

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2010-2011**

Outcome 4 - Employment & Participation Policy

DEEWR Question No.EW1012_11

Senator Cash provided in writing.

Question

SUPPORT TO WOMEN AFFECTED BY FLOODS

a) What is the Federal Government doing to support women that have been impacted by the flooding crisis? b) It has been estimated that approximately 5000 jobs were lost in Queensland in January 2011 due to the floods. What support is being given to the casual employees (mostly women) who have lost an income temporarily? How many of the estimates 5000 jobs were held by women? What is being done to support these women?

Answer

a) There is a range of assistance available to women who have been affected by the floods. This assistance includes:

- The Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy provides assistance to employees, small business persons and farmers who lost income as a result of the flooding. This Subsidy will provide fortnightly payments equivalent to the maximum rate of Newstart allowance depending on the person's circumstances. Centrelink can provide advice on eligibility to individuals.
- The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) invoked Local Emergency provisions under Family Assistance Law to declare a period of local emergency for all Queensland Child Care Benefit Approved child care services (services). Where families are required to pay child care fees on days when their child cannot attend care due to the floods, or their child care service is closed as a result of the floods, the Government will still pay eligible families their Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate entitlements for the period of the local emergency.
 - The Department also advised services that they are able to make Special Child Care Benefit available to families suffering financial hardship as a result of the flooding. Family Assistance Law gives authority to a Child Care Benefit approved service to approve up to 13 weeks of Special Child Care Benefit each financial year where a child is at risk of abuse or neglect, or a family is suffering temporary financial hardship.
- The National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) were enacted immediately after the floods, to assist all individuals impacted by the

disaster.

- Elements such as the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment were made available to eligible individuals and families.
- People who have lost their jobs as a result of the recent disasters may be eligible for assistance through Job Services Australia. Job Services Australia offers tailored assistance and may include training, skills development and work experience.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) has released a 'Fair Work Guide: Employment entitlements during natural disasters or emergencies' which provides advice to employers and employees on relevant workplace relations rights, obligations and options, in emergency situations (in particular, how relevant leave provisions can apply). This guide is available on both the FWO and Centrelink websites.
- The Australian Government, in conjunction with the Queensland Government, announced on 6 March 2011 the Queensland Natural Disasters Jobs and Skills Package, which includes a range of support for job seekers and displaced workers in disaster affected areas.
 - The package comprises four key initiatives:
 - Community Capability – to build the capacity of affected communities to support local industry, coordinate employment and skills assistance and maximise available funding opportunities under the package.
 - Working for the Environment – to provide employment and work experience opportunities for eligible people on projects targeted at rebuilding community and public infrastructure and environmental restoration.
 - Apprentice Support – assistance measures to support employers to retain apprentices and trainees.
 - Priority Skills Development – assistance for training in regions and industries directly affected by the natural disasters
- Wage Assistance has been made available to employers (including businesses, farmers and not-for-profit organisations) whose business has been affected by Cyclone Yasi. This measure, announced on 16 February 2011, will help businesses to retain their employees (including casual and part-time workers) who may otherwise have become disengaged from the workforce.

b)DEEWR monitors redundancies; however companies are not required to provide DEEWR with the gender of exiting employees.

Where redundancies occur in flood affected areas, DEEWR will work closely with companies and the Local Employment Coordinators and Jobs and Skills Development Officers to ensure workers are able to access services and support as they need it.

Any workers, including women, are also encouraged to contact Centrelink who can provide free, unbiased financial advice about their redundancy package and the range of Government assistance available to them. Centrelink will assess workers' eligibility for income support which may depend on their individual circumstances, including income and assets. Centrelink can also answer questions regarding eligibility for Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy.

Any workers, including women, who lose their jobs or who are made redundant as a result of the recent disasters in Queensland and across Australia will be eligible for employment support with a Job Services Australia provider based on their level of need and personal circumstances.

The other assistance and opportunities available to job seekers (including women) is outlined in response to question a) above.