

GOLD COAST Youth Service



Committee Secretary
Education, Employment and Small Business Committee
Parliament House
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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

The Gold Coast Youth Service Inc., makes 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.

1. Introduction

Gold Coast Youth Service Inc. is a leading non-profit youth support and specialist youth support and youth homelessness organisation. Gold Coast Youth Service services the needs of marginalised, disadvantaged and homeless young people and their families, across the Gold Coast region.

Gold Coast Youth Service was formed at a public meeting in February 1980 after two Social Work graduates spent two months living in their cars and conducting a survey as to the need for such a service on the Gold Coast.

Originally the main focus of the agency was a street work program of five nights per week. The workers operated from one small room in Surfers Paradise and worked at a hectic pace. In 1989, after receiving a grant from Jupiter’s Casino Community Benefit Trust, GCYS was able to purchase premises in Oak Ave in Miami, in which we still operate today.

The Gold Coast you service welcomes the introduction of the provision of paid long service leave to workers in the social and community services industry. The entitlement to long service leave regardless of where you work for one or more employees is needed in an industry where work is predominantly determined by short term government contracts. The introduction to portable

long service leave will be a welcome recognition of workers continuous service to the industry but more importantly to the people we seek to serve.

2. Why for this industry?

2.1. Competitive tendering and long term service in the industry

Due to the nature of competitive tendering not-for-profit organisations do not always retain their funding and as a result employees do not remain with the same employer for significant periods of time. However they may apply for their “old jobs” with the new organisation that was successful in receiving the funding. In addition many government contracts are of a short term nature and as such the Industry is sustained by short term Government funding arrangements. This has resulted in long term service by a person within the industry made up of short-term contracts with multiple employers. The Decision RIS at 2.3 *The SACS Sector* reaffirmed these points.

2.2. Conditions to retain quality staff with specialised skills and knowledge

It is widely documented that the SACS Industry is low paid, largely female employees 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. Many are employees who choose to remain within the industry, supporting the values it generates and the clients and communities the services support. Many workers in the youth work field have a commitment to better the outcomes for young people and many have worked to ensure their skills are relevant to working with this age cohort. When staff are not retained there is loss of these specific skill sets and also a cost to the employer when we need to train other staff to take their positions. In many cases training cannot replace years of on the job experience that forms a quality staff person.

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*.

2.3. Attraction for people to enter and retain into the industry

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)

2.4. Upskilling

For many youth workers they may commence in the industry with certificate or diploma qualifications however if they wish to remain in the industry many are required to upskill to a tertiary qualification. Many of the tertiary qualifications require an unpaid placement to be undertaken for a number of weeks. For those employees who have had the benefit of being able to retain their employment with one employer they have utilised their long service leave to upskill. Unfortunately for many in the industry they do not have the luxury of one employer and so have not had the opportunity to undertake a tertiary qualification.

3. Case studies

Case study 1: Bill (not his real name)

Bill commenced working in the social and community industry in October 2004 as an outreach youth worker for a large charitable organisation. Since 2004 he has had 5 employers with a range of tenures – both in a casual or PPT work. Bill has changed employment to increase his work skills and for better income opportunities. Bill has a large family that he supports and is the key income earner and at times the sole income earner.

During all his transition within the sector he has never been paid out long service leave – having now been in the industry for 15 years Bill cannot access any long service leave. With a large family at home as well as obligation to his extended family Bill has not been able to utilise his long service for caring for his children or parents. This has been particularly important when he was a single parent and he needed time out to attend school functions, be at home for the children on school holidays and to attend to his children when they were unwell. This meant he has not always been able to be there personally for his children when he has wanted to (though he has been supported by a loving family who have assisted when and where they could).

In addition the ability to be able to have access to long service will enable access to extended holidays with the family that would otherwise not be available over the course of his career.

Bill is also aware of many colleagues who have been able to access long service leave and have done so to further their study in the industry and in doing so increased their chances of promotion and income. This is due to the fact that many social sciences degrees require a student placement which is unpaid and people need PSL to complete the study leave. Needless to say with a large family to support this has never been an option for Bill.

Bill feels really “ripped off” that due to the nature of work in this industry he has not been able to have access to long service leave.

Case study 2: Sandra

Sandra commenced working in the social and community industry in February 2007 as a residential youth worker for a small charitable organisation. Since 2007 she has had 4 employers in predominantly permanent positions. Sandra changed employment to diversify her skills and increase her employment opportunities in the industry.

Sandra is keen continue her studies and has been unable to do due to the cost of taking time out of work as this is too large a financial impact on her family. Sandra has also had some health issues and had to take time out of the workforce which created financial and personal stress on her and her family.

Sandra feel that she and her family would be have been in a better financial position should portable long service leave been available to her.

In conclusion, as the Industry is heavily reliant on Government funding, organisations like ours 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 our organisation supports the Bill.

Yours sincerely



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