



RESUMED INQUIRY

Paving the way to paid work

The House of Representatives Employment, Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation Committee has resumed its inquiry, commenced in the last Parliament, into strategies to increase participation in paid work in Australia.

For this inquiry, increasing participation includes finding ways of increasing the proportion of the working age population who work. Submissions to the inquiry have identified that there is potential to provide greater support for longer term unemployed persons in their quest to find employment. Additionally, parents with children in school and mature age workers are seeking opportunities to better use their skills. Identified skill shortages could be reduced with targeted assistance to certain job seekers.

Employment issues in both rural/regional areas and urban/outer suburban areas will be examined. The inquiry is also specifically examining how a balance of assistance, incentives and obligations can increase workforce participation by income support recipients.

The inquiry links to the working age payment reform process initiated with the release of the *Building a simpler system to help jobless families and individuals* consultation paper jointly released by Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and to the issues raised in the *Intergenerational Report 2002-03* released by the Treasurer.

The inquiry into increasing paid employment was commenced in the last Parliament. During that time, the Employment Committee amassed a large body of evidence; over 100 submissions were received and 20 public hearings were conducted across Australia.

The current Employment Committee will draw on this evidence to finalise the inquiry and determine its recommendations to the Australian government.

The Chair of the Employment Committee, Mr Phil Barresi MP commented "Creating jobs and implementing strategies to improve the employment opportunities of disadvantaged groups is an important issue, and one which the Employment Committee is determined to address."

He added "There have been some developments since the inquiry lapsed before the Federal election. The committee is looking to incorporate those developments into its findings and release its report in the next couple of months."

Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, and submissions received can be obtained on the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ewr or by contacting the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4162 or emailing ewr.reps@aph.gov.au

For media comment

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For background information

contact the Committee Secretary, on (02) 6277 4157