

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Chapter 2

Recommendation 1: That the Bill be amended to provide that where a person is required to enter into a participation agreement, the person must be offered a ‘cooling off’ period of at least seven days between the time that the terms of the agreement are settled and the time the person is required to sign the agreement; and the Department be required to inform people of their rights to this ‘cooling off’ period.

Recommendation 2: That the Bill be amended to explicitly recognise the needs of the child in determining the capacity of a parent to comply with a participation agreement.

Recommendation 3: That the Bill be amended to provide additional exemptions:

- for parents of children with a disability, not covered in the Bill, or other high care needs or other situations where the child or parent is in special circumstances;
- for parents whose children have non-physical disabilities;
- for a parent with more than one child with disabilities not defined within the Bill; and
- for mature aged Newstart recipients with caring responsibilities or personal circumstances, such as health problems, or other special circumstances that restrict their capacity to participate.

Recommendation 4: That the Bill be amended to provide for temporary exemptions from entering into a participation agreement due to special circumstances, such as short term illness or family crisis situations; and that the temporary exemption be available for a period of up to six months, and for more than one six month period.

Recommendation 5: That the Department introduce measures to facilitate the simplification of income reporting.

Recommendation 6: That Centrelink further develop accessible forms of written communication and encourage the use of plain English in their communications.

Recommendation 7: That the Commonwealth Government introduce a participation allowance to meet the costs associated with participation requirements.

Recommendation 8: That the Bill be amended to provide that full arrears be paid to mature age Newstart recipients if compliance takes place within 13 weeks of the breach occurring, consistent with that to be applied to Parenting Payment.

Recommendation 9: That the proposed breaching and penalty arrangements for Parenting Payment and mature age Newstart recipients be amended in line with the

recommendations of the Pearce Review, especially in relation to a reduction in the rate and duration of breaches.

Recommendation 10: That the Bill be amended to provide that a participation agreement breach not commence until at least 14 days after the person has been given notice of the breach, including the reasons for the breach. That the Bill be further amended to ensure that the recipient of a payment who is breached be notified in writing within seven days of that breach occurring.

Recommendation 11: That an accountability framework for Personal Support Programme providers be inserted into the Bill.

Recommendation 12: That the Government ensure that the high degree of flexibility, recognised as required for those placed on Newstart following the closure of mature age and partner allowances, include the provision of special training programs and specialist support to enable activity test requirements to be satisfactorily met.

### **Chapter 3**

Recommendation 13: That the Department of Family and Community Services implement in full the recommendations of the Independent Review of Breaches and Penalties in the Social Security System to the wider group of existing income support recipients currently subject to breaching provisions.