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EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mrs LM Linard MP (Chair)
Mr N Dametto MP
Mr MP Healy MP
Mr BM Saunders MP
Mr EJ Sorensen MP
Mrs SM Wilson MP

Staff present:

Ms L Manderson (Acting Committee Secretary)
Ms E Jameson (Inquiry Secretary)

PRIVATE HEARING—INQUIRY INTO WAGE THEFT IN QUEENSLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

(In camera)

WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Maryborough

CLARK, Mr Blade, Private capacity (via teleconference)

LOVETT, Ms Michelle, Private capacity (via teleconference)

CHAIR: We are currently in private session. I understand you requested that. Thank you for making yourselves available today to assist the committee. I am sorry we did not get the opportunity to catch up with you as planned yesterday. For your information, the evidence you provide today will be recorded by Hansard and a transcript of this private session will be provided to you for review. The committee does not intend to publish these proceedings. Should the committee later wish to publish any part of your evidence, we are required to seek your views before doing so in accordance with schedule 3 of our standing orders.

With those formalities out of the way, I will just let you know that you are speaking to the whole committee. There are six members here: the member for Pumicestone, the member for Hervey Bay, the member for Hinchinbrook, the member for Cairns, the member for Maryborough and myself, the member for Nudgee. We will take turns asking you questions, but we would very much appreciate hearing some of your story.

Mr Clark: I started working at Cooloola Cove Takeaway & Cafe in May 2017. I started 31 May. I was happy working there. I always put in a lot of effort with what I did. I was always happy with some school funds there or for birthdays. I was going to do a cert 3 in hospitality traineeship there. That was offered to me by Tracey, my boss. We had been organising it for a good month or so before I got fired. We noticed my wages had been wrong. Sometimes the pay cycle was three days behind and then sometimes it was 10 days behind. Sometimes I was not getting Saturday and Sunday wages, that kind of stuff, holiday wages and uniform allowance. A lot of stuff was just not there.

We brought up the issue a while back a little after I started working. Tracey set up a meeting with the bookkeeper. We sorted it out, because I was on the wrong award. I got a statutory declaration saying I did not have to pay back anything that I might have been overpaid. We thought that was sorted out at the time because I was put on the right award. A few months ago when I was still working there we brought up my wages again because they were wrong still. That is where all the issues began. There was stuff like we all agreed to have my time in lieu paid out, but I never got that. There were a couple of holidays that I worked that I never got paid for at all. There were a few weeks where I was not paid at all for about two weeks. My super had not been paid at all.

I got mum to help me try to sort this out. We sent Tracey an email asking for a copy of all my payslips and time sheets so we could try to figure it out and find out what is wrong. In May this year as well Tracey and her husband Dave, the owners of the shop, took a month's holiday across the world. That is when I did not get paid for two weeks and I never got any payslips after that. The shop was not very good then. They were going to make me work 47 hours or something. It was only me and their daughter running the shop for most of the days every week.

When they got back, that is when we brought up the payslips and stuff again. Once we asked, they removed uniforms. After that we started asking about more stuff. We asked her to give us all the payslips and that within a week. She asked for two weeks. We said okay, that's fine. Then when the two weeks were up she came to me directly and said that I need to give her permission to give it to my mum, which I had already done several times. I did that. Then straight after we talked about that, Tracey said they are going to be moving all full-time staff to casual. I was the only full-time staff at the time. I obviously did not agree to that. I said, 'I would rather think about it and talk to my parents.'

The next day I decided to have the day off to get all this stuff organised and try to sort out some things. We gave them a letter of demand asking for my payslips. That is the morning I was fired in front of everyone in the shop. After that we got an email a couple of hours later saying, 'For the avoidance of doubt, you are still employed and must attend work tomorrow as normal.' It also said, 'If you continue to fail adhering to the rules you will be punished with disciplinary action.' We obviously replied, because I was told in person that I was fired and not to come back in or there would be a restraining order against me. I decided that is what we're going with, because I was told in person and I did not want to go back if it was going to be straight after that or the same thing happened again.

We kept looking into it more. We called up the ATO and stuff to try to find out my super. We also contacted Fair Work. We organised a hearing which Tracey had declined to attend multiple times until after I was fired. Then after I was fired she said yes. In the hearing at first she only offered one week's wages as compensation for being fired. We were trying to get compensation for hurt and humiliation. They started off with one week. They already owed me \$3,500 in just wages they have not paid me, so we said no. We kept talking for a few hours until it got up to, I think, \$2,700.

It was late at the time. My dad and all of my siblings were in the car waiting outside for a few hours and it was getting late at night. I did not want to keep them waiting, so we agreed to that. It was just meant to be compensation. Tracey requested that they do up the contract to say that we agreed and that she will pay me, but the contract that Dave wanted was going to remove a lot of my rights. They were going to make me return all the payslips; they were going to say I could not take any further action; that the money was for my wages and everything; and that after I signed it I was not allowed to discuss it with anyone. I was not allowed to do anything. Obviously we did not sign that.

There were also multiple staff letters after we started discussions while I was still working there. They were cancelling the uniform. Immediately after I dyed my hair they said that we were not allowed to do that anymore and that if we have that we will be fired. There was a lot of stuff. When I was asked to change to casual, they would not pay my uniform allowance or anything unless I agreed to go casual. We had been going forward to court more. While this was happening we got my PAYG salary. I was paid \$18,628, but in my bank I only received \$17,000 so there was a big total of at least \$1,600 that was not there.

From the payslips that we do have, sometimes I was not paid my Saturday rates at all, which we have proof of. I was not paid any holidays rates which I worked. My hours would always change. I would always work more than 38 hours sometimes. I would be doing split shifts where I would work from 7 in the morning until 9 at night. That is pretty much how it has been. It has been really difficult to try to get my money. It has been going on for a couple of months now.

CHAIR: Thank you, Blade. Michelle, do you want to say anything?

Ms Lovett: I was just going to say that Blade was hired in May last year. At the start of his employment he never received a Fair Work statement or agreement outlining his award or what his hours would be or his position within the business. Then in July 2017 I realised they had him on the retail award, and I pointed this out to the employer. We sat down and discussed this. She decided to put Blade on the fast food award. At this point she also prepared a statutory declaration to state Blade's unpaid sick leave and that he was not required to pay back any money. She required the statutory declaration so that they could receive the government grant for the Youth Boost allowance, I think it was, to have the system pay for his wages.

At this point we thought everything had been sorted. Then in October Blade started working back late. I asked him if he was doing extra hours and he said yes; however, he was not receiving payment for the hours every week. They were accruing as time in lieu. I asked him how many hours he had worked up and he said he was not sure, that his boss had just been remembering his hours. I said to him, 'That does not sound right, because you will not remember them correctly.' Blade went to work the next day and said that he had organised a meeting with his employer to discuss his time in lieu and recording his hours.

When I attended that meeting, Tracey was very aggressive to me. She told me that it is none of my business and I was not to interfere in her business at all. I explained to her that as Blade was 16, if there is an issue—being his first job, he is not sure about his entitlements—and he needs me to help discuss it, I will be doing that and they need to record his hours correctly. At this point she was aggravated with me and said that, 'He will no longer be doing time in lieu as it is too much of a hassle to record the hours.' She will pay him out the hours he had worked. Blade has never received payment for those hours.

Prior to the employers going on their holiday Blade brought home an information sheet about the certificate 3 in hospitality they wanted to put him on. They had advised him that his hourly rate would not change if he went onto the traineeship. I was not sure about this, because I was under the belief that traineeship hours were lower. I contacted the Fair Work Ombudsman, who did confirm that hours would be lower. I said to Blade, 'We need to discuss this with the employer when they get back from holidays.'

While the employers were on holidays, Blade was working quite a number of hours in the shop and he did not receive payslips. We noticed that when he did get paid, his payments were not reflecting the hours he had actually worked. Two of these payments were actually made late due to the employer not being able to make them on time. I had a look at his payslips and we looked at his superannuation. We noticed that Blade had not been receiving uniform allowance. His Saturday and Sunday penalty rates were not correct. His annual leave had been recorded incorrectly. In one week it equated to 171 hours worth of annual leave taken. His year-to-date balance was up and down. One week it would have \$15,000 and then in the next two weeks it would jump up to \$17,000. His superannuation had not been paid at all.

I rang the Fair Work Ombudsman and spoke with Prianka. They advised they sent through an email to do up a letter asking about his wages and to sit down and discuss this. We received an email that the employer would attend to it in due course and, while we had given seven days, she would require 14 days to prepare documents. In the meantime, Blade continued to work. She also asked if she could email them directly to Blade. I believe Prianka from the Fair Work Ombudsman advised her that it is perfectly fine for Blade to have them emailed to me.

Blade continued working. He came home with a staff changes letter which stated that the uniform would now be removed as of 18 June. They were only allowed to have one hair colour. It also stated, 'Any discussion regarding employment at Cooloola Cove Takeaway & Café must be discussed only with David and Tracey and must not be discussed with anyone outside of our organisation. Continually failing to adhere to the changes may result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of your employment.' That was a little bit harsh considering Blade has been continuing to get his pay slips and time sheets.

The following day when Blade went to work he came home and told me that the employer had asked him to go to casual and he would receive the Gympie show public holiday payment, uniform allowance and annual leave only if he agreed to go on to casual. He needed to provide written permission from me to also look at his pay slips. Blade is the only full-time employee there, so I felt that this was directly because he had been asking about his entitlements. We had previously been working with Prianka from the Fair Work Ombudsman and had got legal advice from Legal Aid. It has been two weeks now since we had asked for time to meet with them and receive his pay slips.

We had been advised to hand in a letter of demand to request pay slips and time sheets. Blade and I talked about that and we handed that in. When we entered the shop we handed in the letter and David Shaw yelled at Blade and fired him and threatened restraining orders against both him and myself and he was banned from the shop.

We contacted the Fair Work Ombudsman who advised us to put in a general protections application, so we did that. They did email for the (inaudible) and he was required to attend work the next day unless he has a valid reason. We continued on to the conference with the Fair Work Commission. We still have not received any time sheets or pay slips. During that conference the employer did not discuss the situation around Blade's termination and insisted that they had overpaid him to the point that they requested we email through pay slips for us to try and show that he has not been paid properly and they are insisting they have overpaid him \$713, which is not correct.

At the end of the conference Blade had to keep hanging up and they would call back and hang up and call back. They did agree to (inaudible). It was 6.30 at night-time now. We wanted to go home. We had a two-hour drive home. We left there and we received a deed of release which had the date of his employment as 1 July 2017, which was incorrect, and it does say for his unpaid wages and he needs to return all confidential information, anything that they deem to be confidential—all claims under the Fair Work Act, Fair Work legislation, Australian consumer law, absolutely everything. I have not got Blade to find that. He was not aware that (inaudible) so we have not found that deed of release and we have a certificate from the Fair Work Commission to proceed in court to try and sue for wages under the general protections application.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I know you have given the committee a lot of detail, and that is understandable given you have been progressing through this for some months now. We might move to questions, but you did get quite quiet, Michelle, just at the end there. I do apologise; the sound is a bit of a challenge, but we will work through it. With the fast-food award, just to start with them changing your hours or suggesting from full time to casual, my understanding of the fast-food award is that the change between a 16-year-old on full time to casual would be about \$2 more an hour. That would actually potentially be of benefit, so was it your thinking and understanding that they were seeking to cut your hours? Why did they seek to change them?

Mr Clark: They did say they would cut my hours, only maybe two or three hours a day, and not working all week.

CHAIR: Which is what you would expect they were doing it for. You have outlined a lot of different issues that you have been raising, and quite quickly. I would say that what we often hear, Blade, with young people is that they do not necessarily know their entitlements and what they should be being paid until much later, but you obviously very quickly raised and continued to raise these sorts of issues with the employer. Was the employer a small business, a sole trader?

Mr Clark: Yes.

CHAIR: Was it your view that the employer just did not seem able to be compliant with the legislation or do you feel they did not have a good payment system—they went away and no-one was there to pay you—or is it that you feel that they were knowingly and deliberately underpaying you to save money?

Mr Clark: Knowingly. I knew they had already done it to other staff before me and I was kind of expecting it, but I did not know how much because we had no pay slips to tell.

CHAIR: They have obviously got what—a reputation in the area or amongst young people who have worked there?

Mr Clark: There were only about two other people before me that they did it to. They were not there for that long.

CHAIR: Did they leave because they were so unhappy with it? Did they raise it with the employer?

Mr Clark: No, they got fired.

CHAIR: They got fired for what?

Mr Clark: They got the grants for those two I believe and about maybe six or seven months in they both got fired.

CHAIR: Right. Was that a deliberate timing within the overall payment of the grant or why do you feel that they were fired around the same time?

Mr Clark: I know for one of them they said the only reason they were keeping him was because of the grant—David had said that to me directly—and I am pretty sure the other one was on a contract. I am not exactly sure, but he was not getting paid properly and when he asked and stuff like that he got fired straightaway.

CHAIR: Blade, why would you want to work for people like that?

Mr Clark: It was the only job I could get in the town. I did not think they were being that bad at the time. I did not know how much they were doing.

CHAIR: There is no judgement in that for you, by the way. We all understand. We all need to work and we all need to earn an income; it is just that we are interested as to why.

Mr Clark: Yes. It was my first job. I was trying to get some money and I did not really know how much they were doing until afterwards.

CHAIR: You were working 38 hours?

Mr Clark: Most of the time it would be a bit more.

CHAIR: Okay, so you were paid for 38 hours but you were routinely working a bit more—40, 41, 48?

Mr Clark: Yes. It went up to 40 or 45 normally. That was a split shift from seven to nine.

CHAIR: And you were working weekends?

Mr Clark: Yes.

CHAIR: And you never got a pay slip?

Mr Clark: No, I got a few, but they were really on and off and on the holidays I never got any.

CHAIR: Those pay slips did not show that you were paid a higher rate? I think your hourly rate would be somewhere about \$10 but on weekends would be \$12 to \$14. Did it show that you were getting the higher rate on Saturdays and Sundays?

Mr Clark: Some do, some do not.

CHAIR: So some show that you were getting paid properly and others show that you were not?

Mr Clark: Yes.

CHAIR: Do you have any insight into why you were paid properly sometimes but not properly other times?

Mr Clark: I am really not sure. I mostly thought it was something to do with when I started there I worked for a week but would not get paid because they said my pay would be a week behind almost. I did not know that was wrong or different until a long time after. The pay cycle was sometimes three days behind and 10 days behind and three again. Somehow during the line there has been a few weeks of pays missing.

CHAIR: Did they explain to you why your pay was not paid on the same—

Mr Clark: No, they never explained that.

CHAIR: They would just say, 'You're not getting paid for another three days or 10 days?'

Mr Clark: No. I would always get paid every week that I know of, but my pay slips showed that I had somehow lost a week of pay.

CHAIR: Right, and were you paid into your account?

Mr Clark: Yes. My pay as you go summary says I got 54 payments but my bank deposit only shows 51.

CHAIR: Right. That is very dishonest. Why did you want to tell us your story in private rather than in public?

Mr Clark: Because of the court case. We are not sure what we can and cannot do, really.

CHAIR: You are taking a civil case forward, aren't you? Just to let you know, we always honour the request to be in private. It just means that we cannot provide news details of the situation. Just so that you know, because of the parliamentary privilege under which we operate and the fact that there is a civil case, there is nothing limiting your right and capacity to provide this information to us in public or private, but we certainly honour that you have requested private.

Mr Clark: Yes, that is fine if it is not private then. We just were not sure.

CHAIR: Okay. It just means that if you are happy for it not to be private then members of this committee can use the name of the employer and the details of what you have experienced, so that is absolutely up to yourself and your mum.

Mr Clark: Yes, that is completely fine.

CHAIR: How old are you now, Blade?

Mr Clark: Turning 17 in two weeks.

CHAIR: Okay, so it definitely is up to you and your mum. Thank you. I could ask you lots more questions, but I want to give my colleagues the opportunity to ask questions as well. Thank you for outlining those details and I am going to invite other committee members to ask you questions.

Mrs WILSON: You mentioned the Queensland Youth Boost program. Blade and Michelle, were you linked with a job service provider at all to gain that employment?

Ms Lovett: Tracey has the business and then she also works with, I think it is, Steps.

Mrs WILSON: Yes, Steps employment services.

Ms Lovett: The email I think is from one of them, so I believe she would have been aware of what—

Mrs WILSON: What wage subsidies were available for her company. I know with the job boost program, particularly with that youth one, employers are only allowed to have, say, five jobseekers or five applicants gain that during the course of the program. Do you think there were other employees there, Blade, that potentially were on the same—

Ms Lovett: We have been contacted by the compliance unit at Queensland Treasury because of the information they have provided with regard to Blade's employment status, what he has been paid and the date he started. They have requested his pay slips because they have given the wrong information and they asked about six or seven other employees in terms of how long they had worked there and if they were full time or casual.

Mrs WILSON: Yes, because it is \$20,000.

Ms Lovett: Yes, I believe that the employer has—

Mrs WILSON: Yes, they have obligations to be providing correct pay slips and everything like that, so to me that is a fraud case that is also affecting the Queensland government in a lot of ways.

Ms Lovett: Yes. They have multiple, multiple grants they have received and provided false information. As well as that the Australian Taxation Office and Julieanne Erhart from the auditing team has requested all of Blade's pay slips, employment confirmation letter and pay as you go summary. When we inquired about his superannuation the employer had told the ATO that Blade had only been working for six months full time. However, he has been working from 31 May up until 12 June, so it was just over a year. They are also now auditing them.

Mrs WILSON: That is it. For them to be able to gain that final payment of the wage subsidy it has to be 12 months at 52 weeks, so 12 June is why they have been able to pick that up. Best of luck and good on you, Mum, for fighting for your son.

Mr HEALY: Blade and Michelle, thank you very much for sharing your terrible story with us. I really appreciate it and I think it is fantastic that you are pursuing this. My question is pretty straightforward. A lot of people that we have spoken to have been reluctant to pursue legal action due to cost. I may have missed this, but you are obviously pursuing this. Is this coming at a significant cost to yourself, Michelle and Blade? Are you there? I think we have lost them.

CHAIR: All right. We will call them again.

Mr Clark: Hello?

Mr HEALY: Blade?

Mr Clark: Yes.

Mr HEALY: It is Michael Healy from the committee. How are you?

Mr Clark: Good. How are you?

Mr HEALY: Yes, good. Sorry about that. We dropped out there. I had a question, if that is all right?

Mr Clark: Yes.

Mr HEALY: I am not sure how far I got in my spiel before you cut out, but I want to firstly congratulate you and your mother for pursuing this. We think it is fantastic. You have been enormously wronged. To see you pursuing this is terrific. We have had a number of parents appear before the committee for the same reason, Michelle, that you are, because you are seeing an injustice and it is just not fair and it is just not right.

Ms Lovett: Yes.

Mr HEALY: One of the things that is of interest is that we have met with a number of people who have been in similar situations. They have been reluctant to pursue this through the courts for a variety of reasons. A lot of that is to do with the cost. I may have missed this, but I know that you have legal proceedings underway. Is that coming at a significant cost to you?

Ms Lovett: No, I am going to self-litigate for Blade. I have always had an interest in the law and I have enrolled to do a Bachelor of Laws. I have deferred that at the moment and I am researching as much employment law and case management as I possibly can to use it as experience. I think, because I have that interest, I am pursuing it a bit harder than maybe most parents. Even though I have an interest, it is still very difficult. Obviously, without formal training, I am still climbing walls, but I am trying to get through.

Mr HEALY: That is terrific. Obviously, you would be getting a bit of counsel on the side?

Ms Lovett: No.

Mr HEALY: No, not at all?

Ms Lovett: No, we have found it very difficult. We have applied for Legal Aid. We keep getting a yes and a no, because they do not have a lot of employment funding. They have given us some advice, but very little. I have not managed to find any pro bono or anything to get any form of assistance to even help write an opening statement, and all of that sort of stuff.

Mr HEALY: This has impacted significantly on you and Blade. This is a huge impact on your life.

Ms Lovett: Absolutely, yes. It is very stressful.

Mr HEALY: I will pass you back to the chair. I want to finish up by saying that I wish you nothing but the best. Please have faith in the system, because we will do what we can at our end.

Ms Lovett: Thank you.

Mr HEALY: Thanks very much.

CHAIR: Thank you. I invite the member for Hervey Bay, Ted Sorensen, to ask some questions.

Mr SORENSEN: Hello, Michelle. Is your son still going to school?

Ms Lovett: No, he had left. He completed year 10 and wanted to work, so he went into full-time employment. He has been applying for work since his termination. He has not succeeded in that.

Mr SORENSEN: You have been going through work agencies?

Ms Lovett: No, he has not. He has just been handing out resumes. I have also had to relocate over the last week, so that has put a hold on it.

Mr SORENSEN: Yes.

Ms Lovett: It is very late in the year for him to return to year 11. If he does, he will have to start—

Mr SORENSEN: You referred before that the business got a grant to provide the employment in the first place. Do you think that they should have the responsibility to look after your son's wages, conditions and things like that?

Ms Lovett: Absolutely, yes.

Mr SORENSEN: Do you think that you have been left down by them?

Ms Lovett: Yes. Being his first job, we trusted them to help build his character. He has always wanted to work and to give him that experience to help him create a long life of employment with good morals and they have let him down.

Mr SORENSEN: I started work really young, too. I know what they feel like. They want to get out there and earn money. He is not having a very good experience, is he?

Ms Lovett: No. When he originally started he was 15, because he turned 16 in September. For someone of that age to commit to full-time work, always on time, I applaud him, because he wanted to work, this is what he wanted.

Mr SORENSEN: My belief is that the agency should have been looking after him a little bit better than what they have. Those are my feelings.

Ms Lovett: Yes.

Mr SORENSEN: I will hand you back to the chairperson.

CHAIR: I have a supplementary question and then we will let both of you go. There was mention in that contract that they sought for you to sign that you would have to return all of the pay slips. Of course, pay slips are your son's property; they are not the organisation's, because they relate to his payment. You never got any. They are obviously referring to the few that you have; is that right?

Ms Lovett: Yes.

CHAIR: I will just clarify, because I think I missed that detail when you were talking to my colleague the member for Pumicestone, when Blade started working there, did he go through some kind of organisation rather than just get the job directly?

Ms Lovett: He just handed in his resume.

CHAIR: Did you say that they got some kind of incentive for him to work there? I am just coming back to the comments that were made by the member for Hervey Bay. What was the organisation that should have been taking care of him? It was not a job agency. The organisation did not get a Youth Boost payment?

Ms Lovett: Yes, the organisation did. Blade was not through any job network.

CHAIR: Sorry, so they did.

Ms Lovett: Yes, because Tracy has been the owner of the business. She works for STEPS employment, I think it is, or APM—one of them. She is more than aware of what she can claim for him.

CHAIR: She is currently employed by them. Does the husband work in the business, or do they just employ young people?

Ms Lovett: The husband sometimes was in the business. They mainly were young people. It is a partnership business.

Mr Clark: Dave used to work there a lot, but they started hiring more and more people. There were always at least two adults. One would work in the morning and one at night, but the rest of the staff, there were maybe six others all under 16.

CHAIR: What was the total number of employees in the organisation?

Mr Clark: I think there were about 10.

CHAIR: Are those individuals raising similar issues?

Mr Clark: A couple of them have.

CHAIR: Are they still working there?

Mr Clark: They have gone now.

CHAIR: They have gone?

Mr Clark: Yes. One of them was their own daughter. She said she knows that they have done it before.

CHAIR: Okay. That must have been a difficult conversation for the two of you. She knew that they had done it before. How do you think she felt about that? Did she indicate that to you?

Mr Clark: She was advising that I try to pursue it as much as I can and try to get out of it. She was a bit more hesitant, obviously being their daughter.

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Clark: They tried to completely stop her. They fired her. She took stress leave because they left her in charge completely during the month that they were going. It was just her all morning and all night.

CHAIR: They fired their daughter as well?

Mr Clark: Yes. I know she said that, after they fired her, they kept her on because they got a grant for her. They told all the people that she was still working there for a good month or two after they fired her.

Ms Lovett: Which is why Queensland Treasury—they had done the same with Blade; that he was still employed—contacted us.

CHAIR: They fired their daughter and then they got a Youth Boost for her and re-employed her and then said she worked there longer than she did. How long would it have been? Another two or three months?

Mr Clark: Yes, two or three months.

CHAIR: For the first payment, I suppose. That is an awful situation. I am so sorry that you have experienced that. You are so young, Blade. The committee has heard, which is concerning, too, that certainly hospitality—the food sector—is an industry in which this seems to be quite rife. Some say that they have had job after job where this is a problem. That is obviously a concern to the committee. It takes great courage to raise these sorts of issues. You obviously have a very loving and a good mum.

Ms Lovett: Yes, I am doing my best. I am scared and nervous.

CHAIR: About going to court, you mean?

Ms Lovett: Yes. I just want to make sure that I get it right—like the whole writing and speaking fluently and that. I have plenty of evidence—documents—to provide. I think our biggest hurdle is whether Blade would be bound by a deed of release. I think that is our biggest hurdle that we have to overcome.

CHAIR: A deed of release in regard to employment or do you mean information?

Ms Lovett: To the employment—whether he is bound by that deed of release for \$2,600. I think that is our biggest hurdle that we have to overcome.

CHAIR: I am a mother of two boys myself. It sounds like, as any mother would, you are doing everything you can for him. I know that court, much like parliament, is all about writing down dates in sequential order and information and being able to relay that. You have certainly done that well today. On behalf of the committee, I wish you all the best—and—you too, Blade. I hope that your next employment experience is a far more positive one.

Ms Lovett: Yes.

Mr Clark: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 10.41 am.