

My name is Christine Ellrott, I live in Mackay. I can be contacted on [REDACTED] or via e-mail.

I would like to make a submission to your enquiry.

My main concern is the drain of population from the central Queensland towns and regions. It must be brought to your notice a practice of several companies in the Mackay region of forcing employees onto contracts with employment agencies and insisting that the worker leave the region to live either in SE Queensland or the Cairns area to retain their employment.

Following are some cases of this that I have become aware of. I will not name the companies or the persons involved but you could easily follow up on this yourselves.

Case 1. Tom [diesel fitter] works for a major mine service company in Mackay. Tom wishes to improve his skills by moving from Team A to Team B within the same company.

Tom is currently paid from the company payroll. If he moves to Team B he is forced to take a contract with a workforce employment company and must move to either the Sunshine Coast or Cairns.

Case 2. Jim,[electrician] working for the same company in Mackay has taken a contract with the employment company and has been given notice to leave the Mackay area and live at either Cairns or the Sunshine Coast.

Jim has a family and does not wish to leave the area. He has been told that if he does not leave by July 2015 his contract will be terminated and he will be sacked.

Case 3. Bill and Bess both work in the Mackay area and have two children in primary school. They own their own home. Bill is forced to take a contract to retain his position with the company he is with.

Bill is told that he must move to Brisbane to an area within a certain radius of the Brisbane airport. The family do not wish to do this. They have been forced to sell their home into a depressed market, take the children out of their school and Bess must resign from her position to make the move. They will then be forced to either buy a house in a much higher priced market or pay high rent to live in the area dictated to them by the employment company. They are not happy in their new environment but say they have no choice as the husband must have a job.

To me this is discrimination no matter how you look at it.

There are many more cases similar to those mentioned above.

This slow drain of families and single people out of the region is having a devastating flow-on effect on the region. In particular I can refer to the Mackay district. You would be aware that there is a 9% plus vacancy rate in the rental market in Mackay and district. Rents have fallen to a level that is not sustainable for the owners of the properties, while Council charges, insurances etc have all increased.

Businesses in the area are suffering, many shops have closed in the two major shopping centres and you only have to drive around the industrial area of Paget to see the number of vacant sheds.

This population drain from the area seems to have gone unnoticed by politicians and councils. I believe it is having a worse effect on the community than the two original FIFO mines approved by the government. This practice of forcing workers to leave the area should be brought out into the open and the companies should be made to cease the practice immediately. There can be no sensible reason for this other than the almighty dollar.

If any more 100% FIFO mines are approved the situation will no doubt get worse.

- [The extent and projected growth in FIFO work practices by region and industry;](#)

If companies wish to have their workforce FIFO why does it have to be from Brisbane or Cairns areas. It is possible that staff could be flown from Mackay, Rockhampton etc to the mine sites for a more economical rate than flying them from further afield.

Adani /Camrichael Mine

I believe that this proposed mine has been given approval to have a 100% FIFO workforce.

Can the residents of Central Queensland be given a rock solid guarantee that there will be no imported '457 Visa' workers for this mine. It could not be possible that the company would claim that there is a shortage of workers for the project.

Why is it that the workers cannot be given the option to live in mining communities, Clermont, Moranbah if they choose. As long as workers appear at the worksite on time where they live should not be concern of the mining company.

I realize that workers cannot live next door to a minesite unless in a camp but workers should not be forced to live 1000km away when they could easily live much closer and maintain a more family orientated lifestyle.

There are mines communities almost becoming ghost towns, housing values have fallen 70% or more in some towns and community services are being withdrawn, e.g. Doctor at Nebo etc etc. These towns have been built to cater for mine working families and they were vibrant communities with excellent facilities which are slowly being lost because of FIFO.

I am aware that mining companies made a decision to have FIFO to break the 'mines culture' in the mining towns, break the union hold on workers, stop unnecessary sick days and stop theft from minesites.

The government reason for FIFO was to increase employment in areas of high unemployment at the time and to spread wealth across the state. Well, the area of high unemployment, excess rental properties and low wages is now Central Queensland.

Much noise has been made by previous politicians but nothing has ever been done to address the problem. Government needs to ensure that mining companies do not choose their staff on where they live but the best person for the job.

- [The effects on families of rostering practices in mines using FIFO workforces;](#)

Family life cannot function in the traditional way. One Parent[ sometimes two] is away for between 50 – 75% of the time. It is not possible for relationships to withstand this amount of time away. Many relationships fail and families are torn apart. This creates stress for both adults as well as the children. Those working in the mining area will be suffering from stress because of this. Some workers are working 26 days on and only 9 days off. It is not possible to maintain a family life with these hours. Children would hardly know who their parent is when they walk in the door.

The government will be forced to pay a lot more single mothers payments and children will be without a two parent family which is not the ideal situation at all.

Families should be able to live together, with both parents home most nights, in the mining towns that were built for this purpose.

[The commuting practices for FIFO workforces, including the amount of time spent travelling, the methods of transportation, and adequacy of compensation paid for commuting travel times](#)

If mining companies are genuinely concerned about the welfare of staff while driving their own vehicles to and from the minesite this can easily be overcome by providing compulsory BIBO

from the closer regional areas, e.g. Mackay and Rockhampton etc. This would be more economical than flying workers in from 1000km away.

I believe that those workers who still travel to the minesite from regional areas are no longer paid for travel time.

### The effectiveness of current responses to impacts of FIFO workforces of the Commonwealth, State and Local Governments

To date there has been no effective response from either Federal or State Governments to lessen the impact of FIFO. It seems that they have washed their hands of the matter and are allowing the practice to continue. In Federal government unless both sides can agree nothing will ever get done and this seems to be the usual outcome on everything in Canberra.

I am hoping that the State Government can sensibly arrange for some life to come back into Central Queensland and have more workers housed in the area.