



Federal Inquiry into FIFO Workforce Practices in Regional Australia

Peel Youth Services

The Peel Youth Services is an Not for Profit Incorporated organisation that supports young people 11 to 25 years of age in the Peel Region of WA. This region covers five local government areas.

The organisation has been in operation since 1990 offering counselling, mentoring, support, information, medication, specialised programs and activities to meet the needs of our young people.

In the past 3 years specifically, it has been identified that a trend associated with the impacts of FIFO has emerged. We have experienced; an increase in the numbers of young males seeking positive male role models, an increase in family breakdown and an increase in young people 14 to 16 years leaving their family home. Many of these issues have also been identified in a large number of the submissions to the FIFO inquiry.

The Peel Youth Services is an innovative youth service using models of practice that encourage young people to achieve and work with their strengths and potential. It has been our experience in the past couple of years to work with FIFO families and encourage them to identify the benefits of being a FIFO family. This may be associated to the increased opportunities for education, training and experiences due to a more financially secure family. We all know and have researched the negative emotional and social impacts that FIFO has, especially on the children and young people in the families but there are also many advantages.

In this submission I will cover some other elements that our service has experienced when connecting to FIFO families and their children.

Terms of Reference:

The Impacts on communities sending large numbers of FIFO/DIDO workers to mine sites:

"The Peel Region contributes to the minerals industry through employment and service activities related to FIFO and DIDO arrangements. An estimated 82% of the FIFO workforce is sourced from the Perth/Peel region, and a projected additional 17,000 FIFO jobs by 2014 is expected to drive continued growth in both the Perth and Peel Regions.(Peel Away The Mask II Executive Summary Feb 2012).

We organised a range of focus groups to identify key issues relating to FIFO families and our community. Our organisation has developed a project called Eyes Wide Open. This project supports young pregnant women, young mothers their partners and children. 40 young partnered women between the ages of 14 to 23 years were questioned on their partners employment, 27% had partners in the FIFO industry. Another interesting Focus Group was 20 young men aged 22 to 25 years who had all know each other from high school were questioned about their employment. The results were 35% FIFO and 12% DIDO. They all loved the opportunity to make good money and get themselves ahead, saving for a house, buy a good car and being able to afford unforeseen opportunities. They all had done their apprenticeships in

the Peel/Perth area but once they attained their trade certificate they left to work in the mining industry.

Children aged 11 to 19 years who were supported by one of the services we offer were also a Focus Group. The outcomes from this group were 35% had FIFO family members, 44.7% had family conflict, 31.5% self-medicating on drugs or alcohol, 47.3% had a low sense of self (with males being higher than females) and 42.1% poor mental health. These percentages were deemed a result of the family situation.

The last Focus Group was that of a Not For Profit board and it's 8 members. 100% of members had close family members living the FIFO lifestyle.

The outcomes of these Focus Groups showed that at least a third of our community is somehow associated with the FIFO lifestyle culture. Young men who attended The Shed program run in 2011 had 75% attending who had a loss of a male role model in their homes. Their behaviour, lack of school attendance and incidences with the law were evident due to a lack of a positive male role model. Over 60% of young men we supported with father figures in FIFO showed an interest in gaining an education so they too could become involved in the FIFO lifestyle.

Through an increase in the many FIFO families we support we have had to create a new service: Family Support Service, this enabling us to also meet the needs of the many mothers who are struggling to successfully parent their children due to separation or inability to cope in the FIFO relationship.

Conclusion:

I have worked in the Early Childhood and Youth industry for over 25 years, I am the wife of a FIFO of 30 years and we have two children who have gone through the FIFO journey for their 23 and 25 years respectively. My conclusion on how to deal with the culture of FIFO especially for families is to build on resilience and strengths. The FIFO industry is difficult for all concerned, therefore creating ways and mechanisms that will retain staff for the mining companies, retain relationships for the families and build health communities for the mining towns are the key issues.

Lack of Sustainability with some mining projects increases the financial risk associated with creating satellite towns for FIFO workers and their families. Also will these towns have the infrastructure desired by the families for their children?

I look forward to the reading the outcomes of this Federal Enquiry and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the many hundreds of families we support every year in the Peel Region.

Be Westbrook
Manager
Peel Youth Services
April 2012

PEEL YOUTH SERVICES

FOCUS GROUPS (April 2012)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO THE FIFO INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA

Focus Group:

*20 young males
22 to 25 years
35% were FIFO
and 12% were
DIDO*

Focus Group:

*185 young people 11
to 19yrs*

*44.7% with family
conflict*

*31.5% self-
medicating with
drugs or alcohol*

*35% had family
members in FIFO
industry.*

*47.3% low sense of
self.*

*42.1% poor mental
health*

Focus Group:

*NGO Board of 8
members.*

*100% of board members
has family (close and
extended) in the FIFO*

Focus Group:

*40 young mothers 14 to 23
years.*

*Out of 40 young mothers
with partners; 27% had
partners who are either
FIFO or DIDO*