

## Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2013-2014

#### Outcome 1 - Employment

#### Department of Employment Question No. EM0175\_14

Senator Cameron asked on 27 February 2014 , Hansard page 91

#### Question

#### Assistance packages for Toyota and Holden

Senator CAMERON: I will stop you there. I want to come back to this. I crave your indulgence to just move to another issue for a few minutes and then I will come back to this. This is for Ms Leon. Is the department working on advice of an assistance package for workers affected by recent decisions at Toyota and Holden?

Ms Leon: They are all matters that will be considered by the government.

Traditionally, in this committee, matters that are going to be considered by the government for its decision are not disclosed to the committee.

Senator CAMERON: Traditionally at this committee—why can I not ask you if you are doing work on an issue for an assistance package for workers? That is not cabinet-in-confidence. That is, 'What are you doing?' Ms Leon: What I am trying to get at is that industry assistance packages are usually considered by cabinet. I was trying not to say the words. I was indicating that it was a government decision. Senator

LUDWIG: You are allowed to say the words. You may not want to tell us about the content of it. Ms Leon: Industry assistance packages are not things that the department just decides to do unilaterally. Industry assistance packages would go to cabinet, if they are in consideration, and that is why I am a little hesitant to talk about what might or might not be being considered by government in that context. Senator

CAMERON: Are you currently working on a cabinet submission? Ms Leon: That is the very thing that we cannot disclose. The Cabinet Handbook precludes us—

Senator LUDWIG: We are not asking for the content of it. In another portfolio Senator Brandis used to make this very clear, and I am sure you remember this. Senator

Abetz: Which you would studiously ignore. Senator LUDWIG: No, I would not. I would take it on notice and ask the relevant minister. In this instance you can say whether there is a cabinet submission. I am not asking you about the content. You can say whether it has been finalised or whether it has been handed and what date it is going to cabinet, but I am not even going to ask that. Ms Leon: I think that those kinds of questions have sometimes been answered in relation to legal advice, 'Was it sought? When was it provided and so on?' But in determining what is appropriate to provide to committees, we do take some guidance in this space from the FOI Act, although not strictly bound by the FOI Act. The FOI Act includes as a reason for why you can claim cabinet confidentiality that the matter has been or will be considered by cabinet. So the fact of something even going to cabinet is something that is usually protected. Senator Abetz: Can we take it on notice and see what we can provide? Senator LUDWIG: Thank you very much. Senator CAMERON: Have I missed anything, Senator Abetz? Has there been an announcement that there will be some support for these workers? I thought there was. Senator Abetz: Yes. What we have indicated—and I confess that I do not have the detail in front of me—is in the industry portfolio coordinating it. In this particular portfolio we are giving assistance. Workers who are made redundant are eligible for immediate access to intensive employment

support with a Job Services Australia provider under the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program and this includes funding for the reskilling of workers to access new job opportunities. There was a \$100 million Manufacturing Growth Fund in response to the Holden announcement and this is being led by the Department of Industry. So, it is the coordinating portfolio, and we are providing that immediate access to intensive employment support with Job Services Australia under the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Program. As I understand it, that would also apply to the Toyota workers. Senator CAMERON: Is this your public announcement? Senator Abetz: No, this has all been announced. This came out in December last year. Senator CAMERON: So, you have taken it on notice? Senator Abetz: Yes, and we can provide further advice as to that. Senator CAMERON: I will put this on notice: is the department working on advice for an assistance package for workers affected by the recent decisions of Toyota and Holden? Where is it up to? Given the recent announcements, has the government given consideration to providing immediate stream 3 assistance to workers who might lose their jobs between now and when the sites close in 2017? How many of the additional places under stream 3, announced by the previous government in similar circumstances, have been taken up, for example, BlueScope Steel and the automotive industry. Senator Abetz: I have got to be careful, because I have a very capable assistant minister who looks after the Job Services area, but I think the issue that you raised about access to stream 3 is already available. I will take it on notice.

## **Answer**

Retrenched workers from automotive manufacturing companies and eligible component suppliers in Australia are eligible for immediate access to intensive employment support with a Job Services Australia provider under the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Programme.

The Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Programme is a demand-driven programme. Since commencement of the programme in 2008, there have been 4384 job seekers registered in the programme.

Other programmes announced by the previous government which provide immediate access to Stream 3, include the BlueScope Steel Labour Adjustment Programme, with 949 job seekers registered since the programme began in 2011, and the Forestry Industry in Tasmania Structural Adjustment Programme with 454 job seekers registered since the programme began in 2011.

On 18 December 2013, the Government announced a wide-ranging industry initiative comprising support for the regions impacted by the wind-down of Holden's operations, reviews of the South Australian and Victorian economies and the development of a National Industry Investment and Competitiveness Agenda. The Government's response includes the development of a \$100 million growth fund to support economically responsible initiatives in regions facing pressure in their manufacturing sectors. The announcement also committed to providing employment support to redundant automotive workers through the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Programme. The Department of Industry is leading this industry initiative and the Department of Employment is providing support as appropriate.