



2006/2007 Federal Budget: An AFDO Briefing

Overview

The Budget contains several positive employment initiatives however the scale of the initiatives appears small. The Budget also contains increased financial support for seniors and carers. Proposed changes to the Commonwealth Government work cover scheme could be of concern.

Employment

- \$1.8M over 2 years for HREOC to assist it to meet the expected increased complaints workload arising from the introduction of the Work Choices Act
- COAG mental health employment related initiatives - \$40M over 5 years
 - o Additional 2,500 places over 5 years in the Personal Support Program
 - o Additional DOES places and vocational rehabilitation support to help people gain and retain employment (no further detail provided)
- Federal Government funded accident and personal liability insurance to cover unpaid workers - \$2.7M over 4 years
 - o 70,000 places over four years, for people with disability, sole parents, indigenous and people unemployed for more than 12 months
 - o available for work experience opportunities running from 5 days to 8 weeks
 - o starts 1 January 2007
 - o it is not clear how this initiative will work with the Workplace Modifications Scheme which cannot be used to fund modifications needed by unpaid workers

Arising from recommendations made by the Employers Roundtable:

- Supported Wage System Assessments - \$2.9M over four years
 - o Will fund assessments of 1,400 people over four years
 - o Not clear if a broader review of the Supported Wages System (including the amount assessors are paid) is proposed as part of this initiative
- Auslan interpreters in the workforce - \$5M over 4 years
 - o 1,750 Deaf employees will have access to interpreters for induction, OH&S training and team meetings
 - o starts 1 January 2007

A proposal requiring more detailed attention is that the Commonwealth work cover scheme be changed such that employees are no longer covered on their

way to and from employment, nor during work breaks if the employer is deemed not to be 'in control' of the breaks.

Income Support

- eligibility for utilities allowance will be expanded; a one off additional payment will be made to seniors this financial year
- the assets tests will be liberalised for age pensioners living in regional Australia who own property, cannot realise it, and who can demonstrate a 20 year connection with the property
- people in receipt of the Carer Payment will again receive a \$1,000 once off bonus payment, and those in receipt of Carer Allowance will receive a \$600 payment
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 1 will be added to the list of recognised disabilities for the Carer Allowance (Child)
- \$115M over 2 years for Centrelink to expand its call centre capacity to respond to increased calls, with increased complexity, following the introduction of Welfare to Work

Other

- \$15M over 4 years to assist Indigenous families and communities deal with the causes and affects of substance abuse
- \$122M over 5 years will be provided to remove young people from nursing homes, subject to matching commitments from state and territory governments. An additional \$8M over 6 years will be allocated for departmental expenses
- \$225M over 5 years for 650 respite care places for people with mental illness or intellectual disability
- \$285M over 5 years for 900 personal helpers and mentors to assist people with mental illness living in the community. By the 5th year, 53,000 people per year will be assisted
- \$45M over 5 years for the community sector to fund projects to assist families, children and young people affected by mental illness. Projects will focus on people who are indigenous or NESB
- DCITA funding for consumer grants continues
- \$0.9M in 06/07 to expand the Disability Coordinator Officers program in tertiary education
- \$5.8M over 2 years to investigate the feasibility of introducing portable funding for people with disability at school
- \$9M over 4 years to establish peer support groups for parents of young children with disability. It is expected that 300 groups will be established nationally, assisting 2,500 families