



SENATOR THE HON MARK ARBIB

Minister for Employment Participation
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery

JENNIE GEORGE MP

Member for Throsby

SHARON BIRD MP

Member for Cunningham

MEDIA RELEASE

15 February, 2010

Illawarra employers urged to kickstart apprenticeships

Minister for Employment Participation Mark Arbib and Illawarra MPs Jennie George and Sharon Bird today urged Illawarra businesses to take advantage of the Federal Government's extra incentive to hire an apprentice.

Senator Arbib said more than 1,932 young trades apprentices had been employed in NSW in the first six weeks of the Apprentice Kickstart program.

Around Australia more than 6,400 apprentices have been employed in the first six weeks of Kickstart and, with just two weeks to go, Senator Arbib urged local businesses to take advantage of the bonus.

"Illawarra businesses and young people have embraced Apprentice Kickstart and I congratulate local MPs Jennie George and Sharon Bird and the Illawarra Mercury for its Project Kickstart campaign which is aiming to secure 500 apprenticeships locally," Senator Arbib said.

"Youth unemployment has been a critical issue in the Illawarra for a number of years and apprenticeships are a great way to build skills for the future and give young people a start in their career.

"With the global recession seeing apprenticeship commencements drop by about 10,000 across Australia in the past year, it is critical that we train tradespeople now to avoid a skills shortage as the economy recovers."

Under Kickstart, the Rudd Government has more than tripled the commencement bonus for employers in the first year, from \$1500 to \$4850.

Employers receive \$2350 when they employ a 15 to 19-year-old apprentice in an eligible trade and then receive a further \$2500 after the apprentice completes nine months.

The Kickstart bonus saw 4,400 trade apprentices signed up in December 2009 – 1,500 more than December 2008 and 1,200 more than pre-global recession levels in December 2007.

Ms George said businesses and apprentice training organisations were pleased the Rudd Government had responded to their calls for extra incentives for employers of apprentices.

“The Kickstart bonus is available to employers of apprentices in the fields that have been hardest hit by skills shortages – identified on the National Skills Needs List,” Ms George said.

“These include everything from butchers, bakers, bricklayers, carpenters and plumbers to electrical trades and hairdressing.

“The bonus is available until the end of the month and aims to sign up 21,000 young apprentices across Australia.”

Ms Bird said increased apprenticeship training was crucial to enhancing the productivity and innovation of local businesses.

“The Government introduced the bonus to fast-forward hiring decisions – to bring apprentice numbers back up to the levels before the global recession,” Ms Bird said.

“We want to be sure the Illawarra region gets its fair share of the funding and encourage any business which is thinking of hiring a new apprentice to act now.

“There has never been a better time to put on an apprentice with these added bonuses.”

Senator Arbib was in the Illawarra today visiting Thomas & Coffey at Unanderra.

Specialised industrial services provider Thomas & Coffey is one of the largest employers of apprentices in the region, with 42 people in training.

This year, the company has welcomed another 12 new apprentices – three boilermakers, one carpenter, one electrician, three fitters, one plumber and three air conditioning technicians.

Ms George said: “Thomas & Coffey have made great use of the Kickstart bonus, putting on 10 apprentices since the scheme began.”

Funding for Apprentice Kickstart comes from the Government’s \$650 million Jobs Fund and was negotiated with the support of the Australian Greens and Senator Stephen Fielding.

It brings to about \$250 million the level of additional support the Rudd Government is providing to apprentices.

More information on Apprentice Kickstart is available at www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au

Media Opportunity

10:30am – Thomas and Coffey, 19 Prince of Wales Avenue, Unanderra

DEEWR Media: media@deewr.gov.au Non-media queries: 1300 363 079
