

THE HON WAYNE SWAN MP

Treasurer

THE HON SENATOR MARK ARBIB

Minister for Employment Participation



EMBARGO 12.30pm

HARNESSING THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS: RUDD GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES \$43.3 MILLION PRODUCTIVE AGEING PACKAGE

The Rudd Government today launched a new \$43.3 million Productive Ageing Package to provide vital training and support for older Australians who want to stay in the workforce.

Treasurer Wayne Swan and Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib today announced the new measures which harness the tremendous skills and experience of older Australians

“This package provides practical support to older Australians who want to stay in the workforce by investing in quality job training for mature jobseekers and supporting mature workers mentoring young Australians,” Mr Swan said.

“We all benefit from the immense value that older Australians add to our workplaces and our economy, not just in terms of skills and work experience, but also life experience.”

The Productive Ageing Package will help us tackle the economic challenges of an ageing population by helping to retain the expertise of older Australians in the workforce and transfer it to younger Australians.

Australia’s mature age participation rate is below that in other comparable economies like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. The 2010 Intergenerational Report, *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges*, highlights the importance of addressing this issue and the need to make the most of a proportionately smaller workforce as the workforce ages.

If we can improve projected participation rates for Australians aged between 50 and 69 by 5 percentage points (from a projected 62 per cent to 67 per cent by 2049-50) then real GDP per person would be 2.4 per cent higher, equivalent to about \$2,500 in today’s terms.

The new Productive Ageing Package builds on the Government’s measures to support older Australians, in particular the historic boost to the Aged Pension delivered last year. This included the introduction of a new Work Bonus allowing age pensioners to retain more of their income under the pension means-test.

“While many Australians are looking forward to their hard-earned retirement, the package is designed to support the many mature workers who are keen to remain in the workforce,” Senator Arbib said.

Through the Productive Ageing Package, the Australian Government is committing \$18.8 million to help mature age workers stay in employment and to support skills transfer.

This includes:

- 2000 training packages for employers to allow eligible mature age workers to retrain as supervisors or trainers of young apprentices or as workplace assessors;
- 50 funding grants for Golden Gurus organisations to connect mature age people who are retired, semi-retired or not working full-time with employers of trade apprentices; and
- face-to-face job support and training for 2000 eligible mature-age workers with a health condition or injury which impacts on their ability to do their job.

The Government is also committing \$23.5 million to help mature age workers transition to new employment through Job Services Australia, including assistance through the Employment Pathway Fund for training relevant to the job seeker's needs.

- Up to 8000 mature-age workers in physically demanding roles and about 1600 recently retrenched job seekers will benefit from the support of Job Services Australia.
- These job seekers will have access to Stream 2 assistance with a Job Services Australia provider for up to 12 months to help them transition to a new role, occupation or industry.
- Job seekers and workers aged 45 years and over will also be eligible for free, professional career advice to help them plan for successful career transitions.
- Qualified career advisers will be available for one-on-one career advice sessions and to make sure as many people as possible can access this support.

Mr Swan said the Government would also establish a Consultative Forum on Mature Age Participation to advise on further measures to help mature age workers who want to remain in the workforce.

The forum will include seniors groups, employment service providers, education and training providers, trade unions and health and ageing experts and will meet for the first time later this month. Chairman of National Seniors Australia, Mr Everald Compton, AM, will be the inaugural Chairman of the Consultative Forum on Mature Age Participation.

Senator Arbib said mature age unemployment was low compared with youth unemployment, but statistics show when older workers lose their job, they are likely to be unemployed for much longer.

“Australian Bureau of Statistics research reveals that for the 12 months to November 2009 young workers were unemployed for an average of 20 weeks, but for people 45 and over the average length of unemployment is 52 weeks,” he said.

“The Government wants to work with employers and mature workers to help with retraining and job retention. But employers must play their part and look at ways jobs and tasks can be designed to accommodate mature age workers.”

The Consultative Forum will begin early this year and provide advice to the Government until at least July 2012. The other measures commence on July 1 and continue until 2014.

For advice, mature age workers and job seekers can call 13 17 64 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday). More information is available at: www.keeppaustraliaworking.gov.au.

CANBERRA

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