

# Welfare Review Submission Template

## Pillar One: Simpler and sustainable income support system

Changes to Australia's income support system over time have resulted in unintended complexities, inconsistencies and disincentives for some people to work. Achieving a simpler and sustainable income support system should involve a simpler architecture, a fair rate structure, a common approach to adjusting payments, a new approach to support for families with children and young people, effective rent assistance, and rewards for work and targeting assistance to need.

### Simpler architecture

Page 42 to 52 of the Interim Report considers the need for a simpler architecture for the income support system. The Reference Group proposes four primary payment types and fewer supplements. The primary payment types proposed are: a Disability Support Pension for people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work; a tiered working age payment for people with some capacity to work now or in the future, including independent young people; a child payment for dependent children and young people; and an age pension for people above the age at which they are generally expected to work.

In shaping the future directions for a simpler architecture the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- What is the preferred architecture of the payment system?
- Should people with a permanent impairment and no capacity to work receive a separate payment from other working age recipients?
- How could supplements be simplified? What should they be?
- What are the incremental steps to a new architecture?

### Fair rate structure

Page 55 to 60 of the Interim Report considers changes that could be considered to rates of payment for different groups. In shaping the future directions for a fairer rate structure the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How should rates be set, taking into account circumstances such as age, capacity to work, single/couple status, living arrangements and/or parental responsibilities?

### Common approach to adjusting payments

Page 60 to 64 of the Interim Report considers a common approach to adjusting payments to ensure a more coherent social support system over time. In shaping the future directions for a common approach to maintaining adequacy the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- What might be the basis for a common approach to adjusting payments for changes in costs of living and community living standards?

### Support for families with children and young people

**Page 65 to 68** of the Interim Report considers how the payments could be changed to improve support to families with children and young people. In shaping the future directions for support for families with children and young people the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can we better support families with the costs of children and young people to ensure they complete their education and transition to work?
- In what circumstances should young people be able to access income support in their own right?

### Effective rent assistance

**Page 68 to 71** of the Interim Report considers Rent Assistance and suggests a review to determine the appropriate level of assistance and the best mechanism for adjusting assistance levels over time. In shaping the future directions for Rent Assistance the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How could Rent Assistance be better targeted to meet the needs of people in public or private rental housing?

### Rewards for work and targeting assistance to need

**Page 72 to 78** of the Interim Report considers changes to means testing for improved targeting to need and better integration of the administration of the tax and transfers systems to improve incentives to work. In shaping the future directions for rewards for work and targeting assistance to need the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How should means testing be designed to allow an appropriate reward for work?
- At what income should income support cease?
- What would be a simpler, more consistent approach to means testing income and assets?

Superannuation- one of the most unfair systems for low income earners, sole -parents or people on Newstart at present is the effect of superannuation deposits which are counted as income under current on our taper systems. Low amounts of super, arising from finding temporary short-term work, and compulsorily deposited by an employer into Superannuation companies, will very likely be eaten away by monthly fees long before we can access it. Yet it counts as 'income' when we earn while we are on welfare support. This is money that has been earned through possibly hard labour (for myself- cleaning at Clipsal once a year!) but is deducted from my tapered welfare payment along with what money! CAN bring home from my Newstart. It is not commonly publicised that one can withdraw small amounts of super in such circumstance- only it turns out that the Govt deducts %30 as a tax just to claim it! There is also a %30 tax on amounts claimed early under hardship circumstances! For a person just scraping by, on an impossible \$250 pw, that is a HUGE part of our labouring payments vanished, when we could be paying bills with it! It's robbery!

**Note:** The page numbers refer to pages in the PDF version of the Interim Report.

## Pillar Two: Strengthening individual and family capability

Reforms are needed to improve lifetime wellbeing by equipping people with skills for employment and increasing their self-reliance. To strengthen individual and family capability changes are proposed in the areas of mutual obligation, early intervention, education and training, improving individual and family functioning and evaluating outcomes.

### Mutual obligation

Page 80 to 85 of the Interim Report considers more tailored and broadening of mutual obligation and the role of income management. In shaping the future directions for mutual obligation the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How should participation requirements be better matched to individual circumstances?
- How can carers be better supported to maintain labour market attachment and access employment?
- What is the best way of ensuring that people on income support meet their obligations?
- In what circumstances should income management be applied?

As an 'older' person trying to take my place in the workforce now that I have resourcefully raised my children- all who have become productive workers themselves- I find the doors of the paid work firmly slammed. By resourceful i mean, years of stress and making do, creative solution-finding, on the subsistence income of a sole parent. I got myself through Uni- I actually appreciated how in those years, the Govt took a hands-off approach, letting me plan my studies without interference. I felt I was being rewarded for being an effective stay-at-home parent, finding many ways to volunteer in the community without coercion, and I think my children are the better for not being forced into being 'latchkey'. But the job-seeking world now relies on online applications- and my very age (54) seems to suggest 'over-the-hill' when in fact I am strong, highly intelligent, and raring to contribute. I feel invisible and written off- and being rejected over compulsory job applications for down beat work has made me super-depressed, disconnected from society, undervalued, and too poor to put petrol in the car or be able to dress well anymore. Yet i sit in Job Network rooms and voluntarily help the paid workers because of my long life experience, Uni knowledge etc. People like myself should have tailored jobs OFFERED to us- why not? Organisations could be identified and suitable jobs held for older, educated, experienced disadvantaged people (ie women!). Give us a chance! We deserve recognition!

### Early intervention

Page 85 to 88 of the Interim Report considers risk based analysis to target early intervention and investment and targeting policies and programmes to children at risk. In shaping the future directions for early intervention the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can programmes similar to the New Zealand investment model be adapted and implemented in Australia?
- How can the social support system better deliver early intervention for children at risk?

### Education and Training

Page 89 to 90 of the Interim Report considers the need for a stronger focus on foundation skills in both schools and vocational education and training, and on transitions from school to work. In shaping the future directions for education and training the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- What can be done to improve access to literacy, numeracy and job relevant training for young people at risk of unemployment?
- How can early intervention and prevention programmes more effectively improve skills for young people?
- How can a focus on 'earn or learn' for young Australians be enhanced?

Please please please do not force more people to pay more money (or owe more money) for courses that may or may not result in employment. If Govt is going to take such an intervening role as it seems to want to- find us an employer and reimburse THEM to pay fees for a course which is actually relevant. The Skills for All in South Australia has been excellent, but it needs to be tied to increased opportunity for employment. While I was at TAFE doing Cert 4 Community Services, I encountered many refugee students who were studying with the English component. They felt very comfortable with me, because of the person I have become through study, parenting, interests, and life experience. Having already done a University degree I was able to understand their need for Higher Order academic English that they hadn't been given in standard basic English classes. I saw a great role for myself and offered my services to the TAFE college. Of course they said they had someone already. This was a man and it turned out the refugee ladies weren't comfortable with him- he also didn't have the relevant life-experience that someone like me does. they didn't attend his classes, I didn't have work, and one I know just works in the market now. What a waste! Change the system, let US be the consultants!

**Note:** The page numbers refer to pages in the PDF version of the Interim Report.

## Improving individual and family functioning

**Page 90 to 93** of the Interim Report considers cost effective approaches that support employment outcomes by improving family functioning and the provision of services especially to people with mental health conditions to assist them to stabilise their lives and engage in education, work and social activities. In shaping the future directions for improving individual and family functioning, the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can services enhance family functioning to improve employment outcomes?
- How can services be improved to achieve employment and social participation for people with complex needs?

Because time is nearly up for writing, may I say one of the worst experiences I've had when I've been able to gain temporary casual employment in welfare settings (I have Indigenous children, University education in multiculturalism and anti-racism, and a Cert 4 in Community Services Work- is being a whistle-blower and finding myself dismissed and unable to even be given references! Single parents have often been living in an isolated world, but one that is highly ethical. In the years of the 80s and 90s when we were able to manage our own destiny (which I think is a better approach for empowerment and resilience) we could volunteer widely, and learn so much about the world. But put us in a workplace full of shoddy work, negligent practice, and bullying, and we have no idea how to play these games- and neither should we! But all the power is with the employer, when it's so easy just to churn through employees like me- older, educated single parents- as Casuals. After the scandal in alt child care in SA, I feel vindicated. I tried to raise issues of risk to our child clients to my managers, and was got rid of! But the Govt should PLACE us in such positions, as auditors, and pay us well! You would gain a much better outcome for the vulnerable children in alt care, and for all society!

## Evaluating outcomes

**Page 93** of the Interim Report considers improved monitoring and evaluation of programmes aimed at increasing individual and family capability to focus on whether outcomes are being achieved for the most disadvantaged. In shaping the future directions for evaluating outcomes the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can government funding of programmes developing individual and family capabilities be more effectively evaluated to determine outcomes?

## Pillar Three: Engaging with employers

Employers play a key role in improving outcomes for people on income support by providing jobs. Reforms are needed to ensure that the social support system effectively engages with employers and has an employment focus. These reforms include making jobs available, improving pathways to employment and supporting employers.

### Employment focus – making jobs available

**Page 95 to 100** of the Interim Report considers what initiatives result in businesses employing more disadvantaged job seekers. In shaping the future directions for making jobs available the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can business-led covenants be developed to generate employment for people with disability and mental health conditions?
- How can successful demand-led employment initiatives be replicated, such as those of social enterprises?

## Improving pathways to employment

**Page 101 to 107** of the Interim Report considers the different pathways to employment for disadvantaged job seekers such as vocational education and training and mental health support models. In shaping the future directions for improving pathways to employment the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can transition pathways for disadvantaged job seekers, including young people, be enhanced?
- How can vocational education and training into real jobs be better targeted?
- How can approaches like Individual Placement and Support that combine vocational rehabilitation and personal support for people with mental health conditions be adapted and expanded?

## Supporting employers

**Page 108 to 110** of the Interim Report considers what can be done to support employers employ more people that are on income support including better job matching, wage subsidies and less red tape. In shaping the future directions for supporting employers the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can an employment focus be embedded across all employment and support services?
- How can the job services system be improved to enhance job matching and effective assessment of income support recipients?
- How can the administrative burden on employers and job service providers be reduced?

## Pillar Four: Building community capacity

Vibrant communities create employment and social participation for individuals, families and groups. Investments by government, business and civil society play an important role in strengthening communities. Also, access to technology and community resilience helps communities build capacity. Building community capacity is an effective force for positive change, especially for disadvantaged communities.

### Role of civil society

**Page 112 to 116** of the Interim Report considers the role of civil society in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of civil society the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can the expertise and resources of corporates and philanthropic investors drive innovative solutions for disadvantaged communities?
- How can the Community Business Partnership be leveraged to increase the rate of philanthropic giving of individuals and corporates?
- How can disadvantaged job seekers be encouraged to participate in their community to improve their employment outcomes?

### Role of government

**Page 116 to 120** of the Interim Report considers the role of government in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of government the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can community capacity building initiatives be evaluated to ensure they achieve desired outcomes?
- How can the income management model be developed to build community capacity?

### Role of local business

**Page 121 to 123** of the Interim Report considers the role of local business in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of local business the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can communities generate opportunities for micro business to drive employment outcomes?
- How can mutuals and co-operatives assist in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged communities?

### Access to technology

**Page 124 to 125** of the Interim Report considers access to affordable technology and its role in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for access to technology the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can disadvantaged job seekers' access to information and communication technology be improved?

## Community Resilience

**Page 125 to 126** of the Interim Report considers how community resilience can play a role in helping disadvantaged communities. In shaping the future directions for community resilience the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- What strategies help build community resilience, particularly in disadvantaged communities?
- How can innovative community models create incentives for self-sufficiency and employment?