

NEWS

Unemployed 'blamed by Government'



Tony Abbott: take any job.

The Federal Government's message to job-seekers, to take what work they could get or lose the dole, showed it was blaming the unemployed for their plight instead of providing solutions, the Opposition said yesterday.

Employment Services Minister Tony Abbott has told the unemployed to take any job or face losing the dole.

But Opposition employment

spokeswoman Cheryl Kernot said job-seekers already knew welfare benefit requirements and could not be expected to take any job without appropriate training.

"Everything that's wrong with it is most of the jobs that are available require skills and training," Ms Kernot told Sky television. "You can't just go and be a chef, for which there are a lot of vacancies, or a construction tradesperson, for

which there are vacancies, if you haven't done the training.

"Tony Abbott's saying 'take what you can' is not the solution," she said. "Stop blaming the unemployed.

"Let's help them move from welfare to work by doing something about skills and training."

Mr Abbott told a western Sydney conference in a speech entitled *Motivating Job Seekers*, "unemployed people can't wait for the ideal job. They must

take whatever job they can reasonably do and then work their way up.

"Job-seekers need to know that the best way to get the job you want tomorrow is to take the job available today, and that is the expectation this government will enforce."

More than half of Australia's employers were reporting difficulty recruiting suitable staff and government rules coming into effect from July would

place new obligations on job-seekers.

"From July 1, before claiming unemployment benefits, all new job-seekers will have to sign a day one Preparing for Work Agreement, specifying the obligations of people on benefits," Mr Abbott said. "Job-seekers should no longer be in any doubt about what's expected of them.

"This will have the status of activity agreement under the So-

cial Security Act and means that recalcitrant job-seekers will not need to be further interviewed before being breached."

People had to accept lower wages were a part of the culture of climbing to the top.

"Most job-seekers want full-time, well-paid work," he said. "Instead, many entry-level jobs are part-time and comparatively poorly paid, at least to start with."

Ms Kernot accused Mr Abbott

of trying to divert attention from the recent welfare reform report issued by Family and Community Services Minister Jocelyn Newman.

The draft report called for a major overhaul of the social-security system and was based on an extension of Prime Minister John Howard's idea of mutual obligation, whereby welfare recipients must take part in work or education programs, or risk benefit cuts.

-AAP