

Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union, Queensland Branch, answer to question on notice, 13 September 2019 (received 23 September 2019).

I write in relation to the Committee's hearings conducted in Brisbane on Friday 13 September 2019, in relation to the Proper Use of Workers' Benefits Bill. During the hearings, Mr Journeaux, Queensland Branch Secretary of the AMIEU took a question on notice from Senator Patrick. Senator Patrick requested a rationale for Mr Journeaux's answer that the proposed legislation could present an obstacle to establishing a service in the meat (or broader manufacturing) industry equivalent to the "Mates In Construction" program.

Mr Journeaux's response is set out below.

Regards,
Craig Buckley
Industrial Officer
AMIEU Qld Branch

Response to Question on Notice regarding the Proper Use of Worker Benefits Bill:

Mr Journeaux informed the committee that in his role as a director on the board of the Meat Industry Employees' Superannuation Fund he would receive information regarding the fund's payment of death benefits. He became concerned at the number of such fund payments which related to suicides. As a result, he has been involved in pushing for an initiative in Queensland, "Mates In Manufacturing," based on the successful model of "Mates in Construction" in the construction industry.

Mr Journeaux reports there has been some interest from some employers in the meat industry, and from an insurer that underwrites the superannuation fund's policies. Other employers are reluctant to accept that there is a problem.

There have been no detailed costings prepared at this stage, but in his discussions with other interested parties, Mr Journeaux has calculated an amount of \$250,000 would be needed annually to operate a service with a single case manager/field officer. To date, there has been no agreement about how funding contributions would be made, but the AMIEU is of the view that funding of this quantity is unlikely to be achieved from industry unless it is derived from income from investments of one kind or another. One option has been the establishment of a fund which might be regulated under the proposed legislation. If that were so, then the provisions of s.329LD(2)(b)(i) would place limitations upon funding welfare services unless the services are provided "at market value and on commercial terms." This is not consistent with the "mates in construction" model the AMIEU wishes to follow. The intent is that the service would receive financial support as a gift from its funding source, and this would effectively subsidise the provision of its training, welfare and other services.

The "Mates In Construction" model is not about providing counselling services that can be sourced from a variety of agencies or providers. It is an integrated combination of training and case management/support – provided by people with knowledge of the particular industry. The example

of “Mates in Construction” has demonstrated the importance of broad industry support (from unions and employers), and of understanding of the circumstances and experiences of workers in the industry. As such, the AMIEU considers it important that a proposed “Mates in Manufacturing” service be an initiative that is developed from within the industry, rather than simply engaging existing providers.

The AMIEU does not know whether a ‘mates in manufacturing’ service would be eligible to become a registered charity. If not, then the AMIEU would have to attempt to develop a stable, recurrent funding source that did not involve a “workers benefit fund.” Mr Journeaux advises that he is not aware of any other feasible method of raising funds of this size from within the industry. Mr Journeaux says, for instance, that his branch is not sufficiently large that such a program could be sustainably funded from simply applying a levy to the membership.