

Senator MARSHALL—Have you done any research or are you aware of any research that has been conducted on the link between AWAs and greater flexibility?

Ms Shelley—Specific research in this industry?

Senator MARSHALL—No. If there is any in this industry that would be good, but in any industry.

Ms Shelley—I would need to take that on notice.

Answer:

The link between Australian Workplace Agreements and greater flexibility has been shown in a number of different research projects. In 2007 the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations released a number of case studies conducted into the benefits of the Government's workplace relations reforms for employers and employees. The case studies were conducted in a number of industries.

A number of case studies focussed on the role that AWAs had in shaping workplace outcomes, demonstrating that flexible working arrangements were a major benefit of AWAs. The case studies included views expressed by both employers and employees regarding their workplace arrangements. A number of case studies provided examples of employees explaining that the use of AWAs provided opportunities for flexible working-hours arrangements, for example flexible rostering and offering overtime as time off in lieu. These opportunities facilitated the fulfilment of family commitments or other lifestyle activities.

Further information can be found at 'workplace innovators' and 'other case studies' on the Workplace Authority website¹ and 'serving up flexibility' at workplace.gov.au.²

The link between flexibility and AWAs has also been demonstrated in two separate quantitative research projects commissioned by the Office of the Employment Advocate and conducted by the London School of Economics academic, Paul Gollan. The results of one of these projects included a survey (conducted in 2001) of the attitudes of a random sample of employees who had signed AWAs, comparing them with another sample of employees who had not signed AWAs. The survey was discussed in a paper published in the *Journal of Industrial Relations* in December 2003 by Paul Gollan and Jonathan Hamburger.

The survey found that 64 per cent of AWA employees agreed with the statement that 'management gives me a say in the way I do my job' compared to 49 per cent of non-AWA employees. Only 14 per cent of AWA employees disagreed with the same statement compared to 23 per cent of non-AWA employees. This evidence supports the above case study evidence that employees find AWAs facilitate flexibility in the workplace.

¹ See <http://www.oea.gov.au/graphics.asp?showdoc=/EMPLOYERS/WorkplaceInnovators.asp> and <http://www.oea.gov.au/graphics.asp?showdoc=/EMPLOYERS/PartnershipCaseStudy.asp>

² <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Programmes/WorkFamily/Servingupflexibility-inrestaurantandcatering.htm>.

In addition, Gollan's other survey conducted for the OEA in 2000 highlighted the way that employers can gain flexibility from AWAs. Results from this survey included in a the March 2004 edition of the *Journal of Industrial Relations* found that 54 per cent of employers surveyed stated that AWAs improved their ability to implement change while a further 12 per cent said it greatly improved their ability to implement change.