

Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers
Department of the Senate

futureofwork.sen@aph.gov.au

PO Box 4093
Ainslie ACT 2602
T (02) 6230 1775
F (02) 6230 1704
anglicare@anglicare.asn.au
www.anglicare.asn.au

17 January 2018

Submission to the inquiry into the impact of technological and other change on the future of work and workers in Australia

Anglicare Australia welcomes the focus of this inquiry on such a critical topic for the future of our community.

Our intent with this submission is to draw the Committee's attention to our Jobs Availability Snapshots (attached), completed in 2016 and 2017, as their findings and recommended policy approaches are directly relevant to the inquiry's Terms of Reference. Our key points are outlined below.

Employment strategies and job creation

Future employment strategies must be inclusionary and incorporate measures designed to ensure that people with significant barriers to work are not left behind, as they are now. As just one example, Australia has one of the lowest rates of job participation for people with a disability in the OECD.ⁱ As the Jobs Availability Snapshots highlight, we as a country have consistently failed to invest in strategies known and proven to be successful through both domestic trials and international policy examples to provide employment for those with significant barriers to work.

Such inclusionary employment strategies must reverse the current hostility to public investment in direct job creation. The evidence is overwhelming that publicly funded jobs are just as good for society as those that are privately funded. They lift people out of poverty, increase their ability to provide for their own needs and others, circulate money through the broader economy, and contribute through taxes. It is absurd and self-defeating to continue to spend hundreds of millions on assisting people to find work when there is a well-known and defined jobs deficit, particularly for people with significant barriers to work. Such money could be far better spent on direct job training and creation in areas of known current and future demand.

Human services are a significant part of the economy, with high and often unmet current demand for workers. Projected jobs growth in human services is unlikely to be significantly impacted by automation. This current and future demand is the same for regional and remote Australia as for our urban capitals, offering job opportunities nation-wide. They are also a critical services that underpin both individual and community wellbeing.

For human services to deliver on the promise of a better society, the wages and conditions of people who work in them are a central issue. Yet current trends and government policy overtly favour the further casualisation and undermining of wages and conditions in these services. Further, work human services work is highly gender skewed towards women and largely underpaid, and they are a significant area of public expenditure. They are therefore a critical sector to consider and test the points outlined above.

Job security and patterns of work

The systematic and ongoing corrosion of job security and conditions needs urgent attention. It is clear that Australia's industrial relations laws have not kept pace with increased forms of casualisation and other mechanisms that reduce workers' pay and conditions. Any envisioning of the future of work must be premised on providing secure and sufficient meaningful work for all, including the use of legislation to underpin it. Anglicare network members are increasingly providing emergency relief and other services to the working poor, and this trend is increasing.ⁱⁱ The fact that our services and government benefits are increasingly necessary to survive if you are a member of Australia's working poor simply means that government has socialised the cost of lower wages and conditions and privatised those foregone wages as corporate revenue.

Consideration of the legislative framework for the work should also include a fundamental overhaul of the hours expected for full-time work and known rates of productivity, given the strong evidence showing that Australians typically work significant amounts of unpaid overtime, current full-time hours are leading to declining health and well-being, and productivity is being undermined.ⁱⁱⁱ

Addressing structural inequalities and barriers to work

Any future employment strategies must explicitly address the gender pay gap with concrete measures, including consideration of legislative measures to end it. They must also include greater access to affordable childcare and extended parental leave for both parents. Again, human services provide a significant test-case of why these matters are so critical to the shape of our future workforce and its implications for overall community wellbeing.

Finally, any consideration of the future of work must also address the conditions of the unemployed. There is now overwhelming evidence that Australia's social security net is a poverty trap, not a safety net. Pertinent to this inquiry is the recognition that rates of Newstart are now so low they prevent people from finding work. No consideration of the future of work can be complete without serious engagement with these issues and recommendations to repair our social security system.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide input to this important inquiry, and urge you to engage with the evidence regarding jobs shortfalls and a failing system for people with significant barriers to work, as presented in our Jobs Availability Snapshot. We further recommend that human services should be specifically considered as part of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations.

Please do not hesitate to contact Anglicare Australia if we can assist further.

Yours Sincerely



Imogen Ebsworth
Director of Policy and Research
Anglicare Australia.

Attachments:

- **Anglicare Australia Jobs Availability Snapshot (2017).**
- **Anglicare Australia Jobs Availability Snapshot (2016).**

ⁱ <http://www.oecd.org/australia/australia-should-help-more-women-and-other-underemployed-groups-into-work.htm>

ⁱⁱ See for example <https://www.anglicarevic.org.au/australians-rich-and-poor-continuing-to-move-apart/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/jan/15/is-28-hours-ideal-working-week-for-healthy-life>