

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

*Chair: Ms Amanda Rishworth MP
Deputy Chair: Mr Rowan Ramsey MP*

**Education and Employment Committee examines the Social Security Legislation
Amendment (Job Seeker Compliance) Bill 2011**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment today tabled its advisory report on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Job Seeker Compliance) Bill 2011 ('the Bill'). This Bill seeks to fulfil part of the Government's election commitment to introduce tougher rules for job seekers as part of the "Modernising Australia's Welfare System" policy statement.

The Bill aims to tighten and enhance the job seeker compliance regime by introducing payment suspensions for job seekers in receipt of participation payments who fail to attend appointments with their employment service providers.

This is the second Bill referred to the Education and Employment Committee under the new arrangements that provide for the Selection Committee to refer a Bill to a House of Representatives committee for an advisory report.

Committee Chair, Ms Amanda Rishworth MP, said that the importance of fostering and enhancing employment participation cannot be overstated.

"The benefits of employment stretch far beyond the receipt of a pay packet. Employment participation brings not only economic security, but also dignity, purpose, and direction. A central element of fostering employment participation is encouraging job seekers to communicate and interact with employment service providers through attendance at appointments. The Bill seeks to encourage job seekers to do this," Ms Rishworth said.

Specifically, the Committee recommended that a plain-English redrafting of the changes proposed by the Bill be produced to combat the existing complexity of the social security system and ensure that job seekers fully understand their obligations under the proposed changes. The Committee also recommended that the word 'special' be removed from the proposed reasonable excuse provision in the Bill in order to eliminate an unnecessary layer of complexity and ensure equitable and clear implementation of the measures proposed by the Bill.

Other areas of interest highlighted by the Committee include:

- The development of consistent guidance and training material for front-line staff;
- The provision of comprehensive training to front-line staff;
- The collection of data in relation to why job seekers miss appointments without a reasonable excuse and the undertaking of a review of the impact of the measures proposed by the Bill;
- The provision of additional training and guidance to front-line staff in relation to vulnerable job seekers; and
- The monitoring of possible increased workloads for front-line staff.

The report is available from: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/ee/socialsecurity/report.htm>