

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FIFO Submission  
**Date:** Thursday, 7 May 2015 9:37:32 PM

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Dear Sir,

I have the good fortune to have an employer that gives employees a choice of residence, with employees being able to base themselves near the mine, or if they live elsewhere provide accommodation during roster. This is as it should be, where employees are **free** to choose where we reside.

Mandatory FIFO denies employees that choice. It also impacts on the ability of employees to live in coastal communities with relatively short travel times for the tour, or days on. It is not only the traditional mining towns that are impacted, but regional communities that rely on the mines and mineworkers. Mackay is suffering greatly. Many jobs in the mines have disappeared or are now only available to people who reside outside the region. As a result, there is little money to flow through the economy and many businesses, small and large, are struggling. One need only visit major retailers on the weekend to see the decline in spending, or walk through the city heart to see the number of vacant shops. It has been often stated that for each job in the mines, there are five in town. It is the loss of these jobs that is having the greatest impact on the major regional communities.

Another result of the exodus from the region is the devaluing of “the great Australian Dream” – our homes. Houses are for sale for \$100,000 less than they were purchased because owners are desperate to move and cannot realise a more realistic price. For many, this is their only and greatest asset. Such losses are unaffordable, yet necessary for many simply to stay in the workforce. This is not how it should be. It is also grossly unfair on the families of mineworkers to have to relocate, leaving friends and family behind, just because the breadwinner has to live in Brisbane or Cairns so he can work in the Bowen Basin – only a short drive from Mackay.

Others who have invested in properties for their future so as not to burden taxpayers with welfare in their retirement now find themselves with assets that cannot be rented out for a fair price (Mackay has the highest vacancy rate in Queensland – 9.4% against 0.5% only a couple of years ago, coupled with high insurance premiums, much higher rates than the south east corner, and a punitive additional rate charge levied against non owner-occupiers). Many of these are now rented for less than they are costing their owners, or sitting vacant.

Former mineworkers find themselves unable to obtain employment outside the mining industry due either to erroneous perceptions of miners, or a belief that the workers will leave their new employers as soon as (or rather, if) jobs become available in the mining industry again. This further adds to the stress of unemployment, leading to family

breakup and affecting physical and emotional wellbeing, as evidenced in suicide rates and obesity. Of course, many of these former mineworkers have been paying significant amounts of income tax over the last few years and now find themselves ineligible for benefits from Centerlink due to their assets, despite having no income and no market available to reduce their assets.

Regards,

Sean Ewart