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A long and winding road

The failure of the CPRS Bill to pass the Senate leaves Australia without a national plan to tackle climate change. But, as Richard Denniss explains, it opens up opportunities to address the failings of the CPRS and to work on a more equitable and effective solution.

The CPRS looks as if it is down for the count. Although the government is threatening to reintroduce the CPRS Bill to the Senate next February, it appears highly unlikely that the Coalition under Tony Abbott will again change its position.

More than a decade has been spent calling for a national scheme to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and there is no doubt that this outcome is, in some ways, disappointing. But although the rise of climate scepticism in Australian politics is an obvious concern, the opportunity to ensure that the next attempt to tackle climate change is equitable and effective should not be overlooked.

Over the past 12 months, The Australia Institute has been a vocal critic of elements of the CPRS and it is gratifying that some of our suggestions have been adopted, if not warmly welcomed, by the Minister for Climate Change.

Our most obvious impact has been in the belated recognition by the government of the need to take account of the voluntary actions of individuals to reduce their emissions. As the Institute first

pointed out in November 2008, the harder that individuals worked to reduce their emissions under the original CPRS, the more spare permits they would free up to allow big polluters to increase industrial pollution.

The Climate Change Minister did not see this as a problem originally and it was only as a result of pressure from the Liberal Party during its efforts to negotiate amendments to the CPRS that the issue of voluntary action was finally taken seriously by the government. However, if implemented, the amendments would ensure that only the efforts of individuals to reduce emissions in their homes would result in a reduction in the overall level of Australia's emissions. The government's proposal would continue to



ignore the contributions of community groups and local and state governments.

A further flaw is the five-year lag between measured emissions reductions and a reduction in the number of permits in circulation. But, inadequate though the current proposal is, it is clear that Australia's emissions would have been reduced by tens of millions of tonnes as a result of the research of the Institute. At the Institute, we feel that such changes mean that we really are doing 'Research that Matters'.

The Australia Institute has shown that good research well communicated can really matter in a debate as important and as complex as that surrounding the CPRS.

A second area where the Institute's research led directly to policy change was in ensuring that community organisations receive compensation for the impact of the CPRS. In a paper published in September 2008 entitled *Who are the (un)intended losers from emissions trading?*, the Institute showed that while organisations like Meals on Wheels and shelters for the homeless would experience increases in the cost of electricity as a result of the CPRS, they would not receive any compensation. And because they often provide their services free of charge, the increase in electricity costs would cut directly into their ability to assist needy people.

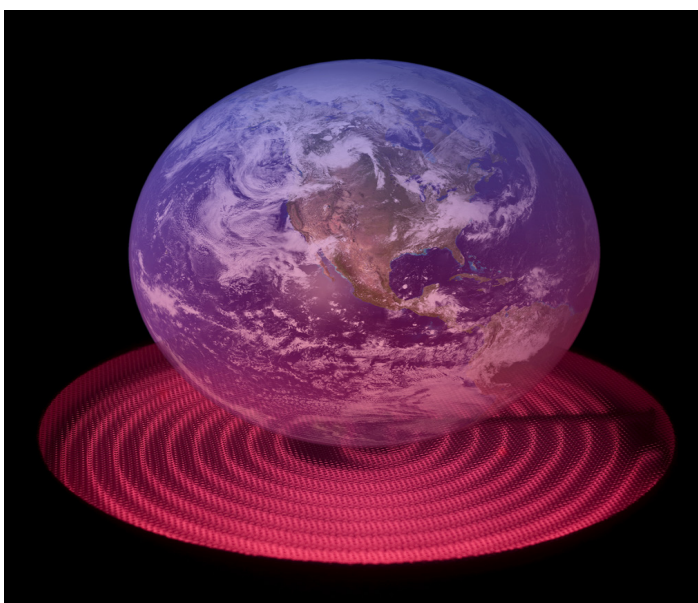
Backed by the Institute's work, peak NGO groups successfully demanded compensation, which was provided in the form of a fund named the Climate Change Action Fund (CCAF). But, although a significant win for those organisations, some of these gains would have been lost recently as a result of the government's negotiations with the former Opposition Leader. Unfortunately for the NGO sector, much of the new compensation offered

to business was funded out of the CCAF pool of money, reducing the amount available to assist community organisations.

As mentioned above, the failure of the CPRS to pass into law means that Australia still lacks a cohesive national scheme to reduce emissions but it does allow the country to develop a more efficient, equitable, and science-based solution. The opportunity now exists to fix the remaining problems pertaining to voluntary action and assistance to the community sector and to find a solution to one of the biggest issues highlighted by the Institute, the failure to provide compensation to state and territory governments.

Both in the September 2008 paper mentioned above and in a July 2009 paper entitled *State of Denial*, the Institute highlighted the fact that the CPRS would impose billions of dollars worth of costs on state, territory and local governments. Hospitals, schools, trains and aged-care centres are substantial users of energy and just as a community-run homeless shelter cannot pass on higher electricity bills to its 'customers', neither can public schools and hospitals.

In our September 2008 paper, we estimated that the CPRS would impose costs on state government budgets of around \$1.5 billion but, it's fair to say, we were wrong. In response to our paper, state premiers commissioned Access Economics to assess the impact and the result was that costs would be around \$2.1 billion a year in 2013, rising to over \$5 billion a year in 2020.



Despite this finding, the state premiers have never publicly demanded compensation from the Rudd Government to ensure that their already stretched health and education budgets are not pressured further. Indeed, premiers such as John Brumby and Anna Bligh instead chose publicly to demand compensation for the heavy polluters in their states.

Although the rise of climate scepticism in Australian politics is an obvious concern, the opportunity to ensure that the next attempt to tackle climate change is equitable and effective should not be overlooked.

The Australia Institute has shown that good research well communicated can really matter in a debate as important and as complex as that surrounding the CPRS. But the proposed improvements to the incorporation of voluntary action and the provision of assistance to community organisations need to be pushed further by individuals and organisations interested in the wellbeing of Australians. Otherwise, those interested solely in the profitability of polluting may again seize the moment.

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Measuring what matters

The Rudd Government is now two-thirds of the way through its first term and its approach to Indigenous affairs is becoming clearer. Jon Altman, Professor and the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University examines the challenges faced and the results achieved by the Australian Government's Indigenous policy.

A recent commission on measuring economic performance and social progress chaired by Joseph Stiglitz and appointed by French President Nicolas Sarkozy found that man does not live by GDP alone. Nor can Indigenous socioeconomic disadvantage be addressed merely by a plethora of measures to 'Close the Gap' (CTG), using statistics, where they exist, in Indigenous infant mortality, life expectancy, educational and employment shortfalls. Not to mention housing and income that have not, as yet, been included in the CTG framework.

The Rudd Government is two-thirds through its first term. The now not-so-new government's approach in Indigenous affairs is becoming a little clearer, although whether it is having any impact is not.

The year began with a national focus on the global financial crisis and a nation-building and jobs plan that did two things. First, it delayed release, admittedly by only two weeks, of the promised first annual report card on CTG. Second, there was little in the plan that targeted Indigenous Australians. It would be interesting to know how many Indigenous workers gained access to the stimulus package.

The NT Intervention and a focus on remote Australia is resulting in a distorted amount of policy attention and resource allocation to only 25 per cent of the Indigenous population.

The government paper, *Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage: The Challenge for Australia*,



reported at some length about the foundations being laid and funding commitments, but said little about outcomes. Why this was so became much clearer in July when in concert with an Indigenous-focused COAG meeting in Darwin, the Productivity Commission released its *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009* report, which told us three main things:

1. Matters have not improved in many areas, hardly an issue that can be laid at the feet of the Rudd Government. Most stark were Indigenous child abuse rates that had trended up since 1999–2000 and increased from four to six times the non-Indigenous rate during the Howard years.
2. In a number of areas, statistical instruments are not available to measure movements in the gaps identified by COAG for closing.
3. What works includes cooperative approaches between state and community, bottom-up rather than top-down community involvement, good govern-

nance at organisational, community and government levels and ongoing government support.

The government's response was predictable, shock and horror yet again at how bad things are and \$46 million of new money to better measure the gaps now to be reported on a biannual rather than annual basis. There was no comment on the need for a more participatory approach because the CTG framework is already set in place and there seems no room to re-negotiate the targets emanating from Canberra as the practical part of the highly symbolic Apology of 13 February 2008.

In October and November 2008, COAG launched a number of National Partnerships to address the Needs of Indigenous Children, Indigenous Health, Indigenous Housing, Remote Service Delivery and Economic Development under the umbrella of a National Indigenous Reform Agreement now called the National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage. In July 2009, three new National Partnerships were added for Remote Indigenous Food Se-

curity (shops), Urban and Regional Service Delivery, and Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access. An Indigenous Education Action Plan is being developed. This raft of strategies provides a salutary reminder of what Murray Edelman termed 'words that succeed and policies that fail'. Mark Latham might be inclined to refer to a veritable conga line of strategies—there are so many that surely the accountability that government is seeking (from states and territories) will be lost in the complexity. Prime Minister Rudd thinks differently; 'By agreeing on clear priorities, specific targets and trajectories, and stringent reporting mechanisms, states and territories will be better placed to work together to close the gap.'

Indigenous socioeconomic disadvantage cannot be addressed merely by a plethora of measures to 'Close the Gap', using statistics where they exist.

At the same time, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Intervention has persisted like an albatross around the Rudd Government's neck. With time, the government will wish it had taken the more common and common-sense political route and distanced itself from the 'crisis' concocted by the previous Howard Government.

In the 2009–10 Budget, the government attempted to change the language of the Intervention referring instead to Closing the Gap—Northern Territory, and from June the operational manager for the Intervention was dispensed with. But every time there is a whiff of 'normalisation' dilution, either shadow spokesman Tony Abbott or ex-minister Mal Brough or an editorial in *The Australian* forces Minister Macklin into a defensive posture quoting statistics left, right and centre on Intervention quantum—as if one improves people's lives with numbers.

At the same time, the government is keen to perform the ultimate legal Houdini act by finding a way to keep racist Intervention measures, like blanket quarantining of income, while reinstating the Racial Discrimination Act (which forbids race-based policy unless deemed of a beneficial nature by subjects of measures) into the NTER laws—assuming they can pass the Senate.

UN Special Rapporteur Professor James Anaya was forthright in August in labelling the Intervention racist, pure and simple. As a supporter of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People from 2 April this year, the government needs to heed Anaya's report even if Opposition spokespeople choose to attack this UN instrument using language reminiscent of how Iraqi dictators or North Korean demagogues respond to UN criticism (usually endorsed by Australia) of their domestic policies.

Lack of progress on the delivery of Indigenous housing and infrastructure in the NT nearly brought down the Henderson Labor Government in the NT in August 2009 with the Commonwealth keen to distance itself from its 'partner's' woes. It became apparent that \$45 million had been spent under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) without a single new house being constructed. And at the same time, the Commonwealth's offer to spend

over \$100 million on town camps in Alice Springs, contingent on transfer of land tenure to the Commonwealth, was legally challenged by town camper housing associations.

It became apparent that \$45 million had been spent under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program without a single new house being constructed.

The NT housing imbroglio is symptomatic of the deep contradictions in the Rudd Government's approach to Indigenous affairs. On one hand, it wants to retool the machinery of service delivery with a preference for monopolistic public, rather than community sector, delivery. Such retooling, as SIHIP shows, is expensive and slow (especially when new institutional barriers like the requirement for state ownership of land and assets are introduced) and does not guarantee better outcomes. On the other hand, the language of emergency and crisis enunciated since June 2007 suggests that speed is essential and speed was very evident when accommodation was constructed at very short notice for government Intervention staff.

The NT Intervention and a focus on remote Australia is also resulting in a distorted amount of policy attention and resource allocation to only 25 per cent of the Indigenous

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Wastebasket of goods

Christmas tends to be a time when Australians throw away a great deal of uneaten food but, in fact, they do it at other times of the year as well. David Baker examines the extent to which food is wasted in this country and exhorts Australians to think of the environment this Christmas by planning better and wasting less.

Christmas is just around the corner and with it the juxtaposition of abundant Christmas dinners and ignored Christmas-tree food appeals co-hosted by national retailers and welfare charities.

For many Australians, Christmas involves over-eating, afternoon sleeps to aid digestion and leftovers on Boxing Day. Christmas is often over-catered. However, over-catering is not limited to the Christmas period—Australians are wasting over \$5 billion worth of food throughout the year in the lead-up to one final annual indulgence.

In order to reduce food waste, Australians need to become aware of how much is being thrown away.

In November, The Australia Institute released updated research into the amount of food Australians throw away uneaten and examined the reasons for this waste. The survey asked main grocery buyers to indicate the amount of food their household wasted and questioned them about their behaviour around meal planning, shopping and food waste. The project provided research support for Do Something's FoodWise campaign.

The report found that Australians are throwing out \$1.1 billion worth of fresh fruit and vegetables every year. A similar amount is spent on restaurant and takeaway food that is ordered and then not eaten. A further \$872.5 million worth of meat and fish is thrown away along with bread, pasta and rice valued at \$570.7 million and another \$512.3 million in dairy products. All this waste adds up.



How much food is being thrown out differs between states. Queenslanders are the worst performers (or the most honest), throwing out \$678 per household per year, 10 per cent above the Australian average. New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory are also wasting more than average.

At the other end of the scale, South Australian households throw away the least amount of food, around \$517 each on an annual basis, which is 16 per cent below the Australian average. Victorian and Tasmanian households are also wasting less food than the Australian average.

Beyond the financial burden of throwing away so much food, there are also consequences for the environment. Scarce water resources are wasted and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions are generated when food is grown only to be thrown out.

Greenhouse gas emissions created in the production and supply of food are also wasted when food is thrown out uneaten. For instance, agriculture accounted for almost 15

per cent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions in 2007; the livestock sector is the third largest source of emissions in Australia.

The climate-changing effect of food waste is greater still when the greenhouse gases generated by decomposing food waste in landfills are added to the mix. Most household food waste ends up in landfills where decomposition is anaerobic in nature (without oxygen), resulting in the production of significantly more methane than carbon dioxide, which is the main component of emissions from aerobic decomposition such as a well-maintained compost heap.

Beyond the financial costs of throwing away so much food, there are also consequences for the environment.

Methane has a greenhouse gas equivalence twenty-one times higher than carbon dioxide.

Reducing household food waste will benefit the environment as well as the housekeeping budget. But re-

spondents to our latest food-waste survey indicated that they are more likely to be motivated to reduce their food waste by financial considerations. Environmental reasons were identified as a motivating factor at only half the rate of the potential personal or financial savings to be gained.

One reason for the low priority attributed to environmental motivators may be the seemingly ambivalent concern Australians hold about the importance of food waste. The majority of households report being only somewhat concerned about their household's level of wasted food.

Australians are throwing out \$1.1 billion worth of fresh fruit and vegetables every year.

The challenge for government policy aimed at reducing levels of household food waste lies in the contradictory behaviour of Australians. For example, householders who believe that only buying food that will be eaten is the best way to reduce food waste indicated that they usually plan ahead, take a list and buy only what is on the list when grocery shopping. However, the same people also agreed that they often buy things on the spur of the moment.

In order to reduce food waste, Australians need to become aware of how much is being thrown away uneaten so that when buying and using food, their awareness leads to a change in behaviour. This Christmas is a good time to begin as 44 per cent of Australian households agree that a great deal of food is thrown away at Christmas time.

So this year, let's plan our own Christmas dinner around lower greenhouse gas emissions and leave some food under the bare Christmas tree at the shopping centre instead of throwing it away uneaten. §



Conjuring tricks with carbon

Signing the Kyoto Protocol has meant a change to government regulations, which has made consumer contributions to emissions reduction meaningless. Victoria Coleman, Senior Policy Officer, Sustainability with CHOICE, explains.

If you look really closely at your GreenPower bill you will notice a very slight change in what you're getting. Not anything too significant; but a slight and sneaky change nonetheless. It seems that GreenPower, the government-accredited renewable-energy scheme, no longer reduces carbon emissions, 'makes a difference' or saves the environment.

GreenPower recently contacted the retailers of GreenPower products to advise of a new communications strategy, amending taglines as follows:

Old tagline	New tagline
GreenPower. A simple switch for you, significant results for our environment.	GreenPower. A simple switch for you, renewable energy for our future.
GreenPower. You have the power to make a real difference.	GreenPower. You have the power to choose.

So why the shift? The product is technically the same; wind turbines continue to turn, solar panels absorb the sun, and all that clean energy continues to be delivered to your door.

It's government regulation that has changed and, in doing so, has made consumers' contributions to emissions reduction meaningless. Under the government guidelines—Carbon Claims and the Trade Practices Act—an energy retailer must be able to demonstrate that their GreenPower results in emissions reductions 'additional' to what would occur without GreenPower.

But since ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, 'additional' has become meaningless. The government has guaranteed that Australia will achieve its emissions reductions target whether you and I purchase GreenPower or not. It will simply purchase additional carbon reduction credits internationally to meet any shortfall. Because of this guarantee, companies can't claim that GreenPower is 'additional' or results in emissions reduction, and consumers can't choose to achieve carbon reductions any higher than the government target.

The government has tried to overcome this by counting any new GreenPower sales over and above 2009 levels as 'additional'. But this doesn't take into account the 984,024 GreenPower customers who already pay a premium for GreenPower.

GreenPower sales have grown by over a third since Australia ratified the Kyoto Protocol—but are GreenPower retailers really being honest with their customers? By making claims of emissions reductions, many GreenPower retailers are misleading hundreds of thousands of households and that's not okay, so far as CHOICE is concerned.

Of course all this tricky marketing-speak would be irrelevant if the government removed its ridiculous 2009 baseline and made sure that every current and future GreenPower purchase is additional to Australia's emissions reduction target—which is exactly what nearly a million households want when they choose to purchase GreenPower. §

Visit www.choice.com.au/greenpower to find out more.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Recent amendments to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* have significantly improved the protection of disability rights. Bronwyn Byrnes, Senior Legal Officer, Australian Human Rights Commission, examines the changes.

Recent amendments to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) clarify its operation in many areas, align some of its key definitions with other federal discrimination Acts and represent a significant improvement in the protection of the rights of people with disability. This article will examine some of the most important changes, namely the:

- explicit duty to make reasonable adjustments aimed at assisting those with a disability
- changes to the definition of indirect discrimination
- new assistance-animal provisions
- changes to some of the exemptions.

The DDA now clarifies that discrimination on the ground of being accompanied by an assistance animal is to be treated as discrimination on the ground of a disability.

Reasonable adjustments

Arguably, the most significant change to the DDA is the introduction of an explicit duty to make reasonable adjustments. The DDA now expressly provides that a failure to make 'reasonable adjustments' may constitute either direct or indirect discrimination.

It is accordingly unlawful not to make reasonable adjustments where:

- this has the effect of treating someone with a disability less favourably than someone who does not need the adjustments in the same circumstances (direct discrimination)
- a person with a disability cannot, because of their disability,

comply with a condition or requirement without reasonable adjustments and the failure to make reasonable adjustments disadvantages people with the disability (indirect discrimination).

A 'reasonable adjustment' is any adjustment that does not impose an unjustifiable hardship on the person. This is a significant improvement to the protection of the rights of people with a disability because the High Court had expressly rejected that former section 5(2) of the DDA imposed an 'implied' obligation to accommodate or had the effect that a failure to provide accommodation would itself constitute 'less favourable treatment'.

Indirect discrimination

The primary definition of indirect discrimination in section 6 of the DDA has also changed in a number of respects. It requires a person with a disability to show that:

- another person requires or proposes to require them to comply with a requirement or condition
- because of their disability they cannot comply with a requirement or condition
- the requirement or condition disadvantages people with the disability.

Importantly, it is no longer necessary to prove that a substantially higher proportion of persons without the disability comply or are able to comply with an imposed requirement or condition.

The new definition also aligns the DDA with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* and the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* by shifting the burden of proving the reasonableness of the con-

dition on to the respondent. Previously, complainants bore the onus of proving a condition was not reasonable.

However, the new section 6 definition still retains the problematic requirement that an applicant show that they are 'unable' to comply with the requirement or condition.

The 'unjustifiable hardship' and the 'inherent requirements' defences are now available in a broader range of circumstances.

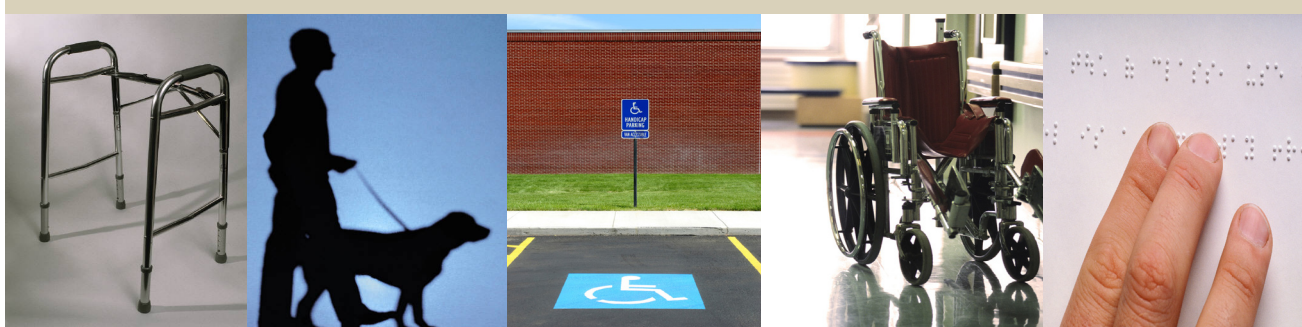
Assistance animals

The DDA now clarifies that discrimination on the ground of being accompanied by an assistance animal (or a carer, assistant or disability aid) is to be treated as discrimination on the ground of a disability.

Importantly, the position of service providers interacting with people using assistance animals is now much clearer. It is not unlawful to:

- request or require that the assistance animal remain under the control of the person with the disability, or their associate
- discriminate against a person





with a disability on the ground of the disability if they reasonably suspect that the assistance animal has an infectious disease and the discrimination is reasonably necessary to protect public health or the health of other animals.

It is also not unlawful to:

- ask for evidence that an animal is an assistance animal or is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour
- discriminate if the person with the assistance animal fails to produce evidence of these things.

The new assistance-animal provisions provide much needed clarification

of the rights and responsibilities of both people with assistance animals and service providers.

Changes to exemptions

Amidst the amendments that aim to improve the protection of disability rights are amendments that expand the reach of some of the exemptions in the DDA. Most importantly, the 'unjustifiable hardship' and the 'inherent requirements' defences are now available in a broader range of circumstances.

First, the defence of unjustifiable hardship will now be available in all areas covered by the DDA except harassment and requests for information. However, courts are now expressly directed to consider whether

funding is available to the respondent when determining whether avoiding discriminating would impose an unjustifiable hardship.

Second, the 'inherent requirements' defence will now be available in a broader range of employment circumstances. Previously the defence was only available in relation to offers of employment and dismissal from employment. Now the defence will be available in all work-related areas except denying access to opportunities for promotion, transfer, training or any other benefits or subjecting the person with disability to a detriment.

These changes took effect from 5 August 2009. §

In the eye of the beholder

The Australia Institute recently recommended that the unemployment benefit be increased substantially from its current \$228 a week. It seems though that Tony Abbott thinks that no such increase is necessary, stating after his ascension to Opposition Leader that 'people who can't work for whatever reason will always have the generous safety net that they deserve in Australia'.

But can \$228 really be described as 'generous'? The OECD thinks not. A recent study of 29 OECD countries found that in no country did the unemployment benefit account for a smaller percentage of the average wage than in Australia (31 per cent). The next lowest was Greece with a 'replacement rate' of 36 per cent. In the UK, the replacement rate was 40 per cent, in the US 56 per cent, in Germany 59 per cent, while in France it was 66 per cent. However, if you become unemployed in Luxembourg, 87 per cent of your income is replaced.

Thankfully, Australia no longer has the worst replacement rate when children are involved. For example, an Australian lone parent on average weekly earnings would replace 52 per cent of their income if they had to rely on unemployment benefits, a replacement rate that is better than in Turkey (40 per cent), in Greece (45 per cent) and in Korea (50 per cent). But the Australian replacement rate falls behind all of the other countries.

How much is enough? Interestingly, when the Howard Government lost office and Tony Abbott lost his ministerial salary, the then Opposition spokesperson for families and community services discussed the challenges of dropping from \$219,000 a year to \$127,000 a year. While emphasising that he was not complaining, he stated, 'Yes, it's true you do experience a substantial pay cut and, yes, if you are a normal family without accumulated assets, without additional sources of income, it does make a big difference'.

Luckily for him and his family he did not fall all the way down to that 'generous' safety net.

A roof over their heads

New legislation to address homelessness in Australia should be based on a human-rights framework, writes Chris Hartley, Policy Officer with the Homeless Persons' Legal Service. An opportunity exists for meaningful change in the way governments address homelessness.

New legislation to address the growing rates of homelessness in Australia should be based on a human rights framework that protects and promotes the right to adequate housing for all homeless people. This legislation should also provide individuals with effective remedies for any breach of their rights by service providers and government departments.

The Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLS) holds these views after receiving considerable feedback from homeless people that their rights in areas such as housing, social security, discrimination and personal safety are consistently undermined by government policies. HPLS used this feedback to inform its submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth Inquiry into Homelessness Legislation.

On average, over 59 per cent of people initiating new requests for supported accommodation are turned away.

Current legislation governing the operation of homeless services in Australia, the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994* (Cth) (SAA Act), has the ambitious objective of providing 'transitional supported accommodation and related support services, in order to help people who are homeless to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence'. But, despite the best intentions of the homeless welfare sector, this objective is not being met. At best, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) acts as a crisis-management system that has little impact on reducing the increas-

ing rates of homelessness.

In response to the Federal Government's announcement of a National Human Rights Consultation, HPLS held a series of human rights workshops in homeless shelters in inner-city Sydney. During these workshops, homeless people were encouraged and assisted to provide their stories and ideas about the protection of their human rights in Australia.

The feedback HPLS received from these workshops pointed to a consistent undermining by federal, state and territory government policies of human rights in housing, social security, discrimination and personal safety. The workshops found that SAAP service providers were failing to adequately protect human rights in regard to service delivery. Participants were asked to vote on the model of rights protection they favoured most. Tellingly, not one of the over 130 homeless people who attended these consultations wanted to retain the status quo.

On the basis of these consultations, HPLS believes any new piece of homelessness legislation should be based on a human rights framework. Without this framework, the impacts that violations of human rights can have in causing, exacerbating and maintaining homelessness will be overlooked.

The SAA Act makes a number of references to Australia's

international human rights commitments. The objects to the SAA Act detail that 'Australia has acted to protect the rights of all of its citizens, including people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, by recognising international standards for the protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms'. In addition, the preamble states that homeless people's 'universal human rights should not be prejudiced by the manner by which services are provided to them'.

While the SAA Act references to human rights look good on paper, they remain aspirational. Instead, the Federal Government should provide adequate support and resourcing to the sector so that rights and standards can be realised. In addition, HPLS believes human rights standards in the homelessness legislation must provide individuals with effective remedies for any breach of these rights by service providers and government departments.

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Grinding to a halt

According to The Australia Institute's submissions to a Sydney transport Inquiry and a Victorian Government Inquiry into state taxation, some tough decisions need to be made to address the problems of congestion. David Ingles explains why.



City dwellers on the Eastern seaboard will face increasingly longer commutes and even traffic gridlock if some tough decisions are not made to tackle congestion problems. The predicted population explosion in Australia over the coming decades has created an urgent need to find solutions other than building new roads. Sydney's population is forecast to rise from 4.3 million in 2007 by up to 5.5 million in 2026 and 7.7 million in 2056, a total increase of no less than 77 per cent in 50 years. Melbourne's population is set to double. Brisbane's will rise by 140 per cent.

New roads will not solve congestion problems in the face of such sustained population growth. It is physically impossible to build the vast amount of road infrastructure that the population projections suggest will be needed. Nor is it a sensible or environmentally-friendly way to proceed.

The failure to charge properly for roads means that demand is artificially high and current usage rates

do not provide a proper measure of the benefits of new road construction.

A better solution is to impose congestion charges to ration road use, with time-of-day pricing on all major roads based on the degree of congestion. While this may not be immediately popular with motorists, the alternative is further time delays and gridlock as the population grows. Either motorists pay through the wallet or they pay through frustration and lost time, ultimately a much higher price. If they pay through the wallet, the community gains as the monies can be fruitfully employed in other initiatives.

Building new roads will not solve congestion problems in the face of sustained population growth.

To soften the blow, revenue from the congestion charge could be returned to motorists and commuters via tax cuts or by way of improved public

transport and road infrastructure. In general, road-user charges have come to be accepted in cities where they are imposed, despite initial opposition.

Currently, Australia's roads are tolled in an ad hoc manner based mainly on the historical accident of whether they were built by the public or private sector. This is arbitrary and unfair. Economic theory makes it clear that congestion pricing should be applied consistently across the road network. It should also vary according to the time of day—high during busy periods and lower during quieter periods.

A number of cities around the world, including London, Stockholm, Milan and Singapore have introduced successful pricing schemes to reduce road use. The Australia Institute's submission examines possible models based on those in place in London and Singapore. The London cordon area pricing system costs \$15 a day and is implemented using number-plate recognition technology. This system is fairly costly and

So what would a human rights framework in the new homelessness national legislation look like?

The framework would protect and promote the right to adequate housing. Currently, the SAA Act and SAAP accommodation services fail to provide homeless people with a right to housing in a number of ways. On average, over 59 per cent of people initiating new requests for supported accommodation are turned away. In addition, little or no support is provided for homeless people with complex needs or those with physical disabilities.

HPLS believes that new federal homelessness legislation should overcome these rights violations by

incorporating a right to adequate housing. Such rights underpin relevant legislation in the United Kingdom and Scotland.

The feedback HPLS received from its workshops pointed to a consistent undermining by federal, state and territory government policies of human rights in housing, social security, discrimination and personal safety.

In addition, a human rights framework would promote the involvement of homeless people in policy and service delivery decisions. Currently, the SAA Act is silent on the rights of homeless people to be involved

in government and other decision-making processes that directly affect them.

National homeless legislation should promote the delivery of services to homeless people that are based on individual need—not on the needs of support agencies. Too often, homeless people with complex needs are denied adequate support and treatment because of inappropriate exclusion and service policies.

In short, homeless support services should stop telling their consumers what their needs are. Support services would be better off listening to homeless people and then planning their services around what homeless people are telling them they need. §

absorbs nearly half the revenue from the charge.

The Singaporean system provides a better model as it utilises e-tag technology similar to that used on our current toll systems. This allows for more flexible pricing with multiple pricing points, and administration is around 20 per cent of revenue. In Sydney, for example, there might be tolling gantries on all major bridges and other heavily used chokepoints. Each toll would have a modest cost, but the charges would start to add up if several were passed in the course of the commute.

By reducing fixed costs at the same time as usage costs are raised, it is possible to move the system to a more efficient outcome without any net disadvantage to the average motorist.

Ultimately, the ideal is a system of road-user charges implemented by way of satellite tracking technology. But these systems, which are planned for example in the Netherlands and mooted in the UK, have yet to be successfully implemented anywhere in the world and it seems sensible to first wait for this to happen. In addition, such technology is rapidly becoming cheaper.

In a related submission, the Institute also suggests scrapping registration and stamp duties in favour of a higher rate of fuel excise as a means of reducing congestion and helping the environment. This would require a 16-cent increase in the current fuel excise of 38 cents a litre, thus increasing the marginal cost of driving (the cost of driving an extra kilometre) by 13 per cent while having no impact on the average cost. The change is equitable as it reduces net motoring costs for those who find it difficult to afford registration, and who typically drive relatively less than the well-off.

Mileage-based insurance is a further way of making motorists more aware of the costs of their driving. In the US, there is a large academic literature supportive of changing the way insurance is levied. Such insurance is starting to make headway in the US and Australian markets and could be

encouraged by governments, beginning with third-party compulsory accident insurance. Mileage-based insurance has a dramatic effect on the marginal cost of driving, raising it by an estimated 45 per cent.

By reducing fixed costs at the same time as usage costs are raised, it is possible for the system to move to a more efficient outcome without any net disadvantage to the average motorist. With a total impact on per-kilometre costs of over 50 per cent, the combined effect of the proposed changes would be to reduce distance travelled, congestion, local air and noise pollution and greenhouse gas pollution. And with fewer kilometres travelled, there is also likely to be a marked reduction in accident rates.

All this can be achieved without motoring being in aggregate more costly—indeed there are big savings for lower-mileage drivers. §



Bring super fees into the real world

Australians pay \$14.3 billion in superannuation fees on an annual basis, with commercial super funds profiting enormously as a result. Researcher Josh Fear suggests adopting a more realistic attitude to superannuation management fees.

Most of us like to complain about the banks from time to time, but compared to some parts of the superannuation industry the banks seem like the good guys. That's because many commercial super funds are profiting enormously through excessive fees on the savings of ordinary workers.

Every year, Australians pay \$14.3 billion in fees on their superannuation. Consumers pay less than half that much, \$6.7 billion, in bank fees. Most of us would use some kind of banking service every week, but we don't expect nearly as much interaction with our superannuation funds.

Fees of two per cent, which are quite common among retail funds, can halve retirement benefits.

Putting this another way, the fees we pay to those who administer our superannuation accounts are equivalent to half of what it costs the government to actually pay the age pension. That's not to administer the pension—that's to actually put money in the pocket of the two million age pensioners in Australia. But

because the management of super assets is a private-sector concern, we have blithely accepted that the current level of fees is reasonable. If that is what the market has decided, the argument goes, we'd better pay up.

In all the arguments about superannuation over the years, in fact we have never had a proper debate about what level of fees are appropriate in a compulsory retirement savings system. Instead, we have focused on other dimensions of super policy, such as what the mandated rate of super contributions should be.

Fees across the superannuation sector are around 1.35 per cent of funds under management. That doesn't sound like much, but for a typical superannuation balance of \$80,000 it equates to \$90 a month. That's roughly the same as the average monthly electricity bill, and probably more than you would pay for high-speed internet access.

If our super funds sent every worker a bill for \$90 each month, fees would come down quickly as everyone would look around for a better deal.

Instead, the funds deduct fees incrementally from fund balances while nobody notices.

Fees of one per cent reduce final payouts by around a quarter. Fees of two per cent, which are quite common among retail funds, can halve retirement benefits. For an average worker stuck in a fund charging a two per cent fee,

The fees we pay to those who administer our superannuation accounts are equivalent to half of what it costs the government to actually pay the age pension.

that's \$200,000 or more that they won't have when they retire.

The Coalition Government's Choice of Fund policy was expected to bring fees down by stimulating competition and encouraging people to take an active interest in their superannuation arrangements. Instead, just one in 25 workers switches funds each year, and half of this small amount of switching is due to job change rather than active choice.



This results in fees that are still too high, particularly in the for-profit sector. Much of what passes for competition in the superannuation industry is now structured around intermediaries such as financial advisers rather than fund members. Most workers (as many as 90 per cent in some funds) don't actively choose how their fund invests their money, so this decision is made by the trustee on their behalf.

Under the present system, fees for those who don't choose a fund can vary dramatically, depending on which default fund they are placed into. That retirement payouts can dif-



fer so much simply by virtue of which employer someone happens to have is truly bizarre.



It is time that the superannuation system is changed to take account of real-world human behaviour, rather than theories about what 'rational' investors would do under ideal circumstances. The first step in this process is to overhaul the current system of defaults—that is, what happens when people do nothing about their super.

The Australia Institute has recently proposed that the government set up a low-cost default fund to provide a safety net for workers who are not currently protected by an adequate default fund. This universal default fund would invest 'passively'; rather

than trying to beat the market, it would invest across the Australian Stock Exchange or a similar index of shares. This would remove all the expenses associated with paying fund managers to try and pick winners.

Fees for such a universal default fund would be less than half the current average, and less than a quarter of what a typical personal retail fund currently charges. This could increase final retirement payouts by \$100,000 or more.

If our super funds sent every worker a bill for \$90 each month, fees would come down quickly as everyone would look around for a better deal.

A universal default fund—or something similar—would also solve once and for all the problem of multiple accounts. There are around 10 million workers in Australia, but there are 32 million superannuation accounts, and fees are paid on each and every one.



Once an account becomes inactive—that is, once someone leaves their job—they can be 'flipped' into another 'plan' with much higher fees. This is one of the true scandals of the present superannuation system. A universal default fund would capture all of these inactive and 'lost' accounts, preventing commercial super funds from profiting from the disengagement of millions of Australian workers.

The government has established the Cooper review to help reform super, and not before time. It is to be hoped that the new minister for superannuation, Chris Bowen, grasps this opportunity to give average Australian workers an extra \$100,000. All he has to do is take it from the super industry. §

Measuring what matters from Page 4

population. Even if those in remote Australia are worst off compared to other Indigenous people, there is ample evidence that the 75 per cent in more densely settled regions are relatively badly off compared to their non-Indigenous neighbours. The COAG communiqué of 2 July 2009 'discovered' this fact.

The state Indigenous affairs juggernaut rumbles on in 2009 with path dependency seeing no change likely in the immediate future. The narrative of failure has captured the government's and the public's imagination and the only imagined path to success is via mainstreaming or assimilation as implied by the goals of the Closing the Gap framework.

A national Indigenous representative body to be in place by 2010 might challenge such monolithic views if it is granted institutional capacity and a degree of arms-length au-

thority to challenge the government of the day. The only other effective avenue for an alternate vision for Indigenous Australians might need to come from the UN. In the run-down to next year's election, one can be sure to hear much spin and see many statistics highlighting how we are Closing the Gap with strategies, financial commitments, inputs and outputs, but sustainable outcomes might be harder to demonstrate. The Rudd Government might do well to seriously consider the Productivity Commission's advice on what works: partnerships, bottom-up rather than top-down approaches, good governance—including by governments—and sustained support.

My advice? Avoid policies that transgress the Racial Discrimination Act and international human rights standards. Focus on what works and seek to support it, grow it and replicate its key features. And engage with the reality of Indigenous hetero-

geneity of both circumstances and aspirations and tailor approaches to fit. And don't look for technical statistical solutions to deeply entrenched and very human problems of disadvantage. Such approaches will not accurately measure, let alone fix, what matters. §



The 'F' word in the workplace

Australians work the longest hours in the Western world, and many are not properly compensated for their time, effectively donating these extra hours free to their employers. Josh Fear examines overtime in the workforce and makes some suggestions about restoring the balance.

Are your working hours 'flexible'? If so, you are probably very thankful when your annual leave rolls around and you can recover from all that flexibility. Unfortunately, your annual leave might be eaten away by the extra hours you work throughout the year.

Australians work the longest hours in the Western world. Full-time employees in Australia work an average of 44 hours a week, much more than the 'standard' working week of 38 hours. Since 1856, when Melbourne stonemasons were the first in the world to achieve an eight-hour day, working hours have steadily declined but from the 1980s, the trend has been in the opposite direction—toward a longer working week.

Employees are forgoing \$72 billion in wages, or six per cent of GDP, which constitutes a direct subsidy to employers by ordinary workers.

Unfortunately, many Australians are not properly compensated for putting in long hours. In fact, official statistics show that unpaid overtime is more common than paid overtime. The Australia Institute conducted a survey of workers to investigate the nature and extent of overtime that is not recompensed.

We found that around half of all employees work more hours than they are paid for on a typical workday, with the average employee working 49 minutes of unpaid overtime each day. Over the course of a year, this adds up to more than the standard annual-leave entitlement of four weeks.

The culture in individual workplaces is often to blame; 44 per cent of people who work unpaid overtime say

that it is 'compulsory' or 'expected' and another 43 per cent say that it is 'not expected but also not discouraged'.

When asked what would happen if they didn't work unpaid overtime, most say that 'the work wouldn't get done', suggesting that the demands placed on employees are too much for many people.

Across the workforce, there are 2.14 billion hours of unpaid overtime worked each year—three times as many hours as Australians volunteer to community organisations. This corresponds to 1.16 million full-time jobs, making overwork a natural target for any government seeking to reduce unemployment. Throughout the economy, employees are forgoing \$72 billion in wages, or six per cent of GDP, which constitutes a direct subsidy to employers by ordinary workers.

The \$72 billion worth of 'free' labour that workers 'give' to their employers every year is just one part of the

costs imposed by unpaid overtime on individuals and on the broader community. Unpaid overtime by definition does not impart the financial benefits that are usually associated with work, and it diminishes the time that people can spend with their families and engage in pursuits outside of work.

Reducing the amount of unpaid overtime is an essential step towards helping families to balance the interaction between work and other aspects of life. There are also obvious benefits for the physical, mental and cultural health of the nation in allowing people to do more of what they want to do and less of what they have to do.

Governments can tackle the problem of overwork by reducing the ordinary hours of the full-time working week, capping the amount of hours that can be worked over a given period, and allowing for workplace agreements that empower workers to refuse long working hours without penalty.





While some will object to any efforts to introduce caps on working hours as unnecessary interference in the operations of business, it is worth remembering that Australians already accept the need to limit the working hours of truck drivers, train drivers and pilots. Extending this principle to ordinary workers is a natural step in a civilised country.

Nevertheless, in any discussion of

overwork—paid or unpaid—it is crucial to address the culture of long hours that is part of life in many organisations. Regardless of what employees and governments do to promote a better balance between work and life, it is ultimately the responsibility of managers and business owners to foster an environment in which workers feel able to work reasonable hours without risking their careers, their health or their relationships.

For too long, ‘flexibility’ has been a one-way gesture in favour of employers and at the expense of employees. It is only through meaningful changes in the culture, values and management of specific workplaces that workers can truly expect to go home on time.

That is why The Australia Institute nominated 25 November as national Go Home On Time Day. For one day

each year, we want to encourage people to rediscover what it is like to have their free time back.

It doesn’t matter what you do with your free time—play with the kids, kick the footy, go to the pub, or laze about on the couch. You might even compose a symphony. But at least you won’t be at work when you don’t have to be. §



In their own words

In 2008, Mission Australia conducted its seventh annual National Survey of Young Australians to identify the areas of concern that particularly worry young people. Anne Hampshire, National Manager, Research & Social Policy at Mission Australia comments on the survey’s findings.

In 2008, Mission Australia conducted its seventh annual National Survey of Young Australians among over 45,000 young people aged 11 to 24 years. The aim was to identify the important and emerging issues for young people via a series of questions about what they value, their issues of concern, where they turn for advice and support and who they admire.

Young people who completed the survey online were able to provide comments on their concerns with close to 1,000 responses received. The insights provided complement the numerical data collected from the survey and offer a richer understanding of the current and emerging issues for young people in Australia today.

Based on the online comments received, young people’s concerns

about three issues—body image, drugs and personal safety—are explored in further detail below.

Body image

Body image was the top issue for young people who responded to the 2008 national survey, particularly for respondents aged 20 to 24 years, with a third identifying it as a significant concern. While some expressed a desire to change their own appearance or body shape, many of the comments related to anxiety about friends or others.

I am concerned about the number of young people from age 10 upwards being worried about the way they look and what other people think of them (Female, 12 years).

The online comments reflected respondents’ disquiet about the media

(and other) representations of the ‘ideal body’ and its effect on young people.

Research suggests that internalising the ‘ideal body’ presented in a range of media contributes to body dissatisfaction amongst adolescents.

It’s hard to realise that nobody is perfect when you’re constantly bombarded with such unrealistic representations in the media ... people need to realise that it’s having a negative impact on the way we view ourselves (Female, 18 years).

Research suggests that internalising the ‘ideal body’ presented in a range of media contributes to body dissatisfaction amongst adolescents because achieving that ‘ideal’



is generally not possible. The online survey comments indicate that young people are keenly aware of the links between poor body image and diminished self esteem.

Body image is my number one concern and plays a major role in most of my other insecurities ... (Female, 21 years).

Drugs

More than a quarter of young people, especially those aged between 11 and 14, were worried about drugs. This does not necessarily reflect drug usage, and research indicates that those most likely to be concerned about the issue (that is, the youngest group) are least likely to have tried or used drugs. The online comments show that young people's misgivings about this issue tend to focus on the potential negative impact of drugs on friends, family and the broader community, but there is also a personal fear about making the wrong decisions.

I am mostly concerned about the

amount of drugs people take in their lives ... drugs affect everyday life, not to just the person taking them but the people surrounding them (Female, 12 years).

I'm worried when I'm out at a party I might make the wrong decision and take something I know I shouldn't and it will harm me (Female, 13 years).

This finding suggests that there is a need to review drug education campaigns to ensure that they are evidence-based and can equip young people with the ability to apply the knowledge they learn through such programs in the specific social contexts in which they find themselves—providing information alone will not be sufficient.

Personal safety

Personal safety was identified by one in four respondents as an issue for both genders and respondents of all ages, although nearly 90 per cent of comments received online about personal safety were from females.

Responses reflect a general sense of vulnerability, particularly when young people are out in the community.

Personal safety is a big issue for young women. For me to walk home alone, especially at night, is a big deal and I want to feel safe when I do that (Female, 20 years).

I am concerned of something happening to me when I'm walking back from school at about 5:00 pm from after-school activities (Female, 12 years).

A disproportionate level of fear can result in young people limiting their participation, which reduces their quality of life and sense of confidence and decreases levels of trust and social capital in the community. Feeling safe is a crucial part of well-being and the challenge is to help young people to strike the balance between developing good personal safety habits while simultaneously encouraging them to participate actively in their community. §

A long and winding road from Page 2

Similarly, new battles over the need to compensate the health and education sectors rather than the coal and aluminium sectors have to be fought and won. Over the past 12 months, the Rudd Government proposed to give away tens of billions of dollars to big polluters and powerful industry groups. Those same dollars can and should be spent instead on tackling climate change, adapting to climate change, and investing in the services that Australia needs. The question for Australians and all political parties next year is simple: who do you think deserves the money most? §

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Women's work—Never done?

Recessions have a serious effect on women due to their already compromised position in the labour market. David Richardson looks at how women have fared during the global financial crisis and assesses the impact of the government's stimulus measures on women's employment prospects.

In mid-2009, The Australia Institute was commissioned to examine the position of women during the recession and how it might affect their prospects for employment. One of the major findings detailed in the subsequent report was that prior to the recession women were already suffering from hidden unemployment, suggesting that the official unemployment figures were painting a distorted picture of the problems women face in the labour market.

As in earlier recessions, the onset of this downturn saw male unemployment shoot up much more rapidly than female unemployment. However, for people to be officially recognised as unemployed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), they need to have:

- worked for under one hour during the previous week
- actively looked for work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and been available for work in the reference week.

Many do not meet these strict definitions and instead become part of

the hidden unemployed—especially women. In October 2009, the official unemployment rates for men and women respectively were six per cent and 5.6 per cent. However, when hidden unemployment numbers are included, the true figures are at least 10 per cent for men and a very large 14 per cent for women.

The paper raised a number of issues relating to the specific experience of women in recessions with the aim of coming to a better-informed position on how government policy should respond.

The Institute's review of the labour-market experience of earlier recessions revealed that while unemployment rose sharply with the onset of recession, it was slow to recover afterwards. Generally, the industries in which women are concentrated are those that have fared better during the recession so far. Based on official definitions, female employment has held up reasonably well in this recession as it did in previous ones. But these overall impressions conceal deeper issues. This recession will worsen the chronic tendency for women to do badly in the labour force due to the following:

- Women are over-represented among the hidden unemployed.
- Even when they are included among the officially recorded unemployed, they are less likely to seek benefits or otherwise stay in touch with the government.
- They are paid less than men (on average about two-thirds less), their working lives are prone to interruptions and, as a result, they have much lower superannuation balances and therefore

lower retirement incomes.

- Many women move directly from employment to being completely out of the labour market and back again. Once outside the labour market, they have been ignored—yet many of these people consider themselves just as unemployed in the common-sense meaning of the word as those who make it into the official definition.
- Women are over-represented among the underemployed, which involves working fewer hours than they consider optimal. This phenomenon has worsened with the current recession as it did in previous recessions.

When hidden unemployment numbers are included with official unemployment statistics, the true unemployment figures are at least 10 per cent for men and a very large 14 per cent for women.

There are a number of realities to bear in mind when designing policies to assist women affected by the recession. For example, there is a wide variation in unemployment rates across regions and the regional dimension is a critically important issue when planning labour-market programs. In addition, there is the fundamental problem of child care and other caring responsibilities, which seriously constrain how women can respond not only to job opportunities but also to labour-market and training programs.

The report also explored the impact of the government's response to the recession, which involved two stimulus packages, the first in October

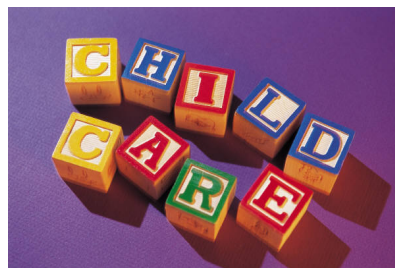


2008 and the second in February 2009, and a series of initiatives that were announced in the May 2009 Budget. All of the measures were examined in order to determine whether or not there was any gender bias because the concentration on infrastructure projects sounded very 'blokey'.

While the stimulus does display a bias against women due to the heavy emphasis on construction and other outdoor work, it might have had a greater employment impact for both males and females if it had been redirected towards public services.

Child care and other caring responsibilities seriously constrain how women can respond not only to job opportunities but also to labour-market and training programs.

There is a need for ongoing investment in child care, health and aged care, which would stimulate jobs, especially jobs that tend to employ women, and remove some of the constraints against women re-entering the labour market. Even when the downturn has passed, there will be a need for additional childcare places to allow greater participation by women in the labour market.



A major difference between the present government response to the recession and the policy responses in earlier recessions lies in the role of labour-market programs; there is little evidence in either the 2009 Budget or the stimulus packages that the government sees any need to expand these. The view canvassed in this paper is that labour-market programs should play a larger role but their design needs to include facilities to cater for those women who are disadvantaged in the labour market, a condition consistent with the government's social inclusion policies.

Because women's financial positions are so much more fragile than men's, they are more likely to be threatened by the interruptions caused by the recession, compounding the interruptions many women already face due to child-care responsibilities. This situation suggests that there is a case for superannuation contributions to support women who are out of the workforce from time to time. §

Membership Renewal

This year the Institute went hi-tech and wrote a program, which enabled an email containing a link to be sent to members who could then click on the link if they wished to renew their memberships.

Unfortunately, it was not entirely successful, though when it did work it was highly efficient and certainly cut down a great deal of administrative time.

Those members who were not sent an email inviting them to renew their membership will receive a membership form with this newsletter. While you can return the form with your details if you wish to renew, you can also go to the website at www.tai.org.au and renew online.

Over 2008–09, the Institute installed a customer relationship management database and when members renew online via the website, their details are automatically updated in the CRM. This cuts down on staff time and is more efficient.

We hope that all our members will renew their membership for 2010 for stimulating and exciting election-year research results.



*The Australia Institute
wishes its members a
happy Christmas and
a peaceful New Year*



Institute out and about

The events calendar in recent months has been far more diverse than it was throughout the rest of the year when invitations were focused on climate change and the government's proposed CPRS.

Some of the events the Institute attended over the past quarter include the following:

1. Richard Denniss launched Jon Altman's monograph, *Power, Culture, Economy: Indigenous Australians and Mining*. Jon Altman is the Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the ANU and recently joined the Institute's Research Committee.
2. Josh Fear presented his paper *Choosing Not to Choose: Making superannuation change by default* to the International Centre for Pension Management Conference in Melbourne. Josh was joined by the report's co-author Geraldine Pace from the Industry Super Network.
3. Richard spoke at the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth held in September in Melbourne where he posed the question, 'If Australia is a rich country, why can't we afford to invest in children?'
4. David Richardson joined Professor John Quiggin from the University of Queensland at Politics in the Pub in Sydney to debate 'Banking after the financial crisis—do we need a people's bank?'
5. Richard travelled to Newcastle to speak at the 'Fair go for the Hunter' community rally against the privatisation of the city's electricity, prison and aged-care facilities.
6. Josh and Richard co-hosted a seminar at the Evidence-based Policy Conference in Canberra.
7. Richard addressed the ACFID/AusAid University Conference in late-November on the Millennium Development Goals, specifically looking at the impact of a global carbon market on developing countries.

Institute in the media



Josh Fear talks about the nature and extent of unpaid overtime in Australia on ABC's *Radio National Breakfast* at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2009/2745819.htm>.



Richard Denniss discusses the \$5.2 billion worth of food Australians throw out each year on Channel 10's *7pm Project* at http://7pmproject.com.au/video.htm?channel=7PM+Catch+Up&clipid=2689_7pm-seg1-051109&bitrate=300&format=flash.



'What will Wong's CPRS actually do?' by Richard Denniss at <http://www.crikey.com.au/2009/10/21/excuse-me-minister-but-what-will-your-cprs-actually-do/>.

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Institute news

New publications

- L Collett, *A fair-weather friend? Australia's relationship with a climate-changed Pacific*, Institute Paper No. 1, July 2009.
- J Fear and R Denniss, *Zero-sum game: the human dimensions of emissions trading*, Institute Paper No. 2, August 2009.
- D Richardson, *The impact of the recession on women*, Background Paper, Security4Women and The Australia Institute, August 2009.
- D Ingles and J Fear, *The case for a universal default superannuation fund*, Policy Brief No. 3, September 2009.
- H Bambrick, J Fear and R Denniss, *What does \$50,000 buy in a population survey? Characteristics of internet survey participants compared with a random telephone sample*, Technical Brief No. 4, October 2009.
- D Ingles, *Road congestion charges: An idea whose time has come*, Technical Brief No. 5, October 2009.
- D Ingles, *Greening motoring costs: Reducing motoring fixed costs and increasing running costs to help the environment*, Technical Brief No. 6, October 2009.
- R Denniss, *Woolly figures: An analysis of the Treasury's modelling of emissions from sheep and cattle*, Policy Brief No. 4, October 2009.
- R Denniss, *Harder to do than to say? The failure of the CPRS to reduce emissions from coal-fired power stations*, Policy Brief No. 5, October 2009.
- D Baker, J Fear and R Denniss, *What a waste: An analysis of household expenditure on food*, Policy Brief No. 6, November 2009.
- J Fear and R Denniss, *Something for Nothing: Unpaid overtime in Australia*, Policy Brief No. 7, November 2009.
- F Wickson, *What you should know about nano*, Policy Brief No. 8, November 2009.

Challenge Grant

At the end of May 2009, The Australia Institute launched an appeal to members to assist with meeting the terms of the Challenge Grant thrown down by one of its principal supporters. He promised a donation of \$50,000 if the Institute was able to raise \$50,000 from other sources.

The Institute was extremely gratified by the response. Our members rose magnificently to the challenge and by the end of September, we had achieved slightly over \$50,000 in donations and grants.

This is a wonderful effort and a great endorsement of the work of the Institute. It is both satisfying and encouraging for us all to think that our members like what we do sufficiently to support us so generously. We cannot thank them enough.

This money has enabled the Institute to hire an extra researcher to create and publish a broad suite of regular indicators of wellbeing, including issues as diverse as carbon abatement, improvements in health and education, fairer government policy and a more sustainable outlook. We hope that this initiative will prove both interesting and informative and a way of keeping an eye on developments in these areas.

Research Fellow—David Baker

In September 2009, I moved with my family to Canberra to take up a research fellowship with The Australia Institute. While we recognised immediately the great potential for exploring and contributing to policy change in Australia through working with the Institute, the idea of uprooting and transplanting our lives from Melbourne took more convincing.

Following an earlier career as an automotive engineer, I worked in environmental revegetation prior to returning to study. Research work is part of a career change that began with a degree in sociology from La Trobe University in Melbourne where my honours thesis examined the role of power in cross-examinations between a witness and a defence barrister.

To complement my studies, I undertook an internship with The Australia Institute in 2005, assisting with the discussion paper, *Wasteful Consumption in Australia*. Since my return to the Institute as a research fellow, I have worked on a revision of this research (see article on p.5).

Now back at The Australia Institute, I look forward to making a constructive contribution to the social outcomes of policy development in Australia. At the same time, I am enjoying what Canberra has to offer a young family, including friendly people, bike paths, bush walking and Questacon.