



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

**SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES REFORM) BILL 2008**

In Committee

SPEECH

Wednesday, 4 February 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 4 February 2009
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Questioner
Speaker Xenophon, Sen Nick

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (11.51 am)—I move amendment (1) as amended on sheet 5710:

(1) Page 17 (after line 31), at the end of Part 1 of Schedule 1, add:

Subdivision G—Review

42ZA Review of impact of compliance regime

(1) The Minister must cause an independent review of the impact of the amendments made by this Division to be undertaken as soon as possible after 30 June 2010.

(2) The review must report on:

(a) the effectiveness of the compliance regime in:

(i) meeting job seeking requirements;

(ii) reducing financial hardship;

(iii) reducing compliance costs for job seekers, employment services providers and the Government; and

(iv) using the ‘no show, no pay’ provision to increase compliance with job seeking requirements;

(b) the impact on vulnerable job seekers including Indigenous job people;

(c) the impact of the compliance regime on employment participation and long-term unemployment;

(d) the number of complaints made with the departmental hotline, Social Security Appeals Tribunal or Ombudsman’s office in relation to the new arrangements;

(e) the gaps between federal policy and state service provision for persons with non-vocational special needs or barriers;

(f) the adequacy of non-vocational support services in regional areas;

(g) the effectiveness of training for and consistency of understanding of Centrelink staff, employment providers and departmental contract managers in the new arrangements;

(h) the adequacy of information and education provided to new and existing clients about the new system;

(i) the adequacy of resourcing for Centrelink to implement the new arrangements and deal with related complaints;

(j) the effectiveness and use of criteria such as hardship, vulnerability and reasonable exclusion within Comprehensive Compliance Assessments; and

(k) any other related matter.

(3) The review must be conducted by an independent panel, chaired by a person with expertise in social security and employment services matters.

(4) The Minister must provide the panel with adequate resources to undertake the review.

(5) The panel must give the Minister a written report of the review, and the Minister must cause a copy of the report to be made public and tabled in each House of the Parliament by 30 September 2010.

This relates to a review of the impact of the compliance regime. It is self-explanatory. I think it would be fair to say that I have communicated openly with the government, the Greens and the opposition in relation to this.

It will ensure that, after a period of 12 months, there will be scope for a review to be conducted within three months by an independent panel chaired by a person with expertise in social security and employment services matters. I think this covers the concerns that have been raised in the course of this debate both by the coalition and particularly by the Greens in relation to the issue of vulnerable job seekers, including Indigenous people. The government is putting through significant reforms. Let's see how they work and let's have the independent review. If the independent review says that they are working fine, there is no need to consider this further, but I think it would be a valuable exercise to have such an independent review to cover the areas of concern that various non-government senators have had in relation to how this legislation will work.