



Labour Relations Newsletter

Issue 262 - 29 May 2009

In this edition:

- State Wage Case being reviewed
- Connecting with regional communities
- Employed people caring for young children
- Paid parental leave
- More jobs for over-55s

State Minimum Wage being reviewed

The Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission has adjourned to consider its decision regarding the State Minimum Wage.

The Commission is required before 1 July 2009 to set the minimum wage to apply to employers and employees covered by the Western Australian industrial relations system.

Interested parties were invited to make written submissions and on 19 to 20 May 2009, a five-member Commission in Court Session heard oral submissions from the:

- Minister for Commerce;
- Trades and Labor Council of Western Australia; and

- Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA (Inc).

The current State Minimum Wage is \$557.40 per week.

The Minister for Commerce proposed that the minimum wage should be increased in line with inflation forecasts. The Trades and Labor Council of Western Australian asked for a \$31 increase, while the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA (Inc) pushed for no increase in light of the difficult economic circumstances.

Written submissions and proceedings can be viewed on the Commission's website [here](#).

The Commission's decision is expected in June 2009.

Connecting with regional communities

Approximately 7000 people attended the Australian North West Expo 2009 held in Broome from 4 to 5 May.

The Department of Commerce was one of the 120 exhibitors at the expo. Labour Relations representative Kelly Maher provided information to members of the community and various organisations (such as Broome Senior High School, Legal Aid, the Broome Small Business Centre, Shire Library and community services and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations / Indigenous Coordination Centre) on a range of topics including:

- the services offered by the Division;
- jurisdiction and award coverage;
- the employment side to setting up and establishing a business;
- the difference between sub contractors and employees;
- managing workplace behavioural matters;
- operation of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)*;
- work in WA and tips for travellers on working visas;
- pay equity; and
- the Division's 'Your First Job (YFJ)' program.



Above: Kelly Maher (Labour Relations) with Annetta Bellingeri (Consumer Protection) and Enzo Fable (Science, Innovation and Business).

Employed people caring for young children

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has released a feature article concerning work life balance for employed people caring for children.

The article considers peoples' working arrangements, child care arrangements, and perceptions of time stress and work and family balance.

The data used in the article was from the Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS) 2007. The survey assumed that care was provided by any parent/guardian (aged 15 years and over) who had their own children aged 0 to 14 years living with them. In addition, other adults (aged 15 years and over) in the household were explicitly asked about their provision of care to any children in the household.

Click on the following links for a copy of the [feature article](#) and further information about the survey [Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation](#). Please note that both the article and the survey data (cat. no. 6361.0) are available free of charge on the [ABS website](#).

For further information about the information provided in this article contact Penny Boyd in Canberra via:

penny.boyd@abs.gov.au or (02) 6252 5884.

Paid parental leave

The Federal Government has announced that a national statutory paid parental leave scheme will be introduced from 1 January 2011. The proposed scheme is based closely on the recommendations of the final report of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Parental Leave: *Support for Parents with Newborn Children* released on 12 May 2009.

The main elements of the proposed scheme are:

- 18 weeks post-natal parental leave will be provided to the primary carer, paid at the adult federal minimum wage (currently \$543.78 per week).
- High income primary carers earning over \$150,000 per annum will not be eligible.
- The scheme will be fully taxpayer-funded.
- Employers will participate in the scheme by acting as paymasters where the employee had sufficient workplace tenure, with the Federal Government prepaying employers by instalment to avoid cash flow impacts.
- Initially, employers will not be required to pay superannuation contributions to employees on paid parental leave when the scheme commences in 2011. This issue will be revisited as part of the overall review of the scheme after 2 years.

More information on the proposed scheme is available on the [Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website](#), in the Budget 2009-10 section.

The Productivity Commission's final report is available at www.pc.gov.au

More jobs for over - 55s

Older workers are usually expected to be worse off in a tight labour market. However research by Monash University demographers Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy found that mature aged workers are increasing their share of available jobs while young workers may be losing out.

In April 2008, 79.2 percent of men aged 20 to 24 were in work but one year later this had fallen to 77.5 percent. For young women the drop was from 75.6 percent to 71.2 percent. Similar drops occurred for those aged 15 to 19 and 25 to 29. However, the reverse happened for people aged 55 to 69. For example, between April 2008 and April 2009 men aged 60 to 64 increased their workforce participation rate from 55.5 percent to 57.8 percent. Older women experienced a similar upwards trend.

Dr Birrell said that in the current economic climate older workers appeared to be staying on, meaning fewer job openings for young people.¹

¹ Patricia Karvelas, *Over-55s lifting shares of Jobs*, the Weekend Australian, 23 May 2009, p.2.