



## UNEMPLOYED BENEFITS 24 November 1994

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** I wish to place on record my support for the motion. Too often the long-term unemployed make a choice, often because of lack of confidence or self esteem, to stay as long-term unemployed. In parts of Australia this has led to three whole generations living solely on the welfare system. As a nation, we must make every endeavour to break this vicious cycle. We must short-circuit the negativity and give these people some achievable goals. In Australia today, if mum or dad does not go out to work, there is a very real chance that their children will do likewise. Not only is this a drain on resources but it is a waste to our society.

There are many examples, both in Australia and overseas, that prove beyond doubt that work-for-the-dole programs work very well. My own city of Port Lincoln was the birthplace for a very successful community development employment program. This was initially a pilot program for Aboriginal people, and it now has been adopted by Aboriginal people all over Australia. It is estimated that by 1995 in excess of 30 000 people will be working in CDEP schemes. Port Lincoln Aborigines have provided an example which has been copied all over Australia, and only recently it was recognised at a conference in England.

In Port Lincoln, one group called Kuju has been operational for five years. It is a voluntary program so there is no requirement for people to take part. However, despite that fact, people join in the program readily. It is funded by an arrangement between Government agencies and ATSIC, and people work two days for their entitlement. To judge its success, one has only to look at the fact that it now has, I understand, 130 people working on the scheme, and this figure is expected to increase. Kuju workers undertake a range of tasks in the community, such as yard cleaning, carpentry and mechanical based services. What must be remembered is that these community services are not normally provided by anyone else.

The other example I would like to cite is from the Far West Coast town of Ceduna. Unemployed Aboriginal people in Ceduna have had the same chance to work in a Community Development Employment Program. This program has proved so successful in the community that some Aboriginal school children now say that they have the ambition of becoming a CDEP worker. My information is that this has led to a very marked change in attitude from that which prevailed before CDEP started. I am particularly proud to say that the people working on CDEP have gone from lacking in motivation and self-esteem to becoming important role models for their children and

others in the community.

The scheme is a credit to those hard-working, motivated people who make it work. I can think of no better example than this one to share with members of the House. This example truly supports the sentiments behind the motion of the member for Kaurana. In Port Lincoln and Ceduna we have broken the barrier; whereas Aboriginal people saw their entitlement to unemployment benefits as a handout, they now see it as something in which they have to put some extra effort to earn.

The only flaw I can see with this program is that it targets Aborigines in particular. It should be expanded to take in everyone across the nation. I am sure that our worthy Speaker, the member for Eyre, would support my sentiments that the CDEP program has helped to break the endless cycle of hopelessness for many Aboriginal families. The program in Ceduna has many goals, including the development of an oyster farm and an emu farm venture. Funds generated go back into the scheme to help provide employment options for an even greater number of people. This program has led to a remarkable rise in self-esteem for the participants, and it has led to a greater understanding among other people in the Port Lincoln and Ceduna communities.

To highlight the lack of desire for employment among some of our long-term unemployed, I would like to pass on the experience of one large supermarket situated in Port Lincoln. Eight people, all long-term unemployed, were selected to be trained as checkout operators by this large supermarket. On the starting day, only one turned up for work, and this particular person did not finish the week. I will also read a letter, which was sent to me recently—only the names have been deleted—and which states:

*Dear Mrs Penfold,*

*I am writing to you with concerns that I have arising from the CES JobStart program. I am a small business, operating in the building industry. I have employed a small number of people, part time, over the past four years, but I have found that the costs take the incentive out of being able to keep an employee— until the JobStart subsidy scheme. I took up the offer that the scheme provided. The officers at the CES supplied me with a short list of people who could be suitable. First, I made inquiries (on my own behalf) to familiarise myself with the names I did not know on the list. I was in disbelief when I was told by a local person that one of the people would probably be unsuitable because he would need the time off to build his house on a block just acquired (registered as unemployed for 36 months or more).*

*Things got worse as this situation unfolded. A footnote to the list I was given explained that none of these people had any experience. Then I find at the top of the list an ex-employee who had worked for me for four months in 1990. RECORDS?? He declined my personal approach by informing me that he had possible work coming up in two months' time, another owner-builder in the middle of construction, hence too busy to take work (18 to 36 months unemployed). Just a point about building your own home at taxpayers' expense. Surely building permits should be issued only when sources of income are disclosed, after all the Government does not recoup any funds from, for example, the sale of a property funded and built from unemployment benefits. I am also*

*assuming that people on social security can apply and receive loans from banking institutions.*

*After personally looking for someone on the list who was keen to take work, I finally decided to leave it to the CES. I gave them the name of the person I felt was suitable and they arranged an interview and the required paperwork. The interview was suddenly put at a stalemate when doctors' certificates were produced (unknown to anyone). They have a back problem, even though his activities lead me to suggest he would be suitable for the job. The officer advised me that it could be unwise to take him on with a back problem. After the interview I was approached by the person in question and he informed me that, 'You know my lifestyle, I need to go surfing a couple of times a week, I couldn't do eight hours' work these days, unless you're paying cash.' I could not believe what I had just heard.*

*The CES then contacted two more people from the list and they were instructed to phone me about the job. The first of the two contacted me and suggested he would like the job. He rang me back (after doing his sums) and told me he would be \$200 worse off and it was not worth taking the job. You have probably heard all this before! The second person has not bothered to contact me at all.*

*The situation now is that I have not found anyone I chose from the list so far, and I have been turned off the idea altogether. I am faced with the situation of having to notify the CES that these people have refused work, an unenviable position to be in, living in a small country town. This is the first piece of correspondence to a member of Parliament so I will be interested in reading your reply to an issue I knew existed but could not believe to what extent it is being manipulated. I hope that if some of these issues were addressed it could help towards reducing debt and creating employment for those who honestly want to make our State productive. In closing I would like to say that the officers from the CES were very prompt and helpful under the circumstances I have outlined.*

What sort of work ethic is this when some of our long-term unemployed deliberately choose to be unemployed rather than seek out work? With the present number of unemployed that we have in this country, there should not be one plastic bag or bit of rubbish lying anywhere to be seen. Once people have worked to earn their unemployment entitlement by cleaning up the environment in which they live, they will be less likely to add to that litter level again. I believe it would also lead to a drastic reduction in the level of graffiti, which we presently spend enormous sums removing.

We must take steps to break this cycle of unemployment. It is my view that a work for the dole program would be a very good start. As soon as people become unemployed, they should be offered training schemes to update, change or improve their skills. The present system of waiting until a person has been out of work for some time is depressing for the person concerned, promotes a negative attitude and increases the difficulty for such people to maintain motivation. People who desperately want work and need the retraining to qualify for that work miss out. They cannot get the necessary assistance, as our resources are now targeted to the long-term unemployed. To preserve self esteem, and for people to keep their pride and dignity, we must reduce

assistance waiting lists.

Time expired