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## **Coalition calls for radical employment plan**

A coalition of interest groups released a report today advocating a radical plan to solve Australia's employment crisis. Under the plan, those in employment would work less, making way for unemployed people to take up new jobs.

The report calls for the voluntary introduction of flexible work schemes, including:

- a national reduction in standard hours of work, with productivity increases taken in shorter hours rather than higher wages;
- an increase in variable annualised leave so that employees can take extra leave. This will especially benefit parents during school holidays and employees studying part-time; and
- long periods of leave without pay with income spread over the whole period.

Commenting on the report, convenor of the coalition Bishop Richard Randerson said: *"At a time of chronic unemployment, Australia is also faced with a crisis of overwork. There is an urgent need to change our patterns of work and life-styles. The benefits of these schemes will go well beyond creating new jobs for unemployed people."*

The coalition that wrote the report draws members from the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches, the Community and Public Sector Union, the Institution of Engineers, the Labor Party and The Australia Institute. Members participated in their individual capacities.

The report observes that, whereas in Europe flexible work schemes are proliferating, in Australia the issues of working hours, the length of paid and unpaid leave and work sharing are barely on the public agenda.

Dr Clive Hamilton, Executive Director of the Australia Institute and a member of the coalition, said: *"The economists have failed. It is universally acknowledged that economic growth alone will not solve our unemployment problem. It is simply not acceptable to abandon thousands of people to the misery of unemployment. New approaches are essential."*

Copies of the report, *Redistributing Work*, are available from The Australia Institute.

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