

Committee Secretary
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee
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Subject: Submission to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee on the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019

To: The Committee Secretary

I am making the following submission in support of the *Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019* ("the Bill") which has been tabled following the *Portable Long Service Leave Scheme for the Social and Community Services Sector, Decision Regulatory Impact Statement ("RIS")*, October 2019.

As a female worker in this industry for about 28 years I have had 6 employers and with the recent commencement of my new job I have no retained long service leave – I would need to be in this position for another ten years before I am entitled to any long service. It is widely documented that the SACS Industry is low paid, largely female and often operates in environments of high stress, crisis and trauma, with the type of work undertaken often requiring employees to have a varying level of skill up to and including some form of tertiary qualification. The Industry is sustained by short term Government funding arrangements, resulting in long term service within the industry made up of short-term contracts with multiple employers. The Decision RIS at 2.3 *The SACS Sector* reaffirmed these points.

I did at one time accept a State government position however it was not the type of work that I wanted to continue and did not match my social work degree or career projection, but most importantly I wanted to work in the social and community industry because of the values it embraces and to support those in our community who are most vulnerable and marginalised. Due to the short term nature of contracts, most employees in my industry rarely remain with a single employer for a decade or more. Yet many are loyal employees who choose to remain within the industry, supporting the values it generates and the clients and communities the services support such as myself. Had these employees opted to work in less philanthropic industries, such as health, local government or the private sector, they would undoubtedly be paid more, enjoy a greater sense of employment security and have a greater opportunity to achieve long service and access their leave entitlement. High employee mobility/turnover is a key workforce challenge for our Industry with the sector reported as having high levels of employee mobility in the Decision RIS at 2.4 *Long service leave in the SACS sector in Queensland, Rates of mobility*.

When I was made redundant from one of my jobs I took the opportunity to further my post graduate qualifications – however this was at a high financial cost to me and a debt that I still carry today. I was also never able to utilise my long service leave as I did not have any to take from my subsequent

employers when I found work. So unlike other my state government counterparts whom many have been provided long service leave for study purposes this has not been afforded to me. Apart from the loss of expertise and continuity; employee turnover can be a major cost, draining resources from service delivery and employee development and training. The labor-intensive nature of service delivery, combined with the investment required in employee collaboration and the small size of many organisations, means that the impact of employee mobility/turnover can be more profound for SACS employers than what might be experienced in most other industries. Unfortunately at times it is left to the employee to ensure that they have the skills to ensure that they can apply for positions.

Employee mobility/turnover has the potential to be intensified even more where funding is driven by consumer demand such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), coupled with the required attraction of new employees to meet the increase in expected clients. It is therefore vital to find strategies to reward and retain employees, to ensure the SACS Industry's sustainability.

The Palaszczuk Government's commitment to fund pay equity rates and introduce longer term contracts is already creating a more sustainable social and community services Industry. The Bill seeks to build upon these foundations by establishing a portable long service leave scheme that would:

- cover all employees across the varied sectors within the Industry (listed in Schedule 1 of the Bill);
- apply to both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations in the community services Industry;
- provide workers with a PLSL entitlement after 7 years' service with accrual at the rate of the existing statutory entitlement of 8.67 weeks after 10 years' service;
- require an employer to pay a levy calculated on an employee's ordinary wages and report on an employee's service; and
- be administered by the existing PLSL Authority, QLeave (which currently administers PLSL schemes for the building and construction industry and the contract cleaning industry)

As the Industry is heavily reliant on Government funding, community based organisations such as the one I work for would need some form of support/ assistance, be it education or financial, in preparing for the introduction of a portable long service leave scheme and ensuring new systems and processes are in place to meet our reporting and remittance obligations.

A portable long service leave scheme is not the complete solution to the challenges faced by our Industry (most notably the attraction and retention issues already mentioned) but it must form part of the Government's Community Services Industry Strategy. It is for this reason that I supports the Bill.

Yours sincerely



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15 December 2019