

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION  
LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**2004-2005 ADDITIONAL SENATE ESTIMATES HEARING  
17 FEBRUARY 2005**

**EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS PORTFOLIO**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Outcome 1: Efficient and effective labour market assistance**

**Output Group 1.1: Working age payments**

**Outputs 1.1.1: Working age payments and compliance**

**Question Number: W218-05**

**Question:**

Senator Harradine provided in writing:

Is it correct that most lone parents are dependent on benefits for an average of 12 years, partly because they lack formal education and work experience? What is the Department doing to help these women improve their education and training for work so they can come off government payments, for their own well-being and that of their children?

**Answer:**

Research by the Australian National University estimates that the average cumulative use of income support by people on Parenting Payment Single (PPS) may be as much as twelve years. The twelve years may include more than one spell on PPS, and time on other income support payments. Forty-seven per cent (47%) of PPS recipients are currently in paid work or study.

People on PPS are eligible for a range of Job Network services tailored to their individual needs. Under the *Active Participation Model*, introduced in July 2003, services are designed to take into account the preference of many parents for part time work to fit in with their caring responsibilities. Job Network can also help people on Parenting Payment if they have a part time job but want to find a full time job.

Parents who have been out of the workforce for two or more years can access Transition to Work services, even if they are not receiving any income support payments. Transition to Work provides a range of flexible services, especially tailored to parents, including training, financial assistance and advice on ways to get

into the job market. It is highly successful with 54 per cent of participants gaining an employment or education outcome.

In addition, Centrelink Personal Advisers were implemented in September 2002 as part of the Australian Working Together Package. Personal Advisers provide a better and more individualised assessment for people who need extra help, such as parents. There are currently around 700 located in Centrelink offices across Australia and since implementation approximately 559,000 Parenting Payment customers have been interviewed by Personal Advisers.

There are also three specific payments administered by DEWR to help PPS recipients upgrade skills or re-enter work.

- the Employment Entry Payment (EEP) is a one off payment of \$104, and not income or assets tested.
- the Pensioner Education Supplement (PES) assists certain income support recipients, including PPS recipients, with some of the ongoing costs associated with study. It is available for income support recipients undertaking an approved course of study up to a postgraduate diploma. PES is paid at a rate of \$62 or \$31 per fortnight depending on study load and other factors.
- the Education Entry Payment (EdEP) is a \$208 lump sum, available annually, to help offset education related expenses such as books and fees. To qualify for EdEP, the PPS recipient must be in recipient of the PES and have not received an EdEP previously in the current calendar year.