



Linking services, supporting relationships

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The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment
Parliament House

By email: eefairworkamend@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Family & Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012.

As FRSA is the national peak body providing leadership and representation for services that work to strengthen the wellbeing, safety and resilience of families, children and communities, we have an interest in this Bill.

FRSA recognises that part-time, casual and flexible work arrangements can offer benefits and opportunities for some people in the labour market. However these benefits can be undermined when employment is insecure. Deregulation of the labour market has led to deterioration in working conditions, including the erosion of penalty rates for shift and weekend work, an increase in unpaid overtime and fewer training and on-the-job opportunities for temporary workers. Despite this, relatively little research has been dedicated to the 'social consequences' of insecure work, specifically its impact on individuals, their family members or the communities in which they live.

There are a number of life domains in which insecure work arrangements can put pressure on families and relationships. These impacts include (but are not limited to):

- financial;
- health and mental health;
- parenting capacity, including time spent with children, quality of child care arrangements and the impact of stress on parenting style; and
- employment pathways – particularly for young people entering the workforce or seeking to become established in a career.

These issues are more likely to affect people who have sole child-raising responsibilities (usually women), limited education, a non-English speaking background, mental health issues, disability and/or caring responsibilities, few financial resources, and little or no support from family or friends.

FRSA welcomes the introduction of legislation that strengthens the rights of casual or rolling contract employees to request secure employment arrangements. Insecure jobs, while suitable for some, can have a significant negative impact on families, households and children. This is particularly because of the subsequent impact of fluctuating income on employee's ability to support their family financially, maintain mental and physical health and their capacity to manage normal parenting and family relationships issues while under the ongoing stress of uncertain and insecure income generating opportunities.

Therefore, while we welcome the Fair Work Amendment (Tackling Job Insecurity) Bill 2012, non-legislative responses are more effective and do not place a burden on business. These can include:

1. Greater investment in the services which provide essential and effective support to families in communities across Australia;
2. More research into the impact of insecure work on individuals and families;
3. Consideration of psychosocial job quality in the design and delivery of employment and welfare policy; and
4. Investment in support and advocacy for marginalised or vulnerable people, who are the most likely to experience insecure work.

FRSA looks forward to further policy developments that protect families, households and children from the negative impacts of insecure work. For more information about FRSA's views on this issue, please contact me at any time.

Yours sincerely

Steve Hackett
Executive Director