

Hello,

I'd like to address a couple of separate points regarding the Abbott Government's budget policies. The first is staff reductions in government departments and the second is it's apparent plans to finally tell unemployed people where their jobs are through it's expanded "work for the dole" scheme.

1. Staff Reductions In Government Departments

While this situation is on first glance understandable, I think it's important to consider that many people today already have a great deal of trouble in their interactions with government departments, and/or have to wait ridiculously long lengths of time to have their issues addressed. I think that the government needs to work on improving the response times and the general helpfulness of their various departments. And it's hard to believe that such improvements will come about if the amount of staff in these departments is significantly reduced.

In some cases at least, these problems are at least in part due to the way that the department interacts with the public, not the number of staff doing so. For example, the ATO doesn't offer an email or web contact form on it's website for general queries, forcing people who need to submit a query to do so via snail mail. It's hard to understand how a government department in this day and age can neglect to offer an online contact to it's citizens. And unfortunately, the ATO isn't the only government department that is behind the times in this manner.

While the ATO does offer some general query support on it's facebook page and perhaps other social media, too, I'd like to point out that not everyone who has email has facebook. A more direct internet query system with all government departments (or at least the ones that interact with the general public) should be available in this day and age.

I also believe that people dealing with a government department ought to have some means of being able to track what the progress on their issue is, as I believe that many people who wait weeks or months with no response from the department they are dealing with begin to fear that they've "gotten lost in the system" and been forgotten.

To once again use the ATO as an example, it's website, which *should* ideally be able to help many people with inquiries answer them themselves, is very difficult to understand in places, often contains broken links and, in at least some cases, is misleading or doesn't fully explain how a matter should be handled. For NSW residents like myself, this only adds to the confusion and frustration created by the ATO's confusing tax forms/etax software/mytax system, which we **still** have to fill out every year.

I think that a major problem is that these departments are largely out-of-touch with what the public wants and/or needs from them. I think that there needs to be a great deal of public consultation about how these departments are run, particularly in regard to the way they interact with the public (e.g. the forms that the departments print for public use,

customer inquiry procedure, online presence, ect.) I believe that as much as possible, interactions with government departments should be brief, straightforward and with minimal confusion. I think the only way for the government to accomplish this is to get the general public, people from all walks of life, to play a larger role in designing how these departments work.

Once again, while the Abbott government's desire to cut staff in government departments is understandable, in view of it's money woes, there nonetheless needs to be a vast improvement in the quality of service by these departments. Things like long wait times on answers for queries and frequent web glitches, to me, suggests that there is an existing staff shortage problem that doesn't need to be made any worse by massive job cuts. However, if the government is indeed able to make interaction with it's departments a smoother process, then perhaps at some point in the future it will indeed be able to reduce staff while maintaining a good quality of service from these departments.

I think it's also important to mention that I'm sure the last thing the government would want to do is actually **create** more unemployment. So I think it's important to insure that it doesn't actually do this with any staff cuts it does make to it's departments. Before he was elected Prime Minister, Tony Abbott pledged that his government would create more jobs, so I think that the government should make sure that a job has indeed been created and given to any employee they intend to fire, before they actually fire them.

2. Work For The Dole

I've read on news websites that the government plans to greatly expand it's work for the dole scheme and actually tell more unemployed people where their jobs are. While this certainly has the potential to be an immensely helpful system to people who have no idea where their meant to be working, I am concerned that the government's priorities when undertaking this important duty are more about making money then improving quality of life for the people it deals with.

The number 1 priority with any scheme like this should be making sure that the people it deals with are sent to workplaces that can provide a worthwhile quality of life for them, particularly in terms of insuring that there is a strong personal compatibility between themselves and the co-workers they will have there. Also very important is the nature of the work itself, the nature of the company and other factors that contribute to the environment of the workplace. All of these things need to be taken in to considderation to insure that the match between employee and workplace works out well for all concerned.

I am also concerned with the impression I got from news sites that the government plans to bounce many (perhaps even most) of these workers around through many short-term jobs instead of sending them to a long term job. This is an extremely poor means of "solving" somebody's unemployment and the government should try it's best to avoid this practice as much as possible. Short term jobs won't allow these workers to settle in and feel like they are a part of their company. They won't have a chance to know their co-workers long enough to be able to form bonds, friendships or romances with them. They won't get a chance to earn a sense of trust with their co-workers or superiors, nor

will the co-workers, superiors and company as a whole have a chance to nurture the employee's loyalty.

While money, and especially how the government saves it and spends it, is a constant hot-button issue, I firmly believe that aspiring to attain a worthwhile quality of life for it's citizens must always remain a far higher priority for the government. This must be the primary aim of the government's plans to direct the unemployed to their jobs - to place these people in a workplace environment that will give them a sense of satisfaction and make their lives worthwhile, not simply to save itself a few bucks. I fail to see how Australia can plausibly consider itself a decent, admirable nation if it ignores these quality of life issues for the sake of money.

I'm also lead to believe that when the math is done in regards to the dole people get paid for the amount of work they do, it will end up equating to them getting paid less then minimum wage. I believe that this is unfair and the payments that these people receive should be increased so that they meet minimum wage requirements. To do otherwise would undermine the spirit of the minimum wage laws and be unfair to the workers.

Thank you for reading this submission. I hope you take the two matters I raised above into serious consideration as you review the government's budget policies.

Kind Regards,

Chris Hamill
Australian Citizen & Voter

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