



*families*  
australia



Senator Gavin Marshall  
Chair  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA, ACT, 2600**

15 August 2005

Dear Senator Marshall,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ‘Inquiry into Workplace Agreements’ currently being conducted by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee.

Families Australia is an independent body funded in large part through the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services. We are the only national non-government peak body funded to provide advice and input to government specifically on family related policies.

Families Australia is interested in the capacity of the proposed Industrial Relations reforms to meet the needs of all Australians as cited in the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry and particularly its ability to enable “... *employees to better balance their work and family responsibilities*”.

Families Australia believes that balancing work and family priorities is essential to family wellbeing, as well as the overall wellbeing of the community. Research has consistently shown that increasing numbers of Australians feel that they do not have adequate balance in their lives and that this affects their capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

In this context, Families Australia would like to make the following comments:

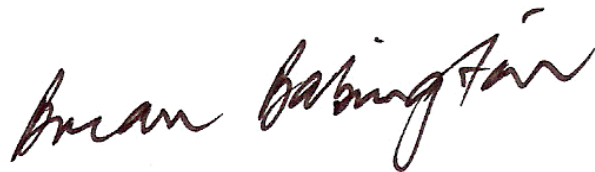
1. Families Australia commends the Government for its increased focus on work and family balance. The attention being given to this issue at present by Senate and House of

Representatives Committees is welcome. Families Australia hopes that findings from both processes will be integrated and cross-referenced.

2. While workplace agreements may provide a framework through which individuals can negotiate improved work and family balance, factors such as individual assertiveness, bargaining power, and the policing of these new arrangements will impact on their effectiveness. We therefore consider that the issue of individual workers' capacities to enter into workplace agreements be given careful consideration by Government.
3. On 8 April 2005, Families Australia provided a submission to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family being undertaken by the House of Representatives' Family and Human Services Committee. A copy is attached as the recommendations relate to the current Senate Inquiry.

On behalf of Families Australia, thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this important review. We look forward to working with the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education in the future to enhance and develop responsible social policy for all Australian families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Babington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Babington  
Chief Executive Officer