

## **2015-16 Budget All Staff Address**

**Wednesday 13 May 2015**

Thank you Jamie and good afternoon everyone. Great to be here today.

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners and custodians of the country on which we meet. I recognise their continued connection to the land.

And I pay my respects to their elders — past and present — and to the Indigenous people who are with us today, either here in the room or throughout the network live-streamed.

I am going to outline for you this afternoon this year's Budget and the impact it will have for the Department. But first I would like share with you a short video from Minister Abetz. In which he expresses his appreciation for the excellent work that we've all done in preparation for this year's Budget. So please, Minister Abetz.

### **Video of Minister Abetz plays**

#### **Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Minister for Employment**

Let me commence by thanking everyone for their efforts. Some incredible work has been done in recent months.

Today, I want to thank all involved in pulling together the Budget measures.

The Growing Jobs and Small Business package is a vital part of the Government's strategy to achieve vital social and economic outcomes.

So to Jamie Clout, Glen Casson, Margaret Kidd, Alison Morehead, Meredith Fairweather, and their teams, thanks for an outstanding job on bringing everything together.

The Growing Jobs and Small Business package will make a profound impact on the lives of many of our fellow Australians. The work we do in this portfolio that is geared toward helping Australians from welfare dependency into meaningful work is literally life changing. We are privileged to be involved in such a vital area of public policy.

Whilst the Budget measures are important, I also want to take the opportunity to thank Deputy Secretary Hehir and his team for their work on jobactive in the Employment space, including the national rollout of Work for the Dole earlier this month.

In Workplace Relations with Deputy Secretary Parker and her team, it has also been a busy time with a building industry legislation and OH accreditation scheme, the introduction of comprehensive workers' compensation reform, and bringing people together on the gender equality instruments, and working to clear the backlog on Fair Entitlements Guarantee claims.

It's been a busy time, and overseeing all of this has been our Secretary.

But it's also been a very rewarding time, knowing we are delivering a high quality service to the public for the benefit of our nation and thousands of individual Australians for whom we are making a positive difference.

On behalf of the Government and the Australian people, thank you for your work. It is appreciated.

### **Secretary**

What a really lovely message from the Minister. I do want to say that was entirely an initiative of the Minister's. We didn't ask him to do it, we didn't script it for him. He saw that I was giving an All Staff Address and said that he wanted to take the opportunity to express his appreciation for the work that we did for the Budget and for work we do across the board. And I think that does say a lot about how much he values the work we do.

So now, let me welcome you to our second Budget Forum and the opportunity to outline for you, as the Minister has already alluded to, the initiatives that are in the Budget for this portfolio.

It does build on our significant recent successful work including the development of jobactive, the G20 summit and the Ministerial meeting that led up to that and the launches of Restart and Work for the Dole, among many other successes of the past year.

I do want to add my thanks to the Ministers, for the people who deliver these programmes and who've worked on this Budget. I really do notice and appreciate your hard work and I know that the rest of the Executive team and of course the Ministers share in that appreciation.

And it's not only on those big high profile projects that I want to express my thanks and appreciation.

I do want to thank the many people across the Department who keep the portfolio running smoothly day-in and day-out.

Everyone's effort, whether you're in Canberra or in one of our State Offices is helping us to deliver the Government's employment and workplace relations priorities.

And it means that we are all contributing to stronger economic growth and to building Australia's participation and productivity. We provide robust and timely advice to the Government that will create jobs, help job seekers into work and encourage great workplaces.

So our work really is central to the Government's economic and social agenda. And as the Minister said, what we do is an investment helping to create a better future for all Australians.

So I'll give you a little overview of the Budget and the measures in it. But then we'll get some more detail from Martin and Sandra, with the guidance of Jamie facilitating that discussion.

So last night once again, the Budget has delivered high-profile measures for our Department that give us a key role in delivering the Government's policy priorities.

The Growing Jobs and Small Business Package will be a significant part of our work going forward and one of the top priorities of the Government for the coming year.

This package clearly links us and our vision of *more jobs and great workplaces* directly to the economic and social agenda of the Government.

It's a good Budget for the Department.

There are 14 new measures for the portfolio. Including 12 spending measures with a total spend of \$346.5 million over the four years, and two savings measures which total \$45.8 million over the four years.

We will be administering about \$2 billion in administered funding and about, a little over \$300 million in Departmental funding in 2015–16.

There will be growth in our employee numbers to implement the new measures and I know that we will have sufficient funding for the next four years in the current Budget. But also that we will continue to be subject to the usual efficiency dividends and others that keep pressure on us to work efficiently over the medium term.

The overall package in the job space is a set of measures that offer improvements both for employers and job seekers, and that are focused particularly on young people and mature age workers.

The package includes increased work experience opportunities, redesigned wage subsidies, a comprehensive Youth Employment Strategy and stronger job seeker obligations.

The package is about investing early so that young people get onto a positive track of work or training opportunities that will set them up for their lifetime of participation.

The underpinning model is strongly evidence-based, and it does speak to the work that we did proactively before the Budget was in preparation in preparing for evidence-based policy in youth unemployment, knowing that this would be an issue that that Government would one day want to address.

We recognise that young people have varied needs and so the package will fund a range of approaches to intervene early with young people and help them get a good start to their working lives.

We are also fine-tuning the Restart subsidies that were announced in last year's Budget for workers over 50 years of age to make it more flexible and responsive to the needs of employers.

And in addition on the Workplace Relations side we are tightening the recovery provisions of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Scheme in a trial programme to endeavour to recover more of the money from insolvent companies that we currently pay out for in employee entitlements.

And Sandra and Martin will go more into those measures, straight after I have given you this outline.

The thing that I am most heartened by is that the Budget shows the confidence that the Government has in us to develop good evidence-based policy and our ability to deliver and implement successfully on the ground. And so they've trusted us with key economic and social initiatives as part of their agenda.

Of course not only in relation to the measures that are in our portfolio, but in relation to the broad themes of the Budget, we are really closely involved in and interested in those themes of productivity and participation. The rest of the Budget, as you may have read in the media this morning includes lower taxation for small businesses, reduced red tape and measures that are designed to encourage business start-ups and entrepreneurship. And this is with the aim of assisting small businesses to increase job opportunities for Australians. So again closely related to our agenda about *more jobs and great workplaces*.

And the other, another major component of the Budget is funding to reform the funding of the child care payment system, designed to make it easier for parents to return to work and help to increase female participation in the workforce, a key initiative of our G20 agenda.

So overall, I think we can be pleased with the Budget the Government has delivered and the impact it will have for our Department. I'm excited by the challenge that we have continued to deliver successfully on the Government's employment and workplace relations priorities, and I hope that you share in that enthusiasm.

Of course this package was developed in collaboration across the Department and with other departments and agencies. And collaboration will continue to be critical to developing further the detail of the youth employment strategy and to delivering it. And that's both with other portfolios and of course with external stakeholders, and players that we engage in contracts with for delivery.

I know that we have the confidence and support of our Ministers and delivering on this and that we have a great capability in the Department, because of the professional and highly capable people who make up the Department.

In delivering the Budget initiatives and in our other work this year, we will be building on a strong track record of successful delivery and implementation since our establishment. It says here 18 months ago, but surely it's been longer than that. I've feel as though we are such a well-established Department.

As we undertake these priorities, it's important that we continue to deliver on and remember that we are always implementing our strategic vision of *more jobs and great workplaces* so that we can deliver on that, as the Minister said, for the Government and for the Australian people. Back to you, Jamie for more detail.

Thank you all.