

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

PROPOSED SELECT COMMITTEE ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

REPORT NO.1 OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

June 1992

Terms of Reference –

On 12 May 1992 the Legislative Assembly agreed that the following motion be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy for consideration and report as to the necessity for a Select Committee and further inquiry ...

That :

- (1) a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on youth unemployment in the ACT with particular reference to the level of youth unemployment and strategies to alleviate the impact on the community;
- (2) the Committee shall report by Thursday 10 September 1992;
- (3) the Committee shall consist of three Members;
- (4) the Committee shall be provided with the necessary additional staff, facilities and resources; and
- (5) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Ms Annette Ellis (Presiding Member)

Ms Helen Szuty (Deputy Presiding Member)

Mrs Kate Carnell

Mr Greg Cornwell

Mrs Ellnor Grassby

Secretary : Mr Greg McIntosh

REPORT NO. 1 – STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

PROPOSED SELECT COMMITTEE ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

1.1 The Committee recommends that a Select Committee on Youth Unemployment not be established.

1.2 The Committee makes the recommendation contained in 1.1 for the following reasons :

- (a) The issue of youth unemployment clearly falls within the responsibility of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The resolution establishing the Social Policy Committee, which was passed in the Legislative Assembly on 27 March 1992, states that the Committee is to "examine matters related to...employment... [and]... youth affairs". Standing Order 217 precludes the establishment of a Select Committee if the proposed terms of reference falls within the responsibility of an existing Standing Committee. On 15 April 1992 the Social Policy Committee, in private deliberation, discussed at length whether to undertake an inquiry into youth unemployment or whether it should adopt an inquiry on aged accommodation and support services in the ACT. Whilst acknowledging the importance of youth unemployment as an issue, the Committee decided to conduct an inquiry into aged accommodation needs in the ACT.
- (b) The Committee acknowledges that Standing Order 217 (and the resolution establishing the Social Policy Committee) could be changed or suspended to allow the formation of the Select Committee but is strongly of the view that such action would set an undesirable precedent. It has the potential to legitimise the practice of establishing a Select Committee each time a proposed inquiry is not supported by a majority of Members on the relevant Standing Committee. Whilst this may not happen very often it could see the establishment of two or three Select Committees in the life of this Assembly inquiring into issues that more properly should be in the domain of an existing Standing Committee. Moreover, given the current level of resources available to service the Committee system, there is a danger that the establishment of another Select Committee will weaken the whole Committee structure. Resources and Members may become stretched "too thinly" for the Committee system to function effectively.

- (c) The Committee notes that the Standing Committee on Tourism and ACT Promotion has included in its terms of reference ... "tourism related employment". As part of that inquiry no doubt some of the issues relevant to youth unemployment will be investigated.

Annette Ellis
Presiding Member
11 June 1992

DISSENTING REPORT - HELEN SZUTY MLA

I hereby register my dissent from the Social Policy Committee's decision "that the Committee recommends that a select committee on youth unemployment not be established".

The Chair of the Social Policy Committee quite rightly points out that the issue of youth unemployment falls within the parameters of this standing committee of the Assembly, because under its existing terms of reference both "employment" and "youth affairs" are expressly mentioned in the Committee's terms of reference.

Ms Ellis also reports that on 15 April 1992 the Social Policy Committee discussed at length whether to undertake an inquiry into youth unemployment or whether to undertake an inquiry into aged accommodation and support services.

I feel I need to say to members that I have no difficulty with an inquiry into aged accommodation and support services, in fact I welcome it as an important inquiry for the Social Policy Committee to undertake and I have had considerable input into the process of the inquiry to date.

However, the most crucial social issue concerning the ACT community is at present youth unemployment and even though many inquiries are worthy of the Social Policy Committee's consideration, the one issue which I consider we have almost been obligated to address is the issue of youth unemployment.

It was for this reason then that on the 12th of May 1992 and following discussion of the issue as a matter of public importance I proposed that a select committee of the Assembly be established to specifically examine the issue of youth unemployment, bearing in mind the decision of the Social Policy Committee not to adopt this issue as a specific inquiry.

My support for a select committee on youth unemployment was not approached from the viewpoint of setting an undesirable precedent but simply from the viewpoint of wishing to address the issue in the most comprehensive way possible, with Labor, Liberal and Independent members working co-operatively together to reach recommendations which could be readily implemented to alleviate the suffering and distress of Canberra's all too many unemployed young people.

A select committee of 3 members would have enabled a Labor member and a Liberal member interested in the issue of youth unemployment to participate in the select committee, as my fellow members of the Social Policy Committee had already expressed their concerns about their workloads.

Ms Ellis refers in her report, to the Standing Committee on Tourism and ACT Promotion and the terms of reference of its inquiry which include the words "tourism related employment". As a member of the Standing Committee on Tourism and ACT Promotion I welcome the suggestion that youth unemployment levels

in the ACT can be examined in this context. However, this is one aspect of the Tourism Committee's terms of reference for its inquiry and I believe the issue of youth unemployment cannot be fully explored by this committee alone.

I believe that this ACT Legislative Assembly needs to fully address the issue of youth unemployment in the ACT, and I believe it has the opportunity to do so through the establishment of a select committee for this purpose. I am disappointed with the Social Policy Committee's response to what is undoubtedly the major social issue of the moment in the ACT.

Helen Szuty MLA

17 June 1992