

SPEECH - OPENING OF THE ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL NEW WORK OPPORTUNITY

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Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen. I must say its nice to be in a hospital to talk to healthy people: people here because they are being armed against the ills of unemployment - I am especially delighted to see trainees from the Royal Perth Hospital Youth Program and from the hospital's Jobskills intake in the guest list.

Today we are here to launch Western Australia's first New Work Opportunity.

In so doing I'd like to reflect on what the White Paper on Employment and Growth means for the unemployed, for employers, and for the community in general.

Working Nation was released some months ago, yet the press, employers, and the public have not yet realised the full significance of the White Paper.

The extent of the Government's commitment, and what it means for the unemployed, has yet to be brought home.

The Job Compact creates for the first time a definite end to the unemployment experience of individuals. This is a significant extension of the social safety net for unemployed people.

By giving the long term unemployed a job, through either New Work Opportunities, Jobstart, or the training wage, we are saying that we will not let the unemployed stay in unemployment indefinitely.

We will help you. The job offer, the central component of the Job Compact, will replace drifting and lack of motivation with hope and a real chance of finding permanent work.

This is not something that has happened before.

Solving unemployment is not easy. While most Job Compact jobs will be in the private sector, we will not be able to place all Job Compact clients with private employers.

New Work Opportunities provide the chance for local communities to develop solutions to their regional development and employment problems.

New Work Opportunities are designed to provide work and training to unemployed people placed on them and to produce social benefits as well as growth in local communities.

New Work Opportunities are one element of the 160,000 jobs that will be provided to long term unemployed people under the Job Compact each year.

Working Nation will ensure that the unemployed share in the economic recovery.

The Green Paper - *Restoring Full Employment* - noted that some 80 per cent of all long term unemployed people who obtained full time jobs in 1992 did so through their participation in labour market programs.

This tells us a lot.

If long term unemployed people are going to share in the economic recovery and find jobs then they need active assistance to do so. This is the basis of *Working Nation*.

In keeping with our election promise to not turn our backs on the unemployed, there will be some 645,000 labour market and entry level training commencements a year by 1995-96.

Over a four year period from 4 July 1994, we will spend a total of \$10.3 billion on employment and training initiatives. This represents an enormous extension of training positions and active labour market assistance.

Government commitment and money, however, is not enough.

To achieve the White Paper objectives we need the commitment of the community, unions, and employers.

Royal Perth Hospital

The Royal Perth Hospital's commitment to the unemployed is a tremendous example for employers.

The New Work Opportunity is only the latest in a series of employment and training projects at the Royal Perth Hospital.

It follows the success of the Royal Perth Hospital Youth Program. The youth program initiative was funded by the hospital. Through it, 20 long term jobless young people got a foot on the employment ladder.

Most of these young people went on to find permanent employment or to enrol in full-time study.

This year alone, the hospital has provided 10 unemployed people with Jobskills placements. Five of these participants have remained with the hospital.

Royal Perth Hospital has found what many employers find when they hire long term unemployed: contrary to the myth, the long term unemployed have a lot to offer to employers.

Of course, we do not expect people who have been unemployed for a long time to walk straight into a job without any help to make the transition.

We know that long term unemployment affects motivation and health and the ability to cope with the demands of employment.

Case management will ensure that unemployed people are able to make the transition from unemployment to work and be an asset to their employer.

Job Compact clients will receive one-to-one assistance with training and other pre-employment needs prior to placement in a job.

Since case management of Newstart clients began in March this year, over 65,000 unemployed people have entered case management. Success stories are already emerging. People that have been unemployed for periods of three, five, and ten years, have been gaining full time employment.

Employers should keep in mind that long term unemployed people they take on under the Job Compact will be provided with support by case management before, during, and after their placement.

We are also going to enlist the help of private sector, community, and industry case managers who know industry and understand unemployed people.

The RPH New Work Opportunity

The New Work Opportunity we are launching today will provide placements for 100 Job Compact clients over a one year period. That is 100 people who have been unemployed for over 18 months will receive a job and training for a period of six months under this project.

The positions will be new job opportunities and will focus on employment and training, both on and off the job, in a range of occupations.

Positions will be filled as: laboratory assistants; pharmacy assistants; orderlies; clerical and medical records management assistants; and in stores; sterilisation and autoclaving; patient care; and landscape gardening.

Clients participating in the program will be able to apply for permanent employment at the hospital as positions become available.

And they will receive job search assistance at the conclusion of their New Work Opportunity placement.

New Work Opportunities Elsewhere in Australia

The Royal Perth Hospital project is the first New Work Opportunity in Western Australia. It will be the first of many.

In New South Wales two New Work Opportunity projects have already begun.

The Parkes and Forbes projects involve the creation of major tourist facilities.

The Parkes project will provide employment opportunities by the creation of Memorial Gardens to commemorate Australian soldiers who have served overseas.

The Memorial Gardens will be based on overseas battlegrounds and will link in with other tourist attractions in the area such as the Cowra Japanese Gardens and the Botanical Gardens in Orange.

The Forbes Local Council will build on the town's profile as Australia's tidiest town to attract a larger proportion of tourists and travellers in the area.

Other New Work Opportunities in the pipeline include bush tucker farms and processing plants in outback NSW; landscaping and re-planting of industrial sites; and expansion of home-based care to people in need.

New Work Opportunities will be concentrated in the growth areas of environmental repair, eco-tourism, and community services.

Area Consultative Committees are being set up around Australia to align with local government areas and natural labour markets.

A major aim of Area Consultative Committees is to devolve some of the responsibility for DEET programs and services to the regional level. As they are established they will provide the means for local communities to participate in the development and selection of New Work Opportunities in their region.

In short, New Work Opportunities provide a a chance for innovative approaches towards regional unemployment to be explored. And they provide local people with the chance to choose, develop, and manage the project.

Conclusion

So may I encourage everyone, especially employers, to respond to the Government's challenge in the spirit of the Royal Perth Hospital - to start thinking about how they can help unemployed people in their local region.

There is so much work to be done: we have the workers, we are providing the funds. All we need now is your commitment and imagination.

I wish the Royal Perth Hospital and the Centrecare SkillShare every success with this project.