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GREATER SECURITY AND MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MATURE AGE AUSTRALIANS

The Howard government has failed Newcastle's mature age job seekers.

With an ageing population and growing skills shortages in key industries, wasting the skills and experience of mature age Australians is not an option.

In Newcastle, mature age people have a participation rate of 59.4% as compared with the national rate of 68.4%. This means that over 40% of people in Newcastle aged between 45 and 64 years are no longer in the workforce, or actively seeking work. They have fallen off John Howard's radar screen for employment opportunities.

We should be investing in opportunities for mature age workers. I welcome Labor's plan as announced today, to *Help More Mature Age Australian's Stay in Work*.

Labor will invest in the opportunities for mature age Australians by creating:

- Career centres to provide job search assistance, literacy and numeracy assessment, counselling and career change advice
- The Rapid Assistance Service to prevent workers from falling into long-term unemployment when they are displaced through large-scale or regional retrenchments
- A Training Partnership Fund to encourage employers to re-train mature age workers.
- A \$2000 Learning bonus for mature age job seekers who take up training in areas of skill shortage.
- New TAFE places for mature age workers, Mature Age Workplace Trainers and opportunities for mature age workers in Information Technology.

Labor's plan will reward effort and invest in those workers who want to keep their skills relevant to the demands of the modern workforce. This is good news for Newcastle.

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