

Ref: FOI2020/00012

Hon Clare Scriven MLC
1 North Terrace
Parliament House
Adelaide SA 5000
scriven.office@parliament.sa.gov.au



Dear Ms Scriven,

APPLICATION UNDER THE *FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1991 (FOI ACT)*

I refer to your application made under the *FOI Act* to the Department for Innovation and Skills (the Agency) received on 30 June 2020, requesting access to:

“All correspondence between Dr Niki Vincent, South Australian Commissioner for Equal Opportunity and the Department of Innovation and Skills between March 20, 2018 and June 30, 2020.”

A search for documents held by the Agency was undertaken and two documents were identified within scope of your application.

I have considered the documents and determined to release them in full, with the details of a third party redacted as out of scope to your application.

While the legislated timeframe in which to process your application has passed, I make this determination in accordance with Section 19(2)(a) of the *FOI Act*.

If you are not satisfied with this determination you have a legal right of review and appeal in accordance with section 29 of the *FOI Act*. Your review rights can be found by visiting the State Records website at <https://archives.sa.gov.au>

No fees and charges are applicable for the processing of this application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Spencer'.

Nicole Spencer

ACCREDITED FREEDOM OF INFORMATION OFFICER

07 / 08 /2020

For Office Use Only – I2 – A2



31 March 2020

Madeline Richardson
Executive Director
Skills and Workforce Capability
Department for Innovation and Skills
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Dear Madeline,

Re: Decision by the Department of Innovation and Skills not to extend funding support to DOME for the Workforce Development Project beyond the 2019 – 20 financial year

As South Australia's Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, I administer the South Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (the Act). The Act prohibits discrimination on a number of grounds, including sex and caring responsibilities, in a range of public areas including in employment. My key responsibilities are to examine and respond to complaints of discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and foster informed and unprejudiced community attitudes, with a view to eliminating discrimination on the grounds to which the Act applies.

In August 2019, I wrote to the Hon. David Pisoni, Minister for Innovation and Skills (the Minister) regarding correspondence I had received from DOME, where they had raised a number of concerns with me regarding the negative impact on mature age jobseekers of the Department of Innovation and Skills (DIS) - Skilling SA program.

In particular the decision to reduce DOME's funding in 2019 – 20 through the 'Workforce Development Project' and uncertainty about the future of this funding. I understood from their correspondence that this funding has been critical to their work in assisting unemployed mature age job seekers to access training opportunities and employment in South Australia.

I understand that staff from DIS met with representatives from DOME on a number of occasions in 2019 to discuss these concerns and were unable to resolve them. I also note that Robyn Dwight, Policy and Education Officer from the Commission, attended one of these meetings in a neutral capacity to provide information on the how the Act might apply to the concerns raised by DOME.

I recently received further correspondence from DOME that included a letter from you written on behalf of DIS. In this letter you advised DOME that you were unable to extend funding support for the Workforce Development Project to them beyond the 2019 – 20 financial year. I understand that this project had enabled DOME to provide a significant level of targeted support to mature age jobseekers in SA.

I am pleased to note that you also recognised the positive work DOME has done to support mature age jobseekers in SA and expressed a desire for DIS to continue to work with them to explore alternative funding opportunities for mature age job seeking employment programs. I also note that they were provided with information about these funding options and that a member of DIS would contact DOME to schedule a suitable time to explore these opportunities with them.

While I understand that DOME will be able to apply for access to funding through the options you have described in your letter, I have significant concerns that their organisation will not be able to provide the important and essential specialised services for mature age job seekers in our community if this funding is not secured by them.

I remain deeply concerned about age discrimination remaining a barrier to mature age jobseekers gaining employment and contributing to the South Australian economy. Age discrimination has been one of the top 5 grounds for complaint accepted by the Equal Opportunity Commission in the last two financial years – and a majority of these complaints have arisen in employment.

I'm also mindful that the barriers faced by mature age job seekers in securing employment are likely to increase due to the increasing unemployment levels resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our community. Demand for specialised services like DOMEs will become even more critical for mature age jobseekers competing in what is already a challenging job market.

I am very interested to hear what plans the Department of Innovation and Skills has in place to mitigate the growing challenges for mature age job seekers in light of its decision to discontinue funding for Dome's Workforce Development Program.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niki Vincent', with a large, stylized initial 'N'.

Dr Niki Vincent
Commissioner for Equal Opportunity

From: [Vincent, Niki \(AGD\)](#)
To: [Evangelista, John \(DIS\)](#); [REDACTED]
Cc: [Cirocco, Lucy \(AGD\)](#)
Subject: RE: Contacts for Educational Visits [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Date: Wednesday, 12 June 2019 4:40:15 PM
Attachments: [image004.png](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image005.jpg](#)

Absolutely – that’s fine with me John. Thanks!

I think Lucy Cirocco is the best contact for the Equal Opportunity Commission. I have copied her into this replay.

Warmest

Niki

Dr Niki Vincent, Commissioner for Equal Opportunity (South Australia) & Chair, Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities

Equal Opportunity Commission | Level 17 45 Pirie Street Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 464 Adelaide SA 5001

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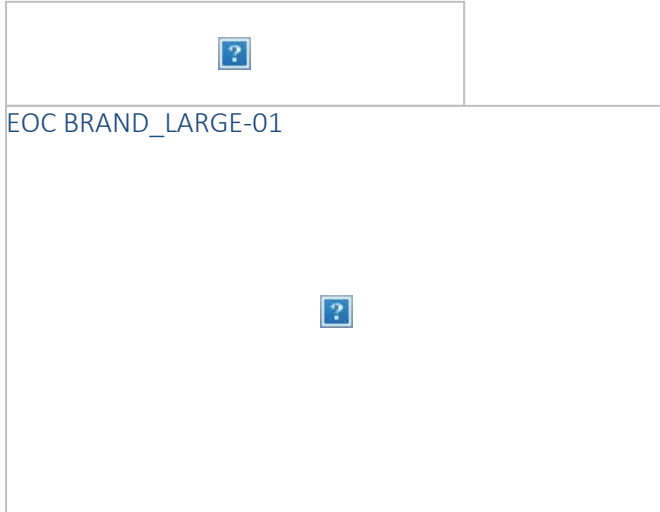
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<https://twitter.com/nikivincent>



From: Evangelista, John (DIS) <John.Evangelista@sa.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 12 June 2019 3:04 PM

To: [REDACTED]; Vincent, Niki (AGD)

<Niki.Vincent@sa.gov.au>

Subject: Contacts for Educational Visits [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

For Official Use Only

Hi [REDACTED] and Niki,

We have spoken previously about sharing contacts and networking opportunities to get the message out to stakeholders about the roles of our respective agencies as we often speak to the same or similar groups.

We met today with SafeWork SA and ReturntoWork SA, and discussed opportunities to share information for educational visits with our stakeholder groups which include employers, trainees and apprentices, training organisations and industry groups.

Would you be open to me sharing your contact details (or perhaps nominate someone from your office) with these rep's from SafeWork and ReturntoWork, with a view to us all collaborating on educational programs where synergies exist?

Happy to chat if it's easier.

Cheers,
John

John Evangelista

Director

Traineeship and Apprenticeship Services

Department for Innovation and Skills

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