

SUBMISSION NO. 88

AUTHORISED: 19-04-05. *LM*

From: Michael Casanova [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 12 April 2005 2:00 PM
To: Committee, FHS (REPS)
Subject: Submission to the INQUIRY BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Submission from the Thomas More Centre, Melbourne

Dear Committee Secretary,

I understand that this brief submission may be too late.

If not, we would like to add our voice to those who have made similar submissions favouring an improved valuing of the sincere efforts towards home making, whether these efforts are those of bread winners, or those thoroughly occupied in the noble career within the home.

The late John Paul II once said, "the future of humanity passes by way of the family."

We know this is true. There is no risk of over population in Australia. We see today a threat much more certain than the old super power nuclear stand off: ageing of population. We see a growing threat to economic wellbeing in the future, and we see today the decline in the quality of life of huge numbers: broken homes; decline in health and education and purpose and happiness, primarily because of the decline in family life. Let's mend both families and the economy.

If our nation lifts its game in esteeming the work of home making, we will as part of the package change many emphases in the priorities of our economics. Otherwise the organic nature of the connection between family wellbeing and economic wellbeing will come back to bite Australia. We would or will learn the hard way that poor treatment of the family certainly equals a ruined economy.

As to

* The financial, career, and social disincentives to starting families

Let there be a living wage which takes into account the family unit. Or a taxation system which takes into account the dependents.

There are such incentives for financial speculation, but not equal incentives or tax breaks for those who would invest themselves totally in starting a family.

And why this emphasis on starting a family?

If having a family were primarily a self indulgent activity, we'd say everyone should have the right to dip their toes in and have the experience. And blow the long term needs of finishing the job properly, so as to turn out well adjusted and socialised adults. Besides, once the kids are born, family financial difficulties are not going to force the kids back to where they came from. So parliament can forget the longer term needs of families.

But if this is about long term population needs, and therefore of health budgets etc, meeting the vocational aspirations of people who are likely to be generous even when the economy is against them, then lets broaden the emphasis to having children and raising them well.

The costs of raising children poorly will come back to roost uncomfortably upon our economy, as research clearly indicates.

Another reason to move the focus from simply starting a family to raising a family, is that our country will never increase its birthrate to adequate levels simply by having every family producing 2 or 3 children. Without those families who have 4 or more children, our average would be atrocious. Let's be honest and put aside all stupid and unintelligent arrogance in this regard: in terms of future tax payers, we need bigger families today.

In simple business terms, if you want more sales, get the customers you already have to buy more. Focusing only on getting new customers is economically you know what...

As to

* Making it easier for parents who so wish to return to the paid workforce

Not without an equal effort turned towards making it easier for parents who so wish to return to full time home making.

If our country places all its efforts into solving labour shortages by encouraging or forcing home makers into the paid workforce, then we will live a perpetual problem or population decline. We are not talking of bludgers here! Families who are serious about having more children know what is required in terms of investment of time, and that ought to be honoured by any parliament that is concerned about Australia's longer term future.

As to

* The impact of taxation and other matters on families in the choices they make in balancing work and family life.

This is no civilised country, if those who have the desire to marry cannot do so, and if those who otherwise would love to have had more children do not, and have to regret that, money and work had to be put ahead of family.

How can we have organised our economy so poorly that poor countries can afford to have children but for us having children is a matter of anxiety and turmoil.

On the other hand, there are open to sectors of our population many taxation advantages, and research shows that for those who have an easier time economically, partnering and having children, and staying married, is more common.

Let's use taxation and infrastructure investment to positively encourage what we want. Australia's current account balance demands that we get back deliberately into value adding manufacturing of our raw materials. There you have it: what the economy desperately needs, the family needs in terms of secure, full time jobs.

Finally, a point about income splitting.

Women who stay at home ought to be recognised in a meaningful, and economically real way. If not, they are insulted, particularly when taxation arrangements recognise so many other lesser partnerships.

These women who stay at home, do not do so with an impersonal and cold business attitude as if some man is going to use part of a wage that is his alone to pay off the woman in a simple transaction for giving him children. No, their relationship is equal to and greater than any warm corporation or partnership that our laws recognise by granting the equivalent of income splitting. The work that the bread winner does belongs equally to the one at home, just as the home making is done on behalf of both. Again this will be recognised, or the insult perpetuated.

Then let our economy give due recognition of what is more a partnership than any other business relationship.

Gratefully

Michael Casanova
(on behalf of the Thomas More Centre)

██████████
██████████ Vic ██████████