COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT BILL 1983

Date Introduced: 19 May 1983
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. R. Willis, M.P., Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations

Short Digest of Bill

Purpose

To establish the Community Employment Program in order to create additional employment throughout Australia.

Background

Until 1982, Australia's only post-war experience with direct job creation schemes in the public sector had been the Regional Employment Development Scheme (REDS). This was introduced by the Whitlam Government in 1974 but terminated by that Government in 1975. For several years the Fraser Government expressed opposition to job creation schemes, but following a rapid deterioration in the economy in 1982 it introduced the Special Employment-Related Programs Act 1982 which allocated $300 million to direct job creation, notionally financed by savings to Revenue due to the wages pause. (For further background, see Bills Digest to that Bill.)

The 1983 election policy speech of the Australian Labor Party contained a commitment to create an estimated 70,000 new full-time jobs, for an average duration of six months, through a Community Works Program. At the National Economic Summit Conference held on 11-14 April 1983, delegates from the Federal and State Governments, trade unions, employers and welfare organisations supported the "introduction of ... stimulatory fiscal policies which enable ... effective job creation schemes to be implemented".

The Community Employment Program was announced on 19 May 1983 in the Treasurer's Ministerial Statement on the Economy. The Statement announced additions to outlays, including those due to the Community Program, of $557 million, and savings on expenditures and revenues due to other measures of $985 million.
Outline

The Bill provides for the appropriation of $300 million for the Community Employment Program for the 1983-84 financial year. According to the Minister's Second Reading Speech, this will create up to 70,000 full-time jobs for an average duration of six months and, indirectly, create roughly twice that number of jobs in the private sector as a result of increased demand for goods and services. Particular attention will be paid to the creation of employment for the long-term unemployed and for the unemployed who are specially disadvantaged. Of the appropriation, $50 million will be set aside for job creation programs through Commonwealth departments and authorities. In his Speech, the Minister outlined the eligibility requirements for the approval of projects, as well as the manner in which funds will be allocated to the States and Territories.

Main Provisions

Clause 4 provides for the approval of employment-creating projects. By Clause 5, the Minister or an authorized Departmental officer, may enter into agreements, on behalf of the Commonwealth, with the States and the Northern Territory in relation to the carrying out of approved projects.

Clause 6 allows Commonwealth Departments, with the Minister's approval, to incur expenditure for approved projects. By Clause 7, the Minister or an authorized Departmental officer, may enter into an agreement, on behalf of the Commonwealth, with a Commonwealth Authority in regard to the carrying out of projects. Clause 8 deals with employment projects in the A.C.T.

By Clause 9, financial assistance will be given to the States and the Northern Territory in accordance with agreements in Clause 5. A Minister may make advances under Clause 10. Clause 11 provides for the conditions of payments. Clause 12 appropriates $300 million for the Program and sets 30 June 1986 as the last day upon which any liability may be discharged out of such appropriations.

For further information, if required, contact: