

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10**

Outcome: 4

DEEWR Question No. EW0172_10

Senator Cash asked on Monday 1 June, EEWR Hansard page 20.

Question

Initiatives to assist Youth, Mature Age and Women participate in employment

Provide a list of the specific elements that target each individual group—youth, mature age and women? Is it easier to do it in that way? Will I get all the information?

Answer

Please note that further details on the following measures are available at www.budget.gov.au (Budget Paper No.2), www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers (for Budget Media Releases) and www.deewr.gov.au/Employment (for Budget measures and announcements)

Women

In the 2009-10 Budget the Australian Government announced \$26.8 million over four years to help parents on income support payments, the majority of whom are women, to balance their income support payment participation activities more effectively with their family responsibilities. The changes will introduce flexibility in the type of activities through which parents can meet their requirements. From 1 July 2010 parents will be able to meet their participation requirements through part-time work or study, voluntary work or a combination of these. The changes will provide greater support for women to undertake study and training to gain additional skills and qualifications.

The Australian Government has also announced the introduction of Australia's first comprehensive paid parental leave scheme to commence on 1 January 2011. The Government funded scheme will provide greater financial support to working families, encourage greater workforce participation by parents and enhance maternal and child health and development.

The scheme will cover employees, including casual employees, as well as contractors and the self-employed, and the Government estimates that 148,000 new parents will be eligible for paid parental leave each year.

From 1 July, Job Services Australia will provide more tailored assistance responsive to parents' individual needs and circumstances. Parents will receive a more holistic service as providers will be working with community services in their local area and activities for parents will be tailored to recognise their caring responsibilities.

The 2009 Women's Budget Statement is available at www.fahcsia.gov.au.

Mature Age

As part of Job Services Australia, mature age job seekers will work with their employment services provider to develop their own combination of job search, training, work experience and other assistance, which will best help them find and keep a job. Each job seeker will work with their provider to develop an Employment Pathway Plan. Providers will have access to a flexible pool of funding (the Employment Pathway Fund) to buy a range of goods and services to address the job seeker's personal employment barriers.

Mature age job seekers may also benefit from Innovation Fund projects and Employer Brokers. Employer Brokers will engage with employers in a skill or labour shortage industry, or a specific location, to broker solutions that meet employers' needs. They will target the efforts of employment services providers to matching the needs of job seekers with the labour requirements of employers. Job Services Australia will promote stronger ties with employers and it is anticipated that this will help to address possible negative employer attitudes that may exist toward mature age people.

Mature age people made redundant as a result of the global recession can access immediate employment assistance to help them get back into the workforce as quickly as possible. Job seekers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own will be provided with immediate support. This initiative will run for two years and covers all workers made redundant between 24 February 2009 and 31 March 2011.

Mature age job seekers with injuries, disability, or health conditions that impact on their capacity to work may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Services or the Disability Employment Network. These services will be replaced with new demand driven Disability Employment Services from 1 March 2010. Information and advice for mature age people with an injury, disability or health condition is available through JobAccess.

Youth

An element of the Jobs and Training Compact is the Compact with Young Australians, which has been agreed by all states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments. The Compact with Young Australians aims to increase educational attainment, by entitling every Australian aged:

- 15 to 19 years to an education or training place for any government-subsidised qualification, subject to admission requirements and course availability; and
- 20 to 24 years to an education or training place for any government-subsidised qualification that would result in the individual attaining a higher qualification, subject to admission requirements and course availability.

The states and territories will have the responsibility for providing the education and training places under the Compact with Young Australians education and training entitlement. This entitlement will be fully implemented by 1 July 2009 for 15 to 19 year olds and by 1 January 2010 for 20 to 24 year olds.

The Compact with Young Australians will be supported by the introduction of a National Youth Participation Requirement from 1 January 2010, which will ensure that all young people complete Year 10 and participate in education, training or employment (or a combination of these) until the age of 17. In addition, strengthened participation requirements will make education and training a precondition for obtaining Youth Allowance (Other) from 1 July 2009 and Family Tax Benefit Part A from 1 January 2010 for young people under the age of 21 who have not completed Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. There is already a requirement for young people aged 21 to 24 to be in full-time study in order to be an eligible person for Family Tax Benefit Part A.