



**THE HON MAL BROUGH MP
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2004

Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy

The Federal Budget announced today includes a \$12.1 million boost for mature age employment as part of a Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy.

Federal Employment Services Minister, Mal Brough, said the Australian workforce is ageing and labour force growth could fall to zero by the year 2040, requiring measures to be put in place now to mitigate the economic effects in the future.

“Increasing labour force participation and productivity is a key response to this issue,” Mr Brough said

“The Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy will provide funding of \$12.1 million over four years to boost workforce participation of mature age workers.”

Mr Brough said a package of measures will build on work within the Job Network to further target mature age workers, employers and employment service providers.

- The Government will promote the benefits of working longer to assist in slowing down the early retirement rates of employees.
- The Government also aims to overcome entrenched views of some employers and to encourage “mature age friendly” workplaces. Employers need to be more aware of the benefits of retaining and recruiting older workers in the face of impending labour supply shortages.
- The Mature Age Employment and Workplace Strategy will target specific industries where there are strong growth opportunities to develop demonstration projects that give mature age workers openings to train for and take up those opportunities.
- Seminars and workshops will be held for employment service providers and intermediaries to help develop strategies to keep mature age employment high on their respective agendas.

“Mature age people, both in and out of the workforce, need to be more aware of their options and opportunities to remain in the workforce, or rejoin it,” Mr Brough said.

“Job Network has been achieving some success on mature age employment with over 180,000 mature age job seekers currently being assisted by Job Network.

“Mature age job seekers form 25 per cent of those who achieved work lasting at least three months, which is proportionately slightly higher in results than the 23 per cent representation of mature age workers amongst Job Network clients.

“However, we need to do more to retain and continue to use the skills and the experience of mature age workers and this Budget measure is part of the response.”

The strategy will build on the good work being done by Job Network for mature age job seekers and will include measures that will also assist some mature age job seekers not currently eligible for the full range of Job Network services.

“The Government views demographic changes in the workforce as one of the most significant issues facing Australia in the medium-term. The previous Labor Government exacerbated the problem by shortsighted policies encouraging early retirement and disability support pensions simply to artificially reduce unemployment figures.”

“Under the Howard Government, service providers such as Job Network have already responded to the challenge of an ageing workforce through jobs drives and development of mature age servicing strategies. Today’s additional Budget measure builds on this good work,” Mr Brough said

Media contact: David Moore 02 6277 7540 / 0417 774 724