

SACS Portable Long Service Leave Consultation  
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**Subject:** Submission to the Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement on the investigation into the introduction of a portable long service leave scheme for the Social and Community Services Industry.

Our organisation, makes the following submission in support of the introduction of a Portable Long Service Leave (PLSL) scheme for workers employed in the social and community services (SACS) Industry in Queensland.

It is widely documented that the SACS Industry is low paid, largely female and often operates in environments of high stress, crisis and trauma, with the type of work undertaken often requiring employees to have some form of tertiary qualification. The Industry is sustained by short term Government funding arrangements, resulting in long term service within the industry made up of short term contracts with multiple employers. As Government funding is the primary source of revenue; the wages tend to be no more than the Award rate.

For these factors and others, employees rarely remain with a single employer for a decade or more. Yet many are loyal employees who choose to remain within the industry, supporting the values it generates and the clients and communities the services' support. Had these employees opted to work in less philanthropic industries, such as health, local government or the private sector they would undoubtedly be paid more, enjoyed a greater sense of employment security and had a greater opportunity to achieve long service and access their leave entitlement.

High employee mobility/turnover is a key workforce challenge for our Industry. Apart from the loss of expertise and continuity; employee turnover can be a major cost, draining resources from service delivery and employee development and training. The labor-intensive nature of service delivery, combined with the investment required in employee collaboration and the small size of many organisations, means that the impact of employee mobility/turnover can be more profound for SACS employers than what might be experienced in most other industries.

Employee mobility/turnover has the potential to be intensified even more were funding is driven by consumer demand such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) coupled with the required attraction of new employees to meet the increase in expected clients. It is therefore vital to find strategies to reward and retain employees, to ensure the SACS Industry's sustainability.

The Palaszczuk Government's commitment to fund pay equity rates and introduce longer term contracts is already creating a more sustainable social and community services industry. The establishment of a portable long service leave scheme that covers all employees across the varied sectors within the industry i.e. mental health; disability; child protection; homelessness and housing regardless of whether their employer is a for-profit or not-for-profit organisation, will build on this solid foundation by improving the lives of these employees and adding to the sustainability of the industry.

Our organisation is aware of existing obligations to account for the accrual of long service leave for employees. We envisage that any costs incurred in establishing the proposed scheme would be minimal if the existing authority in Queensland, QLeave, which administers the Contract Cleaning scheme, was utilized.

Children by Choice have a provision for access to long service leave pro-rata after 5 years as a means to attracting and retaining employees. We know within the Social and Community Services Industry this is a provision that other employers across different sectors of the industry provide to be competitive within a low wages market. We believe that the establishment of a portable long service leave scheme would need to make allowances for these provisions and would welcome the opportunity to explore and participate in further discussions to understand and develop what this might look like should the scheme be established.

A portable long service leave scheme is not the complete solution to the challenges faced by our industry most notably the attraction and retention issues faced by our industry, but it must form part of the Governments Community Services Industry Strategy. It is for this reason that our organisation supports The Services Union submission and call upon the Palaszczuk Government to progress the introduction of a portable long service leave scheme for all employees working in or in connection with Social and Community Services.

Yours sincerely



Bonney Corbin

President

Children by Choice