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13th January 2000

Dr Brendan Nelson  
Chairman  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations  
R1 Suite 116  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Nelson,

Receipt is acknowledged of your kind invitation to attend the "round table meeting/discussion" contained in your correspondence dated the 20th December 1999. Unfortunately delegates from our Club are unable to attend on the 14th February.

However, we are delighted to be involved in this process of consultation and express a willingness to continue to be involved in this complex area of mature workers employment, retrenchment and unemployment and its resultant social and community costs.

Our Club would recommend that a "code of conduct" be adopted. We do this in the belief that the "code" once adopted will be readily understood by and adhered to by all parties. We also believe that the "code" should be registered with the Industrial Advocate. We make this additional recommendation in the belief that the independent arbitrator will be in the best position to oversee its implementation and administration, and at the same time give the "code" the stamp of approval of Government.

This [retrenchment] is too important an issue to leave it solely at the discretion of private enterprise and market forces. The social and community costs, measured in human terms, of the consequences of an individual being retrenched states quite clearly that we [the wider community] have a vested interest in that persons re-entry into the workforce.

We make this recommendation in knowledge that voluntary codes of conduct are usually not worth the paper they are written upon. While we accept that this suggestion will be at odds with current Government philosophy nonetheless the major consideration enshrined within the "code" should be dignity of the individuals involved in the process.

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In the interim we would like to make some suggestions for consideration of inclusion in the "code of conduct". Our Club believes that, in the first instance there is the need to establish protocols and processes that could lead to as seamless a transition from retrenchment to an effective return to the workforce as possible.

Please note that our suggestions and should be seen in that context and not either proscriptive or definitive in detail. Nevertheless we have tried to be constructive in our comments.

#### **Rationale for Code of Conduct:**

Morgan & Banks claim that there have been 300,000 redundancies, in Australia in each of the past 10 years. It would be anticipated that the majority would be able to get back into the workforce, the statistics show that great numbers are still on benefit after two years. On that basis there has to be some monitoring of the impact of these redundancies and the effectiveness of the current procedure/s for re-entry into the workforce.

The employer has a corporate responsibility to the individual, the Government and the wider community to adhere to a set of procedures that will effect a satisfactory re-entry into the workforce of any employee retrenched. The procedures are to be both open and transparent. That is why we have suggested that the Industrial Advocate have responsibility for the oversight of the transitional return to the workforce.

#### **Purpose of the Code:**

We believe that the process of the provision of information and services has to be implemented prior to retrenchment taking effect. We have used the term "effective return to the workforce" deliberately. However that "return to the workforce" can mean, but not exclusively, retraining as well as the opportunity to undertake the obtaining of additional skills leading to the establishing a business. Persons in this age group have been disproportionate among long term unemployed for more than 20 years and are more often than not further disadvantaged by being unable to receive benefit and therefore Centrelink services with their partner already in employment.

#### **Flexibility of Services:**

The provision of information and types of services available should not be set in concrete. Therefore the range of services should be flexible enough to provide effective support/assistance to the individual seeking the advice and help offered and the requirement of service to be non-discriminatory.

**Types of Services:**

The types of services made available to persons that are to be retrenched should be sufficient to meet their requirements. An example of services should be :-

- \* As much notification of the date of cessation of employment.
- \* A guarantee of all entitlements Inc. annual leave, long service leave, termination pay etc.
- \* Provision of a range and types of support services available, Inc counselling (financial, vocational and psychological) training opportunities, assistance in gaining alternative employment, information, financial assistance for training, retraining and benefit etc.

We trust that these suggestions will be helpful in the process of the deliberations of the of the round table meeting. We wish you and the other members of your committee and the participants well in their discussions.

For and on behalf of the Lions Club of Cambridge Park Inc.



ALAN MORAN  
President

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