

Jobs shock, but good rates news

THE Reserve Bank of Australia may keep interest rates on hold after the first fall in job numbers for 19 months pointed to a slowing economy.

The total number of jobs fell in May, the first monthly fall since October 2006, the Australian Bureau of Statistics said.

The national unemployment rate was static at 4.3 per cent.

Overall employment fell by 19,700 to 10,691,200 in May, full-time employment dropped by 10,400 to 7,645,200 and part-time employment jobs were down by 9300 to 3,046,000.

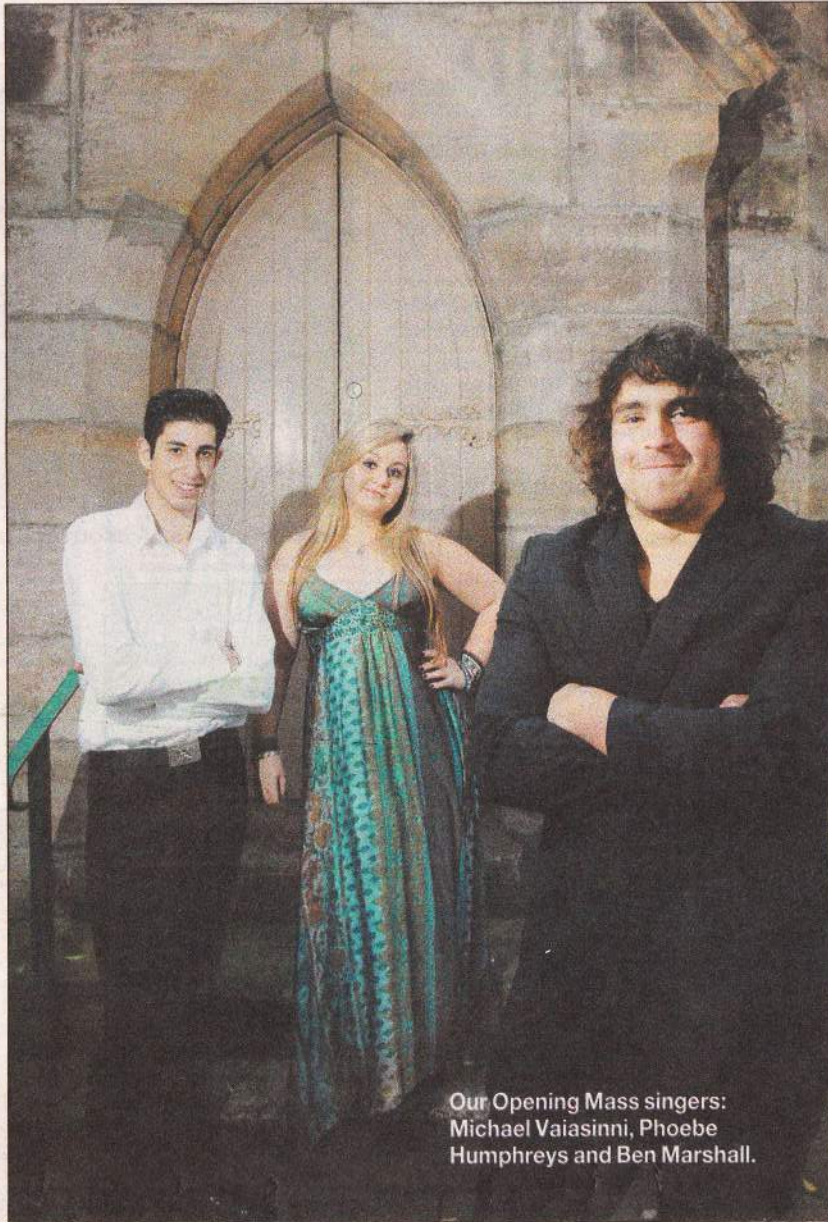
Financial markets had forecast a rise of 13,500 in total jobs for the month, with the jobless rate at 4.2 per cent.

The Australian dollar took a hit from the weaker jobs data and the implication that no further rate rises would follow.

It fell to a four-week low of US93.8 cents from US94.70 within 30 minutes of the data being released.

JPMorgan economist Helen Kevans said corporate confidence had fallen to a level where businesses were not employing new staff.

"The contraction was surprising, but we did expect employment growth would slow significantly," Ms Kevans said.



Our Opening Mass singers: Michael Vaiasinni, Phoebe Humphreys and Ben Marshall.

Three have voices for a billion

Adam Davies

DESCRIBED as having voices from heaven, it is no surprise that this beaches trio has been chosen to sing at the Opening Mass at World Youth Day next month at Darling Harbour.

Phoebe Humphreys of Cromer, Michael Vaiasinni of Newport and Ben Marshall of Balgowlah form half of the extremely talented teenage opera group, Tempus.

To start the World Youth Day celebrations, the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, will celebrate an Opening Mass followed by a three-hour welcome concert for 225,000 pilgrims, for which the group will be one of the headline acts.

"To be chosen to sing at such an event is such an honour," Ms Humphreys said.

The group will perform in front of 225,000 people with a

global audience of more than a billion and perform songs in French, Spanish and Italian, as well as English.

"It is a little daunting, but we have been singing together for so long now it's fun, it doesn't feel like a chore and we really rely on each other for support," Ms Humphreys said.

The group's artistic director, Nicole Alexander, who is one of Australia's most talented music producers, has nurtured the group from a young age and is very proud their achievements.

"They are all so multi-talented, it is absolutely incredible," Ms Alexander said.

"They have worked so hard to get this opportunity to showcase their talents."

Sydney will host the 23rd World Youth Day from July 15 to 20, with Pope Benedict XVI becoming one of only three Popes to visit Australia.