



**Submission Number: 67**  
**Date Received: 7/10/2011**



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Western Australia

**Submission by: Soroptimist International of Karratha & Districts Inc**

**To: Standing Committee on Regional Australia – inquiry on the use of ‘fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive out (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia**

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**Preamble** - This submission, by Soroptimist International of Karratha & Districts Inc (SI-KAD) addresses the practice of FIFO as it effects *our* community – the *Shire of Roebourne, in the west Pilbara region of Western Australia.*

Soroptimist International is a vibrant, dynamic organisation for today's professional and business women. We are committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realise aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities worldwide.

Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships.

### Terms of Reference

1. The extent and projected growth in FIFO/DIDO work practices, including in which regions and key industries this practice is utilised;

Without hard statistics at our disposal, we may express perception as fact... and from our perspective, perception IS fact. It influences our thinking, and it influences our emotional response.

Our perception is that our Shire has become ‘one big work-camp’, and that there is only a sprinkling of people who choose to live here. Our perception is that things will get far worse.

Is the current extent, and projected growth, of FIFO workforce based on figures provided by major resource companies in respect to existing and proposed projects?

Has data been collected from the non-resource sector? Some small business and government sectors have had to utilise FIFO to ‘get the job done’. For example - the State Government have, in the past, engaged FIFO cleaners at the high school.

Did the Australian Bureau of Statistics capture the whereabouts of FIFO workforce in the July 2011 census? Can the projected growth figures of FIFO/DIDO be relied upon as a true working population figure if the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not capture/count FIFO workers as living in specific regions of Australia?

Is there any projected diminution of FIFO?

Could we expect a FIFO ‘construction’ workforce, to move to a resident ‘production’ workforce? FIFO should only be used in large scale construction phases, and only on a temporary short term basis.

2. Costs and benefits for companies, and individuals, choosing a FIFO/DIDO workforce as an alternative to a resident workforce;

The lack of *affordable* residential accommodation in the region fosters FIFO.

If an employer in a remote area (as defined by ATO Zones A and B, or Special Zones A and B) provides residential accommodation, the company does not pay Fringe Benefits Tax on remote area housing.

Leased accommodation for FIFO in camps is (probably) less expensive and more readily available, than building and maintaining (or leasing) suitable housing stock.

Employee ‘churn rate’ is likely higher for FIFO than a residential workforce.

If an employer in a remote area pays an allowance to the employee to provide their own accommodation, the employee pays income tax at full marginal rates on the allowance.

We are pleased to see Rio are bucking-the-FIFO trend, by actively planning for, and acquiring residential accommodation. This change of strategy suggests the social cost of FIFO is considered too great a cost.

3. The effect of a non-resident FIFO/DIDO workforce on established communities, including community wellbeing, services and infrastructure;

A survey has been carried out by Kerry Carrington & Margaret Periera - School of Justice (June 2011) - "Social Impact of Mining Survey: Aggregate Results Queensland Communities" (see Attachment 1). The findings are very similar to what we as a community are living each day in the Shire of Roebourne, with a notable exception - point 6 - *Substandard living conditions for non-resident workers housed in camps*. We believe conditions provided in the majority of camps in our Shire, to be of a high standard.

## **Community wellbeing**

The frenetic pace at which our community is developing into to a FIFO based workforce is changing the demographics, and the cumulative social and cultural effects on our community are being overlooked.

Historically our community consisted of permanent residents and a family friendly environment where newcomers were welcomed. It is now being known as a place where people come to work, not to live.

Long term residents feel their identity, lifestyle and the vitality of the Shire of Roebourne has changed considerably. Our once strong community spirit has been greatly diminished and has little hope of revival in the short to medium term.

The trend to a FIFO workforce has been detrimental to volunteer based community organisations, such as ambulance, fire brigade, SES, sporting groups, and service groups. All are struggling to attract vital community members to operate the towns’ essential services. The communities in which FIFO ‘live’ also miss out on the contributions FIFO could make if they were ‘at home’.

We are concerned that there appears to be no monitoring of the mental and sexual health, and contagious disease effects on both FIFO workforce, and on our Community. A large number of FIFO ‘live’ overseas and ‘commute’ to the Pilbara. See attachments –

- Attachment 3 –“FIFO life of sex, drugs and dongas”
- Attachment 4 – “One in ten testing positive for drugs”
- Attachment 5 – “Miners working high on synthetic grass”
- Attachment 8 – “FIFO workers fuel spike in STD's”

The impact of excessive alcohol, drug consumption, and anti social behaviour has increased dramatically over the past few years since changing from a resident based workforce to a FIFO workforce.

FIFO workers are coming from all parts of the country and ‘take for granted’ the infrastructure that community volunteers have fund raised for, or built, over many years. We hear complaints about what we don’t have – eg hospital in-patient whingeing because the TV was not a flat-screen! He was quickly informed there was no TV at all until the community pulled together to raise tens of thousands of dollars for the supply and installation.

It is indicative of the lack of economic diversity, that ‘logo emblazoned’ fluro safety shirts are the main attire seen at the shopping centres, airports, hotels. This attire is not restricted to FIFO, neither is it restricted to males, but it does re-enforce the image of Karratha being a ‘work camp’ vs being the cosmopolitan community that sits below this veneer.

## **Services**

The large FIFO workforce is undermining the service delivery of State and Federal Government funded services. We understand the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not capture/count FIFO workers as living in the region, and therefore. Local Government are unable to statistically verify/calculate the *true* population and the demands it makes on existing infrastructure, and services, in order to justify requests for increases in State and Commonwealth funding and grants.

Massive jet aircraft movements of workers ...

- is extremely detrimental to the environment and offers no trade-off (no legacy of usable infrastructure)
- has pushed up the cost of airfares / diminished the availability of discount fares
- has resulted in families being unable to sit together - companies block book aisle and window seats.
- generates ‘landing charges’ revenue from FIFO, but are ratepayers being asked to subsidise airport upgrades and maintenance costs?

There is a great emphasis on the well being of ‘FIFO workers’ but the residential community are being forgotten. The greater number of FIFO workers in town is having an impact on getting an appointment at the hospital, physiotherapist, chiropractor, and doctors. It is also impacting on services provided by Royal Flying Doctor Service.

There is little research that examines the social impact on the long term effect of FIFO - the disruptive impact on personal and family arrangements. The high levels of STD's, stress, binge drinking, recreational drug use, depression, suicides and the impact this is having on our town's mental health services. We currently have no inpatient mental health facility in the Pilbara.

See attachments –

- Attachment 3 – “FIFO life of sex, drugs and dongas”
- Attachment 4 – “One in ten testing positive for drugs”
- Attachment 5 – “Miners working high on synthetic grass”
- Attachment 8 – “FIFO workers fuel spike in STD's”

Local hotels which had been frequented by families for meals and entertainment, now promote scantily clad (skimpy) bar maids to target heavy drinking, predominately male, customers.

There is a "Save to Leave" trend appearing in our community which is having a destabilising effect on our population, and increasing the rates of staff turnover.

## **Infrastructure**

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There is no longer, any affordable residential accommodation available in our community.

There is no opportunity to re-develop tourism in our region – tourist accommodation is either not available, or it is not affordable.

Temporary transient workforce accommodation (TWA) camps which were approved by the Shire of Roebourne Council as *temporary* (say, 5 years), are requesting extension of their lease application for a similar time frame.

Caravan parks which had been available for tourists and low income earners, are being sold and more areas are being converted to FIFO dongas or work camps .  
See attachments

- Attachment 9 –“ Searipple Transient Work Accommodation Camp (TWA) 2002. - Previously Searipple Caravan Park.
- Attachment 10 – “Searipple Transient Work Accommodation Camp (TWA) 2009

It would be a positive benefit if some of the higher-end TWA camps reverted to affordable residential, or tourist accommodation when no longer in use by FIFO.

4. The impact on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites;

There is significant economic activity in the Pilbara region with very high proportions of FIFO workers living in camps that have better facilities than some of the smaller and long established towns.

Mining companies in the Shire of Ashburton are building their own airstrips which will then be bulldozed at the end of the project. We have to suggest this is a waste of money and resources, and provides and no short or long term benefit to nearby towns. We would urge companies to contribute to community airports if the camp is in reasonable proximity to the town.

Karratha has accommodated a number of FIFO workers, who subsequently had a daily aircraft commute, to Barrow Island.

5. Long term strategies for economic diversification in towns with large FIFO/DIDO workforces;

Until the issue of *affordable* accommodation is resolved, people cannot live here without subsidised housing being provided by government, or resource sector employers (unless they purchased a home many years ago), and this limits economic diversification.

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The State Government of Western Australia should develop an *affordable housing strategy*. The cost of new residential developments could be significantly reduced if the land content paradigm changed from ‘freehold’ to ‘leasehold.’ (take Canberra as an example).

The introduction of 12 hours shifts, while supplying employees with a better wage, has had a detrimental effect on the local community in regards sports, community groups and volunteers.

A return to 8 hour shifts, as the norm, is encouraged.

It would be a positive benefit if some of the higher-end TWA camps reverted to affordable residential, or tourist accommodation when no longer in use by FIFO.

6. Key skill sets targeted for mobile workforce employment, and opportunities for ongoing training and development;

FIFO companies are not employing residential based apprentices who in the long term will be our tradespersons' of the future.

7. Provision of services, infrastructure and housing availability for FIFO/DIDO workforce employees;

Married Couples are not catered for in (most) transient work camps. Some couples are sleeping in separate rooms, separate camps, or one in a camp and the spouse in a house. This should not happen.

8. Strategies to optimise FIFO/DIDO experience for employees and their families, communities and industry;

A complete re-think of ‘working hours’ needs to be undertaken for the benefit of employees, communities and industry.

A return to 8 hour shifts, as the norm, is encouraged.

Anecdotal stories strongly indicate a person working 12 hour days, especially for a prolonged period, loose concentration toward the end of their shift. This impinges on their productivity, and raises concerns about safety.

12 hour shifts, while supplying employees with a better wage, means most FIFO have a robotic life – fly-in, bus to camp, eat, sleep, bus to worksite, work, bus to camp, eat, sleep, repeat the cycle for 28 days (perhaps with Sunday off), bus to airport, and fly-out...as if they are in a minimum security prison, with time out for good behaviour.

Shorter working days would allow FIFO an opportunity to engage with their ‘adopted’ community, and give them an opportunity for recreation and to create a healthy work/life balance. (See attachment 6 “‘Motelling’ blamed for unreported Woodside death”)

Residential workers are being forced to work FIFO block days to fit with the majority of the workforce which is now FIFO

Some companies are accelerating the trend to hire non-residential workers, and are making their long term residential workers jobs into FIFO positions.

When long term residents leave they take with them a considerable commitment to the workplace and the community. The community loses another family; and if the partner works in an ancillary job - a school, not for profit, small business, these services are also diminished as the employee is not easily replaced.

9. Potential opportunities for non-mining communities with narrow economic bases to diversify their economic base by providing a FIFO/DIDO workforce;

The Kimberley Region is a non-mining community whose economic base is national and international tourism. The community of Broome have given strong indications they want to retain their uniqueness and do not want to become another mining town. We empathise with their (justified) concerns that resource development would be detrimental to their brand, and to their lifestyle.

10. Current initiatives and responses of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments;

The State Government of Western Australia needs to immediately assess the *cumulative* cultural and community impacts of the many approved projects in our area.

The State Government of Western Australia needs to immediately implement legislation, as part of the planning and approval processes, to require companies to prepare a Social Impact Management Policy (SIMP) on the cumulative and cultural effects of proposed development projects.

We believe resource workers *should* have a choice about where they live and work. See comments “The Queensland State Government has released Major Resource Projects Housing Policy” (Attachment 2)

For 74 years (1919-1993) the North West of Western Australia had its own State Minister to personally advocate for the region. Currently we have one Western Australian Minister looking after the Pilbara, Kimberley, Gascoyne, Midwest / Goldfields, Perth, Peel, South West, and Great Southern. With all the activity in the State of Western Australia and its size this is a very large portfolio for one person to

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effectively manage. We would like to see a return of a designated Minister for the North West or Pilbara.

**In closing**

At the moment, in certain parts of Australia, there's no choice – FIFO will always be the only option in very remote operations.

As State and Local Government have a vision to have major cities in the North West of Australia, the FIFO workforce needs to be converted back to a residential workforce.

If FIFO remains the dominant workforce, communities in proximity to mines will see fewer employment opportunities for residents of the local community, and a decrease in positive knock-on effects.

Well-paid, skilled FIFO workers take their wages home with them. There is no surge in spending on local goods and services that every other boom has brought. Small business struggle to develop, expand or create more employment without reinvestment of ‘wages’ into the local market.

State and local Government say the projected *permanent* population of the Shire will double over the next ten years. This implies about 20,000 new permanent flow-on jobs for the area. How will these workers be housed if there is no affordable accommodation?

Many of us recall a drastic accommodation shortage in the early 1980’s. This was followed by a glut of accommodation, and private investors carried a heavy financial burden of having properties vacant for months on end. Eventually, the market levelled.

Now that demand continues to outstrip supply in the housing market, those that can pay (resource companies/employees), pay. Those that can’t pay (service workers, small business, seniors, not-for-profit employees) leave town (home). They have no choice.

We suggest the Standing Committee hold a public hearing in Karratha, as the Shire of Roebourne is host to some 10-12,000 FIFO.

**Signed by:** ..... **Dated :** .....

Joanne Pritchard - Tel: .....  
Immediate Past President, Soroptimist International Karratha & Districts Inc.

## Attachment 1

A survey has been carried out by Kerry Carrington & Margaret Periera - School of Justice (June 2011) on the "**Social Impact of Mining Survey: Aggregate Results Queensland Communities**". (The findings are very similar to what we as a community are living each day in the Shire of Roebourne).

1. Adverse consequences for the wellbeing of non-resident workers and their families
2. Fatigue arising from block rosters and long distance travel
3. Strains on housing, services, infrastructure and economy
4. Erosion of community wellbeing, safety, sporting and cultural life
5. Lack of financial benefits to local business in spite of massive profits for mining companies and royalties for government
6. Substandard living conditions for non-resident workers housed in camps.
7. An expectation of a stronger leadership role for government on all these issues

### IMPACT ON LOCAL ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT, SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The mining industry as a whole does not support the local businesses.

Here are some examples:

- The camps get their food trucked in from Brisbane.
- The plumbers/electricians etc are also brought in from the bigger cities.
- The mines do not source many of their products from the local area.
- They do not support many community organisations or functions.
- They very seldom hire local people, and never advertise locally for any job vacancies.
- The people, who choose to move to a community, get no benefits for living there but those living in Camps get free accommodation and food.'

A Non-Resident workforce puts strain on the local Hospital, Ambulance, Fire Fighters and also puts a lot of extra strain on our already damaged highways.

The township becomes very disjointed. There is the impact on infrastructure, social issues affecting individuals, families and the community at large. Local businesses are impacted more in a negative aspect as often the mining camps are catered for by outside larger companies and minimal expenditure is done with the immediate community.... '

Supporting the housing of non-resident workers in temporary accommodation is non productive as this does not make any money for the local economy at all - most of these workers do not use any of the local facilities as they are either at work or asleep. They only see the town when they drive in and out of it. Non-resident workers make no contribution to the community. They make few, if any, purchases from local businesses. As their families are elsewhere, it means they are only in the community for work, therefore make no contribution to sporting groups and other volunteer organisations. The lack of permanent numbers also leads to a reduction in public facilities - schools, churches, hospital, fire and rescue, ambulance.

Before non-resident workers, previous mine bosses held many volunteer positions in local groups and were part of community life. How many current bosses have ever seen local juniors play soccer - none

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## **Attachment 2**

26 August 2011 - The Queensland State Government has released Major Resource Projects Housing Policy which emphasises choice in the belief that resource workers should have a choice of where and how they live and work.

Where a fly-in, fly-out workforce is proposed, the proponent must work with local communities, councils, unions and the state government to make sure that the liveability and sustainability of towns is protected and that workers have choice about where they live.

According to the policy: Development of resource projects must take into account the location and capacity of existing and planned infrastructure and how best to optimise its use, as well as requirements for new infrastructure to support project workforce accommodation.

Infrastructure requirements may include essential services such as water, power and sewerage and other services such as education, health, police services and emergency services as well as other community facilities.

### Attachment 3

# FIFO life of sex, drugs and dongas

- Kim Christian From: AAP
- June 28, 2011 12:00AM



**LIFESTYLE ISSUES:** The mining industry is full of anecdotes of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workers suffering physical and mental health problems, substance abuse and relationship breakdowns. *Source:* Perth Now

**THE prospect of paying \$100,000 a year to rent a house in the booming Pilbara region of Western Australia isn't everyone's idea of a good deal.**

So it's no surprise that mining workers often choose a fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle.

But as the big resources companies search high and low to fill mining jobs, early research suggests they may even need to take into account the sex lives of fly-in, fly-out employees.

Tens of thousands of workers now split their lives in two, working long shifts on a mine site and flying home to rest in Perth, Brisbane or other major cities.

Everyone agrees the money's great, but some recent studies show the arrangement can be disruptive to employees' and partners' lives in the long-term and lead to lower job satisfaction among workers.

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And the industry is full of anecdotes of fly-in, fly-out workers suffering general health and mental health problems, substance abuse and relationship breakdowns.

But few studies have been conducted into the long-term effects of working away from home for weeks at a time.

To an outsider, life seems rosy.

Strong commodities prices have helped deliver high wages, long breaks, new houses and flash cars to the mining workforce.

But it's a strange kind of life, working 12 hour shifts, eating chef-prepared meals and bunking down in a “donga”, the portable buildings used on remote work sites, to watch DVDs and contact loved ones.

Home time is also unusual, as households get used to having an extra person around 24 hours a day.

“It isn't an easy existence to be a fly-in, fly-out miner, but nor is it easy to conceive of the opposite which would be building great big mining towns that people are going to stay in forever,” Michael Rafferty, a senior research analyst at the University of Sydney says.

“Australia is a very urbanised country and it's quite difficult to attract people permanently to rural and remote areas.”

Rents have also surged in mining regions, making it difficult for some to move there.

Research from real estate consultancy RP Data shows that the median rent in the Pilbara is \$1650 a week, or about \$86,000 a year.

According to local agents, new three-bedroom apartments in Karratha, in the Pilbara, are expected to be leased for as much as \$2000 a week, or \$104,000 a year.

Dr Rafferty, from the university's Workplace Research Centre, said the centre was planning to conduct a study into FIFO workers and those who are no longer in the workforce.

He says there is already research showing how different shifts and rosters affect workers, that there are mental health problems and that it can be difficult for workers to maintain relationships and start families.

As the bidding heats up to attract FIFO workers to remote mining sites, managers are being forced to look beyond offering higher wages and superior entertainment and accommodation packages.

Some bosses are having to consider the sex lives of their employees in a bid to keep couples happy in the bedroom and boost satisfaction levels at work.

A study conducted at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia found it could be difficult for female partners to become pregnant or to have sexual relations if their menstrual cycle did not fit in with the roster.

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“It’s a massive issue,” one respondent said.

The FIFO industry has even spawned dating coaches to help men connect with the opposite sex after weeks in isolation.

Brett Gilbert now helps FIFO workers abandon unhealthy behaviour and sharpen up their social skills.

“Do you drink every day after work? Do you watch countless hours of mindless TV after work? Do you consume too much food before bed, neglect to exercise, or are addicted to men’s magazines?” Mr Gilbert asks potential clients on his website.

As well, doctors and psychologists are seeing worrying rates of drug use among FIFO workers during their time off in Perth.

The prevalence of obesity and diabetes is also a concern, particularly among workers who may miss out on wages if they’re unfit for work.

Still, improvements have been made in the industry in recent years.

Neville Bruce, from the Centre for Integrated Human Studies at the University of Western Australia, supervised a study which addressed the personal issues of FIFO workers.

“There will be occasional problems in individual groups, but on the whole (companies have) established a reasonable working relationship for people going into fly-in, fly-out,” he said.

But Dr Bruce added that anyone entering that lifestyle should be fully aware of the issues.

“If they’re in a relationship, they have to make sure that their partners and family are in full agreement and continue to be so.”

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#### Attachment 4

## One in ten testing positive for drugs

May 11, 2011.



One in ten workers at some mine sites are testing positive for drugs while it is one in three at a few (7pm TV News WA)

**Random drug testing at mine sites in the state shows one in ten workers are testing positive for drugs while at some sites the rate is as high as 30 per cent.**

The State Government laboratory says a number of organisations, including mining companies, have approached them to test staff for the use of synthetic cannabis, Kronic.

The New Zealand substance, which is being sold legally in WA, has a similar effect as cannabis and cannot be picked up through on-site drug tests.

Kronic has been in the spotlight in recent weeks after anecdotal reports of mine workers using it.

ChemCentre's Sarah Lau says urine samples from random drug testing are assessed.

She says the laboratory is the only facility in the country which can detect the substance.

"We're seeing about 10 per cent of samples show positive for drugs like Kronic, on some sites though that rate is as high as 30 per cent of random drug testing," she said.

"From my understanding you have a number of employers including mine sites which are looking at developing policies to address things like Kronic and their use at work as well as their detection in workplace drug samples."

The ChemCentre is compiling a report on Kronic to help Government agencies determine whether the product should be banned or regulated.

## Attachment 5

### Miners working high on synthetic grass

#### The Australian, 14.4.2011

THE mining industry has been rocked by revelations that workers are buying synthetic cannabis over the counter.

The substance can impair performance but is undetectable through on-site drug tests.

Known as Kronic, the newly available fake cannabis from New Zealand can be purchased legally despite health officials confirming that it mimics the affects of regular cannabis.

As well as producing a "high", the West Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority said it could cause fatigue, headaches, disorientation or hallucinations in some people, which could be devastating at work.

BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto both expressed concern at the revelation, saying workplace safety was crucial for the industry.

The West Australian Chamber of Minerals and Energy called for an investigation.

"It's vital that authorities examine the legality of this substance," said the chamber's chief executive, Reg Howard-Smith.

"If the reportedly adverse effects on the user are correct, the industry is concerned about its over-the-counter availability."

Health officials said Kronic could alter "mood and perception" and should be avoided. But Gary Kirby from the West Australian Drug and Alcohol Authority said it was too early to say how widespread the practice was in the wider community and whether it should be banned.

He acknowledged it was already illegal in some countries, including parts of the US and Europe, but said more information was needed.

A shop owner in the North West mining town of Karratha told The Australian she had been selling Kronic since February, after dozens of people, including mine workers, asked her to stock it.

"Everyone's using it," she said. "It's right across the board, men and women. They'd been ordering it off the internet but asked if I could get it for them."

The woman, who asked not to be named, said she sold it for \$70 for 3g.

"It gives me some cash flow and people want it," she said.

## Attachment 6

# 'Motelling' blamed for unreported Woodside death

Aja Styles

January 7, 2011

Woodside has denied "motelling" is to blame for a worker's body lying undiscovered for up to 12 days in accommodation linked to the company's multi-billion dollar construction project in the state's North West.

The 55-year-old construction worker died in a donga provided by Woodside's Pluto Liquefied Natural Gas Project about December 23, a day after beginning his Christmas shift. But his body was only discovered on Tuesday.

His death is not being treated as suspicious.

The man had been subcontracted by Ausclad Group of Companies to help in the construction of Woodside's Pluto project in Dampier and was living in accommodation provided in Karratha.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has pointed the finger at poor accommodation rules as being in part to blame for death going unreported for so long and wants WorkSafe to investigate.

WorkSafe, however, is unsure whether it can investigate.

Since the man is believed to have died of natural causes and was found in accommodation, it was not considered a work-related death, WorkSafe spokeswoman said.

It was up to police to investigate the death and prepare a report for the State Coroner.

Yet the matter has angered the man's colleagues and the CFMEU said it was unacceptable that the employer did not show proper duty of care by checking up on their worker.

The man, who is said to have a brother who works in the Pilbara region as a fly-in fly-out worker, had volunteered to work over the Christmas break.

He was being accommodated in dongas at the Gap Ridge accommodation site, which operate as a motel, so he was never staying in one place for the term of his contract.

"So you never know who is going to be next to you, which could have been a contributing factor in his death because usually you get to know who you're living with," Mick Buchan, CFMEU's WA occupational health and safety spokesman, said.

Although cleaners attend twice a week, the worker was only visited once since his suspected death during which the cleaner thought he was asleep and didn't disturb the room, Mr Buchan said.

"You hear of these stories but you wouldn't expect it of a multi-million dollar construction site," he said.

He said the union had strongly opposed the introduction of "motelling" last year for those reasons.

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"It's bad enough to be away from your family at the best of times let alone when you're motelling - it just makes it worse," Mr Buchan said.

He said the man's colleagues were distressed since it was the third death at Gap Ridge over Christmas, with two other men being found dead from suspected natural causes and suicide.

"We don't think it is any excuse that the numbers were down and he simply slipped through the system," Mr Buchan said.

Woodside has denied there has been any other deaths at the camp.

"Woodside has initiated an immediate review requiring all contractors to assess their protocols and processes in managing their staff movements to ensure absences from work are identified and promptly investigated," it said in a statement.

"Counsellors have been mobilised to site and to Karratha to provide support as required.

"The circumstances surrounding the death are being investigated by police. There is no reason to believe that motelling has had an impact on this situation."

Access to the donga has been restricted and some workers felt unable to pay their respects, Mr Buchan said.

A number of colleagues also took days of leave when they heard news of the death on Tuesday.

Both companies, Woodside and AGC, have given their condolences and offers of support to the man's family, friends and colleagues.

AGC said it "deeply regretted" any distress on those affected and both companies said they were carrying out investigations, together with police.

WorkSafe is waiting on the police report before it makes any decision on whether it has any jurisdiction to investigate.

"Our regulations apply to people working alone or working in remote areas. If you can't get in contact you have to go and look for them," the spokeswoman said.

"But this doesn't fit since the camp is within the boundaries of the town - it's not a remote location."

Mr Buchan said it wasn't good enough.

"WorkSafe should not be looking to little loopholes to get them out of it. The Occupational Health and Safety Act says that employers are to provide accommodation and their duties are to ensure their workers are cared for," he said.

The WorkSafe spokeswoman said however, the work safety watchdog was only able to investigate within its own regulations.

Mr Buchan said the CFMEU, together with the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, would continue to lobby WorkSafe and would not give up the fight.

The matter also falls outside the jurisdiction of the Department of Mines and Petroleum

## **Attachment 7**

28/09/2011

### **OAKESHOTT - REVERSE THE FIFO THINKING FOR MORE STABLE COMMUNITIES**

ONE of the region’s leading manufacturers, HF Hand, will join Independent Lyne MP Rob Oakeshott at the Future Jobs Forum in Canberra next week with the aim of encouraging more manufacturing contract work to the Mid-North Coast.

“We will be sending a strong message to the forum that public policy must encourage contract opportunities throughout regional Australia, rather than export local skills to remote mining centres,” Mr Oakeshott said.

“The current focus of the government supporting ‘fly-in, fly-out’ (FIFO) jobs has a real and lasting impact on local businesses such as HF Hand, who are losing skilled and experienced tradespeople to highly attractive incentives being offered in remote mining communities. “This is not only highly disruptive to our local manufacturing industry, but it also creates an immediate disincentive for local businesses to invest in the trade training and skills growth that supports these industries in the longer term.”

Mr Oakeshott said this reluctance to invest in training opportunities would also harm the job prospects of local young workers looking for apprenticeships.

“Public policy consideration must look to long term sustainability for skilled workers in all regions of Australia, where contracting work can be done off-site as part of a broader strategy to meet the demand for trade skills within the mining and resources sector,” Mr Oakeshott said..

“This is highlighted by one example from HF Hand and shown directly to the Prime Minister, where the fabrication and construction work for an aluminium smelter in Portland in southern Victoria was completed here on the Mid-North Coast of NSW.

“If we build a system that only focuses on labour mobility to areas of need, we strip some communities bare as a consequence. Surely, the challenge is to get contracts and work to move around Australia, rather than honey-pot policies that subsidise existing labour movements.

“Policies such as FIFO Coordinator Program, announced by the government last week, are therefore likely to achieve the opposite of what is intended.

“Those positions, which link skilled workers to remote mining locations, should be working on peeling off contracts and work from mining-related activities, and finding ways to get that work to businesses throughout regional Australia.

“Organisations such the 55 Regional Development Australia bodies already established could and should be engaged to spread the work and keep skilled tradespeople in local industries and in local communities.

“This will be the single most important message I will be taking to the jobs forum,” Mr Oakeshott said.

Submission by: Soroptimist International of Karratha & Districts Inc

To: Standing Committee on Regional Australia – inquiry on the use of ‘fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive out (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia.

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## Attachment 8

### FIFO workers fuel spike in STDs

Lloyd Jones September 09, 2011



DOWN TIME: Reported cases of STDs are on the rise among WA FIFO workers. Source: Supplied

#### **HIGHLY paid fly-in, fly-out workers are returning from cheap Asian holidays with high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, West Australian doctors say.**

Australian Medical Association WA President Dave Mountain says there's been a significant rise in such diseases in WA over the last three or four years.

Doctors in WA have been reporting boosted numbers of FIFO workers fronting with sexually-transmitted diseases.

“Whenever you get those rises in sexually transmitted diseases that's almost certainly a sign that people are having high risk, unprotected sex,” Dr Mountain said.

“The real concern then is that HIV rates are going to start increasing as well.”

Dr Mountain said there was a real concern about FIFO workers bringing back from South-East

“Those diseases, we're going to be getting very resistant bugs coming into our very high risk communities already.”

Dr Mountain said there were already high rates of sexually transmitted diseases in the Aboriginal and mining communities of WA's northwest.

Part of the problem were well-paid, young, single, male FIFO workers in the mining, and oil and gas industries who took cheap flights to Asia, he said.

“They have a pretty tedious time when they're on the sites,” he said.

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“They're working long hours, they're isolated for two to three weeks, then they have two to three weeks off.

“There's a real combination of factors there that's going to put people at risk.”

Dr Mountain said the local sex industry in WA's northwest was also likely contributing to the rise in cases of sexually transmitted diseases.

“It would be very surprising if that wasn't true when you've got a lot of cashed-up young men.”

Dr Mountain said his advice to such workers was, “Always wear a mac”.

He said the medical services in WA's northwest were already under strain to cope with boosted populations and high rents.

Governments and mining companies needed to ensure health services were maintained, and subsidised if necessary, and studies were needed to determine the impact of FIFO work on public health, Dr Mountain said.

“A very small proportion of the amazing profits that are coming out of this mining should be put into examining the effects on the health of the workers, their families and the communities they live in.”

The AMA WA will be making submissions to a federal parliamentary inquiry currently underway into the impacts of FIFO work.

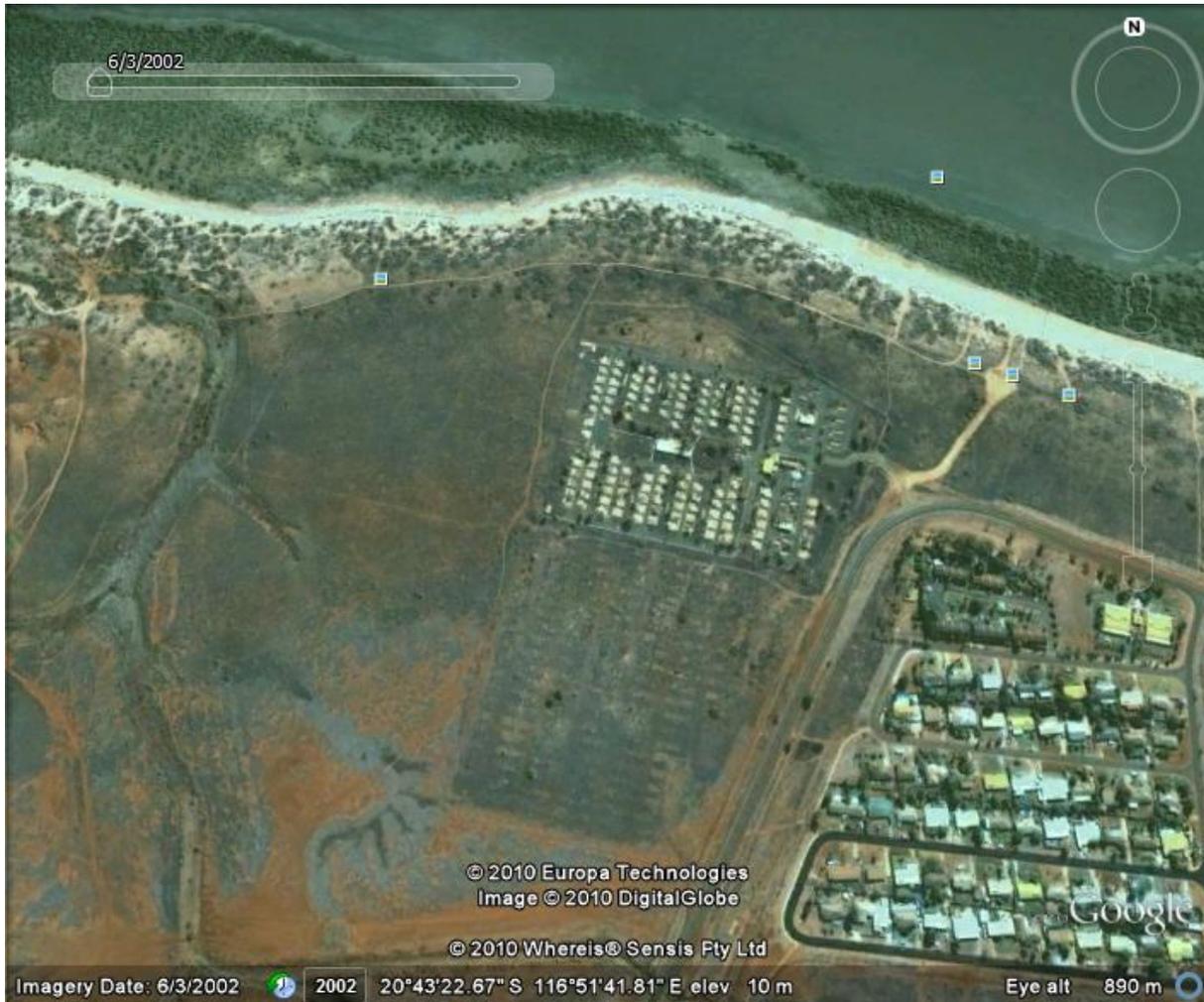
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## Attachment 9

Searipple Caravan Park 2002. Now Searipple Transient Work Accommodation (TWA) Camp. - The size of caravan park size fluctuated over periods of high construction in the area and was one of the towns' affordable living and tourist options.



Source – Google – Imagery Date 6/3/2002

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## Attachment 10

Searipple Transient Work Accommodation (TWA) Camp 2009.



Source – Google – Imagery Date 30/04/2009