

4 Jackaranda Street
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Re: Social, Economic and Industrial Issues pursuant to Workers over the age of 45

45 years of age and you're classed as a mature worker and your employment problems begin and such problems, throughout Australia, are being focused upon during the International Year of Older Persons
50 you're old enough to join the National Seniors Association
55 and sometimes 50 and you're eligible to live in a retirement village
60 and you're eligible for a Seniors Card in NSW
65 for males, and in the not too distant future 65 for females also, and you're eligible for the Age Pension

This makes the average of age of a senior **55** years.

With these facts in mind what is a mature unemployed worker (say from 55 even 50 on) eligible for when it comes to transport in NSW? He/she is eligible to use a Concession Fare Card allowing him/her to travel for half fare on buses, half fare on trains in peak hours and to get a small reduction in train fares in non-peak hours.

What is the same worker eligible for when he/she is lucky enough to pick up some part time work, but still not enough to live on entirely without welfare assistance, as regards transport? Nothing. Once you earn more than \$60 per fortnight your right to use a Fare Concession Card ceases.

My question is, surely there's something that could be done to allow such workers to continue to travel at half fare at least when travelling to and from their part time employment?

Let me present the following scenario in relation to a single person:-

A person over 55 accepts 15 hours work per fortnight at \$15 per hour in the hope that such work may lead to longer hours. They are also grateful for the experience because they have never done any paid work in this particular field before.

Total amount earned before tax	\$225.00 per fortnight
Part benefit entitlement	\$226.20 "
Benefit plus pay before tax	\$451.20 " "
Benefit plus pay after tax	\$422.40 " "(Tax about \$28.80)
or	\$211.20 per week

This is not a fortune per fortnight but is certainly better than unemployment benefit alone (\$96.70 p/f better) and the Social Security bill is being reduced due to a person doing part time work. One person, of course, won't make much difference but hundreds of thousands certainly will.

In order to earn that extra bit though a person has to get to the job and in this instance by public transport. This involves catching two buses each way to get to work, which by car would take a little less than 15 minutes. Full fare produces the following results:-

4 trips x \$1.40 = \$5.60 per day
\$5.60 x 5 days = \$28 per week
\$28 x 2 weeks = \$56 per fortnight

The \$96.70 gained per fortnight is now reduced by \$56 per fortnight making the gain, achieved by doing the part time work, \$40.70 per fortnight/\$20.35 per week. This now raises the question of whether or not the part time work is worth doing or whether it would be better to look for something more worthwhile. A person over 55, even over 50, doesn't have much choice. Either take a little part time work for a reasonable amount of extra or do without.

Half fares totalling \$28 per fortnight would make the fortnightly gain \$68.70 which is a little more worthwhile to the person doing the part time work than a gain of \$40.70 per fortnight.

My suggestion is to lobby Centrelink so that the amount of part benefit a person can receive will be increased in order to make any part time work more worthwhile by considering and acting upon one of the following lines or some other possible formula:-

1 Raising the amount, currently \$140, from which figure on 70% of a person's income is deducted together with 50% of earnings between \$60 and \$140 in order to calculate out how much part benefit a person is entitled to receive. Consideration should be given to raising the \$140 figure to \$200 when part time work is involved.

or

2 Increasing the amount a person can earn through part time work, without affecting a benefit. It is currently \$60 per fortnight with regard to a single person's Unemployment Benefit. Consideration should be given to taking the \$60 up to \$100, but only when part time work is involved.

And lobby the Seniors Card Office or appropriate NSW Department to:-

Allow 55 year olds the benefit of the Seniors Card as regards fares at least. Consideration should be given to allowing part benefit of the Seniors Card to those over 55 as regards fares, providing of course that they meet the necessary requirements. Entitlement to the other benefits as well could still begin from the age of 60. This is only in regard to NSW residents, as I am not familiar how other cards work in other States.

If one of the above three (3) suggestions could be implemented it would certainly be appreciated by mature workers doing part time work, who are still not earning enough to be independent of welfare.

Admittedly the bill for the payment of part benefits for either options 1 or 2 would be increased compared to the present situation. On the other hand though if a person receives some incentive to take up part time work the welfare bill be decreased.

The Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, Wayne Swan, believes:-

- 1** in rewarding work over welfare
- 2** in such things as a work bonus and
- 3** that long term unemployed don't have that helping hand

What does the Government do along similar lines?

Don't consider this submission to be the thoughts of only one person as I'm sure that there are many others who would share my opinion but wouldn't consider writing. I wouldn't be writing either if I hadn't attended the Retirement and Home Living Expo in Sydney recently. Before then I didn't know that an inquiry covering employment for mature age people existed. There would also be others who do not know either.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Guy