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I am writing to provide a copy of the Draft Evaluation of the Pilot Restart Program as agreed at my appearance before the Committee *Inquiry into Issues Specific to Mature Age Workers*, 23 September 1999.

Monitoring of the Restart program indicates that the retention rate of mature age people in employment after six months is very good. The Government is currently developing options for the continuation of Restart in the 2000 calendar year.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before the Committee and to comment on the issue of unemployment of mature age workers.

Yours sincerely

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Restart

*An Incentive Scheme for
Mature Aged Unemployed People*

DRAFT EVALUATION 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KATE ALDRIDGE
On behalf of the Chief Minister's Department

Executive Summary
EVALUATION REPORT
PILOT RESTART INCENTIVE SCHEME

The Evaluation Report on the Pilot *Restart* Incentive Scheme for Mature Aged Unemployed People was sought by the The ACT Government Chief Minister's Department, Office of Business Development and Tourism (OBDT), Employment Pathways Unit to examine the:

- effectiveness and efficiency of the *Restart* Scheme;
- use of future government resources for mature aged employment programs; and
- policy direction on mature aged unemployment.

Background

The ACT Government recognised an ongoing requirement for a commitment to meet the needs of the unemployed in the ACT community.

A strategy for a Pathways to Employment Opportunities concept was developed to:

- provide support to help unemployed people into real jobs;
- support a workforce that meets the needs of industry and employers; and
- work together with all sectors of the employment industry to tackle unemployment.

An Employment Services Industry Forum (ESIF) was convened by the OBDT in December 1997 in a response to the known necessity for change. The forum addressed the concerns identified by the business and community sectors since the change in Commonwealth employment assistance regarding the need for increased consultation, communication and information sharing regarding employment programs and strategy development.

The ESIF noted the dramatic change in the structure of the labour market the ACT has experienced in recent years experienced. In particular, the ACT has had traditionally high public sector employment in relation to other Australian cities. Publicly released ACT Government data indicates that from 1996 to the present more than half the ACT Government redundancies have been taken by over 40 year olds. A secondary change in the labour market has been government outsourcing.

The Evaluation Report recognised that mature age unemployment has also been previously highlighted in an ACT Government funded report by the Belconnen Employment Solutions Taskforce, '*Our Neglected Resource: A Canberra Challenge on the Employment Related Needs of Mature Age Job Seekers in the Belconnen Area 1999*'.

The Restart Campaign

To address the issue of mature aged unemployment the ACT Government Pilot *Restart* campaign was developed and implemented over three months with the aim of placing 100 people over the age of 40 years into full time work within 100 days. This focussed all activities around a specific period of time in order to

maximise the impact of both resources and the resulting publicity. The scheme was designed to focus the attention of potential employers on the benefits of employing mature age people. The target was achieved 3 weeks late.

It is ACT Government policy to outsource programs that can be delivered in the community however *Restart* was a pilot project and as such was still determining its feasibility to be ongoing.

The Pilot *Restart* aimed to:

- reduce mature age unemployment through raising the awareness of employers of the skills and experience available in the target group;
- instigate positive attitudinal change by employers toward the mature aged unemployed target group;
- provide industry with job ready employees; and
- determine the long term feasibility of a Restart Incentive Scheme for Mature Aged People.

To implement the Restart Scheme the ACT Government made available \$250,000 in- direct subsidies to employers as an incentive. To ensure employees sustain employment employers made a claim for payment at 3 months and 6 months employment targets.

A further budget of \$50,000 was available to provide promotion and administration costs to conduct *Restart*.

The Employment Pathways Unit undertook all administrative procedures and strong links were formed with stakeholders for support to assist in the achievement of the aims of the Pilot *Restart* scheme.

Outcome of Program

At September 1999 retention figures indicated that out of 100 positions filled 88% of the original employments remain employed, and with the replacement of 7 employees the retention stands at an excellent rate of 95%.

Data analysis of the Pilot *Restart* scheme emphasised the diverse range of industries. Notable were the employments in the communication/Information Technology sector. The Information Technology industry is identified by the Government as a high employment growth area to be targeted for jobs.

Other data demonstrated that most unemployed mature aged people were previously unemployed less than three months. However the number of long term unemployed was significantly and unexpectedly high.

While most employments were in the 40-50 age group (74%) the 50-60 age group was relatively high (24%). Only one person was employed in the 60 plus age group.

There was a clear indication of hidden unemployment found through numbers of callers and registered employees who were not in receipt of Commonwealth Government Newstart.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Evaluation Report of the Pilot *Restart* Incentive Scheme for Mature Aged People clearly indicates that there is evidence that mature aged unemployment is an issue which requires further analysis. The knowledge that the ACT leads the nation in its program to address the unemployment issue for mature aged people is a very clear indication of the necessity to continue to address this particular concern and to create more information for analysis.

Further programs such as *Restart* would enhance opportunities for promotion of the mature aged person as a workplace asset. Another analysis of *Restart* at a six or twelve month point may also be useful for research purposes.

The Pilot *Restart* Program itself is considered to be very appropriate and administered in an efficient and effective way. The only real issue to be addressed would be 'lead up' to for planning and design. This was identified as a particularly weak point in the development of the Pilot *Restart*.

The conclusions and recommendations of this Evaluation Report clearly indicate that *Restart* would benefit the community if it was to continue for further financial years and that it could be outsourced at this point.