

EMP Inquiry
Submission No. 41

Scarlett, Cheryl (REPS)

From: Lewis Fitzpatrick
Sent: Thursday, 28 August 2003 1:07 PM
To: Committee, EWR (REPS)
Subject: Obstacles to Paid work opportunities

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28 August 2003

Dear sir or madam

Following a similar submission posted to the Department on June 7, 2003 in response to public consultation regarding welfare reform, I am happy to contribute similar suggestions in response to addressing increasing paid work opportunities Australia-wide.

I am 52 years of age and have been unemployed for almost seven years. Following TAFE studies which I strategically used as a tool for changing from engineering to administration background, on what I considered to be good advice at the time, I chose to undertake voluntary work.

*The background of my findings and my submission for consideration under **measures that would increase the level of participation in paid work** is based on my experiences since engaging in voluntary work:*

Below I list some factors that are having a negative impact on the availability of paid work and hence the level of participation in the same.

a) Lack of mutual commitment from not-for-profit organisations to employ volunteer labour when vacancies arise.

c) Lack of Vigilance demonstrated by DEWR in screening and monitoring Work for the Dole schemes instigated by not-for-profit organisations.

Having performed voluntary work at two welfare organisations over the past three years, I find it to be a complete loss as far as re-entering the workforce is concerned.

In addition, at my current organisation, I have experienced a significant proportion of paid work being displaced to the unpaid workforce with the blessing of DEWR so I ask how serious are we about this inquiry?

At the first organisation, (Note: with whom I had also been registered with their job network branch) the position that I had been doing as a volunteer became available as a paid position and I duly applied. I had been doing the duties advertised for more than a year as a volunteer yet my application was unsuccessful. The successful candidate being

- a) a person not registered with the job network of the organisation
- b) living in another part of the state
- c) No prior knowledge of nor commitment to the organisation

In the second case, I have applied twice for positions about 90% of which I had performed as a volunteer but on both occasions was unsuccessful. Again to people from outside the organisation.

I should add that both of these organisations have several tiers of management, a well-paid CEO and rely heavily on volunteer labour to run the organisations' services.

As alluded to previously, in the second case above, to add insult to injury, the organisation is a large Australia-wide concern and a member of ACOSS yet they have recently in Victoria, taken a substantial portion of a traditionally paid employee's duties from their workload and off-loaded it to a Work for the Dole project. (the legality of which is currently being investigated at my initiation).

The outcome of my findings leads me to submit for your attention a suggestion to make such organisations more accountable in their responsibilities to;

- a) their volunteer labour**

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b) the welfare system

I believe that consideration could be given to levying certain categories of not-for-profit organisations, proportional to their paid staff/non-paid staff ratio, for their use of volunteers.

This would ease the government welfare bill by incurring a user pays type of system as well as compel the organisation to justify their use of volunteer labour.

I also believe that a commitment should be demanded from the same organisations that unpaid staff such as volunteers, where they have demonstrated a capability to perform 50% of the duties of a position, be recruited and trained if necessary when vacancies arise.

This would avoid misuse/abuse of the unemployed workforce who are capable and seeking employment.

This would make such organisations more accountable to government and the welfare system regarding their use of volunteer labour.

This would encourage others to volunteer with the knowledge that there was a more than fair likelihood that they could gain paid employment in return for their commitment.

Finally I believe that greater vigilance must be demonstrated by DEWR in screening and monitoring Work for the Dole schemes instigated by not-for-profit organisations.

With the dramatic increase in the 'social enterprise' model as opposed to the 'charity' model in the not-for-profit sector and the growing competition for the Government and corporate dollar I have detected a tendency for some of the major organisations to move towards a multi-tiered management structure geared to promoting service quantity as opposed to service quality. This method of promotion inevitably increases the opportunity for Government and corporate partnership and subsidies thereby justifying management's salary.

Such partnerships and subsidies should at no time offer potential to impact either directly or indirectly in the transfer of traditionally paid working hours to the unpaid workforce.

It also creates the double negative of draining Government funding as well as reducing the availability of paid work.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons for the recent downturn in volunteer labour and that people are returning to their local clubs and organisations as opposed to what once was seen to be welfare organisations or charities.

This completes my submission and I look forward to the dates of your public hearings and/or the outcome of your enquiry.

Regards
Lewis Fitzpatrick