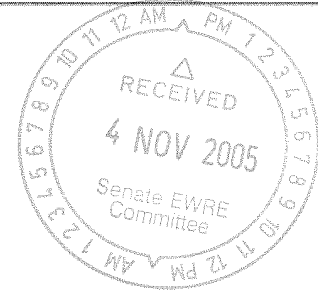


**From:** John Stannard [johns@wrcqld.org.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, 4 November 2005 6:42 PM  
**To:** EET, Committee (SEN)  
**Subject:** Senate Inquiry into new workplace legislation



Dear Sir,  
 I write in a personal capacity, although my work does ground me in what I say.

I am concerned that the Bill will develop a class of working poor, not unlike those we have seen in TV footage in American cyclone disasters, able to live, but not able to advance themselves due to the daily struggle to survive.

And not able to afford to protect themselves from a disaster or to properly school their children so a cycle develops.

The reason I think this is the removal of the current protections for individual workers will mean the lowest common denominator will apply, in much the same way the truckie disputes have sent many broke as they could not afford to turn down a load, even though it was not paying enough to put food on the table, every load becomes a back-load.

Unskilled workers and those limited by age or ethnic origin will be especially vulnerable to downward wages pressure. It is not logical to expect unskilled workers to be able to bargain for fair wages and conditions. They will be told what they can have and take it or leave it. Dickensian England showed what market forces will do to wages for unskilled workers.

I had hoped for a progressive Bill that would break the mould of unionism, the once a worker, always a worker ethic that paralyses much of union thinking today. This looks more like the New Zealand model that caused that economy to both polarise wealth and cease to grow. It is the polarity that I think is the worst possible outcome as it will break economic initiative and incentive. The worker will lose capacity to plan for growth into their own business as wages stagnate, and ideas will wither.

I agree the best safety net is a job, but not any job, and not a protected union job either where profit dwindles and workers become complacent, but a job that is paid at a rate that reflects need and rewards incentive. The Bill by not being "fair" allows for below poverty line employment. The parallel welfare to work reforms would seem also to remove Centrelink payments as a backstop for a failed 1:1 wage negotiation. People with any commitment, even to renting a home, will not be able to say no to a job, no matter how poorly paid because Centrelink will not back them up. They will be without income of any sort and forced into poverty.

The system is not broken, wages have been under control, productivity and profits high for a decade at least, so this reform is quite radical in its concept and needs to be seen as a major experiment in economic productivity. Individuals will pay the price long after the government of the day has comfortably retired with pre-reform super packages.

Many people and their children will be hurt. And there will be nothing I can do at my workplace for them.

This is my concern.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute, I wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

**John Stannard**

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7/11/2005