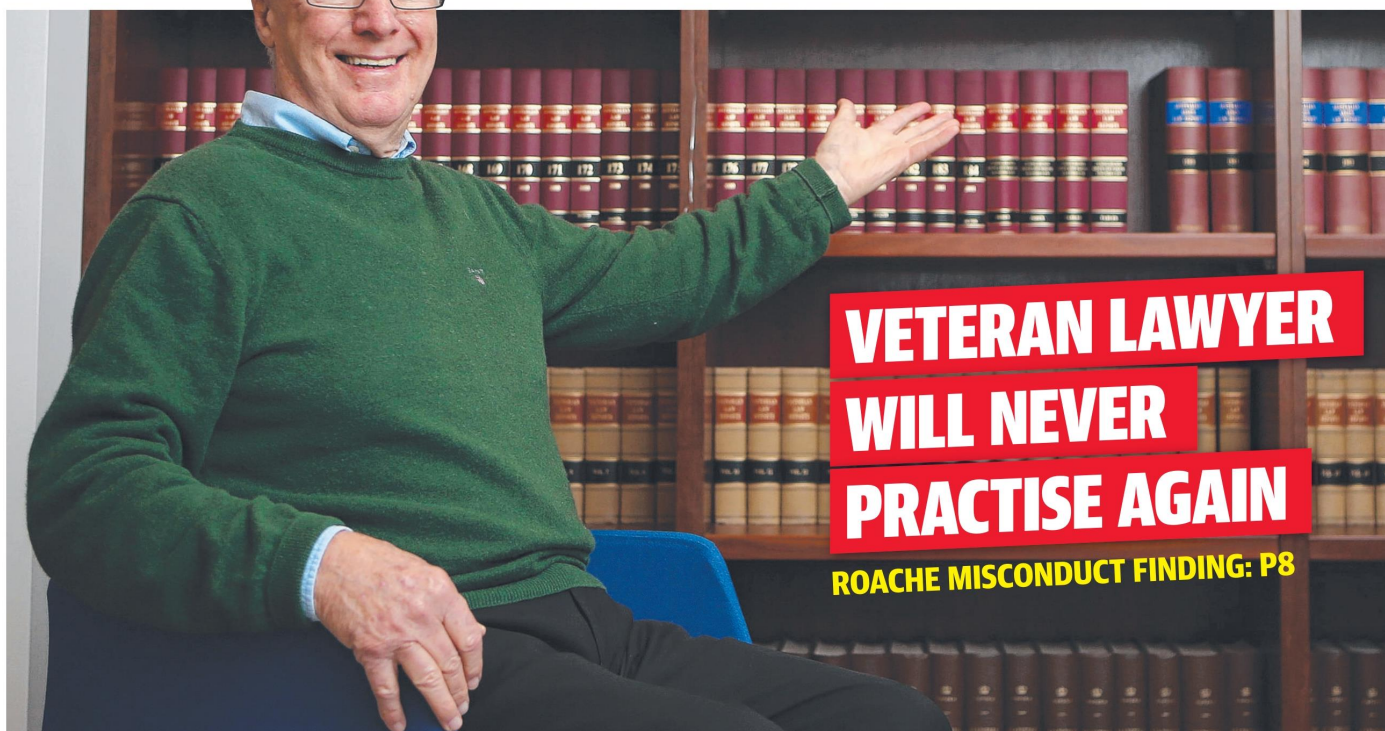
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HUGE BLOW: Geelong workers in the
gun as every local Jobactive provider
loses their government contract

**HARRISON TIPPET,
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Employment Services,
G-Force and Workskil
Australia have all lost
their contracts with the
government as part of a
consolidation of services.

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