

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 1**

4.32 That the Commonwealth Government develop a national jobs strategy to:

- promote employment opportunities, particularly permanent full-time and permanent part-time jobs;
- set long-term targets for increased labour force participation;
- develop better targeted employment programs and job creation strategies;
- ensure a substantial investment is made in education, training and skill development; and
- bring a particular focus on improving assistance to young people making the transition from school to work, training or further education to prevent life-long disadvantage.

### **Recommendation 2**

4.33 That the Commonwealth conduct a review into the dynamics of the labour force, especially in relation to skill shortages.

### **Recommendation 3**

4.51 That the Commonwealth Government:

- introduce a training guarantee for long term unemployed or at risk jobseekers under the Job Network;
- introduce quality controls in the form of case management provided to jobseekers;
- provide automatic entitlement to case management for long-term unemployed people and unemployed youth;
- provide caps on the number of unemployed persons a case manager can assist within a job service environment to reduce the incentive to churn; and
- consider the feasibility of introducing a 'training and hiring' model (referred to in paragraph 4.65).

### **Recommendation 4**

4.52 That the Commonwealth Government introduce a range of measures, in addition to subsidised employment services, to address structural problems in the labour market.

### **Recommendation 5**

4.66 That a transitional jobs scheme for the very long term unemployed be introduced, whereby people who have been unemployed for over two years would be provided with six months employment at a training wage in the not-for-profit and public sectors.

### **Recommendation 6**

4.90 That the Australian Industrial Relations Commission establish a new minimum wage benchmark based on a wage level that enables a single full-time worker to achieve an adequate standard of living relative to contemporary community standards.

### **Recommendation 7**

4.104 That the Commonwealth Government conduct an inquiry into low-paid employment and that this inquiry examine:

- the nature and extent of low-paid employment in Australia;
- the introduction of a workable floor in relation to the minimum hours of work offered by employers;
- the problem of casualisation and employment security;
- the feasibility of attaching standards in relation to wages and conditions to Government funding of services; and
- the wages and conditions pertaining to contract labour.

### **Recommendation 8**

4.122 That the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* be amended to provide definitions of 'full-time' and 'permanent part-time' work.

### **Recommendation 9**

4.123 That the Commonwealth legislate to guarantee the right to standard entitlements, such as annual leave and sick leave, for casual workers converting to permanent part-time work.

### **Recommendation 10**

4.133 That the Commonwealth legislate to guarantee the right to standard entitlements, such as annual leave and sick leave, for labour hire workers.

### **Recommendation 11**

5.30 That the Commonwealth Government:

- consider increasing the base rates of allowances to the level of pension payments and that these payments be indexed to 25 per cent of MTAWG; and

- 
- consider the feasibility of introducing this reform by 2005.

### **Recommendation 12**

5.41 That the Commonwealth and the States review their approach to concessions by:

- establishing common eligibility criteria for concessions by removing anomalies in the level and scope of concessions between pensioners and allowees;
- that priority for access to concessions be directed to low income pensioners and allowees; and
- that information be widely disseminated on the nature and extent of concessions available.

### **Recommendation 13**

5.50 That the Commonwealth Government introduce a means-tested participation allowance, to broaden and replace existing payments, to meet the additional costs, up to a prescribed level, associated with jobsearch, work experience or further education and training activities of jobseekers.

### **Recommendation 14**

5.70 That the breaching and penalty system be amended in line with the recommendations of the Pearce Review; namely that:

- all penalties should be fully recoverable if the jobseeker takes reasonable steps to comply with the relevant obligation;
- the duration of penalties should not exceed eight weeks; and
- the rate of reduction in allowance should not exceed 25 per cent.

### **Recommendation 15**

5.84 That the Commonwealth Government review social security income tests:

- to reduce the high effective marginal tax rates for many unemployed people with casual or part time work;
- reduce the high effective marginal tax rates for families caused by the combined effect of income tests for Family Tax Benefit A, Child Care Benefit and Youth Allowance, in cases where a family has children attracting more than one payment.

### **Recommendation 16**

6.22 That the Commonwealth Government provide a commitment to the continued operation of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program.

**Recommendation 17**

6.43 That base funding arrangements for public housing be increased under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

**Recommendation 18**

6.44 That the Commonwealth and the States:

- increase funding for the maintenance of current housing stock;
- increase funding for new public housing stock; and
- develop strategies to increase investment from the private sector into public housing.

**Recommendation 19**

6.65 That, in supporting the current review being undertaken by the working group into residential tenancy databases, the Commonwealth Government, in co-operation with the States, develop national guidelines as a matter of priority in relation to the operation of tenancy databases.

**Recommendation 20**

6.70 That the Commonwealth Government develop a national housing strategy in consultation with key stakeholders including State Governments, community housing providers, the construction industry and the finance sector; and that this national strategy involve:

- the development of specific strategies to achieve growth in the supply of affordable housing through both public and private investment, particularly for low income groups;
- a review of the effectiveness of Commonwealth Rent Assistance in providing affordability and access to the private rental market; and
- a review of the relative funding priorities in relation to social housing and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

**Recommendation 21**

7.30 That the Commonwealth work with State and Territory education departments to identify those students who are at most risk of poor literacy and numeracy attainment and provide additional funding to enhance literacy and numeracy programs so as to meet the national literacy and numeracy goals.

**Recommendation 22**

7.31 That the National Report on Schooling in Australia provide the results of literacy and numeracy benchmarking by socioeconomic group.

**Recommendation 23**

7.49 That the Task Force on Child Development, Health and Wellbeing develop as a matter of urgency a national program for early childhood education.

**Recommendation 24**

7.50 That the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the States and Territories, develop initiatives to improve participation in early childhood education.

**Recommendation 25**

7.51 That the Commonwealth, in partnership with the States and Territories, develop and contribute to the funding of early childhood education.

**Recommendation 26**

7.52 That the Task Force on Child Development, Health and Wellbeing develop and implement special literacy programs for parents wanting to develop the skills to assist their children with early childhood learning.

**Recommendation 27**

7.70 That the Commonwealth provide funding to establish school breakfast programs in disadvantaged areas.

**Recommendation 28**

7.102 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding for schools based on the socioeconomic profile of the school community to improve services provided to disadvantaged students.

**Recommendation 29**

7.103 That the Commonwealth work with the State and Territory Governments to develop effective policies and identify successful programs that improve retention rates of young people in danger of leaving school early and re-engage early school leavers to return to education at school or TAFE; and to provide additional support for those programs.

**Recommendation 30**

7.104 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding for the TAFE sector aimed at providing support for those students wishing to complete their school education in TAFE institutions.

**Recommendation 31**

8.50 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding for preventive health and related measures, and that this funding be directed particularly at socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.

### **Recommendation 32**

8.68 That a jointly funded Commonwealth-State national dental health scheme be established to improve access to dental services for people on low incomes, and that it be modelled on the former Commonwealth Dental Health Program.

### **Recommendation 33**

9.8 That public and private utilities have in place hardship provisions that provide for the reduction or waiver of debt to ensure that customers genuinely unable to pay for the provision of utilities retain access to these essential services.

### **Recommendation 34**

9.21 That all States and Territories require credit providers to undertake a satisfactory assessment process prior to an increase in the credit limit available to a client to determine that person's creditworthiness.

### **Recommendation 35**

9.40 That the Consumer Credit Code be amended:

- to impose additional requirements for high cost loans provided by fringe credit providers, relating to:
  - disclosure of the comparison rate (the total cost of the loan, including interest and all fees and charges to a single percentage rate) on the loan offer;
  - disclosure of a statutory warning on the loan offer that the particular loan is an expensive form of credit; and
  - disclosure of information regarding the cancellation of direct debit authorities and avenues for complaints on the loan offer.
- to clarify that all credit providers must disclose an annual percentage rate (APR).
- to prohibit the taking of security over essential household goods.
- to prevent fringe credit providers from circumventing the application of the Code by setting up the credit transaction as a pawnbroking or broker arrangement.

### **Recommendation 36**

9.44 That a Ministerial Council on Pawnbroking be established to review the adequacy of existing regulation of the industry.

**Recommendation 37**

9.48 That State and Territory Governments fund more community education programs in relation to credit and credit-related matters.

**Recommendation 38**

9.49 That credit providers be required to provide clear, 'plain English' information on credit products to potential clients.

**Recommendation 39**

9.52 That Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments increase funding to financial counselling services.

**Recommendation 40**

9.74 That the Commonwealth Government, in co-operation with State Governments through the Ministerial Council on Gambling, continue the development of a national approach to problem gambling, and that this approach examine:

- the adequacy of current regulatory mechanisms;
- the need for further harm minimisation and prevention measures; and
- the adequacy of support services for problem gamblers and their families.

**Recommendation 41**

10.31 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding to increase the number of child care places available, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

**Recommendation 42**

10.98 That the Child Support Agency review its debt collection procedures to ensure that debt repayment is made on a regular and timely basis so as to not disadvantage custodial parents and their children.

**Recommendation 43**

11.94 That the Commonwealth, in cooperation with the States and Territories, develop a comprehensive system of community-based early childhood and parenting support for all families.

**Recommendation 44**

11.95 That the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments cooperate to ensure that additional intensive services are funded for disadvantaged families experiencing multiple and complex problems which impact on the care of children. Further, that the provision of such services in Indigenous communities be given a high priority.

**Recommendation 45**

11.96 That the Commonwealth conduct an audit of existing rules relating to parents receiving income support payments to ensure these do not place children at risk of hardship.

**Recommendation 46**

11.97 That the Commonwealth develop and implement a community education campaign for new parents aimed at improving the nutrition of children.

**Recommendation 47**

12.57 That the Commonwealth provide funding for the expansion of access to the New Apprenticeships scheme, particularly in rural and regional areas.

**Recommendation 48**

12.58 That the Commonwealth work with industry and unions to maximise the take up of apprenticeships in areas where there are recognised skills shortages and to ensure that training is relevant to enterprises and apprentices themselves.

**Recommendation 49**

12.59 That the Commonwealth undertake a review of New Apprenticeships to evaluate the effectiveness of policies; recruitment and selection; progression through the scheme; and employment outcomes after training.

**Recommendation 50**

12.82 That the Commonwealth initiate an employment assistance program, based on the United Kingdom Gateway program, to provide youth with intensive assistance and an agency providing comprehensive support for youth pathways.

**Recommendation 51**

12.86 That the Commonwealth and State Governments implement strategies to improve access to employment opportunities for young unemployed people, in particular those young people living in rural and remote areas.

**Recommendation 52**

12.88 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding to community organisations to enable them to provide education, training and housing assistance packages to young homeless people.

**Recommendation 53**

12.90 That the Commonwealth progressively lower the age of independence test for Youth Allowance from 25 to 21 years.



**Recommendation 54**

12.91 That the Commonwealth review its income support programs for young people to fully recognise changes in the Australian labour market.

**Recommendation 55**

12.93 That Centrelink expand forms of service delivery which are responsive to the needs of young people, particularly young homeless people.

**Recommendation 56**

12.108 That the parental income test for Youth Allowance be increased and maintained as a percentage of Average Weekly Earnings.

**Recommendation 57**

12.119 That Rent Assistance be extended to those receiving Austudy payments.

**Recommendation 58**

13.13 That the Commonwealth, in conjunction with State Governments, provide a range of incentives to stimulate the growth of industries and employment in Indigenous communities.

**Recommendation 59**

13.14 That the Commonwealth and State Governments, in co-operation with the private sector, establish partnerships with Indigenous communities to promote employment opportunities.

**Recommendation 60**

13.21 That Community Development Employment Projects participants have access to the full range of assistance available under the *Australians Working Together* package in order to increase social and economic participation of Indigenous people.

**Recommendation 61**

13.27 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding for Indigenous-specific housing programs.

**Recommendation 62**

13.50 That the Commonwealth work with the States and Territories to develop strategies to improve access of Indigenous children to early childhood education facilities.

**Recommendation 63**

13.51 That the Commonwealth provide additional funds specifically for improving Indigenous literacy and numeracy.

**Recommendation 64**

13.52 That the Commonwealth investigate the impact of the changes to ABSTUDY on the participation of Indigenous students and implement changes to improve ABSTUDY assistance to Indigenous students.

**Recommendation 65**

13.57 That the Commonwealth and the States continue to implement programs and strategies to improve access to health care services for Indigenous people.

**Recommendation 66**

13.66 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding to improve the affordability of child care for Indigenous children.

**Recommendation 67**

13.78 That the Commonwealth provide additional funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

**Recommendation 68**

13.79 That the States provide additional assistance for programs that address recidivism and post-prison release support services for Indigenous people.

**Recommendation 69**

14.42 That the Commonwealth and State Governments maintain and expand services in such areas as health, education, housing and transport to rural and regional areas.

**Recommendation 70**

14.43 That the Commonwealth and State Governments set national minimum standards for access to essential community services, such as health, education and welfare services in rural and regional areas.

**Recommendation 71**

14.44 That State Governments maintain and expand regional development strategies in rural and regional areas.

**Recommendation 72**

14.45 That the Commonwealth Government develop a national public infrastructure development program targeted to regional areas focusing on such areas as transport, hospitals and schools.

**Recommendation 73**

14.46 That State Governments encourage the expansion of labour-intensive private sector services in regional areas by improving education and training and

other public infrastructure and/or providing tax concessions or other subsidies to encourage employers to relocate to regional areas.

**Recommendation 74**

14.47 That State Governments support local employment and social development initiatives in rural and regional areas.

**Recommendation 75**

15.27 That the Commonwealth increase support to educational and other programs which enable older Australians to remain active members of the workforce.

**Recommendation 76**

15.34 That the Commonwealth Government review the special needs of ageing carers in relation to retirement income and income support.

**Recommendation 77**

15.39 That the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the State and Territory Governments, ensure that there are adequate guidelines in place to protect older Australians who use home equity conversion products.

**Recommendation 78**

15.50 That the Commonwealth Government provide additional funding for programs which provide support services for the aged homeless including additional funding to ensure greater access to aged care accommodation.

**Recommendation 79**

15.93 That the Commonwealth enable Temporary Protection Visa holders to access English language training and employment assistance in addition to existing services.

**Recommendation 80**

15.95 That the Commonwealth Government investigate additional avenues to enable migrants and refugees to have qualifications recognised and to upgrade skills to ensure that migrants and refugees are able to find appropriate employment as soon as possible following arrival in Australia.

**Recommendation 81**

16.25 That the Commonwealth introduce a disability allowance to meet the additional costs associated with disability.

### **Recommendation 82**

16.36 That the Commonwealth re-commit to employ people with disabilities in the public sector in proportions that reflect their representation in the wider community.

### **Recommendation 83**

16.37 That the Commonwealth Government and the States continue to implement strategies to promote greater employment of people with disabilities in the private sector.

### **Recommendation 84**

16.52 That the Commonwealth and the States continue to implement programs and strategies to improve access to educational opportunities for people with disabilities, including the recommendations of the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee report on the *Education of Students with Disabilities*.

### **Recommendation 85**

16.77 That the Commonwealth Government review:

- the level of income support provided to carers, especially the rate of Carer Allowance;
- the income support and other support needs of carers with special needs, such as young carers and ageing carers (also the subject of a separate recommendation); and
- the level of respite care provided for carers.

### **Recommendation 86**

16.78 That where young carers have primary care responsibilities in their families, adequate financial support measures be available, including removing current restrictions that discourage young people from combining paid work or study with their caring responsibilities.

### **Recommendation 87**

16.79 That, as a matter of priority, the Commonwealth relax the rules for adult carers who live adjacent or near to the person they are caring for to enable them to receive Carer Allowance.

### **Recommendation 88**

17.40 That the Commonwealth increase the current level of emergency relief funds allocated to agencies.

**Recommendation 89**

17.56 That the Commonwealth government streamline the funding arrangements for all its community funding programs.

**Recommendation 90**

17.57 That the Commonwealth conduct an audit of its community funding programs to determine:

- whether they are located in the areas of greatest need;
- the degree to which complementary services are co-located;
- that there is an identifiable continuum of services from capacity building through to tertiary and crisis support.

**Recommendation 91**

17.58 That COAG conduct an audit similar to that in the previous recommendation to determine the adequacy of Commonwealth, State and local government funded community services in local communities.

**Recommendation 92**

17.93 That Centrelink Community Service Centres be resourced to establish local management advisory committees with membership drawn from its customer base, emergency relief providers, local schools, the police, employers and community representatives to sensitise service delivery to local needs.

**Recommendation 93**

17.94 That Centrelink CSCs be resourced to act as community service hubs for Commonwealth government-funded programs to ensure there is a greater connection between income support and other human service delivery.

**Recommendation 94**

18.46 That a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy be developed at the national level and that this involve:

- an initial summit of Commonwealth, State and local governments, the welfare sector, unions, the business sector, community groups, income support customers and relevant experts in the field to be held to highlight the importance of the issue and agree on a timetable for action;
- a commitment to achieve a whole of government approach. That is, coordinated action across policy areas such as employment, health, education, income support, community services, housing and other relevant areas to reduce poverty and poverty of opportunity;
- not longer than a 12-month period of consultation.

**Recommendation 95**

18.47 That a statutory authority or unit reporting directly to the Prime Minister be established with responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring a national anti-poverty strategy and that this entity:

- establish benchmarks and targets to measure progress against a series of anti-poverty objectives;
- report regularly to the Parliament on progress against the strategy; and
- undertake or commission research into a range of poverty-reduction measures.