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Submission to the

ACTU Insecure Work Inquiry

In and Out: The challenges of work insecurity

January 2012

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Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of 43 independent organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered to one in forty Australians, in partnership with them, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas. In all, over 17,771 staff and 17,908 volunteers work with over 480,000 vulnerable Australians every year delivering diverse services, in every region of Australia.

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Introduction

The premise of this submission is that employment is a major (but not only) component in the health, wellbeing and inclusion of individuals and their families. Along with such elements as health or housing; employment is a lynch-pin in determining the extent to which a person is capable of participating in society where often one of these conditions, ie employment, stands as a necessary prerequisite for the others. When one factor is at risk, such as unstable or insecure employment, the other factors – housing, health etc – potentially come under threat; such is the connection between the elements.

Anglicare Australia contends a fully inclusive society is one which provides a benefit to all and which creates opportunity for progress rather than exerts pressure on the most disadvantaged of its citizens. Inclusion allows people to make the most of their circumstances rather than to be oppressed by them.

In considering work insecurity and its impacts on society, particular issues are evident in having a particular role. These issues include transitioning into employment off benefits and the barriers interrupting that process; the conflict between the costs of inducing productivity and the savings made from clawing back working conditions; the balance to be struck between employer expectations, employee needs and the concept of work/life balance; the implications which arise from the introduction of reforms in the community sector; and the external considerations over which employers themselves have little control.

Transition into Employment

Summary

For those who are on the edges of employment, who are entering the market after a long absence, those with informal qualifications, and who undertake work traditionally casualised, insecure work conditions have them caught in an impossible position. On the one side they experience unstable or uncertain working conditions perpetuated by structural apathy and on the other are rising house prices, costs of living, competitive and increasingly costly rental markets, rising utility prices and any number of other life-stage events hinging on the individual's capacity to earn a stable and secure income.

There are two main issues on which we would like to focus in this section and they are the structural apathy that exists around job creation and the conditions which create difficulties in returning to work after an extended absence from the labour market.

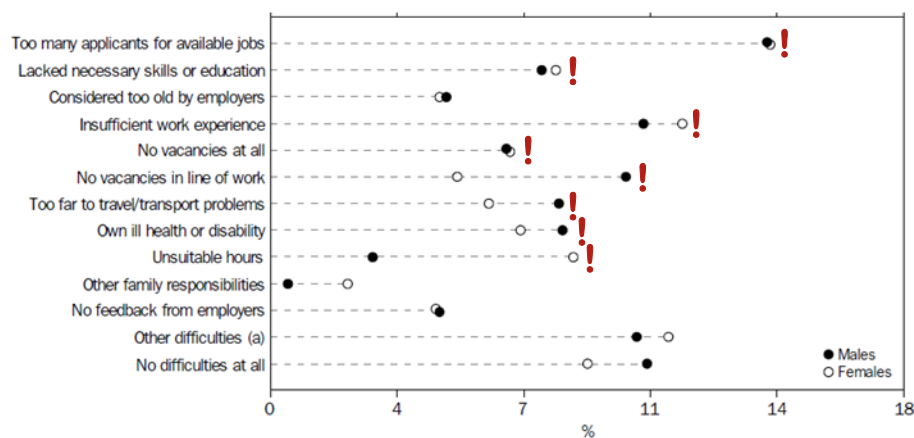
The current Government has a strong employment agenda with much of the focus on returning long-term unemployed people (including long-term pension recipients) back to the workforce. In the most recent budgets we have seen extensive measures targeting return-to-work initiatives, and those with mixed receptions and results. For example, the national employment programs requiring substantial re-jigging and with similar outcomes for other state-based employment programs, diminishing numbers of entry-level jobs in the public service, increasing disinclination of employers to take on 'troublesome' employees and major improvements in information, communication and other technologies, society has seen a shift away from traditional employment and an increase in competition for available jobs. The focus has been on moving people into jobs and yet the vision and activity on the other side, for 'real' job creation seems to be lacking.

Unemployment is a very prominent and real-world issue; internationally the World Economic Forum has announced that financial instability and income disparity will be the number one global issue of concern for the next 10 years¹ and at home, Minister Bill Shorten reaffirmed Government's commitment

¹ Sloan, J & Maher, S. 2012. [Income disparity world's chief risk, says World Economic Forum survey](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/nationalaffairs/treasury/income-disparity-worlds-chief-risk-says-world-economic-forum-survey/story-fn59nsif-1226243066379). *The Australian*, January 13, 2012 accessed from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/nationalaffairs/treasury/income-disparity-worlds-chief-risk-says-world-economic-forum-survey/story-fn59nsif-1226243066379>

to workforce participation by dismissing out of hand increases to the NewStart Allowance despite its international reputation of being too low.² He said "Australia's social security system needs to provide a strong safety net for people who need financial assistance while also acting as an incentive for people to take up paid work".³ Recent research has been published introducing a concept relating to **theoretical jobs**. These are jobs that exist in principle in the economy, rather than actually available jobs.⁴ The term allows for an explanation of the incongruity between the seemingly countless number of jobs reported in the media and the high levels of unemployment present in the lower third of the social gradient. "With unemployment currently low and some employers complaining about skill shortages it might seem a stretch to argue that labour market demand is a problem. But data on the rates of male full-time employment suggest exactly that."⁵ It illustrates the point that it may not be as easy as simply 'taking up paid work', when in reality, it seems these jobs don't exist. Financial disparity internationally is mirrored here in Australia with the rich seemingly becoming very rich and those at the other end of the spectrum left feeling the pressure of that disparity and consistently impeded by the very conditions which a secure income might help overcome. To reiterate a point made in a recent paper from major church providers – *What if employers say no?* – theoretical jobs don't pay the bills.⁶

Table 1: Unemployed Persons, main difficulty in finding work



(a) Includes people who reported 'considered too young by employers', 'language difficulties', 'difficulties with finding child care' or 'difficulties because of ethnic background'.

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. *Job Search Experience, Australia, Jul 2010*. Cat No. 6222.0.)

Table 1 illustrates the main impediments that that people who have been unemployed experience in finding employment. It conspicuously highlights in the first instance that competition for available jobs is high. A major barrier to employment is the sheer number of other applicants. This indicates that the availability of jobs is not as cut and dry as commentary suggested it might be. The other impediments that have been noted with an exclamation mark are known to particularly impact those already experiencing disadvantage; where levels of education, experience, skills translation, transport and health are at the lower end of the scale than for mainstream employment. Given the cycle of disadvantage; the very conditions that might be overcome by work are the barriers to obtaining it.

We know that employment along with many other social factors follows a social gradient and with that, those with lower financial and educational standing (low-paid and low-skilled) consequently find

² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2008), *Growing Unequal? : Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* accessed 24 August 2011 <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/47/41525263.pdf>

³ Karvelas, P. *Bill Shorten rules out increase in the dole*. *The Australian*, January 11, 2012 accessed from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/industrial-relations/bill-shorten-rules-out-increase-in-the-dole/story-fn59noo3-1226241256488>

⁴ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2008), *Growing Unequal? : Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* in Catholic Social Services Australia, Anglicare Australia, UnitingCare Australia & the Salvation Army. 2011. *What if employers say no?* Canberra.

⁵ Catholic Social Services Australia, Anglicare Australia, UnitingCare Australia & the Salvation Army. 2011. *What if employers say no?* Canberra.

⁶ Catholic Social Services Australia, Anglicare Australia, UnitingCare Australia & the Salvation Army. 2011. *What if employers say no?* Canberra.

employment that is low quality, low-skilled, low security, few benefits, generally high in physical labour or danger and low in pay thereby perpetuating those conditions which stymie opportunities for growth in pay or skills.^{7,8}

In an economic climate fraught with uncertainty the Federal Government has promised fiscal responsibility to ensure that Australia does not follow the same path of its international friends. In this context, an individual may be viewed as a micro-representation of the national scene, where the same principles apply; limited spending, saving for growth and ensuring that revenue streams, ie income, are wide open. Right across the board people are dealing with rising house prices, costs of living, competitive and increasingly costly rental markets, rising utility prices and any number of other life-stage events hinging on a person's capacity to earn a stable and secure income. And yet employment opportunities for the most disadvantaged sector of society are decreasing. Households which have been receiving benefits even for a short time have less of a buffer between losing employment and hardship and so the *risk* of moving from one (benefits) to the other (employment) is far greater, especially given the likelihood of securing work that is poorly paid and highly insecure. Incidentally it was found that financial insecurity has a role to play on all income levels but households on a low income can be pushed into extreme financial hardship from unexpected expenses. Moreover, 'occasions' such as marriage, the birth of a child, children moving into education, or the death of a loved one – those family transitions common to us all – can push households living on a low income across the threshold and into poverty.⁸ Therefore, the capacity to work, earn an income and provide security and stability for themselves and their families are most limited for those who, at any given moment, could spiral further into disadvantage and poverty.

Given that for a majority of long-term unemployed individuals the future holds the prospect of employment which is uncertain, they are forced to make a decision: remain on Government benefits which are low and come with a number of participation requirements but which are also stable over time *or* move into work which may, more than likely, be intermittent, casual, shift work or pose a threat to their own health and safety. People who make this decision in favour of the former are described by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as *marginally attached*⁹ – hinting at the link between employment and social inclusion – but in many respects, for people who are already close to the brink of poverty, attributes such as those listed are frightening and threaten the safety and security of themselves and their families. The dichotomy represented above seems to be an over-exaggeration; however, without a stronger expectation of finding work to sustain them, the decision is more akin to one of survival than apathy.

This situation begs the question, at what point does “for the greater good” cease to apply? Are we to assume that the general consensus is to accept *anything* because it is *something* regardless of the consequences for the individuals concerned? Research shows that taking any work, when it has little

Housing and Income

Anglicare Australia last conducted its annual *Rental Affordability Snapshot* in April 2011. The results of that survey showed that people living on Government benefits were in the most tenuous of housing positions.

No one on a Youth or NewStart allowance across Australia could afford to house themselves without going into housing stress; spending more than 30% of their income on housing. In some instances they were required to spend up to 45% of their income to obtain housing that was adequate and appropriate for their needs.

Similarly, less than 1% of properties advertised for rent in the survey period across the major metropolitan areas were suitable for *anyone* living on a low income.

A safe and secure dwelling underpins a person's capacity to contribute meaningfully to society and given the results of the *Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot* the relationship between housing and income is undeniably linked.¹⁰

⁷ Antoniou, A.G. 2009. *Handbook of Managerial Behavior and Occupational Health*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁸ Daly, M. 2011. *Welfare*. Polity Press: Malden, Massachusetts, USA.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *Understanding the Australian Labour Force Using ABS Statistics* accessed 18 December 2011 from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6202.0Main%20Features999Dec%202011?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6202.0&issue=Dec%202011&num=&view=>

¹⁰ Anglicare Australia. 2011. *Rental Affordability Snapshot*. Canberra.

quality or meaning to the individual performing the duties, has long-term impacts on their health and wellbeing.¹¹ The Gillard Government has acknowledged that the longer someone is unemployed the more difficult it is to find and sustain work.¹² In the last budgets, generous appropriations were made for the long-term unemployment programs where incentives were increased for participants on the one hand to complete training and employers on the other to subsidise wages. However, the act of *finding* work in an environment where meaningful work does not exist can only be undertaken by the prospective employees (and their employment agencies) to a certain degree. The point that was made very clearly by Anglicare Australia in the review of the [Disability Impairment Tables](#),¹³ where **opportunity** to work was a major hindrance to coming off the Disability Support Pension, is that responsibility also lies with employers and governments. Responsibility is theirs to create opportunities for unemployed people to take up which provide security for the long-term. Responsibility is also theirs to create opportunities which provide income enough to meet the challenges of day to day living, or in the least not deny other opportunities to do so. The responsibility is also theirs to allow room for growth and development so as to continue the cycle of employment and productivity.

If, in making the choice between benefits and employment, an individual has a responsibility to society for the greater good – employers almost certainly do. Theoretical jobs, to become real, must be made so by employers.

Long-term or sporadically unemployed people are facing multiple disadvantages in the labour market. They are contending with the same costs of living that are effecting the whole of society however they are doing so from a weaker position than others on the social gradient. They are the first to feel the effects of economic down turn and have the smallest buffer against adverse events such as job loss or unexpected expenses. It is therefore imperative that long-term unemployed people are not pressured into accepting jobs with uncertain security and for business and governments to think and act creatively to ensure a vibrant employment sector which accommodates the skills and abilities of those who are seeking meaningful work and that energies are focussed on this endeavour rather than pushing an already disadvantaged sector of Australian society further into disadvantage.

Productivity vs Obligation

Summary

Tension exists between the cost of gains made by promoting worker satisfaction and savings made by reducing Industrial Relations obligations.

A contemporary analysis of industrial relations suggests that improved working conditions, more satisfying jobs and greater opportunities for participation reduce voluntary absenteeism and labour turnover rate in workers.¹⁴ A better working condition will raise workers' sense of belonging to a workplace, efficiency, productivity, and consequently competitiveness of the company. This is particularly relevant to the Australian context, as one in four of the nation's employees are engaged in casual employment, many of whom have no entitlement to the benefits that are generally associated

¹¹ Butterworth P., Leach L., Strazdins L., Olesen S., Rodgers B., Broom D.2011. 'Workplace: The psychosocial quality of work determines whether employment has benefits for mental health: Results from a longitudinal national household panel survey'. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1136/oem.2010.05903010.1136/oem.2010.059030

¹² In addition to Government funding long-term unemployment programs the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that in 2010 of the 57,600 unemployed people who reported that they had 'no difficulties at all' in finding work 74% had been unemployed for less than eight weeks. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. *Job Search Experience, Australia, Jul 2010*. Cat No. 6222.0.

¹³ Anglicare Australia. 2011. *Impairment or Entrapment: Disability and employment*. Canberra.

¹⁴ Deery, Plowman, Walsh & Brown (2002), *Industrial Relations: A contemporary analysis*, Irwin/McGraw-Hill

with more secure types of employment.¹⁵ More importantly, half of all casual workers would like to work in an ongoing job.¹⁶ Addressing the needs of this valuable labour force has long been overdue.

The 'SET' model of employment gives us a good example to look at achieving productivity gains by investing in training and ensuring employment security of workers. Brown, Reich and Stern¹⁷ argue that an employment system that provides employees with a high degree of employment security (S), employee involvement in problem solving (EI), and continuous training (T), encourages both employees and employers to bring out their best qualities for the long term wellbeing of a business.

Firstly, an improvement in employment security encourages workers to contribute to improving work processes as they are not fearful of losing their jobs and have a stronger sense of belonging to a workplace. For those who are constantly facing the uncertainty of casual employment, this blanket of security means they have more control over their work arrangements, hours and finances. Workers will hence have more spare time for their families, leisure activities, and other social obligations outside work, which will improve their psychological and physical wellbeing, resulting in higher productivity at work. Employment security also contributes to training as both the employer and employee have greater incentives to invest in development programs, expecting that their relationship will continue.

Furthermore, training reinforces employment security and employee involvement as better-trained workers will be more productive, efficient and knowledgeable in the field, and active participation in the work processes will further improve their career prospect and hence standards of living. A more competitive market will also enhance workers' employability and job security in the long run. Whereas employers reducing standard employment with a view to increasing productivity and decreasing labour costs is generally only beneficial to the employer.

This is but one example of a model that might be adopted by employers; Anglicare Australia does not pretend to be an expert on organisational psychology however the overwhelming evidence points to productivity arising from satisfied workers. Limiting the progress to be made on the Government's productivity agenda is the vehicle (jobs) to transport an unemployed individual to a happy worker. The issue that that has been referred to throughout this submission and which has been referred to in the media is the actual lack of new jobs being created. Mr Hockey was very quick to point out the slide announced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹⁸ of the reduction in employment numbers as compared to this time last year. Innovation and drive to create sustainable and meaningful positions whereby employees are considered an integral part of an organisation rather than a necessary condition and which accommodate the skill-sets of the existing unemployed is the best way to meet the Government's productivity agenda.

A Question of Flexibility

Summary

In the community sector, given its demographic make-up, greater flexibility in workplace arrangements has been sought to accommodate other aspects of an employee's life, such as caring commitments, other family commitments, work/life balance and other aspects. In contrast however, greater security is sought due to the highly casualised and temporary nature of the positions offered.

Where there is a seeming contradiction in our response is where flexibility and responsiveness to work/life balance becomes a consideration. On the spectrum of employment there are those for whom the flexibility afforded by less restrictive employment conditions is a positive. Take for example the

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2011. *Forms of Employment, November 2010*. Cat No. 6359. Canberra.

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. *Measures of Australia's Progress 2010: Casual Employees, 2010*. Cat No. 1370. Canberra.

¹⁷ Brown, Reich and Stern (1993), 'Key Developments in Human Resource Management', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 247-76.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *Labour Force*. Cat No. 6202. Canberra.

most recent ACOSS Community Sector Survey where it was reported that for 44% of agencies, job security was a major barrier to employing and retaining staff. A further 20%, however, reported that it *facilitated* in the employment and retention of staff.¹⁹

As has been recently confirmed by the Equal Remuneration case, the community sector largely comprises women.²⁰ Without making any assumptions regarding the social roles of women we do know that women are predominantly the primary care giver for young children, that women are predominantly the providers of care to a spouse or elderly relative and that due to caring roles such as these and other responsibilities we know that 71% of part-time workers across all sectors are women.²¹ In acknowledging those and other roles and responsibilities consider that of the 1.3 million new starters in July 2010 almost one quarter (307,450, 23%) were women who commenced work without any leave entitlements.²²

It follows that caring and other roles require flexible working conditions – and here read ‘flexible’ not ‘insecure’ – but it is not only these conditions which require it. Often, especially at the service level in the community sector but also in other sectors, a single position cannot offer the number of hours wanted or needed by an employee (underemployment). As such the employee takes on a second and sometimes a third job in order to meet the needs of their life circumstances. Through ineffective use of non-standard employment conditions there is a risk of segregating society further into class roles whereby mainstream/standard employees continue to improve and non-standard employees are pushed further into financial insecurity. Whether it is through choice or requirement there must be cooperation on the parts of employer and employee both to create conditions that allow for gainful and flexible employment on the one side and productivity on the other. Again, it comes down to the employer to be open to and mindful of considerations outside the workplace and for the employee to be cognisant of the dues that come with such consideration and support.

But not all flexibility is a function of care responsibilities. For some, the ability to work part-time, casual or intermittent hours works for their lifestyle. And when this desire can be accommodated by the employer, it is usually gainful for all involved.

As was described in the earlier section, there is merit in an employer responding to the situations of their employees. The free market – which arguably is responsible for many of the class-based struggles evident in society, but never the less – has lessons to teach in allowing innovation to thrive. Overt regulation forcing employers into providing certain conditions is not necessarily conducive to increased security of employment.

A recent opinion piece by Paul Sheehan²³ of the *Sydney Morning Herald* is testimony to the ‘duress’ the small business sector perhaps feels it is under. Mr Sheehan would have you believe jobs in that sector are being held to ransom by overly bureaucratic and burdensome industrial relations red tape, which may or may not be the case. And yet Mr Sheehan opens his piece with dismay that the owners of his favourite restaurant are ‘forced’ to work in their own “packed” establishment as the industrial conditions surrounding their business has prevented them from re-hiring. Mr Sheehan also states that the owners would prefer not to be working weekends, the assumption being that they would like to take that time to enjoy the fruits of their hard work. The question here may well be whether or not the staff of Mr Sheehan’s favourite restaurant and indeed all occupations that attract non-standard conditions do not also deserve protections which will allow them to enjoy comforts such as eating out or spending time with family, obtaining an education or any other pursuit to balance out their work-life? Celebrity Chef George Colombaris has also been heard this month castigating industrial relations

¹⁹ Australian Council of Social Services. 2011. *ACOSS Community Sector Survey 2011*. Sydney.

²⁰ Fair Work Australia. 2011. *Fair Work Australia Decision Fair Work Act 2009 s.302—Equal remuneration order: Equal Remuneration Case*. [2011] FWAFB 2700. Canberra.

²¹ Allebone, J. 2010. *Flexibility with security: Driving a new compact down under?* Brotherhood of St Laurence: Melbourne. pg 7.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. *Job Search Experience, Australia, Jul 2010*. Cat No. 6222.0. Canberra.

²³ Sheehan, P. 2012. ‘Australia’s Big Job Killing Machine’. *Sydney Morning Herald*. Accessed 15 January 2012 from <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/labors-big-jobkilling-machine-20120115-1q15f.html>

rules due to the high costs attracted to non-traditional conditions.²⁴ In this instance however, Minister Shorten cautioned Mr Colombaris reminding him that his staff ought to be remunerated in order for *others* to enjoy the lifestyle that they choose.

Daly points to trends indicating the development of a sub-class or a service class allowing those in the mainstream to enjoy the convenience of “services, servants and security” at the expense of those on the fringe.⁸ A main tenet of this theory is that those providing the services in non-traditional employment capacities do so at the cost of their own lifestyle, with often a significant disconnection from their own social networks. Anglicare Australia agrees with Mr Sheehan in that purposeless regulation and bureaucracy is not the answer however protocols must be in place to guide employers in the obvious power they wield over those they employ. Employers have the power and authority to make a workplace accommodating or completely inflexible and so they have the greatest contribution to make by responding to their local conditions and working to provide appropriate protections to employees but also offering conditions which will reward themselves by becoming an employer of choice.

Similar to increasing opportunities for people with a disability in the workforce, it is about raising awareness among employers, especially in small businesses, and to provide support so that they are able to be responsive to employees needs whilst at the same time being competitive and productive in their industry.

Implications of Reform

Summary

Exciting reforms indicating a shift in Government thinking regarding the importance of client choice and individualised support also have implications for the protection and conditions of employment for those in the community sector. Friction between the needs of the client and the rights of the worker present an unintended consequence of reform which further impacts on the equality and security of engaging in caring roles in the community sector.

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It is a curious time for those in the social policy sector at this time what with major international economic upheaval on the one hand and major reform at home on the other. Despite the recent debate over the merits social inclusion, reforms currently underway, most notably in aged care, the not-for-profit sector and in disability, are tending towards change which allows for the individual to be at the core of service delivery and moreover, to be an integral factor in determining how they receive support from services. Granted, the Not-for-profit reforms are somewhat detached from this but the end-game is still the same: for NFPs to function more efficiently to provide improved and targeted services to those who require them.

These are exciting reforms which will change the face of service delivery in Australia. But what does that mean for the community sector workforce? On the face of it, particularly in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, job growth is set to increase, with the establishment of new agencies and services. For qualified individuals this will be a boon with the development of career pathways and potentially competitive wages, given the Australian Services Union fair pay case. However, following the career path backwards and inspecting the coal-face positions of attendant care and such-like, the scene requires closer investigation.

The following is an excerpt from the Anglicare Australia response²⁵ to the Productivity Commission draft report on a Long-term Disability Care and Support Scheme:

²⁴ Australian Associated Press. 2012. ‘MasterChef slams Fair Work pay rates’. *Sydney Morning Herald* accessed 9 January 2012 from <http://www.smh.com.au/national/masterchef-slams-fair-work-pay-rates-20120109-1pri2.html>

²⁵ Anglicare Australia. 2011. *Response to the Productivity Commission Draft Report: Disability Care and Support*. Canberra.

Worker Protections

It is noted that the NDIS will take into account the natural supports that are available to people living with a disability as they undergo the day to day activities of their lives. In the assessment process, part of determining what funded supports are available to an individual is in part contingent on what informal supports are also available to them. Further, that the funds allocated to an individual as part of the support package are able to be utilised to provide recompense to those friends and family who are providing support.

Anglicare Australia is strongly in favour of this model. It is important that people who are providing care and support are recognised as doing so and receive the appropriate level of payment and that people with a disability have the flexibility and choice of directing their own care.

Anglicare Australia notes that Draft Recommendation 6.5 calls for a testing phase for this process as there are inherent risks in its implementation. A particular risk – that has been in part noted by the Commission as illustrated in the workers compensation and complaints mechanism requirements in Draft Recommendation 6.8 – is that of the potential for abuse of industrial rights of workers, in taking higher paid or less formal paid work where those protections might not exist. As part of the evaluation framework Anglicare Australia would like to see reports against outcomes for the maintenance of workers' rights and/or standards.

As indicated by this excerpt, there are industrial relations implications for how conditions are maintained for services that are purchased informally through family networks or privately through other networks by clients themselves. Similarly, working conditions will be a factor for employees of agencies who are engaged through individual purchasing contracts for services such as attendant care. The difficulty arises, for example, in how to ensure working hours, travel, both physical and personal health and safety and services sustainability are ensured whilst meeting the requirements of the individual purchasing the service? And, in addition to these, how to ensure that those purchasing these services, whom may have little knowledge of industrial relations regulations are aware of their responsibilities to what will be effectively their employees? Unintended though it may be, there is a very real potential for tension between the choice of the client and the conditions and protection of the worker. If unattended, these niche areas may impact substantially on the security and viability of caring roles within the community sector.

External Considerations

Summary

In the community sector, temporary and casualised positions are contributed to by the certainty or rather uncertainty of Government funding of programs. The Government commitment to three year funding cycles is promising however, some organisations are managing upwards of 100 government contracts from both state and federal levels and not all of these are yet subject to ongoing funding. The uncertainty promulgated by this type of arrangement makes it difficult for community sector employers to provide sufficient certainty of employment, particularly at coal-face staffing levels. These workers have the greatest interaction with clients, where the majority of care work is undertaken and yet it is also this level of staff which can least afford uncertainty of employment.

It has long been understood within the community sector and perhaps less well understood outside of it that agencies do not accept government funding contracts for their own gain. Community sector organisations provide services to the community which come under the purview of the various levels of government. Over time, more and more of those services have been outsourced to church groups, social movement groups and other client or issue based groups to provide the given service among their

natural networks. This arrangement has given way to a service system that is at once both integral to the Government's agenda and forgotten by it.

In a straw poll taken at the most recent ACOSS conference it was clear that the majority of delegates felt that services and programs were underfunded in the sector. This has direct impacts on the security of work within the sector. Much of the work undertaken in this sector is done so through the interaction of relationships. A small portion of funding may be quarantined for infrastructure and administration but the majority of funding in the not-for-profit sector is put toward wages.

For governments trapped in the three-year cycle and reticent to commit to any particular course of action for a longer duration it has meant that funding agreements most often range between one and three years. The move of federal government to three year contracts is promising however the process of contract renewal is yet to be improved. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon experience for an agency not to know the month before a contract is meant to begin, whether or not the contract will commence. At times a contract variation will be put in place for six months to a year in order for Departments to confirm and arrange a longer term contract however in that time a Government may change or experience upset and variations are again put in place to provide time for Ministerial redirection of funds. Whilst this is occurring, service managers are attempting to assuage the fears of casual and contract staff whose livelihoods depend on the contracts being in place. It is highly stressful for all involved and unnecessarily so. Improved government processes will not be a panacea for the insecurity experienced particularly in this sector however it will be a significant start. The conditions under which agencies are prepared to accept funding must also be fully reviewed to ensure that persistent under-funding does not exploit the sector. In addressing these two major issues in the not-for-profit sector will substantially alter the current insecure work conditions that currently exist and as we have pointed out, flexible conditions can be in place for those who want them and protections will be in place for those who need them.

Conclusion

To fully participate in society certain pre-conditions need to exist. These conditions are not the same for everyone but in general terms, health housing and employment could be regarded as three very important conditions for participation. Instability in one, impacts on the others and ultimately affects how an individual contributes to society. Employment is recognised in Australia and in particular by our Government as a treatment for flagging economic conditions and as such have applied great pressure on the unemployed to move into paid employment. Difficulties arise however when the employment opportunities do not exist or are for positions which can only exacerbate existing difficulties. Action is required to over-come structural apathy to create employment opportunities that provide genuine avenues for people to find work that will allow them to lead the lives they want or to at least allow them to get there.

Appendix 1: Anglicare Australia Network Members

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Anglicare Canberra & Goulburn
St John's Financial Assistance

NEW SOUTH WALES

Anglicare Diocese of Sydney
Anglicare New England NW
Anglicare North Coast
Anglicare Northern Inland
Anglicare Riverina
Anglicare Western NSW
Anglican Retirement Villages
The Buttery
CASPA
Samaritans Foundation
Social Responsibilities- Diocese of Newcastle
Work Ventures Ltd

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Anglicare NT

QUEENSLAND

Anglicare Central QLD
Anglicare North QLD
EPIC Employment Services Inc
Spiritus

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ac.care
Anglicare SA
Anglicare Willochra
Laura & Alfred West Cottage Homes Inc
St John's Youth Services

TASMANIA

Anglicare Tasmania
Glenview Community Services Inc

VICTORIA

Anglicare Victoria
Anglicare Ballarat
Gippsland Anglican Aged Care
Benetas
Brotherhood of St Laurence
E Qubed Inc
ECHO Inc
Melbourne Social Responsibility Committee
St Laurence Community Services Inc
St Luke's Anglicare

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Anglicare WA
Anglicare South-Bunbury Diocesan, Anglicare Council
Parkerville Children & Youth Care Inc
Social Responsibilities Commission, Province of WA

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

Anglicare StopAIDS PNG
The Anglican Care Network
The Selwyn Foundation
Australian Council to the Mission to Seafarers
Mothers Union Australia
The Anglican Trust for Women