

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2011-2012**

Cross Portfolio

DEEWR Question No. EW1002_12

Senator McKenzie provided in writing.

Question

Jobs in a Regional Area

Recently, the *Australian Financial Review* (Thursday 9th Feb) claimed that only 306 unemployed persons took advantage of the 2010 Gillard election campaign promise to give \$6,000 to each person when undertaking a job in a regional area. The government was prepared to pay \$14.8 million to this incentive. Additionally, the \$150 million infrastructure employment projects program has also reportedly failed to create jobs in vulnerable areas. Why is there no incentive to move to the country? Is the payment not enough to entice the unemployed? Do we need to invest more in regional services to make it more attractive? Perhaps the \$150 million infrastructure employment projects campaign could have been spent more wisely in the country.

Answer

Moving to a new community – particularly for individuals or families which may be facing multiple disadvantages – is a major decision and is not undertaken lightly.

The Connecting People with Jobs initiative provides incentives to job seekers, registered with an employment services provider, who have been unemployed for three months or more to relocate for ongoing work and apprenticeships.

Connecting People with Jobs funding is flexible and can be used to cover a range of relocation related costs including travel expenses, removalists, temporary accommodation and mentoring.

Eligible job seekers can move (1) from anywhere in Australia to a flood affected area of Queensland, or (2) from an Employment Services Area where the unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Relocations between capital cities is not permitted under the initiative (unless it is to a flood affected area of Brisbane).

It is important to note the relocation limits under Connecting People with Jobs:

- Relocation to a metropolitan area without dependent children - \$3,000.
- Relocation to a metropolitan area with dependent children - \$6,000.
- Relocation to a regional area without dependent children - \$6,000.
- Relocation to a regional area with dependent children - \$9,000.

Job Services Australia providers can also use the Employment Pathway Fund for the costs associated with the relocation of an eligible job seeker including fares, temporary rental assistance, goods transport, bond assistance and any other legitimate relocation expenses related to an individual's circumstances.

The Infrastructure Employment Projects program is the responsibility of the Department of Infrastructure and Transport. That Department has provided the following response:

The Infrastructure Employment Projects program has generated over 2,740 short term positions and 913 long term jobs across Australia. Two recently commenced projects will take these figures to 2,925 and 1,646 respectively. It has given a strong confidence boost to many businesses in the construction industry to maintain existing employment levels.

Many of these positions are located in areas outside Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Excluding these locations the short term positions are 591 and long term 839 positions.