

The Australia Institute

Research that matters.

Reading *Between the lines* this week:

1. National Go Home On Time Day—November 25

Do you find yourself working back late? Never quite getting out the door on time? And is it a constant juggling act to manage the school run, household duties, and find the elusive 'work/life balance'? Well, you're not alone.

According to a new survey by The Australia Institute released today, Australians work more than two billion hours of unpaid overtime a year, with around half of all employees putting in more hours than they are paid for. International comparisons show that Australians work the longest hours in the Western world.

The 70 minutes of unpaid overtime worked each day by the typical full-time employee equates to a staggering 33 eight-hour days a year, or six and a half standard working weeks.

Put another way, Australian workers are 'donating' more than their annual leave entitlement back to their employers.

In recognition of the extent of unpaid overtime and overwork in Australia, the Institute has declared November 25 to be national Go Home On Time Day. We've set up a website www.gohomeontimeday.org.au where you can register your intention to participate and we'll send you a 'leave pass'. You can also invite overworked friends, family and colleagues to participate.

Most Australians have come to accept the ubiquitous need or expectation to work unpaid overtime, so for at least one day in the year we're hoping that employers will be flexible enough to simply let their employees go home on time.

National Go Home On Time Day on November 25 is intended to be a fun, inclusive and guilt-free way of raising awareness of the nature and extent of unpaid overtime in Australia and the important industrial, health and social consequences it often has.

If you'd like to participate go to www.gohomeontimeday.org.au or you can find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/gohomeontimeday>.

If you'd like to read the research paper, *Something for Nothing: unpaid overtime in Australia*, go to

<https://www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&act=display&type=1&pubid=702>

2. That other great moral challenge

Last week Greg Combet, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, spoke in inspirational terms about one of the big problems facing Australia. 'We should not ignore the demanding nature of this project, which will require every bit of scientific, technological and industrial capacity that Australia can muster', he said.

Unfortunately, Minister Combet was not speaking in his role as Assistant Climate-Change Minister when he made this stirring call to arms. Rather, it was our need to spend tens of billions of dollars and the next two decades building 12 new submarines that led to this outpouring of faith in the capacity of Australians to take on the big problems.

It is often said that the politics of tackling climate change are so hard because the costs are up-front and the benefits are in the future. Democracy, it is argued, is not capable of such long-term thinking.

The inconvenient truth is that our political leaders do not want to make the hard decisions necessary to prevent dangerous climate change; it should never be doubted, however, that those same politicians are both willing and able to make such long-run decisions in other portfolios. It will cost tens of billions of dollars to build submarines to replace the current ones we don't use.

The irony is that all of the macroeconomic modelling conducted shows that the up-front costs of tackling climate change are not even particularly large. The Treasury modelling of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), for example, suggests that tackling climate change would reduce the rate of growth of GDP by only 0.1 per cent each year ... that's about \$1 billion a year.

While some industries have talked up the direct costs to themselves, the modelling makes it clear that the overall cost to the economy as a whole is quite small.

The reason that our leaders find tackling climate change so hard compared to building submarines is that the first action alarms some big businesses while the second makes some very happy. When it comes to considering the national interest, it seems that some interests are more interesting than others.

To view a vodcast of Dr Richard Denniss, Executive Director of The Australia Institute, explaining why the proposed CPRS will not reduce emissions in Australia until at least 2033 go to

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=He5FN3IPA58>

3. Telemarketing: the lifeblood of commerce

The Do Not Call Register is the government's primary weapon against one of the most annoying features of modern life: telemarketers. In the four years since it began operation, almost four million numbers have been added to the Register, a testament to the strength of feeling against telemarketers in the community.

The Register is now the subject of a legislative review. A key question for the review is whether the current 'opt-out' system is appropriate, or whether an 'opt-in' scheme might be preferable. An opt-in system, in which people who want to receive telemarketing calls place their numbers on a register, would be based on the assumption that most people don't like telemarketing and shouldn't have to put up with it.

The department's [discussion paper](#) argues that that 'an opt-in approach would have a significant adverse impact on organisations that rely on making telemarketing calls for their business activity'. In fact, any measure that reduces the volume of telemarketing calls would naturally have such an effect. The department's concern, and the reason it favours the less strict opt-out approach, appears to be that an opt-in arrangement would be highly effective. This indicates how successful industry lobbying has been in watering down the government's approach to dealing with telemarketing.

In fact, the *Spam Act 2003* employs an opt-in approach to regulating unsolicited bulk emails. The same principle could easily be applied to telemarketing, which is arguably a greater public policy problem and somewhat easier to control than spam.

Industry claims about the potential costs of expanding the DNC Register's coverage are grossly exaggerated. The Australian Direct Marketing Association has called telemarketing 'the lifeblood of commerce in this country' and expressed concern that 'the expansion of the Do Not Call Register will stifle economic activity ... [and] jeopardize [sic] traditional commercial practice'. These assertions clearly do not reflect commercial and economic reality. In fact, it is a minority of businesses engaged in telemarketing that have brought about the need for greater regulation in this area.

To read the Institute's submission go to <https://www.tai.org.au/index.php?q=node%2F19&act=display&type=1&pubid=697>

Recent publications

- [Greening motoring costs](#)
- [Submission to the Do Not Call Register Review](#)

- [*What a waste: an analysis of household expenditure on food*](#)
- [*Something for Nothing: unpaid overtime in Australia*](#)

Recent media

- Executive Director Richard Denniss discusses food waste with [*The 7pm Project, Channel 10*](#),
- 'Log off, head for home, and get a life', [*Sydney Morning Herald*](#)
- Richard Denniss comments on the CPRS debate, Coalition split over emissions trading bill, [*The 7.30 Report*](#)