

### STATEMENTS FROM TWO CHILD OUTWORKERS

#### Statement No.1

When asked how I feel about my parents being outworkers, I feel very bitter and angry that my parents are outworkers. Growing up with two little sisters and one little brother and one older brother, I feel very disappointed and disadvantaged with my parents working seven days a week, 20 hours a day without one day off no matter what day it is, Christmas or New Years Day.

With my parents working so much and my brother in Year 12, I started looking after my little brother and sisters a lot. After school I would go and pick them up at school and we would walk home, not having enough money to spend on a bus or train ride home. I would then make them do their homework or have a shower, then I help my parents to sew. We would always be quiet at home because we were scared to make too much noise and distract my brother from doing his homework.

I would make dinner around 6 O'clock and we would eat it except my parents would keep on sewing. Then they would go play some quiet game or something while I helped my parents again. Around 9 O'clock they would go to bed, since we didn't have a TV I wouldn't have to tell them to turn it off. They would go to bed without me telling them to and during the time they were asleep I would bring my parents dinner. It was exactly the same thing I had except it was cold and they didn't want me to heat it up because it would make the gas bill bigger and since we didn't have a microwave they would eat it just like that. During the time they ate their dinner I would help them sew the clothes.

Sometimes my little brother and sisters wouldn't see my parents for a whole week unless they went out to the garage to see them but then my parents would tell them to get out of the garage and do their homework. Soon we needed to buy more stuff for my brother such as his textbooks and his calculator so I would help my parents more to get more money and soon my little brother and sisters had to walk home from school by themselves while I helped my parents.

There were times when I would sew till 5am and go to sleep then wake up at 7am to make my little brother and sister's breakfast and lunch and then I would go to school.

During mid-year of my Year 11, I decided to quit school completely and stay home and help my parents sew and find more money to send my brother to University. After I quit school I helped my parents everyday and they started to accept more work and I would sometimes not sleep for a couple of days to help my parents. I feel really

sorry for my little brother and sisters because my parents never have time to spend with them at all and they know never to disturb them.

My little brother and sisters never go out because they are expected to go home straight after school and are beginning to help them sew, cut or iron. My youngest sister is eight and does some small jobs.

I think it is a great injustice because they are just little children eight, ten and twelve years of age and are needed to help our parents sew, cut or iron. The same age as when I began helping to sew. So they have enough money to pay the bill and buy food. I quit school two years ago and I don't think I will ever go back because my parents need me too much at home.

TANG - 17 years, March 1998

### **Statement No: 2**

As a child my family and I lived in poverty in Vietnam till we immigrated to Australia. I thought we would be better off in Australia than in Vietnam, but then we couldn't pay all the bills with my mother and father began working as outworkers.

They started sewing a lot and soon I didn't see my parents much except when they asked me to help them because they couldn't finish all their work.

Soon whenever I had spare time I would be in the garage sewing and helping them sew the hems and iron the dresses and shirts or whatever their bosses would give them to sew. I was in Grade 6 when I began doing this work.

After a few months I would stay up till 2am to help them out and wake up around 5 am to help them sew because we never seem to have spare money to buy the things we needed. Every month my parents would dread the bills coming so they accepted more work and soon I would come home straight after school to help sew.

Sometimes if we were really desperate I would stay home the whole day and help them. On those days my parents would always worry how my school work was suffering and what bad parents they were. I always tried to comfort them by saying that I was doing fine and would do my school work during the spare times I had.

In reality I didn't have any spare time and I would always have bags under my eyes and felt really tired. Recess was a time when I would try to get some sleep or do my work. My friends knew what I was going through because they were going through the same things so that sometimes we would compare how much sleep we got.

This year I am in Year 12 and I wonder if I going to pass this year because now we aren't getting paid a lot because the boss keeps telling us about how we have sewn the garments wrong and refuses to pay us. My parents and I know that there is nothing wrong with the garments but my parents are too scared that their boss would find a problem and fire them. Then we won't have any money to pay the bills and we might

be forced to go back to Vietnam. So now my parents are accepting more work everyday and we've got less time to do it in.

I just hoped that I could pass my V.C.E. and get a decent job because I didn't want to end up like my parents being outworkers and being paid next to nothing.

LINH - 17 years March 1998