

SUBMISSION
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PAVING THE WAY TO PAID
WORK

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EMPLOYMENT – INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN PAID WORK IN AUSTRALIA.

If Australia is to maintain economic growth, solutions must be found for the many problems that are occurring at the present time. These are numerous but if the obvious ones are dealt with, many of the others will disappear.

PERCEIVED PROBLEMS IN THE WORK FORCE - 2003

- Too many employees ‘slogging their guts out’ and doing the work of several people because employers will not or cannot afford extra staff to provide an efficiently run business and service to customers.
- Because of this pressure on employees, there will be little job satisfaction and no incentive to achieve more for the employer. In fact people will get so fed up that they will only do what is absolutely necessary.
- Due to the lack of interest and lack of job satisfaction, work will gradually get more and more behind until a huge backlog will build up and eventually everything will grind to a halt. This means that orders will build up, fewer deliveries will be made. This will result in unhappy customers, less orders and possibility of bankruptcy for the firm and redundancy for the employees.
- Employers faced with the situation of less productivity will therefore require that employees work compulsory overtime in order to catch up. Longer hours being required in the hope those things will improve. This results in stressed and unhappy workers.
- People working in stressful situations and being required to work longer hours leads to disharmony in their home and family life which in turn leads to disunity, drunkenness, disputes and in severe cases domestic violence or worse.
- Many employers now rely on employment referral firms to supply temporary staff to fill in for absenteeism. Often the people that obtain work through this medium are given as little as ten minutes notice that they are required.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 1.)

- Employers using this system for back up usually get uninterested workers who have no loyalty to the firm. The worker often work one day or several days and in some cases only an hour, before deciding it is too hard and leaving. The argument for some of these people is “why work their guts out when they can obtain 'the dole' and do nothing.”
- Workers being employed in this way find it difficult to plan for the future as there is absolutely no guarantee of a living weekly wage. Each week is a different scenario. The people listed on the books of these referral firms are usually people seeking permanent work and unable to find something suitable.
- Workers employed by referral firms, if they are willing and keen, are given more work but often this is the most disagreeable work. So they are actually penalised for being keen and willing while the loafer goes back and requests something more congenial.
- Many businesses complain that they cannot afford the wages but would like to work two or three shifts. However overheads including penalty payments, superannuation, long service leave, sick leave and payroll tax make this impossible.
- Many small businesses cannot afford to open at the very times when it would be more profitable to them and more convenient to the public.
- High School children are being told, and have been told for many years, that they may **NEVER** have a full time job. This hopeless outlook and seemingly uncaring attitude by the government is a cause for crime and drug abuse.
- In many cases, where both husband and wife are working in an effort to keep ahead of their expenses, children are suffering. This is through lack of attention and perhaps adequate care. It is a known fact that child abuse has escalated and there are more family breakdowns.
- Job pressure and stress in all areas of the workforce are found to interfere with family time and sex lives. It is felt that jobs now make unreasonable demands on people. A survey has found that overworked couples found that long hours and stress cause loss of sexual intimacy. **(Advertiser 20.8.03)**

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 2)

- Tax funded job referral clubs are failing those in need by not managing to place people in gainful and satisfactory employment.
- 1 in 5 teenagers are not in full employment – more youth opportunities are badly needed. The country cannot afford to lose the potential skills of this section of the community.
- Long hours are mandatory for many in the work force, particularly men. The growth in full time jobs for men between 1985 and 2000 has been in the 45 hours plus range. So-called standard hour jobs are disappearing fast.
- A potentially dramatic change in the way we work is on the horizon in an upcoming ACTU test case on reasonable working hours. Meanwhile managers and professionals continue to struggle with work leisure balance.
- Chris Overland, director of Ageing and Community Care with Department of Human Resources in South Australia speculates on the year 2021. He says the number of younger people entering the national work force each year will collapse from 175,000 to about 12,500 a year. He recommends that older people should be encouraged to stay at work to compensate.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 3.)

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO INCREASING PARTICIPATION IN PAID WORK IN AUSTRALIA.

Australia is the ideal place for experimentation and implementation of a new system. Some of the ideas listed below have been partly implemented in other countries. Some have proved very successful and some not easily accepted. There is evidence to suggest that in the past quite a number of new developments have been trialed in this country before being introduced worldwide.

It must be noted here that the writer is not an expert in any field and feels that the suggestions that are put forward, are a result of many years of interest and of common sense thinking.

Monetary details have **NOT** been established, as this would be impossible by other than experts. What is detailed are **POSSIBLE** solutions, problems, drawbacks, arguments, work needed and most important of all, **BENEFITS** to this country.

Australia is at the point in time when it is essential to the well being of everyone to look at employment from a new perspective. With the agreed participation of employers, employees, dole recipients, older citizens, unions, government and all interested parties, a much healthier, happier, economically viable country would result. It is hoped that with new outlooks, both employers and employees and all other people will achieve a better more stable future.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION

- **IT IS SUGGESTED THAT A SEVEN-DAY WORKING WEEK BE ESTABLISHED WITH PEOPLE WORKING A THREE AND A HALF-DAY WEEK. THIS, IN THEORY WOULD DOUBLE EMPLOYMENT FIGURES.**
- **IT IS SUGGESTED THAT A SEVEN-DAY WORKING WEEK BE ESTABLISHED WITH PEOPLE WORKING A 4-DAY OVERLAPPING WEEK. THIS, IN THEORY WOULD ALSO DOUBLE EMPLOYMENT FIGURES.**

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 4)

IMPLEMENTATION OF SEVEN DAY WORKING WEEK.

- **ABOLITION OF PENALTY RATES OTHER THAN DANGER MONEY FOR AGREED INDUSTRIES.**
- **ABOLITION OF ALL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS OTHER THAN CHRISTMAS DAY.**
- **REGULATED AND UNIVERSAL SUPERANNUATION SCHEME WITH MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF ALL CONTRIBUTIONS AND INVESTMENT.**
- **BAN UNPAID OVERTIME.**
- **POSSIBLE ABOLISHMENT OR LESSENING OF PAYROLL TAX. AND LEGISLATION WHERE NECESSARY.**
- **POSSIBLE WORKER PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT AND ABILITY TO BUY OR RECEIVE SHARES IN COMPANY.**
- **ABOLISHMENT OF LONG SERVICE LEAVE.**
- **REDUCTION OF PAID MATERNITY AND PATERNITY LEAVE.**
- **POSSIBILITY OF PRODUCTIVITY BONUS, IF AND WHEN EMPLOYERS ARE IN POSITION TO OFFER IT.**
- **ANY PERSON CHOOSING TO TAKE TWO JOBS UNDER THIS SYSTEM SHOULD ONLY WORK A MAXIMUM OF 56 HOURS PER SEVEN DAY PERIOD.**
- **UNITED UNION PARTICIPATION AND AGREEMENT WITH THIS PROCESS TOWARDS A GOAL THAT WOULD BENEFIT EVERY WORKING PERSON.**

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 5)

PERCEIVED BENEFITS ARISING FROM THIS SOLUTION – 7 DAY WORKING WEEK.

The perceived benefits deriving from this idea appear almost too numerous to mention. An attempt has been made to list as many as possible but doubtless more would emerge if this system were adopted in part or in full.

ADVANTAGE TO BUSINESS EMPLOYERS.

- The ability to trade at any time without need to pay extra penalty rates.
- Double the number of staff thereby improving efficiency.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Reduced sick leave.
- Due to abolishment of public holidays, long service leave, possible pay roll tax reduction and increased productivity – the ability to pay two wages without need to lower them.
- With the advent of more staff, a lessening of the load on present staff resulting in a happier work force. This in turn would relate to more productivity and loyalty to the firm.
- Interested staff and meaningful interaction between management and themselves would lead to better conditions and ideas for improvement within the workplace.
- With job share implementation there is a direct effect on absenteeism and general job satisfaction.
- A happier staff would directly reflect onto customers and customer service thereby leading to more sales or business.
- Being available to clients on a 7-day basis.

(Submission by Bernce Pratt, Page 6)

ADVANTAGE TO GOVERNMENT.

- A country of satisfied and happy workers.
- Lessening of social welfare payments due to more employment availability.
- More money from personal taxation as more people in work force.
- More superannuation input and therefore less impact on government for pensions.
- Better staffing for schools, hospitals and all other government establishments.
- More work place safety and therefore less pressure on hospitals.
- Disabled persons being able to participate in paid labour and therefore less imposition on government funding.
- Ability to provide necessary services which are at present in turmoil.
- Less crime as more people have access to paid employment.
- Ability of people at present on relief payments, to upgrade their incomes and raise their standard of living without government assistance.
- Combination of shorter working hours would lead to healthier work force and once more less stress on health care services.
- University students would be able to be in paid employment and still have time for study and also the ability to pay for their own entry to higher education, thus relieving the government of HECS fees to a great extent.
- Those university students currently on HECS benefits would be in better position to repay these debts if more employment available after graduation.
- Reduction of childcare costs as people working shorter week and therefore needing less child care.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 7)

ADVANTAGE TO WORKERS.

- Availability of paid work.
- More choice of employment.
- Shorter hours.
- More leisure time.
- Less need for childcare.
- Less guilt for working mothers.
- More family time for outings, shopping, entertaining etc.
- Happier work place.
- More job satisfaction and participation.
- More time for further education if required.
- More ability to cope with sickness at home.
- Better health.
- Better balance between work and leisure.
- Improved job satisfaction.
- More self esteem.
- Would ensure that all employable people would have a very good chance of gaining mindful and satisfying employment including disabled, retired and university students.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 8)

POSSIBLE DRAWBACKS AND/OR OBJECTIONS.

- There are of course serious drawbacks to consider. These include Union objection and a government that at times seems to be against any going forward for this country and seems to be hell bent on running it into the ground.
- One big obstacle to this whole idea is the insurance company. At the moment it appears that there is in progress an attempt to close down anything resembling a leisure activity by charging impossibly high premiums.
- Insurance problems regarding hospitals, doctors and tourism.
- The idea of a level playing field in a global economy appears to mean that Australia is the only country participating while other countries do as they please.
- Gaining public acceptance of the scheme.
- Critics may argue that full employment leads to galloping inflation.
- People do not want to be paid less money.
- Need to change people's expectations of what a working week should be.
- Religious leaders may argue that people should not work on Saturday or Sunday.
- Acceptances by Chamber of Commerce who are said to believe that flexible working hours are not viable at present.
- There will be people that do not want change of any sort for whatever their reasons. These will include that cannot imagine not working the full 5 day week.
- People who, at present, cannot exist without their penalty rates and overtime.
- Many people would rather have more money than more spare time.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 9)

- View of industry that shorter working week would lead to less productivity.
- Few people expect to balance work and family life successfully even though this has been done in the past.
- Employers may believe that flexibility would reduce productivity, add cost and need extra staff.



ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CHANGE.

- Penalty payments, long service leave, payroll tax etc. are crippling all business.
- Employment positions could be almost doubled.
- Chance that all school leavers would find paid employment.
- Shorter week ensures more quality of life for everyone.
- Older people more likely to stay at work longer or return to labour force.
- Retain older people and their valuable experience in the work force.
- Vast improvement in productivity.
- Improve workplace relations.
- Business able to give customer satisfaction.
- More chance for apprenticeships to gain skilled future labour.
- Allow small business to compete.
- Ability of business to trade at any time without incurring large costs.
- Due to extra staff availability, there would be a decrease in absenteeism and sick leave.
- Happier work force and therefore fewer labour disputes.
- People need to work smarter.
- Advance of technology is placing huge stresses on everyone and more leisure time would ensure that this challenge could be met without breakdowns in health.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 11)

- The need for “balance” in people’s lives.
- On an Internet search, many examples of job sharing were found. Most of these involved women sharing a 5 day normal working week. However in most cases it was found that a 3.5-day week was acceptable.
- Prime Minister John Howard and ACTU in rare accord say that workers need a better balance between work and personal life.
- People with firm religious beliefs could choose to work that part of the week that would not interfere with their preferred day of prayer.
- People would be happier knowing they will contribute to a superannuation scheme that is under strict regulation.
- Workers working shorter hours with short rest periods have been found to lead to higher production.
- There is huge support for a shorter working week in many countries including Africa. But with perceived problems for employers in loss of production and productivity. Job sharing on the proposed basis would alleviate these problems.
- The probability of getting a 35 to 40 hour week job that would let a person go to work on Monday and finish on Friday has almost halved in the past 30 years. For women the same thing has happened but not so strongly.
- A third of the job growth for women is for over 45 hours per week.
- Women could work what would be called a full week (3.5 days) without guilt over family and home care.
- Women could take jobs without being told they are depriving men or young people from working.
- Both parents could work same hours and spend more time together as a family.

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- Parents could choose to work different weeks and negate the need of childcare.
- ACTU are involved in an upcoming test case on reasonable working hours.
- More leisure time will result in a healthier population.
- More business will develop with the advent of more leisure time, therein creating more jobs.
- Everyone experiences pleasure when they have a three-day weekend several times every year; this system would give this same pleasure and ease every week.
- A shorter working week would prove less onerous and perhaps more interesting to employees.
- With only 3.5 days to work and a similar break to follow, there should be very little absenteeism except for genuine cases of sickness.
- Quality of life must become a focus for everyone.
- There is a need for achievable targets and goals.
- Women should be able to combine work and home without feelings of guilt and inadequacy. (44% of the workforce on Australia are part time working women.)
- Unions are starting to look at “life balance”.
- 69% of female “bosses” believe flexibility would be good.
- At present there is an under utilisation of over 50’s skill and experience.
- Need for young people to be employed or in training now.
- Ability for university students to be able to work and still have plenty of time for study while earning enough for fees and living expenses.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 13)

- Availability of extra education and tuition to everyone should they desire without losing work time or too much leisure time.
- Older people encouraged to work to generate retirement nest eggs.
- More skilled women will return to the work force.
- Those with highest levels of education and most money wish they had more leisure time, meaning that those with more important jobs are working longer hours.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ARGUMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEVEN DAY WORKING WEEK AND JOB SHARE OPTION OF A THREE AND A HALF DAY WORKING PERIOD.

WOULD ENSURE MORE FAMILY TIME WITHOUT HAVING TO SACRIFICE A CREATIVE AND CHALLENGING CAREER.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS ARE AS STRONG AS PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTION.

THE FRENCH EXPERIENCE

FRANCE HAS REDUCED WORKING HOURS WHICH IS NOT AS DRASTIC AS THE PROPOSAL IN THIS DOCUMENT BUT SOME OF THE RESULTS INDICATE THAT BENEFITS OF THIS IDEA COULD BE EVEN GREATER.

FRANCE HAS FOUND THAT TIME LOST TO ILLNESS HAS ALMOST DISAPPEARED. PEOPLE FEEL BETTER AND THEIR HEALTH HAS IMPROVED.

MANY EMPLOYEES LOVE THE 35-HOUR WEEK BECAUSE UNIONS HAVE ENSURED NO SALARY CUTS. LESS WORK – SAME PAY.

SHOPPING AND HOLIDAY HABITS APPEAR ALREADY TO SHOW THE 35-HOUR SHORTER WORKING WEEK EFFECT.

DEPARTMENT STORES REPORT MORE BUSINESS ON WEEKDAYS AND RAILWAYS SHOW MARKED INCREASE IN PEOPLE TAKING LONG WEEKEND BREAKS.

SOME FIRMS HAVE INTRODUCED LONG OR SHORT WEEKS – SHOWING FLEXIBILITY AND TAILORING WORKING HOURS TO BETTER SUIT FIRM, STAFF AND CLIENTS.

FINLAND

LARGE FINNISH TYRE MANUFACTURER, NOKIA, BROUGHT IN A SIX HOUR WORKING DAY AND THEIR STAFF SUDDENLY STOPPED TAKING DAYS OFF FOR ILLNESS.

IN THE BOOM DAYS OF 1988 IN LOJO, FINLAND, THE PLASTICS MANUFACTURING COMPANY 'ORTHEX' FOUND THAT IT COULD NOT KEEP ITS WORKFORCE. IT WAS PAYING 30 MARKS AN HOUR BUT AT NEARBY PAPER MILL WORKERS WERE EARNING 100 MARKS AN HOUR. SO THE COMPANY DECIDED TO MAKE ITSELF MORE ATTRACTIVE BY CUTTING WORKING HOURS FROM EIGHT TO SIX AND STILL PAY WORKERS FOR EIGHT.

'ORTHEX' WAS PROMPTLY EXPELLED FROM THE EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION AND THE UNIONS BECAME VERY SUSPICIOUS. THE COMPANY KEPT ITS WORKERS FINDING THAT PEOPLE WOULD RATHER HAVE MORE FREE TIME THAN EXTRA MONEY.

CANADA

A SURVEY IN CANADA HAS FOUND THAT WORKERS WERE GENERALLY INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATING SHORTER HOURS OF WORK AND THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER SOME KIND OF FINANCIAL SACRIFICE AS LONG AS FULL TIME PERMANENT JOBS WERE CREATED AS A RESULT. THE IDEA OF MORE TIME AWAY FROM WORK WAS EXTREMELY POPULAR WITH WORKERS.

IN SARNIA, ONTARIO, A UNION NEGOTIATED FOR ONE EXTRA DAY OFF EVERY THREE WEEKS. SIX OTHER PLANTS PLUS SOME NON-UNION PLANTS AND PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS FOLLOWED SUIT. IN A TOWN OF 100,000 PEOPLE, THESE 'HAPPY FRIDAYS' ARE NOW A COMMUNITY EVENT WITH FAMILY PICNICS, FISHING DERBIES, GOLF TOURNAMENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

AUSTRALIA

- IN A SPEECH RECENTLY GIVEN BY PRIME MINISTER JOHN HOWARD, HE MENTIONS -
- ISSUE OF QUALITY OF WORKING LIVES.....
- QUALITY EXPRESSED BY THE BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY...
- THAT CENTRALISED WAGE STRUCTURES WERE TOO SLOW TO RESPOND TO MODERN WORKPLACE NEEDS...
- THE COALITION WOULD REMAIN COMMITTED TO PURSUE GREATER FLEXIBILITY ...
- THAT OFFERING CHOICE TO WORKERS DOES NOT HAVE TO COMPROMISE PRODUCTIVITY.

ONLY 7% OF AUSTRALIAN NOW WORK 9 AM TO 5 PM.

25% SPEND AT LEAST PART OF THE WEEKEND AT WORK.

IN PAST 20 YEARS THE PROPORTION OF THE WORK FORCE DOING A 35 TO 40 HOUR WORKING WEEK HAS DROPPED FROM 50% TO 30%.

THE TREND FOR BOTH PARTNERS TO WORK HAS LED TO THE NUMBER OF FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS WITH A SINGLE BREADWINNER FALLING FROM 51% IN 1980 TO 30% TODAY.

WORK IS FAR LESS CERTAIN. ONLY 55% OF EMPLOYEES ARE PERMANENT. 25% ARE CASUAL (RISING TO 65% FOR TEENAGERS) AND THE REST ARE CONTRACT WORKERS OR LABOUR-HIRE WORKERS.

MANY PEOPLE WHO WANT MIDDLE-HOUR JOBS ARE NO LONGER WORKING BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF GROWTH IN THESE JOBS.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt, Page 17)

THEY HAVE BEEN PUSHED OUT OF THE WORK FORCE AND INTO SOCIAL SECURITY. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE CANNOT TAKE PART-TIME JOBS BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT WELL QUALIFIED FOR THEM. THESE JOBS ARE OFTEN TAILORED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OR HAVE A VERY HIGH SERVICE CONTENT.

A STUDY BY ACIRRT BASED ON 1995 DATA, FINDS THAT THERE IS A TREND TO SPREAD WORK AMONG FEWER EMPLOYEES – INCREASING WORKPLACE INSECURITY. THIS TREND HAS GROWN AS COMPANIES CONTINUE TO DOWNSIZE.

PART-TIME WORK IS NOW WIDESPREAD, UP FROM 10% OF THE WORKFORCE IN 1966 TO AN ESTIMATED 27% TODAY. WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR 60% OF THESE JOBS AND NOT NECESSARILY BY CHOICE.

IF THE BENEFITS OF A GROWTH RATE OF 2% LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY WERE TAKEN IN REDUCED HOURS RATHER THAN EXTRA INCOME, THE WORKING WEEK COULD BE CUT TO 30 HOURS WITHIN 10 TO 15 YEARS. WITHIN 50 YEARS, IT COULD BE REDUCED TO 15 HOURS A WEEK WHILE MAINTAINING CURRENT INCOMES.
(DR. CLIVE HAMILTON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE.)

HAMILTON ALSO BELIEVES A MOVE TOWARDS A SHORTER WORKING WEEK WOULD... FORM THE CENTREPIECE OF FAR-REACHING SOCIAL CHANGE. PEOPLE WOULD BE FREED TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH THEIR FAMILIES, IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND PURSUING THE ACTIVITIES THAT THEY FIND PERSONALLY FULFILLING.

WITHOUT THE PREOCCUPATION OF MONEY, PEOPLE WOULD CHOOSE WORK WHICH THEY ENJOY RATHER THAN ENTER CAREERS BECAUSE THEY PAY MORE.

SOME OF THE TIME FREED FROM THE COMPULSION TO WORK AND CONSUME COULD BE DEVOTED TO EDUCATION AND SELF-BETTERMENT.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 18)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

Governments and general population in Australia are realising the need for balance between work and personal situations. The term “balance” implies that equality exists between two things being compared.

The only way to truly find balance between personal and professional life is to recognise that your personal life is more important.

To gain a competitive edge in the global economy and also have a happy and productive work force, new ways of working must be explored.

There is no reason not to expect that Australia could be a country of satisfied and happy workers. To also believe that business can function without problems of absenteeism, apathy and stressed staff.

With some people being forced to work longer hours, longer shifts and losing much needed leisure time while others can find no work at all, indicates that it is time to look seriously at solutions to current problems in the work place.

The idea of shorter more flexible working hours is not new. There are more than 500,000 Internet sites regarding this subject.

There is an example in America of a middle-aged man earning a 6-figure salary. He loses his job and the only gainful work he can find to sell tickets in a cinema for \$6 an hour.

There are middle management people in Australia becoming redundant and who cannot find any alternative employment. They suffer the indignity of not being able to support themselves or their families. They believe they are “failures”.

This is a ridiculous situation. Australia needs to keep a viable economy but also needs to consider its people and their well being.

At the present time thousands of volunteers are shoring up many aspects of life in this country. Unfortunately many of these willing people are in the older age bracket and numbers therefore will begin to diminish.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 19)

WHAT HAPPENED?

30 years ago it was predicted that people would be leading lives of leisure where they would become even more inventive in finding ways to occupy themselves as work demands were increasingly met by machines.

Others ways **MUST** be found. There must be serious attempts to find solutions to all our problems. By re-energising the work place and giving people a better life style things can only improve.

- Good ideas are needed.
- Flexibility must be the keynote.
- Union support must be gained.
- Business support must be gained.
- Worker support must be gained.

This can be achieved through advertisement, education, surveys and incentives.

If government considers and implements changes envisaged in this submission then business has the incentive to consider and implement changes for the better.

If unions are serious about their aims to make things better for workers, then there is no reason for them not to consider and implement such changes.

Once people are convinced that they will not lose money and definitely improve their time at work and at home they will appreciate changes.

New shopping laws will come into effect in South Australia in October, This will have the effect of putting more pressure on those shop assistants already employed as they may be required to work much longer hours for little more money. Thus they will be deprived of any chance of an improved home life.

Small business will not survive in this climate, as they cannot afford extra wages and current penalty rates. Therefore they cannot open at the precise times when they will profit most and be most benefit to customers.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 20)

Small business should not have to give in to supermarkets. No one can open a shop or business if they are going to lose money.

Bridgestone Australia in South Australia believes that it is uncompetitive at present. They need more productivity. This has amounted to 5% in 3 years but during that period costs have escalated by 11%. They are at present having forced lockouts of their staff and problems with the union.

Offers of trade-offs for 12 weeks leave per year do not appear to be the answer to the many problems. (Advertiser 19.8.03)

A report (Advertiser 16.8.03) from Britain concerns a survey by a team of researchers at South Bank University in London. They conclude that employers must do more to help reduce the stress levels of working mothers and that these people should have the right to request more flexible working practices.

This team found that women wanted to work – not only to increase family income but also because they felt that this would have a positive impact on family relationships.

Most expressed concern of a negative impact on their family particularly when they became overstretched at work, felt tired and had trouble “switching off” after bad day at work. Fathers also showed concern about the demands placed on their partners and the effect that work-related stress would have on the children and their relationship with the partner.

The report also states that while most employers were focused on “family friendly” policies, these were focused more on time spent at work than quality of life.

It was felt that more attention could be paid to controlling workloads, managing the intensity of work and ensuring achievable goals and targets in the time available to employees.

Dr.Pocock, Director of the Centre for Labour Research at Adelaide University mentions several points in a report in the Advertiser (16.8.03)

- Sometimes women have to make difficult choices to either ignore their children or ignore their workplace. More sensible workplaces are needed to combine work and home without people having to be a part-time marginal casual worker.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 21)

- Parents working full-time are tied to longer hours, often unpaid and increasingly encroaching on weekends.
- Fathers wanting to be of more use at home are also butting their heads against longer or more irregular work hours.
- It is suggested that people might have to trade some of the material prosperity and be better able to cope with family ups and downs.
- Regarding the idea of more paid maternity leave; it was found that given the choice of where the government spends its money, most women would prefer cheaper and more affordable childcare.
- Few people expect to balance their work and family life successfully.

An article in the Advertiser (10.7.03) notes the following points.

- That the population ageing fairly quickly and that young people's skills are being wasted and that we are building a deficit for ourselves.
- It is believed that in a few years we will be looking to see who will do the work and will realise that the young people, who should have been training, have been unemployed for years.

If we want to keep young people at school longer to undertake training then more teachers and instructors are needed. Smaller class numbers are essential in order for every pupil or student to achieve their best potential. A three and a half-day working week in a seven-day working week could help this situation.

It must be concluded that after consideration of all the above-mentioned points, it becomes obvious that change will occur and is occurring worldwide. This is the ideal time to change working conditions and to enable anyone desirous of employment, to obtain that desire. But change must not come at the expense of people's lifestyle and family relationships.

It is easily foreseen that more involvement with the family by parents and more quality time spent together must help to alleviate present day vandal, drug, crime and suicide statistics. This alone would save billions of dollars for Australia.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 22)

The concept of 'reasonable overtime' has been exploited by employers who cut back full-time numbers and try to fill the gaps with part-timers. This is an argument put forward by the ACTU. There has been a reduction of full-time jobs and an increase in employment arrangements that have been casualised.

This is not due to productivity but to cost cutting, often at the demands of the financial analysts.

Dr.Clive Hamilton says "that the obsession with continual growth is now so universal that alternatives are not even taught in most schools. But across the world, the growth model has failed miserably in its central claim – to produce more contented fulfilled societies.

A substantial proportion of people – dubbed downshifters – are realising the need, without living in poverty, to reduce their work, income and consumption for more balanced lives."

Why are people spending more time in the workplace and giving up their weekends and other time traditionally spent with family or in leisure activities?

Much of the pressure is clearly business-driven – greater competition and demand for profits – while redundancies, deregulation of the labour market, casualisation and contracts have made people more fearful of losing their jobs and livelihoods and more willing to put in extra time.

A redistribution of work would benefit the unemployed and the overworked.

An organisation of satisfied employees would also have satisfied and loyal customers and clients. In business this translates to bigger profits.

One important aspect of this proposed change in work practice is the effect it would have upon the local tourism industry. With the advent of more overseas terrorism, more people are opting to holiday within their own country. This would ensure a huge upturn in the Australia's tourism industry. At the same time there would be an ample work force to cope with the increased staff requirements without anyone having to forego any change to their own quality of life.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 23)

This submission has outlined a reasonable work alternative suggestion, one that could be trialed fairly successfully with full co-operation from all parties. Of course there will be snags that have not been foreseen in this submission. There will be some business' that cannot use this system but may be able to incorporate some changes.

All options for changes in the work force must be considered if this country is to progress into the future. The country needs happy workers, employers, governments and unions to make it an even better country than it is. A country to be proud of.

WORKING LIFE IN AUSTRALIA AND MOST OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES HAS UNDERGONE A REVOLUTION, THE SPEED AND BREADTH OF WHICH HAS LEFT MANY PEOPLE BEWILDERED, FRUSTRATED AND UNHAPPY.

THEREFORE IT IS TIME TO LOOK AT ALL POSSIBLE OPTIONS IN ORDER THAT EVERYONE BENEFITS.

PERHAPS IF AUSTRALIA FINDS THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEMS THEN THESE IDEAS CAN BE EXTENDED WORLDWIDE.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

Job sharing is a superior flexible work option. It may be the only option that offers the employer full time coverage. The pooling of talent and experience offers tremendous advantage to the employer in today's competitive marketplace. Retaining two quality employees allows an organisation to remain superior in the talent market.

Public acceptance would need to be obtained. A proposal of this kind could be accepted in principle. At the moment a good proportion of able-bodied people are on the dole and bored and despondent. A very large proportion of these people has accepted that they may never have a full time job or that they may never work again. This leading to a generation of people with little or no expectation of ever having a more productive interesting life. This in turn leads to a country without hope.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 24)

It is heartening that the Government has called for submissions on this subject. It is sincerely hoped however, that it is a genuine call for help and ideas and not just another idea to “shut up” the masses. There are thousands of people in Australia with good ideas on many matters and no way to communicate them to others.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.

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24th August, 2003

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 25)

SOURCE MATERIAL.

ADELAIDE ADVERTISER NEWSPAPER.

INTERNET ARTICLES

**EXPATICA – 35-HOUR WEEK EXPLAINED (FRANCE).
(21.7.03)**

**JOBS & MOMS – WRITE A WINNING JOB SHARE
PROPOSAL. (USA) (7.8.03)**

35 HOUR WORK WEEK (FRANCE) (21.7.03)

**LONG HOURS HAVE HAD THEIR DAY, INSURER TOLD.
(AUSTRALIA) (21.7.03)**

SHAREGOALS. (USA) (20.7.03)

**WORKING HOURS – BULLETIN ED/DESK ARTICLE
(AUSTRALIA) (7.8.2003)**

QUEENSLAND SUNDAY MAIL. (7.7.03)

DISCUSSIONS WITH VARIOUS PEOPLE.

(Submission by Bernice Pratt. Page 26)