

**Drug testing of income support recipients:  
comparison of New Zealand model with  
proposed Australian trial**



	New Zealand	Australia
<b>Who?</b>	Jobseekers required to apply for a job that requires a drug test (approx. 40% of jobs listed with NZ's social security department, Work & Income). <sup>i</sup>	5,000 Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other) recipients in 3 trial sites.
<b>When?</b>	Prior to a jobseeker applying for a suitable job that requires a drug test. <sup>ii</sup>	After the person has qualified for Newstart or Youth Allowance (Other).
<b>Why?</b>	Some employers perceived income support recipients to be using drugs and therefore did not want to hire them. This measure was implemented in response.	It appears people will be drug tested regardless of work requirements. It also appears to apply to people without job search obligations.
<b>What happens if someone fails?</b>	<p>Failure of the first test without a good reason results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repayment of the cost of the drug test.</li> <li>• The person needs to agree to stop using drugs.</li> <li>• A second test in the future.</li> </ul> <p>Failure of the second test results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another test within 25 working days;</li> <li>• Irrespective of whether this is passed or failed, the person needs to meet the cost of the test.</li> </ul> <p>Failure of the third test results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment cut for 13 weeks for people without dependents, or cut up to 50% for people with dependents.</li> <li>• Payment can be restarted earlier if person agrees to do an approved activity for at least six weeks.<sup>iii</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Failure of the first test, regardless of the reason, results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person being income managed.</li> <li>• A second test 25 working days later.</li> </ul> <p>Failure of the second test results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement to undergo treatment for addiction.</li> <li>• This treatment forms part of activity requirements.<sup>iv</sup></li> </ul>
<b>What happens if someone refuses a test?</b>	Same as above.	Payment is cancelled.
<b>Exemptions?</b>	Yes. People who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dependent on drugs or</li> <li>• undergoing/waiting for treatment for addiction, or</li> <li>• taking prescription meds which could result in failing a test.<sup>v</sup></li> </ul>	No.
<b>How many failed/refused a test?</b>	466 of 95,000 people tested (0.49%) since 2013. <sup>vi</sup>	

## REFERENCES

---

<sup>i</sup> NZ Ministry of Social Development, Work and Income (2017): Drug testing for beneficiaries with work obligations. [Online] Available at: <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/providers/health-and-disability-practitioners/drug-testing-for-beneficiaries-with-work-obligations.html> [Accessed June 2017].

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>iv</sup> Australian Government, Department of Social Services (2017): Welfare Reform, 2017 Budget [online] Available at: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2017/budget\\_2017\\_-\\_welfare\\_reform\\_-\\_fact\\_sheet\\_for\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2017/budget_2017_-_welfare_reform_-_fact_sheet_for_web_0.pdf) [Accessed June 2017]

<sup>v</sup> NZ Ministry of Social Development, Work and Income (2017) *Op.Cit.*

<sup>vi</sup> Davison, I (2017): Just 466 failed drug tests since 2013, Ministry of Social Development says. New Zealand Herald, [Online]. Available at:

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11809291](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11809291) [Accessed June 2017].

Lavopierre, A (2017): Federal budget 2017: New Zealand organisations say drug testing for welfare 'not the best use of funds' ABC News [online]. Available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/story-streams/federal-budget-2017/2017-05-13/federal-budget-2017-nz-welfare-orgs-warn-drug-test-dole-policy/8523738> [Accessed June 2017]