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Minister for Human Services
Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law

SENATOR THE HON MARK ARBIB

Minister for Employment Participation
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery

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Taskforce to focus on jobs for the long term

The Minister for Human Services Chris Bowen and the Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib today announced a new taskforce to provide more support for Australian jobseekers during the global recession and the road to recovery.

The *Taskforce for Strengthening Government Service Delivery for Job Seekers* is part of the Government's targeted response to help prepare the economy for a strong recovery and assist job seekers to capitalise on the employment opportunities that come with it.

Senator Arbib said the taskforce would be central to the Government's response to employment issues, based on lessons learned from the past and those on the horizon for the Australian economy.

"History tells us that unemployment can go up quickly, but takes a long time to come down. Figures from the 1980s downturn show that unemployment doubled in two years from 5.4 to 10.4 per cent, but took 10 years to fall," Senator Arbib said.

"So we are working to keep people in jobs, and we are directly helping people who might otherwise fall into long-term unemployment."

Mr Bowen said the taskforce would focus on new and innovative ways to strengthen Government service delivery for job seekers and employers through better use of the services of Centrelink and employment services, especially Job Services Australia.

"The collaborative approach of this taskforce involving the Departments of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Human Services and Centrelink is critical to its people-focused and innovative view of government service delivery," Mr Bowen said.

Mr Bowen said the taskforce's findings would also inform the work being undertaken by the Department of Human Services and Centrelink on service delivery reform.

The key terms of reference for the taskforce are:

- Examine strategies and processes to enable job-ready jobseekers to find employment as quickly as possible;
- Examine the successful New Zealand approach which assists up to 40 per cent of jobseekers into employment within 28 days;
- Examine international experience on best practice in organisational responsibility for policy and delivery of unemployment benefits, labour market programs and employment services;
- Consider an assessment process to quickly identify Centrelink customers capable of self-help and online job searching to free up resources for those who need extra support;
- Consider ways to support jobseekers from becoming long-term unemployed;
- Consider a more collaborative approach to support mobility of workers seeking jobs, particularly for large employment projects and growth labour markets; and
- Consider ways to better assist national employers to access Job Services Australia providers across Australia.

The joint Taskforce for Strengthening Government Service Delivery for Job Seekers will be headed by Graham Carters, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

It will report to the Secretary of DEEWR, Lisa Paul, and Finn Pratt, Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS), responsible for Centrelink.

Senior staff from both Departments and Centrelink will make up the taskforce.

The taskforce will also consider options for developing the next employment services model to operate from July 2012.

It will report back to the Department Secretaries, the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Employment Participation in six months.

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