Dear Committee.

I have responded to the relevant terms of reference below.

a) the incidence of wage theft in Queensland, with reference also to evidence of wage theft from other parts of Australia

Between December 2017 and February 2018, me and my colleagues at the time experienced wage theft while working as security officers in the security services industry. The wage theft was in the form of underpayment of wages. When I raised the underpayment with my manager, he threatened my employment would be terminated if I was to pursue my entitlements.

b) the impact of wage theft on workers, families, law-abiding businesses, the economy and community

The coercion and underpayment of wages caused me to experience work-related stress. Furthermore, the circumstances were also stressful for my spouse as we have four young children to support.

f) the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework at state and federal level in dealing with wage theft and supporting affected workers

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) said they usually only investigate issues when they have received complaints from a number of employees. When I approached other employees, they were concerned that reporting the underpayment of wages to the FWO would lead to them losing their jobs.

g) options for ensuring wage theft is eradicated, including consideration of regulatory and other measures either implemented or proposed in other jurisdictions interstate, nationally or internationally and the role of industrial organisations, including unions and employer registered bodies in addressing and preventing wage theft

On 26 May 2018, the Victorian Premier announced, if re-elected, he would introduce jail terms for '…employers who deliberately withhold wages, superannuation or other employee entitlements, falsify employment records, or fail to keep employment records…' This is an option which would deter employers from unlawfully exploiting workers and an option I think the Queensland Legislative Assembly should consider.

I appreciate the time taken to consider my submission.

Justin Cobbett

i https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/dodgy-employers-to-face-jail-for-wage-theft/