

3rd October 2011

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

**INQUIRY INTO FLY-IN, FLY-OUT (FIFO)/ DRIVE-IN, DRIVE-OUT (DIDO)
WORKFORCE**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into fly-in, fly-out/drive-in, and drive-out mining operations.

The City of Swan is located in the Perth metropolitan area. Many residents of the City of Swan work in FIFO or DIDO arrangements throughout Western Australia. Though it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many people are affected, anecdotal evidence suggests the numbers are significant and increasing.

Please find attached the submission on behalf of the City of Swan.

The City of Swan appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on community impacts of FIFO/DIDO. We look forward to receiving the outcomes and recommendations of the Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely

M J Foley
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



City of Swan Submission to:

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia inquiry into the experience of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) workers in regional Australia.

The Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon Simon Crean, has asked the Committee to look into a range of issues, including:

- the extent and projected growth of FIFO/DIDO work practices;
- the impact of FIFO/DIDO on individuals, communities and companies;
- long-term strategies for economic diversification in towns with large FIFO/DIDO workforces;
- provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO employees.

Terms of Reference

The Standing Committee on Regional Australia will inquire into and report on the use of 'fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and 'drive-in, drive-out' (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia, with specific reference to:

- the extent and projected growth in FIFO/DIDO work practices, including in which regions and key industries this practice is utilised;
- costs and benefits for companies, and individuals, choosing a FIFO/DIDO workforce as an alternative to a resident workforce;
- the effect of a non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce on established communities, including community wellbeing, services and infrastructure;
- the impact on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites;
- long term strategies for economic diversification in towns with large FIFO/DIDO workforces;
- key skill sets targeted for mobile workforce employment, and opportunities for ongoing training and development;
- provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO workforce employees;
- strategies to optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees and their families, communities and industry;
- potential opportunities for non-mining communities with narrow economic bases to diversify their economic base by providing a FIFO/DIDO workforce;
- current initiatives and responses of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments; and
- any other related matter.

City of Swan Submission

The City of Swan welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia regarding the experience of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) workers in our communities. This submission is made with particular reference to the following point from the terms of reference; *'the impact on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites'*.

The City of Swan understands that the major impacts on our local communities that have large numbers of FIFO/DIDO mine site workers;

1. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the City of Swan from discussions with service organisations, local community groups and residents suggests that there are concentrations of families and people working in the mining industry living in the City of Swan and in three particular Place areas – Ellenbrook, Rural (Bullsbrook) and Altone. In the Altone Place area, children's service provider, Meerlinga, has reported that there is a high proportion of FIFO families accessing parenting support services and playgroups.
2. While there are no formal support groups for FIFO workers families in Bullsbrook or the Altone community, there is a self-organising FIFO family support network in Ellenbrook.
 - In Ellenbrook, a FIFO Facebook page was set up by a group of partners/wives of FIFO workers. It has around 65 members who were initially invited to monthly social coffee mornings or get together at local venues. However, attendance numbers were low and so the activities ceased to occur on a regular basis.
3. Local resident Anne Sibbel's research; *Living FIFO: The Experiences and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Western Australian Fly-in/fly-out Employees and Partners (June 2010)*¹. Her findings indicate;
 - Both FIFO employees and partners of FIFO employees were within the norms for healthy functioning on the scales and sub-scales of the measures of psychological wellbeing, relationship satisfaction and perceptions of family function, and that there were no statistically significant differences between the scores of the two groups on any of these measures.
 - Despite perceptions that regular FIFO employment related absence would have adverse impacts on various aspects of wellbeing, the group of FIFO employees and partners in this study reported similar levels of psychological wellbeing, relationship satisfaction and perceptions of family function to the general Australian population.
 - There is increasing evidence across all Australian industries of greater use of non-traditional work schedules including compressed work schedules, shift work arrangements, part-time work and self-employment. What used to be described as "normal" is nowadays just one of a diversity of work schedules.

¹ <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1132&context=theses&sei-redir=1#search=%22fifo%20research%22>

4. Susan Clifford's research; *The Effects of Fly-in/Fly-out Commute Arrangements and Extended Working Hours on the Stress, Lifestyle, Relationship and Health Characteristics of Western Australian Mining Employees and their Partners (August 2009)*², findings indicate;

- FIFO and extended working hours had negative impacts on employees' work satisfaction and FIFO was frequently reported to be disruptive to employees' and partners' lifestyle, in the long-term. However, FIFO and extended working hours did not lead to poor quality relationships, high stress levels or poor health, on average in the long-term; there were generally no significant differences in these characteristics between FIFO and daily commute employees, or between the FIFO sample and the wider community.

5. A report³ by Ngala, Meerilinga and Murdoch University of 32 FIFO families, explores the impacts on relationships and children. It offers suggestions by the families to improve support for families by government and the fly in fly out industry, including:

- improving the flow of information from agencies about parenting and children;
- improving the flow of information from industry regarding entitlements;
- providing practical support for families such as considering the implementation of an emergency in home child care or similar service;
- working to improve social networks via a range of strategies including the development of a mentoring scheme; and
- reviewing policies and procedures that negatively impact on time spent at home such as flight times, and rosters for contractors.

Summary

Though the extent to which the City's communities and families are impacted by FIFO/DIDO, it would appear from anecdotal feedback that there is some impact that could be lessened.

Independent research however, indicates that the impact on the City's communities from FIFO/DIDO work practices is no greater than the impact experienced from daily commute employees.

² <http://www.ihs.uwa.edu.au/research/?a=409988>

³ http://www.ngala.com.au/files/files/596_5_Fly_In_Fly_Out_Report.pdf