



## Office of Hon Paula Bennett

**MP for Waitakere**

Minister for Social Development and Employment

Minister for Disability Issues

Minister of Youth Affairs

Kiwi Polemicist

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Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for your email of 19 November 2008 asking about this government's plans for the Domestic Purposes Benefit, in particular the introduction of work obligations.

This government supports the role of parents and I personally believe that there is no job more difficult but also more rewarding. Our policies will support parents while also recognising the value of paid work.

We will have a work focus for two reasons. The first is that paid work is the route to independence and well-being for most people, and is the best way to reduce child poverty. Long-term welfare dependency locks people into a life of limited income and limited choices.

Work is beneficial not only for the greater earning potential it provides, but also for the dignity, self-worth, and sense of belonging that is part of being in a workplace, having colleagues, and being productive.

Currently, people receiving the Domestic Purposes, Sickness, or Invalid's Benefit do not face any work obligations whatsoever. We believe this needs to be changed for the reasons I've already mentioned. So, we are going to extend part-time work obligations to two groups of beneficiaries:

- DPB recipients, once their youngest dependent child is aged six or over; and
- people on Sickness and Invalid's Benefits who have been assessed as being able to work part time.

These groups will be required to spend at least 15 hours per week in employment, training, or job-seeking activities. It's in the long-term interest of sole-parent families to engage in paid work because this is the most effective way of reducing the risk of family poverty.

In 1999, a similar policy was implemented and DPB recipients faced work obligations when their youngest child turned six. The Ministry of Social Development studied the results of this policy and found that:

- there was an increase in the number of sole parents moving off the benefit;
- most of those who moved off the benefit and into employment said they were eventually better off financially; and

- 60% of sole parents who moved off the benefit and into employment reported that the overall effect on their families of them obtaining paid work was positive or very positive, with only 4% describing the overall effect as negative or very negative.

You particularly asked how the new policy would apply to those on the DPB who wish to home school their children. Thank you for raising this particular issue. Much work still needs to be done to finalise this matter. I have referred the question of home schooling situations to the officials who are working on this matter to consider whether or not an exemption should be applied.

Thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paula Bennett', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Hon Paula Bennett  
Minister for Social Development and Employment