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Committee Secretary

Education, Employment and Small Business Committee

Dear Madam/Sir

**Re Portable long service leave scheme for the Social and Community Services Industry.**

I have been working as a volunteer and for wages in the community sector since 1988. In ten Brisbane and Logan workplaces, I have worked in casual, part-time permanent and in full-time permanent positions, the last usually on fixed term (12 month) contracts.

My longest service was for 13 years in a part-time permanent position. I've had a number of full-time 12-month contract positions in a neighbourhood centre, and in tenancy and mental health services. Those contracts were renewable when funding was available. My shortest positions were locum stints for other people on leave. My current position is a full-time one: a 12 month contract renewed annually since June 2011.

In 31 years, I have qualified for long service leave once. Workplace policy allowed employees to take LSL after 7 years. I served 17 years there: 4 as a volunteer and 13 in a part-time permanent position. After taking LSL, I stayed another six years. I left to take a similar but full-time position just a few months before I was due for a second LSL entitlement. In 30 years, I have had no other opportunity to take LSL.

The Commonwealth program that funds my current position is secure to June 2020, when I will be 11 months short of 10 years in this position. If the program ends I will lose the accrued LSL - the second time I would have missed long service leave by less than a year.

Portability could turn long service into just another entitlement, lessening the employee's incentive to remain loyal and to earn the leave but for two factors:

1. Work in the services sector is insecure and it often is not possible to stay long enough to qualify for LSL.<sup>1</sup> Short-term contracts, insecure funding and ‘burn-out’ mean considerable mobility between similar organizations in the sector.
2. Moving between workplaces is often the only way to advance. For me, there is no prospect of advancement in my current workplace, and I can expect no wage increases outside of the Award increases. Despite relevant professional qualifications and a higher degree, my full-time earnings now are just ~ 1.7% above the average Australian wage. The organization I work in now has 20 employees; only three of us work full-time, and most earn less than me on an annual basis. My only chance is to move to a better paid position in a similar organisation.

In this sector, wages, job status, security and the prospects of advancement are low. Every benefit is important. Aside from the personal benefits that come from extended recreation time, portability helps to legitimise the sector and attract quality people to it.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Collyer



<sup>1</sup> ABS 6226.0 - Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia, Feb 2019

**Graph 2: Mobility by occupation**

