

Member briefing

Jobs and Skills Summit: Outcomes and next steps

19 September 2022

Purpose

To inform ACOSS members about the outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit, our participation in this and related events, and next steps.

Summary

The Government held its Jobs and Skills Summit on 1-2 September at Parliament House Canberra. Details, including an [Outcomes Statement](#), are on [this webpage](#).

Positives

- Sectors, including our own, collaborated with government on the country's big challenges, in a shift away from short-termism and reactive government.
- Widespread sector engagement through roundtable processes leading into the summit.
- People with a variety of experiences were included amongst participants, notably people with disability and younger people, with an emphasis on ensuring different population groups were represented. A step towards including people with lived experience of unemployment, with the inclusion of a panel of people with recent experience of unemployment (but see also below).
- Full employment, reducing long term unemployment and the need for reform of employment services, are on the policy agenda.
- The role of the care economy and the need to improve the quality of jobs and services in the sector, were promoted by speakers at the Summit.
- Workplace relations changes are planned, which should improve pay and the quality of jobs and reduce the gender pay gap.
- A focus on growing clean energy jobs (including a 'Just Transition' for people in fossil fuel dependent sectors and regions) and employment in climate mitigation activities.

- Gender equality featured strongly at the summit, with all the facilitators and more than half the participants being women, and the first panel session focusing on gender equality.
- A number of speakers, including the opening address, raised the issue of inadequate Jobseeker and related payments.
- The 2024 tax cuts have come under sustained criticism on the grounds that we cannot afford them if we are to meet the challenges we face.

Disappointments

- No commitment at this stage to increase Jobseeker and related payments.
- Limited involvement of people directly affected by poverty and unemployment in the Summit itself (apart from the panel referred to above and some involvement in roundtables)
- No major new commitments at this stage (beyond election commitments on aged care and childcare) regarding funding for care and community services, or to prioritise the sector in industry development plans, and limited representation of community service organisations.

ACOSS activity in the lead-up to and at the Summit

- Acting CEO [Edwina MacDonald](#) and Principal Advisor [Dr Peter Davidson](#) spoke at the summit.
- ACOSS and members participated in many of the pre-Summit Ministerial roundtables (see a list of these in the Attachment).
- We reached agreements on [shared policy positions with ACTU and BCA](#) and [separately with the ACTU](#).
- We briefed members on the process and opportunities to participate, and consulted with members on our Summit policy paper, [Restoring full employment](#).
- We shared member policy papers and statements via our website and social media.
- We brought together members who were participating in the summit to share priorities and support and amplify sector voices.
- We engaged directly with Ministers, politicians, other peaks and summit participants on our key policy asks prior to and during the summit.
- We advocated for the voices of people with lived experience to be at the heart of the process and decision-making, and for diverse and adequate representation from across our sector.

We supported people with lived experience of unemployment to engage with media in the lead-up to the Summit, to participate in one of the Roundtables, and express their views via social media throughout the process.

Next steps beyond the Summit

- Submissions will be called soon for the [Employment White Paper](#).
- We understand there will be further consultation as this is drafted and will continue to advocate for an inclusive process with broad participation across sectors and people directly affected.
- A Parliamentary [Select Committee](#) is reviewing the new employment services system, 'Workforce Australia'.
- We shall continue to work with members, the ACTU and relevant unions over workplace relations reforms affecting care and community services, including options for enterprise bargaining involving more than a single organisation.

ACOSS pre-summit asks and summit outcomes

The following is a summary of ACOSS proposals from our [pre-Summit policy paper](#) and related [commitments from government](#) (including relevant election commitments) and consensus views at the Summit. This is a general guide for the information of ACOSS members rather than a comprehensive list of our proposals and the government’s commitments.

1. Full employment policies

ACOSS asks	Summit and its outcomes
A shared commitment to full employment, and fairer ways to deal with inflationary pressures and labour and skills shortages than excessive reliance on higher interest rates or austerity policies.	Treasurer indicated full employment is an objective for the government. Strong Summit speeches on full employment from Danielle Wood (Grattan Institute) and Prof Ross Garnaut (ANU) Agreement between ACOSS, ACTU and BCA on restoring and sustaining full employment, productivity and incomes.
Reduce inflation directly by boosting the supply of social and affordable housing by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing direct investment in new social housing; • introducing financial incentives for affordable private rental housing; • incorporating inclusive zoning into urban planning instruments. 	Widen the remit of the National Housing Infrastructure Facility, making up to \$575 million available to invest in social and affordable housing. The funding can be used to partner with other tiers of government and social housing providers, and to attract private capital including from superannuation funds.

2. Skills and migration

ACOSS asks	Summit outcomes
Strategic workforce planning at national, industry and regional levels led by Jobs and Skills Australia.	Establish the Jobs and Skills Australia work plan in consultation with all jurisdictions and stakeholders, to address workforce shortages and build long term capacity in priority sectors. Restart discussions for a 5-year National Skills Agreement based on guiding principles agreed by the National Cabinet and Skills Ministers.
Expand career guidance and support to assist people facing disadvantage navigate a changing labour market, and lift investment in TAFE, community-based training providers and foundation education. Training and education must be accessible for people with low incomes and barriers to employment, and responsive to the needs of workers and employers.	Accelerate the delivery of 465,000 additional fee-free TAFE places, with 180,000 to be delivered next year, and with costs shared with the states and territories on a 50:50 basis. Reinvigorate foundation skills programs to support workers and vulnerable Australians to gain secure employment choices.

<p>Immigration policies that prioritise skilled and permanent migration, and that protect temporary visa holders in entry-level jobs (e.g. students, working holidaymakers, and Pacific Island workers) from exploitation and abuse.</p>	<p>A Committee has been established to review the migration system to streamline visa processing and strengthen protections for temporary visa-holders against exploitation in the workplace.</p> <p>Bring forward a package of reforms to address migration worker exploitation during 2023.</p>
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3. Employment participation

ACOSS asks	Summit outcomes
<p>Raise JobSeeker and related income support payments from \$46 to \$70 a day.</p>	<p>Provide Age pensioners with a temporary upfront \$4,000 income bank credit to allow them to work and earn more before their pension is reduced.</p>
<p>A shared commitment to prevent and reduce long-term unemployment, including a flexible Jobs and Training Offer for people on unemployment payments for more than 12 months.</p>	<p>The Treasurer emphasised the need to reduce long-term unemployment in his Summit speech</p> <p>Government, business, unions and the community to develop a set of best practice principles to guide meaningful work experience opportunities and workplace based mentoring programs for people experiencing disadvantage.</p>
<p>Reform employment services to move away from the present harmful compliance approach towards genuine practical help to secure employment.</p>	<p>A Parliamentary Select Committee is reviewing the new employment services system, 'Workforce Australia'.</p> <p>Work with other levels of government to explore further options on place-based approaches that drive co-ordination at the local level and address barriers to employment among disadvantaged groups and the long-term unemployed.</p>
<p>Ensure that the Disability Employment Service review is not rushed, that the new program supports people with disability in employment as well as those seeking it, and that organisational systems, practices and performance indicators prioritise the long-term wellbeing of each person with disability using the service.</p>	<p>Work with stakeholders to expedite the development of new disability employment service model.</p> <p>A Visitor Economy Disability Employment pilot to deliver place-based employment outcomes by connecting small businesses, employment service providers and jobseekers with disability</p> <p>Memorandum of Understanding with the BCA for a pilot project to increase employment and improve career pathways of people with a disability.</p> <p>A Disability Employment Centre for Excellence to improve ideas and increase capacity among employment services.</p>

<p>Ensure that the program replacing the Community Development Program is genuinely co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled organisations and that it includes a substantial paid employment component through establishment of a Remote Jobs Investment Fund.</p>	<p>Replace the Community Development Program with a more effective program.</p> <p>Work with members of the National Closing the Gap Agreement to examine a Closing the Gap policy partnership on economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>
<p>As part of a shared commitment to reduce harassment in the workplace, employers should establish policies and procedures to prevent harassment of women, young workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex workers, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander workers, workers with disability and workers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in the workplace and support those affected.</p>	<p>Implement recommendation 28 of the Respect@Work Report by expressly prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace and enabling the Fair Work Commission to resolve disputes relating to workplace sexual harassment.</p>

4. Workplace relations and incomes

ACOSS asks	Summit outcomes
<p>Restore sustainable growth in real wages by lifting productivity, renewing the links between productivity and pay, and strengthening enterprise bargaining.</p>	<p>Legislate to ensure all workers and businesses can negotiate in good faith for agreements that benefit them, including small businesses, women, care and community services sectors, and First Nations people.</p> <p>Ensure workers and businesses have flexible options for reaching agreements, including removing unnecessary limitations on access to single and multi-employer agreements.</p> <p>Make the Better Off Overall Test simple, flexible and fair.</p>
<p>Lift minimum wages and social security payments, to levels that enable people to achieve a decent standard of living.</p>	<p>Initiate a detailed consultation and research process on the concept of a living wage, reporting back in late 2023.</p>
<p>Establish a legislative link between growth in wages and social security allowance payments including Jobseeker Payment.</p>	
<p>Promote pay equity for women, through workplace relations legislation and test cases that recognise the value of their skills, experience and qualifications, especially in caring roles traditionally undertaken by women.</p>	<p>Include gender pay equity and job security in the objects of the Fair Work Act and a statutory equal remuneration principle to improve the way pay equity claims can be advanced.</p> <p>Require businesses with 100 employees or more to publicly report their gender pay gap.</p>
<p>As far as possible, employment and paid working hours should be regular and predictable so that workers can meet</p>	<p>Initiate a detailed consultation and research process considering the impact of workplace relations settings (such as rostering</p>

<p>current needs and plan for the future, and employers have the benefit of a committed workforce that is skilled for the job.</p>	<p>arrangements) on work and care, including childcare.</p> <p>Legislate to provide stronger access to flexible working arrangements and unpaid parental leave so families can share work and caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Set an objective test in legislation for determining when a worker is casual.</p>

5. Industry development: Care and community services and clean energy

ACOSS asks	Summit outcomes
<p>Promote development of a robust care sector and ease chronic labour and skills shortages by developing standards for accredited training and staffing levels that enable good quality care, investing in sector-specific skills and training, lifting pay and improving job security, with government commitments to fund the increases.</p>	<p>Establish two new expert panels in the Fair Work Commission for pay equity and the care and community sector.</p> <p>A Productivity Commission review of the childcare sector and an Australian Competition and Consumer Commission inquiry into childcare prices.</p>
<p>Benchmark public funding to the actual costs of quality care and support care services to develop their core capacities (including the skills of their workforce) rather than merely funding 'episodes of care'.</p>	<p>Support and, if successful, provide funding to support increases to award wages for aged care workers through the Government's submission at the Fair Work Commission.</p>
<p>Promote development of a community services sector that is responsive to community needs and adequately funded to provide quality services, through funding that responds to need in the community, meets the actual costs of quality services, and provides fair and timely indexation.</p>	

<p>Invest in job-creating industries that reduce global warming and ease its impacts on people with the least, including clean energy industries in regions reliant on fossil fuel production to ensure a just transition and retrofitting the homes of people on low incomes to improve energy efficiency.</p>	<p>A coordinated approach with industry, unions, local governments and communities to assist affected workers and regional communities prosper in a clean energy future</p> <p>Work with investors, including superannuation funds to leverage greater private capital into national priority areas, including housing and clean energy.</p>
<p>Accelerate the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy by establishing a First Nations Communities Clean Energy Fund to invest in clean energy and energy efficiency for rural and remote communities.</p>	<p>Establish a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy, through the National Energy Transformation Partnership, co-designed with States and Territories.</p>
<p>Establish community-based disaster resilience hubs to support people affected by fires, drought, floods and other disasters triggered by climate change, and provide employment and training opportunities for people who are unemployed in this work.</p>	

Attachment:

Ministerial roundtables

ACOSS and its members attended a number of these pre-Summit roundtables. For information on participation in, and the outcomes of these meetings it's best to contact the relevant Minister's office.

Minister Rishworth (Social Services):

- Barriers to workforce participation
- Employment for people with disability

Minister Burke (Employment and Workplace Relations):

- Workplace relations
- Disadvantaged job-seekers
- Employment for older people

Minister Gallagher (Finance and Women):

- Gender equity in employment

Ministers Bowen (Climate) & Husic (Industry):

- Employment in clean energy industries
- Employment in manufacturing ('Made in Australia')

Minister Butler (Health and Aged Care):

- Health and aged care workforce (with input from Premiers)

Minister Ali (Childcare and Youth Affairs):

- Childcare workforce
- Youth employment

Minister O'Neil (Home Affairs) & Minister Giles (Immigration):

- Migration policy and labour and skills shortages
- Employment for refugees and other newly settled migrants

Ministers O'Connor (Skills and Training), & Clair (Education):

- Vocational education and training and skills
- Higher education and skills

Minister Watt (Agriculture):

- Workforce issues in agriculture

Minister Burnie (First Nations)

- Mini Summit

Minister Giles

- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
- Refugees

Minister King

- Industry and regional development

Assistant Minister Leigh (Charities, Competition and Treasury)

- Charity sector