



# Federal Budget 2004-05

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## ***Fact sheet — Additional funding for AWAs and Office of the Employment Advocate***

Additional funding has been given to the Office of Employment Advocate (OEA) to meet the increasing demand for Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs).

AWAs are a highly successful agreement making option and an important element of modern workplace relations practices. They benefit both employers and employees by enabling flexible working arrangements to be negotiated to meet the specific needs at the workplace level.

Productivity has increased significantly under the flexible workplace arrangements introduced by the Coalition Government. This benefits employees, employers and the Australian economy as a whole.

Australian employees are the real winners as published survey results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics clearly indicate that the average weekly total earnings of employees on AWAs are much higher than those on Certified Agreements.

The OEA is a key player in workplace reform and has three vital roles:

- provision of advice and assistance to employers and employees, particularly on AWAs and freedom of association;
- filing and approval of AWAs to ensure they meet all statutory requirements; and
- handling of alleged breaches of AWA and freedom of association provisions.

At March 2004, a total of 458,224 AWAs had been approved by the OEA. AWA take up is increasing. AWA approvals in the 12

months to the end of March 2004 were 45.9 per cent higher than the 12 months to the end of March 2003. Some 155,000 AWAs are projected to be lodged in 2003-04, compared with an estimated 120,000 AWAs lodged in 2002-03.

The OEA has reallocated significant resources to assessing and approving AWAs and has streamlined its processes through, for example, the increased use of electronic lodgements. However, additional resources are required to enable the OEA to process significantly increased numbers of AWAs and continue to provide advice to employees and employers.

The Government is committed to properly resourcing the OEA and will provide additional funding of \$2.8 million (\$0.7 million for each of the next four years) to service the increased demand for Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs).

Further details are available on the Australian workplace website at [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au)