

Submission to Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia by Social Justice Committee of St Vincent De Paul Society of Queensland

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this enquiry. This matter was discussed at committee meetings on November 12 and December 10, 2011. Committee members expressed concern about the trend towards insecure employment practices in Australia. In our capacity as practicing Vincentians making home visits to assist families and individuals in times of financial and consequent personal hardship we have observed all of the distressing consequences of this practice referred to in your introductory letter:

- Financial insecurity
- Relationship breakdown
- Employment insecurity
- Unpredictable working hours
- Unpredictable and fluctuating levels of income
- Dependence on Centrelink benefits
- Dependence on community welfare and support services
- Inability to maintain mortgage payments for housing or to sustain the high rental market costs
- Inability to access some health services and
- Inability to provide for dependent spouse and children.

We have also noted the inability to provide education requisites with record demand on our Children's Education Fund benefits and find this particularly disturbing as we regard the equitable provision of educational opportunities as essential to providing a hand up rather than a hand out for those wanting to escape a cycle of poverty which is developing in certain locations. We would also add that that personal and financial resilience in the face of personal crises and natural disasters is affected by the stresses caused by insecure employment opportunities. This contributes to increasing incidence of mental illness, substance abuse, criminal activity and a breakdown in social cohesion.

Community groups such as ours are being increasingly tasked with making up the shortfalls experienced by individuals and families when insecure income sources cease but financial commitments remain. This is severely taxing our resources.

The financial insecurity resulting from insecure employment practices also makes it very difficult for the business sector to operate from a stable base of planning and growth which in turn leads to economic downturn and the resultant impacts that has on the members of our community who can least afford them.

We commend you in your attempts to address this issue in order to ensure the link between secure employment and future individual and community and economic well-being is acknowledged and understood and that action is taken at the appropriate level of power to ensure the imbalances are addressed.