

May 8th 2004

Australia's Demographic Challenges
Social Policy Division
The Treasury

Chairperson,

Please accept my submission concerning - **Australia's Demographic Challenges in the Years Ahead**. I have based my submission on the issues raised in the government notice as placed in the newspaper May 2004.

1. - How to improve workforce participation.

The essential need of work is paramount to those who need to provide for a family, a stable homelife, health, education, to pay a mortgage, or rent a home, to enjoy a sport, or be able to be free of overwhelming debt.

To have reliability in the working life of a family can relieve the pressure, the fear of losing a home plus other possessions. Workforce personal will participate for the good of the industry when they know they have security in the position they hold. Take away the security, and the results will be a workforce that will have no loyalty for the company they work for. This will show up in lack of respect for those in control, working results that are not up to standard, absenteeism climbing. Bring back the security for the workforce and the participation level will climb, as will the quality of the work that is accomplished.

2. - How to keep the workforce healthy and skilled.

As stated above, security in the job is a major factor in the health of the working public. Unfortunately the government has pushed the destructive line "that you have more than one job in your working lifetime" "you change your job every five years or so". This may suit those who wish to lead an unsettled life style, but for the average worker they need and want security in their job. Health, medically and mental can deteriorate over

a period of stress, especially if the worker has a mortgage plus family to provide for. Everyday expenses can become overwhelming if the threat of losing a job hangs over the head of a worker. Skilled workers who are secure in their positions will continue to improve their skills in doing so the industry benefits. The health of the work force depends on many factors, home life, relationships plus the stability of their working life.

3. - Who will be in the workforce.

This in part depends on the Federal government. Skilled workers are encouraged to migrate to Australia, the reason given is that there is not enough skilled workers in the Australian population to cover the needs of industry. We have over a period of too many years lost a good percentage of our manufacturing industry. This in turn has taken away a large percent of the apprentice position resulting in less young people being qualified, and Australia lacking in skilled workers. Computers ie IT industry, has not provided the jobs that was built up with such high expectations to provide. Not only are skilled workers encouraged to migrate to Australia but there is an excess of Australian jobs exported to overseas countries. Call centre work etc. can be answered by people from overseas who do not even know the work they are answering calls for. This has been accepted as normal while in the meantime Australian workers are being made redundant. There was also the cruel fallacy that workers over FORTY were too old to be retrained and so were made redundant. The loss to Australia of trained workers from this cruel fallacy has also resulted in marriage break-downs, loss of homes and the well being of too many Australian workers. Who will be in the workforce will depend on the understanding plus the ability of the Federal and State governments to face their responsibilities in defending the Australian public's right to have their jobs and to prevent more of them from being exported to overseas countries.

4. - Will current working arrangements suit workers in the future.

If the trend continues, export of our industries and the exporting of too many jobs, current working conditions will not be a problem to those who have lost their jobs. Hospitality work is mainly based on casual positions the hours can be split and be seasonal, this can lead to long hours with little security for the worker. Other highly trained professionals find they must work long hours with unpaid overtime expected of them as a way of keeping their positions. This exploitation of trained personal will lead to health problems plus the break down of personal relationships resulting in bad work ethics. For too many Australian workers the current working conditions are not good, yet the need to retain their positions rule their lives. The need to improve the working conditions now are important so that in the future people will be able to obtain work as well as know the working conditions are acceptable to the worker as they are for the good of the country.

5. - Will current retirement arrangements continue to suit us.

The Federal government has recently encouraged people near retirement age to continue to work well over the designated age of retirement. This would seem a brilliant idea, it would retain qualified workers who could pass on their expertise to younger workers. What of the thought ??? that keeping older workers was not good business sense as seen by the amount of older workers that lose their jobs and cannot obtain employment because of their age. There are people who willingly will continue to work past retirement age, other people are made redundant before they reach retirement age. There needs to be decisions made that will benefit the people as well as the country. To have the older worker continue in their profession well after the age of retirement would aid the financial side of the economy but what of the young person seeking employment.

Where does their chance at employment evolve from if the older worker continues past the age of retirement.

A summary of this submission - An example of a large company who exploited the need of their workers to have work. The Olympic Games 2000 - certain workers were asked if they were prepared to work at the Olympic Games venue. If they did the work they would be slotted into the digital side of the company when

the Games were over. That meant they would not be made redundant as so many of their fellow workers had been threatened with. The work was carried out for the Games, during this time the workers found to their horror their names had been added to the redundancy list. It would seem the workers had trusted the manager and believed he stood by his word. They were told they did not have in writing the agreement they had made with management concerning their future positions in TELSTRA. At the time of these workers having their jobs taken from them and being told there was no jobs for them after the Games, TELSTRA had been hiring and training people to work for TELSTRA. 20 years service wiped away as though it was nothing there was no loyalty from TELSTRA to its long time workers.

Workers need security, they need to know their working life is important, not only to the company they work for but also for their countries well being. Security and loyalty help in the well-being of the Australian worker. Modern day thinking has down graded and polluted the words - Security and Loyalty.

Mrs Patricia Wagstaff.

- P. Wagstaff.