



“Shaping the Future Together”

www.adde.org.au

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QUOTE OF THE SEASON:

(Carbon) Tax is not a dirty word if it means that the first \$18200 you earn is tax free! (see media release below).

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR:

Carbon tax... price on pollution...emissions trading scheme...clean energy future...carbon pollution reduction scheme...Whatever one calls it, at long last Australia has moved into the post industrial century with the government acknowledging that the world's climate is changing faster than it ever has before. To me the recent carbon price announcement couldn't come soon enough; I remember doing high school projects during the 1960's on pollution, acid rain and destruction of native forests. While the subject and the consequences if we do nothing are serious, the price on pollution announced by the federal government, to me is a positive move towards making our world a better place to live. It is in fact a good news story! But when reading the papers and listening to the media it seems that it is not.

Have a read of the media release and the news section to find out how people with disability will be better off under the government scheme and will in fact be more encouraged to seek part time or fulltime work.

In August 2011 a new series of anti-discriminatory laws will come into effect. Read the summary of the article from HR Monthly which discusses these changes and how they might help people with disability get work.

Find out what people attending our Best Practice Disability Employment Workshops are saying and finally some member contributions in the form of poetry on the subject of employment and disability. If you think you have a poem in you then email me and I will include it in the next newsletter.

Enjoy the read...Kathy Leitch, Editor

MEDIA RELEASE:

The government's price on pollution and people with disability:

Depending on which newspapers you read, you may not have noticed that the recent carbon price announcement by the federal government has quietly improved the lot of people on low incomes and those wishing to do part time work and still retain some or all of their welfare payments. Tax is not a dirty word if it means that the first \$18200 you earn is tax free!

The following excerpts from an article in The Australian, July 11th, 2011, highlights the fact that the government is putting in place measures ensuring that those hardest hit by the price on pollution (those on low incomes and welfare) will be better off than they are today.

Tax Reform the secret ingredient (of the Government's Carbon Price announcement):

ONE million lower-income and part-time workers earning up to \$18,200 a year will get to keep every dollar they earn without paying tax (and may not have to fill out a tax return)...The tax reform was the best-kept secret of Labor's gruelling negotiations with the independents and the Greens. It picks up on a key recommendation of the Henry tax review to encourage the poor to move from welfare to work... The tax-free threshold will be trebled from \$6000 to \$18,200 on July 1 2012, freeing one million Australians from the need to lodge annual tax returns... No worker will see their total income tax burden rise as a result of the simplification of the tax scales...A further \$6.9bn in assistance will be provided to families, pensioners and self-funded retirees.

Further comments from CEO of Mission Australia in The Age newspaper, July 11th, highlight further the good news coming out of the carbon price package:

"It's a good package. A carbon price remains the most cost-effective means to reduce carbon pollution – and these household assistance measures ensure that it is also fair and equitable. Low income and vulnerable households will have a buffer ... pensioners and families are particularly protected.... Shifting the tax-free threshold to \$18000 provides an added incentive for those on benefits to join the paid workforce... We will be working with the government

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to ensure low income households get the most benefit ... energy efficiency remains key to helping households cope with electricity prices...”

NEWS:

The following media releases from the offices of Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and from the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard outline further the assistance package that will go along with the Carbon price policy announced 10th July, 2011

Clean Energy Future – Household Assistance Package

Last Sunday the Australian Government announced its plan for a clean energy future.

An important part of this announcement was the Household Assistance Package, worth \$14.9 billion over four years, which will help Australian households meet their expected increase in costs of living due to the carbon price.

This package directly assists those Australians who will be most affected by the carbon price. This assistance will mean:

- More than 50 per cent of the carbon price revenue will be used to assist households
- All assistance will be permanent and will rise over time
- Low-income and middle-income households will be eligible for assistance that at least offsets their expected average price impact from the carbon price
- Australians receiving means tested income support payments will be eligible for assistance under the package and recipients working part-time may also benefit from the new tax free threshold of \$18,200
- Australians receiving the Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, Carer Payment, Service Pension and the Seniors Supplement will all receive assistance with the costs of the carbon price
- Assistance will be provided to families receiving the Family Tax Benefit
- The Low Carbon Communities program has been expanded to include the Household Energy and Financial Sustainability Scheme, to support 100,000 low income households to improve their energy and financial sustainability

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- Households with people who have a relevant concession card and face higher essential electricity costs due to medical condition or disability will be eligible for additional assistance
- Over a million taxpayers will not have to lodge a tax return, because we are lifting the tax free threshold from \$6,000 to \$18,200
- A new \$40 million Remote Indigenous Energy Program will help remote Indigenous communities access clean, affordable and reliable 24-hour power supplies.

The Low Income Energy Efficiency Program will provide up to \$100 million in grants to consortiums of local and state governments, community organisations, energy retailers and energy service companies to assist low income households reduce energy costs to adjust to the impacts of a carbon price. These competitive grants will fund around 15 to 20 trial projects to assist identified low income households across the country.

To find out more about the Household Assistance Package, phone 1800 057 590 or visit:

<http://www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au/>

Extra Support for Pensioners and Self-Funded Retirees

The Gillard Government will provide Australia's 3.4 million pensioners with extra payments that at least offset all of their expected price impact under a carbon price. Around 90 per cent of pensioner households, including all full rate pensioners, will also benefit from a buffer of at least 20 per cent over and above their expected average price impact from the carbon price.

About 280,000 self-funded retirees who are Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card holders will receive the same amount of assistance as age pensioners. Australians receiving Age Pensions, Disability Support Pensions, Carer Payment, Service Pension and the Seniors Supplement will all receive assistance with the costs of the carbon price.

Pensioners will receive a new Clean Energy Supplement equal to a 1.7 per cent increase in the maximum rate of pension. This is an annual increase of up to \$338 for singles and \$510 for couples combined.

Pensioners will receive lump sum advance payments of up to \$250 for a single pensioner before the carbon price begins, to make sure they have extra money in their pockets to help meet price impacts.

For pensioners, this advance payment will be equivalent to nine months – or in other words, about three quarters – of the extra annual payment.

The advance payment will be made in May and June 2012. Regular payment of the Clean Energy Supplement will begin in March 2013. The assistance will be permanent and will rise over time through indexation.

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The Government will review the adequacy of assistance each year and will increase it further if necessary.

This article also provides information on:

- Essential Medical Equipment Payment
- Support for aged care residents and their providers
- Public housing tenants

To read the full story, visit:

http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2011/pages/extrasupportforpensionersandselffundedretirees_10july2011.aspx

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT: THE ISSUES

Summary of article in HR Monthly, June 2011 issue:

Wake-up call – Employers need to wise up on their disability strategies

In August, 2011, a new series of anti-discrimination laws will come into effect. For the many Australian organizations struggling with the issue of employing people with disability, the reforms will be a serious wake up call. All government, business, employers and service providers will be obligated to get proactive about creating non discriminatory workplaces.

Disability employment remains the Achilles heel in many company diversity strategies....Employers are worried about safety.... efficiencyand whether they will be setting the person up to fail....

Unemployment rates of people with disability are twice the overall level, leaving people who are willing and able to work relying on disability benefits....**"this is a social and economic tragedy"** (OECD report, *Sickness, Disability and Work, Breaking the Barriers 2010*).... there are currently 150,000 people with disability receiving a disability benefit who have no restrictions to work.... such untapped talent and potential is sad....disability includes common chronic conditions such as asthma, kidney disease, chronic back pain, neurological disorders, mental illness.... disability is the second largest group that comes under the diversity banner after gender and affects 16% of the working population....

The participation of individuals with chronic health problems or disability is essential to address the decline in the effective labour supply associated with population ageing and thus help secure the economic wellbeing of many OECD countries.... (OECD, *Sickness, Disability and Work, Breaking the Barriers, 2010*)

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Despite exceptional role models (Bill Moss, Macquarie Bank senior executive; Graeme Innes, Australian Human Rights Commission commissioner; Stephen Hawking Cambridge University director of research and theoretical physicist), disabled people remain largely invisible, excluded from employment opportunities and actively discriminated against.

In discussion with the Australian Disability and Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, he stated that unless the issue of disability employment is passionately endorsed by the senior levels, nothing happens...."because what you are trying to do is change a culture and remove the soft bigotry of lowered expectations...."

This **bigoted attitude** towards disability remains a major obstacle. Innes has seen it inside organizations and outside. In 2010, Innes took a taxi driver to court for refusing to pick up Innes and his guide dog. The law requires the taxi driver to take the fare but he refused. The driver was found guilty, fined \$750 and ordered to pay legal costs of \$2500. He was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald: "I love handicapped people". Clearly rhetoric is one thing, actions and behaviour another.

There are organizations taking the lead....Perth based EDGE Employment Solutions has filled more than 5000 jobs with people with disability at organizations such as Bunnings, Wesfarmers, Steggles and government departments. The Executive director of EDGE, Dr Greg Lewis, is quick to point out the pool of talent on their books have "superior attendance levels, take less sick leave and days off"...backed by independent research (Graffam, Shrinkfield and Polzin 2002). Edge assists workers with disability by using technology such as talking post-it-notes, the JAWS computer software which reads typed text and Braille labeling systems. Dr Lewis stated, "You can't squeeze people into the job, we build an exact profile so we can go to an employer and see if they have the sort of job that they want to do and can do." Once employers take the plunge they no longer need convincing about the business case for employing people with disability. "It's good for the employer in the humanity stakes too".

Dr Lewis said 95% of job placements do not involve costly workplace modifications and this can no longer be a reason for not employing people with disability. He cited a recent discrimination case in NSW where a cinema said they could not afford to modify the cinema to fit wheelchairs – they lost the case.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act will come into force August 2011....which means that employers will need to make their workplace and staff 'disability confident', understand their legal obligations and take practical measures to eliminate discrimination against people with disability. Such things as appropriate recruitment programs and understanding reasonable adjustment can be applied with the help of "the federal government's best kept secret" called **JOBACCESS. This internationally recognized resource is underutilized** (PSST, it has a free advice service, online resources on workplace modifications and adjustments and an online claims process for the payment of workplace modifications!).... **Did I hear you say payment of**

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workplace modifications!!!! Check out this link to find out how you can employ a person with disability and **NOT** have to pay for workplace modifications:

http://jobaccess.gov.au/Workplace_modifications/Pages/home.aspx

Getting disability policy right and resultant action is a challenge. Gadens Lawyers in Sydney employs 4 people with disability and know first hand the benefits.... it takes commitment from the organization.... but the end result is that it enriches everyone.

ADDE BEST PRACTICE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS

What people are saying:

Since our last newsletter, ADDE has been running a number of disability employment workshops aimed at the not for profit sector, state and federal government and local government. The workshops are attended by the board and senior members of staff and examine their practices, procedures and results around the employment of people with disability within their organization. Cut and paste this link: <http://adde.org.au/training.html> . The following is a selection of comments from workshop attendees, which we hope will interest you and perhaps lead you to having a workshop at your place of work in the future:

"Most valuable was the statistics and own personal experiences"

"Thank you, I have some useful knowledge gained ...I loved relaxed but structured format"

"I have just had a light bulb moment! I now have something to work on that I didn't have before this workshop. I can see that my clients need to learn exactly what workplace adjustments they need before they go for job interviews. They need to be taught to self advocate. This will be so useful!"

"Thankyou for sharing your personal stories..."

"The workshop came at just the right time...we are just starting to put together an action plan to increase the number of people with disability on our staff"

"I can see that we will have to put pressure on the national representative body to get its members to look at our own practices regarding employing people with disability in our organizations"

"The workshop highlighted for me that our board needs to champion the cause of employing more people with disability within our organization"

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MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS:

Poem by Kathy Leitch

What's it like?

(To have a disability)

Like a refugee
(In your own country)
Feeling alone
(Even in the city)
Looking different
(But for everyone to see)
Wanting to be the same
(But then again you're free)
To think and behave distinctively!

Poem by Peter Rickards:

Looking for paid employment

The days, weeks, and months go slowly by
But no one offers me a job to try
To have paid work like others I do aspire
To feel valued and useful is of great desire
I need someone to motivate me along
To keep applying and pretend I'm strong

The question is to say or not to say
That I have a disability in my resume
Being honest I never get to interview
They always give me another reason not the true
On the news again I hear them say
Unemployment has dropped again today

Employers complain they are short of skills
New migrants must arrive these jobs to fill
More training I am told is what I need
And to volunteer my time for free will lead
To getting a paid job one day
But I only feel frustration and delay

Years go by and nothing changes
Governments tinker and rearranges
The sectors payroll is immense
Employing able bodied people with good intents
We need to take control and show the way
Self help self-determination with dignity and pay.

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Poem by Kathy Leitch

It's not your day

One stormy day
My mobile rings
While I am walking
Her voice it sings

A phone interview 'Oh my'
But after lots of talk
I ask myself
'Did I sound like a dork?'

A week goes by
She calls again
'Come n try' she says
I pass everything

I wait some more
Again a call
'You're in the top 3!'
You'll need a medical

'But oh dear
You cannot hear
Sorry to say
It's not your day'