



Submission

Federal Inquiry into the use of 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforce practices in regional Australia

Requests for Serious Consideration



Water Feature - Moranbah Town Square Shopping Centre

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Federal Inquiry into the use of ‘fly-in, fly-out’ (FIFO) workforce practices in regional Australia Requests for Serious Consideration

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Moranbah Traders Association Inc. Executive Committee Members Responsible for Submission

President	Peter Finlay
Secretary	Lisa Corica
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Sign at entrance to Town Square Shopping Centre

1. Moranbah Traders Association Inc. (MTA)

Inc No. IA29671

P.O. Box 322, Moranbah, Qld, 4744.

ABN: 78 190 579 664

Moranbah Traders Association Inc. was formed approximately 9 years ago as the initiative of some businesses operating in Moranbah. The **aim of the Association was and still is, to provide a united group of networking businesses with support and positive projects to encourage good service and promote shopping locally.** Initially the group was formed to help with the improvement of sales and service for Moranbah, which included businesses such as hair salons, hardware store, newsagency, bank, fruit & vege. Cafe, bakery, shoe, toy, sports shop, etc.

The original **concepts of the Moranbah Traders Association have remained the same over the years**, but the **membership growth and number of Community Projects** MTA are asked to be involved in, as a respected Association of Businesses, made it **necessary for MTA to employ a Liaison Officer in 2007.**

The liaison officer was appointed to work on **promotions such as the Service Star of the Month, Service Star of the Year**, (to encourage individual good service in Moranbah businesses) the **Gala Business Awards**, a major community event held every September, and the local shopping campaign, Belyando Bucks, (now called **Moranbah Money**).

Moranbah Traders Association is constantly asked to attend community meetings, and to have a representative on committees of interest to the Business Community as well as the welfare of the larger community. In the last 2 years **the demand for MTA's input into the Community has grown enormously in response to the huge industrial growth, and with all of the issues associated, that demand attention.**

Any business in the district is encouraged to become a member of the Moranbah Traders Association, and we currently have a membership of 64, including industrial, medical/professional, education, training, trades, hospitality, accommodation, and retail. ***Most of these businesses are owned and/or managed by wives, husbands, or partners of people who are employed in and associated with the mining industry, with some very successful businesses having been here for over 30 years. Without families living in Moranbah we would not have people to own or staff the businesses that support the community.***

With large number of "prospective" members who receive networking support from MTA as well, **our representation has the potential to reach over 300 local businesses**, and get to hear a large number of concerns from them. **Moranbah Traders Association works in close association with many community organisations, including Isaac Regional Council, Schools, and large Mining and Associated Companies, to deliver better service and representation to our area.**

Moranbah Traders Association is largely seen as a **respected voice of the business community**, but has not lost sight of their original goal;

"Our goal is to unite the business community of Moranbah, actively seeking the promotion and development of our district".

Id 4744.

1. Moranbah

A permanent friendly and modern town located approximately 195 klms West of Mackay and 200 klms North East of Emerald; Moranbah was built on a cattle station over 40 years ago.

It was built as a single purpose mining town to house the small population of families of the miners who would work in the newly established coal mines of Goonyella Riverside, and Peak Downs.

Moranbah was a new and shining example of what could be achieved when, the Government of the time, told the Mining Company of the time, Utah Development, they had to build housing for families before they could mine coal. From humble beginnings and over 4 generations later, Moranbah is a family friendly, thriving community of proud and passionate residents, with around 10,000 permanent residents, and another 4,000 housed in and around Moranbah in temporary accommodation.

Moranbah services over 8 coal mines, with employees of 5 of those mines residing in Moranbah, where before FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO, (Fly In Fly Out, Drive In Drive Out, Bus In Bus Out) 100% of the workforce, apart from contractors or associated industries, resided here.

Moranbah has many active sporting, and social clubs, which helps to keep a thriving healthy community together, but with the introduction of 12 hour shifts and people deciding they might like to reside elsewhere and commute, which is their choice, to FIFO, DIDO, & BIBO, many of these clubs have had to devise alternative and flexible hours to retain team memberships.

With over 70 retail and commercial outlets, and many other facilities, such as a golf course, bowls, gymnasium, large multi sports complex, 2 Day Care centres, large Olympic size swimming pool and heated pool, 2 primary schools, high school, Training Facilities, churches, and restaurants, to name a few, Moranbah has always been considered a very attractive, safe place to raise your family, work, and even retire, until recent rises in the FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO workforce.



Toddlers in “learn to swim class” at Greg Cruickshank Aquatic Centre

2. Some important observations and case stories regarding how FIFO has affected housing affordability and how some see greater increases in FIFO, BIBO, and DIDO as hugely impacting on the town of Moranbah.

- 1. Since Utah/BHP offered their houses to the workers in a buy back scheme** some years ago, there has been a real sense of ownership in the community, a positive for Moranbah and the other BHP owned mining towns, with many people deciding to buy their company rental houses, and subsequently renovating or adding verandahs and the like, to enhance their individual lifestyle requirements. This in turn created many work opportunities for **local builders and owner builders alike**, and improved the face of the town so that many houses took on a more attractive appearance, and with the ownership, came pride in gardens and community. (If 100% FIFO is introduced, these houses may well be housing only FIFO and contractors, not families of the miners, as the balance of workers' housing needs is changed)
- 2. After 7 years, the initial caveat was lifted from the housing sale contract, and many of those original houses have since been sold on the open market**, giving people who wanted to stay in the community, and who no longer worked for a mining company, housing options, and along with some local investors, the opportunity to buy these houses, and invest in the town they lived in. These investment houses have inadvertently helped non-mine workers live and stay here as the rents were affordable. **(Affordable housing is now being bought by investors who are renting for very high prices due to the fact that the larger companies are prepared to pay the high prices that non-mine employed families cannot afford – hence their only option is to move. This is becoming a regular occurrence.)**
- 3. When land was made available to purchase**, many people opted to sell their previously purchased "mine" house, and build their own new lifestyle house in lieu of moving to the coast, hence increasing the number of houses in the town. People started realising that they could actually **believe in the long term prospects of living in Moranbah where their career and family are, and even retire due to the lovely friendly and laidback lifestyle**. It also gave people a **choice of housing** and the opportunity to remain in the town where they work, while retaining an elevated and modern sense of lifestyle. **(Some of these people are now considering that the balance is changing too much in favour of FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO. The atmosphere of family friendly, and the non-affordability housing for their extended families and/or friends, is forcing them to leave.)**
- 4. With the rapid growth caused by the mining boom that has occurred over the past few years, the housing demand exceeds supply. We believe that the State and Regional Government needs to play a greater role in demanding a balance be maintained in these regional communities like Moranbah, Dysart, Middlemount, Blackwater, and Emerald for example.**
 - A. That they should be demanding that more housing be built immediately by the companies who already own land but are not utilising it.**
 - B. For their permanent workforce who wish to reside here with their families, before building more single style accommodation.**
 - C. To allow every worker the option and a choice to reside in a regional town.**
 - D. Not to assume that every worker would not want to reside in "one of those towns".**

4. With the rapid growth (cont.)

E. Demanding that 80% of workers reside within the region does not guarantee that any one town will not become 100% FIFO, when another in the region can take up the remaining balance under the set guidelines of the Qld Government. WHY?

- a. Because this ruling says 80% *over the region*
- b. Because it is already happening in some smaller regional towns such as Dysart – the balance is favouring FIFO and Transient workforce
- c. Because this takes potential families and workers away from the schools, businesses, and service industries that need the balance to be in favour of family residential.
- d. Because 100% FIFO for Caval Ridge for example has changed the demographics and % ratio of transient to permanent for Moranbah already and isn't yet in operation.
- e. Because the ruling does not stipulate that these residential workers are majority family or single.

A. Transient and temporary employees.

Temporary workers looking for a permanent start in the mining industry, are not allocated housing and have to find accommodation, e.g. rent a spare room at friends house, if available and lucky enough. Whether single or married these "temps" can't afford housing in the present climate. The only alternative for single temps is camp accommodation without any subsidy at well over \$140 a day. ***NB: (All of these housing options are already running out as there is no affordable housing or spare rooms for "temps" who are working for the mines through Workpac or other employment agencies. It is perceived by most "temps" that some companies seem to be slow on their uptake of them on as permanent although the companies are saying they are short staffed.)***

Case study examples:

Case 1. Would build, buy, or rent, and bring his family from Brisbane to Moranbah in a minute, if housing was more affordable. **Forced to remain FIFO.**

Case 2. Knows no one to rent room from, so has to pay large rent or share house with a few others while hoping for permanent position where some form of housing is provided or subsidised. **Forced to FIFO on days off for a break from the single lifestyle but has to rent a house elsewhere for somewhere to stay on days off.**

Case 3. Wife hates that husband has to drive 200 klms **DIDO** as they own house in Mackay, they have children, but can't find land to build their own accommodation in Moranbah in the current housing market, and can't afford to buy at current prices. **No choice to come here – forced to DIDO.**

Case 4. Husband hates being away from small family and wife, and is "over" FIFO to W.A., would like to come to live in quiet town, build or buy, and start new life. **Still forced to FIFO from Brisbane to keep job.**

Case 5. "Tree change" couple and teenage son, all working, but living in daughter and son in law's house, want independence and finding rentals still too expensive on their part time wages, would rather put rental money to buy or build as better investment for their future. **No choices.**

Case 6. Young manager of large local Club lives in Education Department housing as wife works as Teacher and is provided housing, they have 2 young children, and Dad has not been able to work until recently as he had to care for youngest while wife works. Can't afford to build, buy, and rent

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on open market but would like to stay, as they love the town, and want to stay. **May be forced to leave Moranbah taking two potential support staff from our business and education industries.**

Case 7. Young carpenter left Sunshine Coast to come here to work in building industry and FIFO's to coast on days off. His young partner now wants to come to Moranbah to be with him and to get a job here as a Nurse, but does not want to live in the house full of men. **Forced to stay in FIFO situation until housing or land is available.**

B. How FIFO has affected the community

1. Moranbah residents' fears are being realised now that 100% FIFO has been allowed to go ahead at Caval Ridge Mine. They realise that the majority of people were passionate about their community and have already endured a lot of stress, angst, and worry trying to fight against 100% FIFO. Many deflated and disappointed, but not beaten locals have lost faith in who the Government is listening to – the big companies or the people?
2. The whole community, Isaac Regional Council, Moranbah Traders Association, Local Action Groups, Unions, and families alike have held numerous large but peaceful community lead meetings to try resolve this issue and to help urge large companies to allow choice for all of their workers.
3. To encourage them to look at their long term workforce and learn by that. Most people who have stayed with the same company for 20, 30 or 40 years have been residents of the town where they work.
4. Community is disheartened by the Governments decision to allow companies the option to pursue their 100% FIFO agenda.
5. MTA is very disappointed that they have fought to make it clear that an imbalance of the population will change the local town and community in a negative way, especially as it has a huge impact on attracting and retaining staff. No partners or families – no staff.
6. All regional communities knew times when you would have been able to go about your business and pleasure knowing many other long term residents. Many of these long term residents have now moved due to the instability of the housing and issues associated with the huge changes taking place, their disillusionment and experiences since FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO.
7. The change to FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO has created a huge imbalance within the community in the ratio of the transient workforce to the permanent residents and although we appreciate the need for choice for people who want to live in another town and commute, it should not be to the detriment or imbalance of the existing community and its population.
8. Workers forced to come to Moranbah for jobs in the building industry, or other supporting industry, are being housed in cramped conditions in houses that often their company rents or buys on their behalf to house them. The company has no options for finding accommodation for their large number of workers, and are forced to source what once were family houses, and are prepared to pay the large rents. Typically these are highset houses able to be built underneath with extra bathrooms, and bedrooms. Companies being the only ones able to afford the large rents by housing up to 6 or 7 of their workers in some instances.
9. Many of these companies are also forced to FIFO or DIDO, but are saying they are also looking for other permanent options for the wives and partners of the workers who are willing to come to live here.
10. Workers their wives and partners realise that the building and other industries are long term work options, and that FIFO and DIDO are not the family friendly option they want for their relationships or children.

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11. We feel that mining companies cannot expect their long term workforce will want to remain FIFO for 40 years or the life of a particular mine, and that perhaps their workers may soon realise that if their relationships aren't flourishing in this transient lifestyle, they will not stay loyal workers for long.
 12. "Happy wife - Happy life" applies.
 13. The wives and partners they leave behind in order to pursue the higher pays, often realise that family is worth more than any money in the world, and we are seeing more wives and partners wanting to move to be where the work is. They find that without companies providing choice and housing for those families they are unable to move if they wanted to.
 14. Wives/partners and families are crucial to our community for its growth, it's support workforce in all industries, retail, hospitality, manufacturing, administration, cleaning services, health, and education to name a few.
 15. They are also potential staff for the mining companies, with many families seeing both partners employed with the same company.
 16. Lack of planning on behalf of the government and or large companies to foresee a housing and staffing crisis has created a FIFO age.
 17. FIFO, DIDO, BIBO has created other monsters such as:
 - a. Family instability, and or disturbances.
 - b. More traffic on local roads and in cities with more people commuting to catch planes.
 - c. More accidents on roads
 - d. More social problems
 - e. Huge strain on medical services
 - f. Huge strain on existing infrastructure
 - g. Huge strain on available staff for supporting services such as cleaning, hospitality, domestic.
 - h. Expectations of smaller town and businesses to provide when staff shortages are at a premium
- C. Even if land was available, building a new house has become expensive, even for long term residents who would like to rebuild here. Banks are very cautious with lending in the current volatile housing market. Some are thinking that family housing will be a thing of the past, due to the number of units and high density being constructed in back yards.**

Case 1. Long term residents lucky to have bought land in last release 2 yrs ago, quoted over \$600K+ to build standard 4 bedroom house by out of town builders due to housing subbies. A few local builders are offering better than "out of town builder" prices, and a few have committed to housing their workers and staff at a great cost to them and the person who wants to build a house.

Case 2. Family owns mine house but wants to build affordable lifestyle house and know they will sell for good price, but to build is about \$150K or more than to build on the coast. (Most of the cost is due to unaffordable housing for the building contractor's employees) **(We acknowledge that ULDA may help with this situation if/when they decide to develop some land, but are afraid that many FIFO contractors will be attracted to fill these houses already needed for families needing affordable housing.)**



Lions Park Moranbah

D. Many Moranbah businesses who are trying to attract staff are unable to find affordable housing for their staff to retain them.

Case 1. Isaac Council Affordable Housing Project has been helpful, but still a long list of people waiting to move into the units.

Case 2. Most families would rather have a back yard for their children to play in. Multi dwelling housing is not as suitable for families because of less room, privacy, etc.

Case 3. One large Club has invested in affordable housing for Club staff, to help alleviate, attract, and retain, staff.

Case 4. Principle staff member of a large club is forced to leave her job and her home town of 20 years, due to housing rental market being too expensive. **Although her husband works for mining company and receives a subsidy on rent, the shortfall is over \$1000 with a recent rental price rise and no other houses are available for rent under these prices.**

E. Existing staff being attracted to the mining companies' higher wages, making it difficult to retain staff for small businesses. Small business can't compete with housing and pay rates and are depending on stability in the community and a constant stream of new potential staff from new families moving to Moranbah.

Case 1. Hair salon loses staff to a mine job, having invested a great deal in training her from apprentice to a senior. Ex staff member and her husband owns their house so accommodation is not a problem for them, but salon owner has lost an employee after a great deal of expense. **FIFO, DIDO, BIBO clientele making her salon busier, but fewer staff at her disposal to grow business.**

Case 2,3,4,5 etc. Beauty Salons, pharmacy, bank, Coles, loose staff same way. Partners are mostly in mine housing so have an easy choice to change jobs. **Businesses have grown to expect this turnover but were able to rely on partners and wives of the workers to fill positions in the past.**

Case 6. Female owner/manager sells business and goes to mining associated work, as is currently living with family in husband's company provided rental housing. Wants independence to build and own permanent lifestyle house but no land and couldn't buy anyway as prices too high. **DIDO contractors occupying the larger family houses.**

Case 7. Business owner/manager sells her business and moves to less stressful mine related job. Her stress was related to staffing issues with housing and poaching of her employees. **(Couldn't compete with mine wages and housing)**

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Case 8. Health Professional in a local business, moved from city, married with new baby, in smaller subsidised housing, would like to build house and live here permanently, but no options available.

Case 9. Permanent DIDO mine worker wishes to bring skilled wife, 2 teenage sons with trades, and elderly Mother, needs suitable housing. Prepared to rent, build, or buy if prices were more affordable. **Has now changed his mind due to FIFO changing the safe reputation of the town.**

F. Apprentices and trainees are not supplied with housing by most mining companies, and most small businesses can't afford to provide housing either. They find it very difficult to find a place to live when they want independence and/or to move from their existing accommodation supplied by parents.

Case 1. 19 yr old **Mine Apprentice wants to move into house or unit with partner** to start new life, and does not want to leave his home town.

Case 2. Partner works for **local hair salon as trainee, but is sharing room with her partner in a house full of male friends who FIFO, or DIDO.** They want independence and options.

Case 3. Mum and Dad want empty nest, or to retire, but have to stay because of apprentice son or daughter needing accommodation. **Transient population growing and occupying family housing - fewer choices for parents to pursue for themselves, or reluctant to encourage their children to buy their own house, as even with government subsidy is not a viable option.**

Case 4. Young married couple, male finished traineeship and starts permanent job with mine that doesn't offer housing in Moranbah, and wife works in banking in Moranbah, wants to build, but can't afford to on their newly acquired positions, so buy in old home town of Gladstone, (new house & land package \$200K less than equivalent in Moranbah) and travels to Gladstone on days off, and lives in camp in Coppabella. Now have new baby, and wish they could have stayed here.

G. Some people who are on the cusp of retiring (the former young families and pioneers of this town) have bought elsewhere for security in retirement due to the shortage of land and the extra expense to build in Moranbah, when they would have preferred to live in Moranbah or even retire here where their families and friends are. FIFO, DIDO and BIBO have changed the free and easy lifestyle of the community.

Case 1. Left Moranbah to affordable lifestyle house on coast, but still having to live apart due to work commitments, and coast not preferred climate or lifestyle after all, now find options not available or even as attractive with FIFO.

Case 2. Left to try City life and don't like it, would like to return, but as have already been part of housing scheme with company are not eligible for mine housing, and need to buy, or build, but no land.

Case 3. "Tree change" city couple came to visit friends, and decided to move from sales job and government executive position for better lifestyle and less stress. Already have jobs in industry, but have to live on coast and DIDO due to no option in Moranbah.

Case 4. Couple about to retire, take long service, to see the world, and then maybe buy caravan and travel Australia, with Moranbah as base. They don't own house, only rent. Would like to secure permanent residence before they leave, but no options and now unaffordable option.

Case 5. Would move to Moranbah but afraid that extremely high percentage of transient workers will **not** make Moranbah the family friendly, attractive community they are looking for.

M. Moranbah Traders are very concerned that imbalance of transient or high density accommodation set already for many new projects (100% or even at 70% to 75%, as compared to 25% - 30% permanent family housing,) has already changed the demographics drastically from the balanced, family friendly and safe town Moranbah has always been known as.

Case 1. Families wishing to live here are afraid of social issues with more camp style accommodation, so stay with reservation, or move to coast.

Case 2. People afraid that having high density camps in town will mean too many single persons integrated in what were traditionally family streets.

Case 3. Without the wives and partners of the mining workers who will staff or own the small businesses. Most are now owned or operated by partners, family, wives, and husbands, of permanent mining and/or related industry staff.

Case 4. Second and third generation looking to changing their career while staying in the mining industry, but jobs is not being offered by some mines as required to FIFO, and they believe that imbalance offers *no choice*.

Case 5. If non-mining employees owned their own housing they have the option to stay in Moranbah and possibly do training or get degree while working for another company or business.

Case 6. Long term residents renting but even with a subsidy from mining company unable to stay here due to rental price rises. A business loses key staff, and family forced to leave home town.



Moranbah Golf Club from balcony of Club House

4. We refer to some local discussion groups

- a. There have been of late many discussion groups formed within our community, especially on Face Book, that need to be taken seriously. These have evolved though a necessity for people to be able to network and get fast answers regarding important issues facing our community.
- b. Although some light relief is also involved within these networks though cynicism, or jokes, the fact remains that the original intention of the website being set up in the first place was for people to be able to express their views in the hopes that someone with the power to help or change things will listen.
- c. Most of these sites have been set up in addition to the person or person seeking other proactive ways of addressing the issue, i.e. by approaching Mining Companies directly, being involved in the community forums and committees on each subject, staying in touch with our Local Isaac Regional Council, Mayor, and Councillors, involving local members of the Queensland and Federal Governments, DEEDI etc.
- d. Some of the sites are relevant to gain an understanding of how many comments are made within each of these about accommodation being an issue, and how many people do want to live here where they work.
- e. It is interesting to note that some of these sites are brand new, but their membership has grown very fast in line with the amount of interest and concern felt my community.

We refer to the following:

Moranbah Rental Crisis Action Page: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/293267050686922/>
Moranbah Community Billboard: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/174249682595984/>
Moranbah Community Noticeboard: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/149260631800086/>
Moranbah Action Group Inc:
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Moranbah-Action-Group-Inc/139918326052612>
Moranbah Job Vacancies and Employment wanted page:
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/194423017246226/>

5. Summary of points raised and points to consider:

This submission is on behalf of Moranbah Traders Association representing over 65 member businesses and the community, as a large group of intelligent family minded people with real concerns for the disastrous ramifications of allowing larger percentages of Fly-in/Fly-Out to be approved. We are already facing huge issues we believe are mainly due to FIFO, BIBO, and DIDO:

A. Affordable housing being one of the main issues to the rising costs to businesses.

Those workers who wish to reside with their families where they work are prohibited from doing so. This is detrimental to family life and the wellbeing of all concerned. We feel the good reputation of this town has been compromised due to the media focus on the FIFO issue. Reports such as the "Moranbah – the most expensive town in Queensland" were rife in the media, but they failed to mention the fact that the cost of residential accommodation was the prime reason. Supply and demand are the catch cry, but the demand is created by huge numbers of FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO taking existing family housing.

B. A major problem facing Moranbah businesses is attracting and retaining staff - without staff we have no business.

Businesses already lose a large percentage of workers to the mines due to the attraction of higher wages, but with no partners and extended families coming to live in our town with the 100% FIFO we will have fewer employees to choose from to service our businesses, i.e. chefs, waitresses, cleaners, checkout operators, accountants, dental nurses, receptionists, retail staff, pharmacists, etc. It is the wives and partners of the mining and related industries who are the service staff and the owners and managers of our businesses. Partners are also in the main, the nurses, leaders of service clubs, secretaries, administration assistants, and teachers, council staff, and Councillors.

MTA are trying to address this issue with a new project specifically to attract and retain staff within Moranbah with a new project called STAARS – (Strategies to Attract And Retain Staff), but are currently seeking funding.

C. Evidence of inappropriate behaviour of contracting or transient workers in a family town is increasing with the increase of percentages of FIFO, DIDO, and BIBO.

Balance of our population is leaning towards a transient workforce at the expense of those who want to remain here to raise their families in a safe and friendly environment. There are reports of more traffic, child safety, alcohol, and vandalism incidents within the community.

D. 100% FIFO and the other high percentages of DIDO, and BIBO, will further contribute to the decline of most of our Sporting Clubs, Service Clubs, and the everyday social life of this community

Sporting Clubs are businesses too, and they are there to promote and provide employment, and the health and well being for the workers and their families. Add an increase or imbalance of FIFO to 12 hour shifts on top of travel to and from work and the ability to attend training and or competitions is almost impossible for most workers.

E. The large amount of angst and stress;

The threat of 100% FIFO has already caused families and businesses in Moranbah and other mining towns a great deal of angst and stress, along with uncertainty about the future, which we feel could have been averted with a strong stance from the State Government against this imbalanced trend towards bowing to larger company demands and their bottom line profits. That generally Mining Companies could be looking at the small things to help alleviate this distress and waste of time.

- a. More attention needs to be made within communities where small things (to a large company) are needed to address large problems affecting many locals. e.g. to donate or provide housing for **one family counsellor** within the community would be more valuable and recognition that someone cares for our community. Large amounts of money spent on high profile or “sexy” community projects are recognised and appreciated by the public, but small deeds done are appreciated and recognised more as being in the best interest of the Moranbah community.
- b. It is well known that some mining companies often have family housing unoccupied for very long periods and that they could be used for housing their own employees *today*. Being upgraded is the common answer to why they are vacant, but is commonly known in these small towns, that the upgrades have been done many times before, and sometimes unnecessarily so. That the houses are in excellent condition and able to be used immediately.
- c. That the pool of older Attract and Retain Housing often is occupied by only one person, or a couple that could be housed in company townhouses or units, releasing more houses to families who really do want to live here.
- d. Some motels have reported companies approaching them regarding room banking. The company wants to book about 10 or more rooms when they won't necessarily be used. Some of those motels have refused this request in lieu of being able to best serve the huge demand for motel accommodation in Moranbah.
- e. Having empty rooms means that the restaurants at the Motel are less likely to be running efficiently due to fewer clientele as well.
- f. When these rooms are paid for but not necessarily occupied, potential clientele are being told there are no rooms available and are having to drive at least 100 klms or more before finding accommodation, and then travel back to town to complete their visit the next day.

6. Comments from Traders and residents (In Confidence)

1. "I believe that the current ridiculous cost of accommodation situation in Moranbah and similar communities, has been orchestrated by the mining companies, supported by political parties on both sides of the house, to gain support from potential FIFO employees to make the decision not to live in our community. 100% FIFO is going to have a negative effect on your businesses and your lives, and based on the State government's decisions over the past few weeks, I can see a time in the not too distant future when all employment opportunities in the mines will be for people living in Brisbane, the Gold or Sunshine Coasts, Townsville, Cairns, or overseas – not Moranbah or Mackay. We need to work together to fight for our community. Decisions on our future have been made by politicians and bureaucrats who have completely ignored the wishes of local businesses, Unions, Moranbah Action Group, and many individuals. How many of your potential new employees will be able to afford to live here, or your current employees rent on the open market?" Moranbah has always had accommodation problems in the 32 years that I have lived here. Most of us longer term residents started out our Moranbah residency in caravans - they were fantastic social environments. We were never in a position where living here was unaffordable. The current situation where 30 year old houses are renting for \$2000 plus per week is a direct result of the State government cancelling a private development 6 years ago, that would have seen another 1500 homes built in Moranbah by 2009. This development passed all town planning conditions and was approved by the Belyando Shire Council, only to be overruled by the State government, supported by the opposition at the time, so mining companies could mine coal right up to the back yards of existing houses – which is going to happen. Some of you dislike it when I keep bringing this up, but had that development gone ahead, we all would have had a much better community by now and a far more secure future." *Peter Finlay – MTA President*
2. "It is with mixed emotions that I will be leaving Moranbah in January 2012. The decision came through meetings with our accountant, solicitors and banks that if we are to keep our business going that we could no longer afford to stay in Moranbah. Due to the accommodation, we are currently paying \$3,700 per week to house some of our employees, we need another 4 tradesman but that is a minimum of \$2000 per week so if you divide the \$2000 by 4 people buy the standard 38 hour week that is \$13.15 per person per hour on top of their hourly rate of \$42.00 which is \$55.15 per hour plus super plus penalties. Where does this end??? I have always said that I would love to get out of Moranbah before I have clocked up 40 years, I will have clocked up 39 years and 9 months as we arrived in Moranbah on the 26/3/1972, which is why it was a hard decision as I wanted to leave because it was time not because I could no longer run my business here. I feel that small businesses not essential to the mining industry will not survive. What a shame, I remember when you could buy everything in Moranbah, Thomas Drapery all the materials and men's clothing you could want, Minimac boutique for the ladies, 2 supermarkets for choice, kids clothing shops, novelty shop cannot remember what Jill Daley called it on the corner where the fruit & veg shop now is. Wouldn't it be lovely to go back to then!!! I agree with you Peter that development 6 years ago would have made it so much easier on us all." *Karen – Engineering Group – MTA Member*

3. **Lyn also has received many communications from people over that last 6 months, re this issue: We refer to this email message as an example received from a friend who has just moved to Collinsville. She was emailing in reply to Bernard Salt interview on ABC radio that we had sent out.**

(insert re interview follows this email)

"Hi Lynnie

How do we get this message out to our current government, they could be doing something about this as well by spending some money up this way and getting the message out with these mines. We seem to be the poor cousin, the road out of here is a dangerous mess, they are patching it up but the locals are at a loss as nothing is done.

This little town has a lot of FIFO they don't tend to gardens, just live in flats that they neglect we have one next door to us. At least they are living in the town but really don't add anything to it as they make it clear they are only here for the money.

I get the feeling you have a bit more action in your town....the main street has some nice shops and it looks cared for.

I have found the locals here very friendly, very proud of where they live, nicer then the city that is for certain. I rather like the lifestyle, just miss the shops but that is not a bad thing.

Take care, one of these days we will catch up.

Helen xx".

Subject: FW: FIFO is not the answer - Bernard Salt

FIFO is not the answer

08 September 2011 , 7:00 PM by Craig Zonca (ABC Capricornia)

Fly-in, fly-out workers are not the answer to meet labour demand in Queensland according to demographer Bernard Salt.

Instead, he argues the focus should be on developing sustainable and diverse communities across the Surat and Bowen Basins.

Both areas are seeing extraordinary growth in the coal seam gas and mining sectors with billions of dollars worth of projects in the pipeline. While that growth may bring jobs to the regions and high salaries, it also creates a number of social challenges - none bigger than affordable housing.

Mr Salt says locals need to "win the hearts and minds" of the nation to get the infrastructure needed to take advantage of the boom and build strong, liveable towns that don't disappear as the natural resources deplete.

He spoke to me before his keynote address at the Surat Basin Conference in Roma:

Download the audio file

http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/2011/09/fifo-is-not-the-answer.html?site=capricornia&program=southern_queensland_drive

7. As business operators, we clearly understand the need to look at profitability, staffing and bottom line:

But not at the expense of the workers and families who serve our businesses every day. Nor at the expense communities and their businesses that have been developed for and on behalf of those people. ***We believe that communities should come before profits – people are our best asset.***

1. We believe that the imbalance of families to the transient population in Moranbah is not the preferred option of the general community, the local business community or Moranbah Traders Association.
2. We are not necessarily against all FIFO, DIDO or BIBO, but need workers within our own region to be able to have the choice to come to live here and call this their community too, as we have always been able to.
3. 100% FIFO means that 100% of wages earned from working in our district *will not* be spent in supporting our district's businesses, schools, councils, or services, but that our infrastructure is still expected to support the extra strain on water, electricity, roads, and emergency services.
4. We recognise that a natural settling period will help to level out the housing issue, but also believe that family accommodation is in deficit by hundreds of houses. Would the Committee and the Queensland Government encourage all companies to look at utilising all of their existing land parcels and address the housing issue for their workers as a priority, to avoid using existing housing in these towns to solve their accommodation crisis?
5. Would the Committee please consult and fully utilise all local resources, family opinion, and permanent organisations within Moranbah and district, before you decide on the perceived opinion that none of the workers for the new mines would want to live in Moranbah with their families?
6. That leadership, ownership, and responsibility (of our town) will not be a priority for workers if they are FIFO, DIDO or BIBO, and this can lead to serious problems within our community.
7. To please consider the long term ramification of the imbalance of our community due to high percentages of FIFO.
8. In summary; we believe that FIFO, (along with DIDO and BIBO,) is a short term solution to finding and filling positions in the mining industry, and does nothing to create the loyalty and long term commitments of workers to any one company. It has been proven by the large number of long service awardees in our mining companies over the last 40 years, that there is certain stability in workers who live and play in the community where they work, and is of far greater value to the employer if they are prepared to invest in sustainability of a workforce, in lieu of losing workers through social problems caused by the itinerate lifestyle.
9. Moranbah Traders Association wishes to thank the Committee for their time in consideration of these points directly and indirectly related to FIFO. We urge you to consider all of the above recommendations as offering a speedy and positive solution to the future growth and balanced wellbeing of the Moranbah family lifestyle, our businesses, our community and district, and our future generations. 100% FIFO ***may*** benefit mining companies, but will be disastrous for our communities.

Signed:

_____ Peter Finlay, President, Moranbah Traders
Association

_____ Lisa Corica, Secretary, Moranbah Traders
Association

_____ Lynnie Busk, Liaison Officer, Moranbah Traders
Association

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