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

THE HON BILL SHORTEN MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services
Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction

Sharon Grierson MP

Member for Newcastle

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pilot program to boost employment for people with disability

Employers in Newcastle are being included in a pilot project to boost job opportunities for people with disability, Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib announced today.

As part of the Rudd Government's new \$1.2 billion Disability Employment Services, which begin today, the Government is conducting a pilot to provide an extra financial incentive of up to \$3,000 to eligible employers to take on a person in receipt of the Disability Support Pension.

The \$6.8 million Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot will operate in the 15 Labour Force Regions with the most Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients, which includes Newcastle, and will run until February 2012.

The Pilot will trial a new way of encouraging employers to offer employment to people with disability and allow DSP recipients to demonstrate their skills.

Senator Arbib, who launched the new Disability Employment Services, said the new arrangements meant more jobs for people with disability, improved choice for job seekers and employers and more innovative service delivery.

"For the first time, people with disability will have direct access to the help they need to find and keep a job. There will be no waiting lists because the Government has uncapped services," Senator Arbib said

"Under the Rudd Government people with disability will have access to better and more individually tailored employment services.

"In addition, employers will also benefit from accessing a Disability Employment Service. Employers will be able to tap into the wide range of skills and experience people with disability bring into the workforce."

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten said that people with disability had told the Rudd Government they wanted to work.

“People with disability are still under-represented in the workforce. We need to ensure that we remove the barriers facing people with disability who want to work, and recognise their potential rather than their impairments,” Mr Shorten said.

“These changes are a far cry from the punitive approach of the Howard Government. We will give people with disability the training and support they need.

“As our population ages, it will become even more important that the talents of all Australians are included in the workforce.”

Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson MP, said she was pleased the Newcastle area had been included in the Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot.

“Employers who participate in the project will be supported through wage subsidies of up to \$3000 after the job seeker has remained in work for 26 weeks. Normal income taper rates will apply to DSP recipients who participate in the pilot,” Ms Grierson said.

“People with disability have a great deal to offer in the workforce and this pilot provides employers with an extra incentive to ensure they have a chance to show their skills.”

The Australian Government is committed to supporting people with disability into employment. The new Disability Employment Services will help the Government to meet this commitment.

More information on the Disability Employment Services can be found at www.deewr.gov.au/DES.

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