

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

Chair: Ms Amanda Rishworth MP
Deputy Chair: Mr Rowan Ramsey MP

Committee to examine the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Job Seeker Compliance) Bill 2011

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment has been asked by the House of Representatives Selection Committee to inquire into the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Job Seeker Compliance) Bill 2011 ('the Bill'). The inquiry will examine the possible implications and consequences of the Bill.

The Explanatory Memorandum outlines the Bill as follows:

This Bill implements the Government's election commitment to introduce tougher rules for job seekers, which was announced on 11 August 2010 as part of the "Modernising Australia's Welfare System" policy statement.

The amendments in this Bill will enhance the current job seeker compliance framework by providing additional incentives for job seekers to engage with their employment services providers and to participate fully in activities designed to improve their employment prospects.

This Bill will introduce suspension of payment for job seekers following an initial failure to attend an appointment or, in some circumstances, an activity such as training or Work for the Dole. As soon as the job seeker agrees to attend this appointment, their payment will be restored with full back payment. All job seekers will be required to attend a rescheduled appointment, regardless of their reason for missing the first appointment. If the job seeker attends the rescheduled appointment, they will not be penalised.

If the job seeker does not attend the rescheduled appointment, payment will again be suspended but this time, if they do not have a reasonable excuse for missing the appointment, they will incur a reconnection failure and lose payment for each day from the second missed appointment until they do attend a rescheduled appointment. That is, there will be no back payment for this period.

The reconnection penalty will be deducted from the payment for the period in which the job seeker was notified of the failure. This will ensure that the impact of the penalty is more immediate and will provide a more direct deterrent than under current legislation, which requires that the penalty amount be deducted from a later instalment period.

Reasonable excuse provisions will also be tightened so that, even if a job seeker has a reasonable excuse on the day for not attending an appointment or activity, it will not be accepted if they could have given advance notice that they couldn't attend but didn't do so.

The terms of reference are the text of the Bill, which can be accessed, together with the Explanatory Memorandum and Minister's second reading speech, on the Committee's website.

Submissions for the inquiry close on Friday 8 April 2011.

For media comment: contact the Committee Chair, Ms Amanda Rishworth MP on (08) 8186 2588.
For information on the inquiry: contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4573 email ee.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ee>