

Submission
No 28

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF COMMONWEALTH WORKCHOICES LEGISLATION

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Telephone:
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Theme:

Summary

Submission
to
Legislative Council, Social Issues Committee

**Inquiry into the Impact of Commonwealth
WorkChoices legislation**

Submitter: Social Issues Executive
on behalf of
The Most Reverend Dr Peter Jensen

Organisation: Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney

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Terms of Reference

1. That the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquire into and report on the impact of Commonwealth WorkChoices legislation on the people of New South Wales, and in particular:

- (a) the ability of workers to genuinely bargain, focusing on groups such as women, youth and casual employees and the impact upon wages, conditions and security of employment,
- (b) the impact on rural communities,
- (c) the impact on gender equity, including pay gaps,
- (d) the impact on balancing work and family responsibilities,
- (e) the impact on injured workers, and
- (f) the impact on employers and especially small businesses.

2. That the committee report by Thursday 23 November 2006

The Social Issues Executive of the Anglican Church, Sydney Diocese, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Legislative Council, Social Issues Committee, Inquiry into the Impact of Commonwealth WorkChoices legislation.

While there are some technical matters which fall outside our area of expertise, we wish to highlight to the Committee two principles which we believe must be at the forefront of any system of workplace relations:

1. Proposals that impact on shared and community time, and;
2. Proposals that appear to shift undue power to employees.

Sundays and public holidays are an important time in the life of the nation for families and communities together together. The erosion of Sunday as a day of rest and a day for the worship of God is a matter of concern for Christians. The need for a day of leisure and rest, and for time to spend in family and community activities must always be a priority for our nation. While some people already work on these days, the principle of requiring employers to pay a premium to remove workers from important family and community times is important.

A second area that we remain concerned about is that vulnerable workers, or those who have less bargaining power, need to be protected from the effects of any reforms. Traditionally, unions and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission have played an important role in our community in protecting such workers. We would wish to see such protection continue to ensure that employers' power is not increased at the expense of those with less bargaining power.

In summary, we believe that the needs of the economy should remain second to the needs and working conditions of employees and their families. Economic prosperity should not come at a high price to relationships. We would therefore strongly encourage the Committee and the Government to continue to monitor carefully the effects of the legislation on families, relationships and communities.

Kindest regards,

Rev Dr Andrew Cameron
On behalf of the
Social Issues Executive, Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney