

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

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

Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy

DEEWR Question No. EW0143_12

Senator Cash provided in writing.

Refers to previous DEEWR Question No [EW1012 11](#).

Question

Jobs Lost In Queensland Floods

It has been estimated that approximately 5,000 jobs were lost in Queensland in January 2011 due to the floods. What support has been given to the casual employees (mostly women) who have lost an income temporarily? How many of the estimated 5,000 jobs were held by women? What is being done to support these women?

Answer

Employment in Queensland declined by 23 700 (or 1.0 per cent) between January 2011 and February 2011. While the fall in employment in Queensland is likely to have been due, at least in part, to the impact of the floods on the labour market, it is inappropriate to attribute the fall in employment to the floods alone, as there were numerous other factors that affected the Queensland labour market over the period. Females accounted for around 69 per cent (or 16 300) of the total fall in employment in Queensland over the month to February 2011. It is important to note, however, there has been a recovery in female employment in recent months, which, in June 2011 (latest available data), was up by 700 on the level recorded in January 2011.

There has been a range of assistance available to people affected by the floods, including casual workers. This assistance includes:

Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy

- On 10 January 2011, the Prime Minister authorised financial assistance through the Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy for employees, small businesses and farmers who experienced a loss of income as a direct result of the flooding and severe weather throughout November 2010 to February 2011.
- This Subsidy provided fortnightly payments equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart allowance depending on the person's circumstances for a maximum of 13 weeks.
- The claim period for this subsidy closed on 31 March 2011.

Child Care Assistance

- In response to the flooding, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department) invoked Local Emergency provisions under Family Assistance Law to declare a period of local emergency for all Queensland Child Care Benefit Approved child care services (services). Where families were required to pay child care fees on days when their child could not attend care due to the floods, or their child care service was closed as a result of the floods, the Government still paid eligible families their Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate entitlements for the period of the emergency.
 - The Department also advised services that they were able to make Special Child Care Benefit available to families suffering financial hardship as a result of the flooding. Family Assistance Law gives authority to a Child Care Benefit approved service to approve up to 13 weeks of Special Child Care Benefit each financial year where a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, or a family is suffering temporary financial hardship.

National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements

- The National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) were enacted immediately after the floods, to assist all individuals impacted by the disaster.
 - Elements such as the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment were made available to eligible individuals and families.

Support through Employment Services

- Any workers, including casuals, who lost their jobs as a result of the Queensland floods may have been eligible for assistance through Job Services Australia.
 - Job Services Australia offers tailored assistance and may include training, skills development and work experience.

The Fair Work Ombudsman

- The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) has released a 'Fair Work Guide: Employment entitlements during natural disasters or emergencies' which provides advice to employers and employees on relevant workplace relations rights, obligations and options, in emergency situations (in particular, how relevant leave provisions can apply). This guide is available on both the FWO and Centrelink websites.

Jobs and Skills Package

- The Australian Government, in conjunction with the Queensland Government, announced on 6 March 2011 the Queensland Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package, which comprises a range of initiatives to mitigate skills and job losses, support the retention of workers in impacted communities, and address emerging skills shortages stemming from the floods and Cyclone Yasi.
- The Department's \$38.5 million contribution to the Jobs and Skills Package, which will be available until 30 June 2012, includes:
 - a \$12 million Flexible Funding Pool;
 - 400 additional places under National Green Jobs Corps;
 - support for Apprentices through out-of-trade Apprentice work teams, bonuses for employers, replacement tools and relocation payments;

- assistance for Indigenous Australians through targeted Indigenous Employment Program places and Indigenous Employment Coordinators;
- additional places for job seekers under Community Work Placements program; and
- funding for Jobs and Skills Development Officers.
- The Department continues to work with the Queensland State Government to implement the individual elements of the package.

Cyclone Yasi Wage Assistance

- Wage Assistance was made available to employers (including businesses, farmers and not-for-profit organisations) whose business was affected by Cyclone Yasi.
- This measure, announced on 16 February 2011, assists businesses to retain their employees (including casual and part-time workers) who may otherwise have become disengaged from the workforce.
- Wage Assistance provides fortnightly payments equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart allowance depending on the person's circumstances for a maximum of 26 weeks.
- Whilst the claim period ended on 30 June 2011, employers can potentially receive Wage Assistance until December 2011.
 - As at 24 June 2011, 425 employers have claimed Wage Assistance for around 2,700 employees.