

Henry Fields

Thursday, 2 July 2015
Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Inquiry into Personal Choice and Community Impacts

Dear Chairman,

I make the following submission.

I am a young Australian, only 22 years old. I have only had a brief interaction with politics, enrolling to vote at age 18 and only really becoming politically aware of the parties and the political system since I was 20 years old. My interest spiked when I became worried that a person's freedom was being heavily diminished by government laws.

Freedom of speech, action and thought are being heavily undermined in this country.

This is because of the creation and acceptance of **dubious** theories about personal freedom. A government's number one priority should not be safety, if this was true we should all stay in our houses and rarely leave. Our houses would be bunkers to protect us from the world. A government's number one priority should not be happiness either, such as through protection from being offended. A government's number one priority should be to give peoples' lives **meaning**. It seems sometimes hard for some to accept but one is extremely likely to experience pain/offence in their lives. I'd say confidently that every single person will either have to experience a relationship break up or a death of someone they care for in their lives. This is a pain a government cannot protect its people from. It is life.

'Nanny' state to me implies the government treating its citizens like children. There are a number of recommendations I'd give to counteract this. Whilst support for politicians may at present be low, I do think that far too many of the processes of government are handled by 'independent' bodies. There is a plethora of commissioners and government bodies dealing with all manner of types of discrimination and/or health concerns (as this committee is focused on) of the nation that are independent. But I don't think these should be independent, I actually think each new government should have the option (whether for just the start, or the duration of their term), to select the chiefs of these organisations and the suchlike, as then social issues may be better chosen by the will of the people. For example, a Finnish MP argued that the right to the internet should be a human right, our nation could debate this at an election and elect a party and their view accordingly.

Stand-up comedy remains as one of the last great bastions of free speech because I'd argue this is an environment where the employee (as in the comedian is paid to perform a service for the crowd (employer)) treat the audience as adults who are conscious enough to discern that offensive points of view on topics may be offered and yet they need cause no offence because they are simply true facts of life. The populace (voters) are not dumb, they do not need to be treated like children. Most Australians have completed some form of high-school education, they are capable of absorbing complex important information such as new policy ideas. If they cannot this is a fault of a government that is not utilising the mediums available to it well enough.

On the note of safety regulation I'd advise the committee to consider the unforgiving statement that some jobs are worth being hurt in or even dying for. Journalism, law enforcement and politics are among some of the professions where I feel certain circumstances would mean dying would be a noble and worthy cause. Many journalists willingly risk their own safety so that the truth may be told and society is no doubt better for this because of these brave, freedom chasers. It may be of note to the committee that perhaps the media has a role to play in this debate, investigative journalists are becoming less and less, but at least they did support the view that pain could be worth the gain. Constant evidence of this I feel is needed to remind society of the importance of such a statement.. Finally, in what I call the 'long term economic loss effect of safety regulation', I'd argue that particularly heavy safety regulations can actually be to the detriment of a society. One can think of it like this. A particular new safety regulation adds a large amount of extra time onto completing a task, this task then becomes less worthwhile and produces less economic benefits. But if this had not happened there would be more economic benefits, more economic benefits in the long run means greater tax revenue for the government, and more tax revenue can thus be put into the health system. It is a hard cost-benefit analysis to do, one which I cannot with my education at present but I foresee that such regulation as say protecting someone from a small cut (such as a paper cut) in his/her profession could be done away with. This in turn would increase economic benefits and this money could be used in the health system to save people who are dying, not just suffering a small cut. Another area of **potential** examples is to think of the career of a soldier. Safety regulations do protect soldiers and save lives I don't doubt it, yet the job is still inherently dangerous and no amount of regulation will actually fix this. What will fix this is better technology to protect soldiers when out on the battlefield. Better technology requires funding, and thus the 'long term economic loss effect of safety regulation' **may be** shown again. Balance is the key to safety regulation in industries, because if you overburden an industry too much with regulation its' economic benefits will become too small to be worthwhile. It'll thus either shutdown (meaning less economic and thus social benefits for the country) or operate illegally. One could argue with a very long bow that the steep regulation on the pharmaceutical industry is what has in part led to the rise of illegal, illicit-drug manufacturing. I **support** the regulation to make drug-testing thorough and **wouldn't** like to see any changes. However I would just like to say that if there was less regulation chances are there would be more efficient antidepressant medication available and thus perhaps less need for citizens to use recreational drugs as an alternative.

If there was one point I'd like the committee to consider it is that there needs to be respect by the government for long-term goals over short-term outcomes. The populace should be educated and encouraged to make smart decisions for themselves, not forced. Take for example, alcohol. Time and time again commentators and researchers say that Australia has a cultural problem with binge-drinking. Forgive me, but the way to fix this problem is not through bans in advertising or lockout laws, but in educating the populace about the harms binge-drinking does not just to themselves, but to society. Too often in the campaign to end 'offensive' things is there not recognition that an individual may have to take some offence (pain) for the betterment of society. If divorce was banned because just one individual felt their divorce had been too offensive (hurtful) to go through then that one individual has made the mistake of not realising that when you are a member of a society you must carry the burden of accepting its ways that enable it to thrive and survive. Individualism has and will continue to lead to the crisis of affection in today's society in Australia. I ask older Australians about difference between when they were my age and now and almost all say that

regardless of the higher crime and poverty levels, the general, lawful populace were kinder to one another. Whether it be through manners or openness to interact. Australians may give more to charity nowadays than before but this does not reflect the non-monetary charity citizens can undertake in their lives.

Now forgive me but I know that it is a tough thing to ask society, to accept more danger so that they may be freer in the long run. But it comes down to the simple fact that if you ban or shepherd the population from everything that could harm them then you will ruin people's lives. We will become emotionless and will not interact with each other for fear of offending (hurting) one another. That's a society that **lacks** meaning, and I'd say that a society where people don't have meaning in their lives isn't a society at all, it is just a bunch of individuals.