

# Red Tape... ALERT!

## **Changes to timeframes for failing to attend appointments**

A Provider must follow-up non-attendance by attempting to contact the participant to ascertain whether they had a reasonable excuse for not attending their appointment, if the participant has not already been in contact. Where a participant fails to attend an appointment or to participate in an activity without a reasonable excuse, their Employment Services Provider has the discretion to determine the most appropriate re-engagement strategy for the participant. This includes reporting the non-attendance to the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) for their investigation through the submission of a Participation Report (PR), arranging for the participant to make-up any lost time in the activity or simply getting the participant's agreement to attend a rescheduled appointment.

Where the Employment Services Provider decides to submit a Participation Report, Centrelink will investigate the non-attendance and determine if a participation failure should be applied.

In order to improve the timeliness of processes under the Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) compliance frameworks, from 4 March 2013, Employment Services Providers will only be required to make one contact attempt following participant's non-attendance at an appointment or activity. Providers will be required to make this attempt on the day of the missed appointment or on the day on which the Provider becomes aware of non-attendance at an activity. This has been reduced from the current two attempts on two consecutive business days.

In addition to this reduction in contact requirements, the timeframe in which Providers have to make the decision on whether they wish to submit a PR will be shortened from five business days to two business days. The DEEWR IT Systems will be updated as part of these changes to support the new requirements to be implemented from 4 March 2013.

Why are these changes being made?

The Government has decided to make these changes in order to take direct action on a key concern from stakeholders on participant participation and compliance — namely, the time that, in some cases, can elapse for participants to 'feel' the consequences after the incident of non-attendance.

## **Income Management safeguards abolished for some young people and ex-prisoners**

In the space of the same discussion about the none-too-flattering independent evaluation of Income Management, which identified major problems, the Minister for Families, Housing Community Services & Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin has announced that compulsory income management will be extended. From July 2013, young people applying for the independent rate of youth allowance on the basis of "unreasonable to live at home" will be included in the "vulnerable" category of income management. The "unreasonable to live at home" requirements include young people who experience:

- extreme family breakdown
- serious risk to physical or mental health due to violence, sexual abuse or other unreasonable circumstances, or

• whose parents cannot provide a suitable home because they lack stable accommodation. In addition they have to not be receiving any other income from neither the State nor Commonwealth Government, nor continuous support from a parent or a guardian.

The second new income management target is newly-released prisoners.

Currently, newly-released prisoners may be eligible for crisis payment, which is not income-managed, and a hardship advance of their ongoing entitlement, which is likely to be income-managed, but will depend on which payment they receive.

The Minister will be required to change the current "instrument", which lists the types of people who are considered vulnerable, and are referred to income management.

Before placing people on income management, Centrelink will still be required to consider, as is the case with all vulnerable income management, whether the person is capable of meeting their priority needs, and secondly, whether income management is the most appropriate action to assist people to meet their priority needs.