

4 September 2012

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To: AJ Macken & Co, acting for
Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association

College of Medicine, Biology and the
Environment, National Centre for
Epidemiology and Population Health
Building 62 Mills Road
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia.

Regarding: Fair Work Australia Review of Award Provisions for
the General Retail Industry Award 2010, the Fast Food Industry
Award 2010, and the Hair and Beauty Industry Award 2010.

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Please find below my short report addressing the following:

- 1) *Does the performance of work by workers on evenings and nights and or on weekends have consequences for*
 - a. *The workers who perform such work and*
 - b. *The families of the workers who perform such work?*
- 2) *If the performance of such work does, in my opinion have adverse consequences for any or all of the above groups, please describe the nature of these consequences and that factors which may affect the extent of those consequences.*

A curriculum vitae describing my professional background, qualifications and expertise is appended. References are provided overleaf.

Yours sincerely

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WORKING WEEKENDS, EVENINGS AND NIGHTS: REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON FAMILIES AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

Scope of the report: This report is based on my research and clinical expertise, which centres on contemporary Australian parents' experience of combining work and family care and its health consequences. The focus is therefore largely on employees who are parents and on health, especially mental health outcomes. The nature and conditions of paid work, including the scheduling of work, and the mechanisms linking work schedules to adult health are one element of this report. The main focus however is on how parent's work conditions (including work schedules) may influence (positively and negatively) family life and family member's health. The notion of linked lives, whereby family members' wellbeing is mutually dependent, is well established in clinical and developmental psychology. It forms the theoretical basis for considering how the work circumstances of mothers and fathers, including the conditions of their jobs, could also affect the health and wellbeing of their children.

Definitions: Standard work schedules are defined as weekday and daytime hours (usually between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday although studies vary somewhat on exact start and stop times). *Nonstandard work schedules* refer to work usually performed on weekends, evenings or nights.

Patterns of weekend, evening and night work: In 2009 15% of the 8.7 million Australian employees holding a single job usually worked on Saturdays, 9% on Sundays and 28% worked on both weekdays and weekends. Multiple job holders (just over half a million) are much more likely to work evenings, weekends or nights with 40% usually working on Saturdays, 26% on Sundays and 57% working on both weekdays and weekends (ABS, 2009b).

Parents as a subgroup of Australian employees commonly work a combination of standard weekday hours and nonstandard evening, night or weekend hours.¹ In about one half of Australian dual-earner households one or both parents work variable hours or are on call, and in nearly 60% one or both parents work some hours at night (between 7pm and 7am). In over one half of dual earner families one or both parents work a combination of weekdays and weekends, and about one third of lone parents with children also work schedules that span weekdays and weekends. Note that it is not clear the extent these statistics reflect overtime (unpaid or paid) as working long hours, by definition, will involve work outside the standard weekday hours.

Parental preference for weekend, evening and night work: Work times are an important consideration for parents who must fit their work around children's school and care. There is to my knowledge no direct research on Australian parent's preferences for standard or nonstandard work schedules. ABS data indicates that the vast majority of people (including parents and nonparents) who work typical, standard weekday schedules prefer them (96%). This compares with about two thirds of the people who work non-typical, weekend or non-daytime hours (ABS, 2009a). In our own research on parental employment over the period 1981 to 2000 we observed distinct shifts in the proportion of mothers employed within Australian industries (Strazdins, Broom, Meyerkort, & Warren, 2006). In this analysis retail moved from having the third highest to the lowest percentage of mothers among its female workers. The drop in the proportion of mothers working in retail occurred after shop trading hours were deregulated, suggesting that this acted as an important disincentive. Note however that all the above research is based on current pay rates, there is, to my knowledge no research that tests preferences for work schedules that builds into the analysis a reduced pay rate.

Australian data on work schedules and parent work-family conflict (which plausibly could inform preferences) shows few linkages to nonstandard work times. For fathers, regularly working weekends or irregular schedules (rotating shifts, on call or split shifts) are associated with more work-family conflict (Hosking & Western, 2008), but there is no association between the timing of work and mother's work schedules. In the US, about a third of married mothers who work nonstandard hours prefer these times because they help with child care arrangements (H. B. Presser & Cox, 1997). Child care costs are therefore minimized or avoided, and working around fathers' work schedules (what is often termed 'shift parenting') can lead to greater involvement by fathers (Averett, Gennetian, & Peters, 2000; Brayfield, 1995; Riley & Glass, 2002; Täht & Mills, 2012). Studies in the US and UK indicate that, while some parents prefer evening, night or weekend work times to help with child care, a sizable group of parents find that these nonstandard schedules can also interfere with family routines, meals and time together (La Valle, Arthur, Millward, Scott, & Clayden, 2002; Presser, 2003). In La Valle et al's (2002) study of UK families, nearly half of the mothers who

¹ In nearly two thirds of all couple families, both mothers and fathers are employed (dual earner families). Similarly, about 60% of all lone parents hold a job (ABS, 2009b).

worked shifts and two thirds of those working weekends wanted different work times, signaling that in at least some families, nonstandard work schedules can create problems as well as solutions. Fagan and Burchell's (2002) study of European employees found that regular Sunday work was viewed as the least compatible work schedule for family or other commitments (39%), followed by evenings or night schedules (33%) and regular Saturday schedules (31%).

Associations between parent weekend, evening and night work and parent and child health: Along with positive outcomes such as flexibility and sharing care in couple households, there is evidence that work in the evenings, nights, and weekends can make it harder to maintain family rituals, routines, and social activities that are important for closeness (Presser 2003; La Valle et al., 2002). These strains can influence the mental health of parents, marital stability, and the way parents interact with each other and with their children. In turn, all these elements can affect children's mental health and wellbeing.

Two studies have found higher rates of separation or divorce when parents work night or evening shifts ((H. B. Presser, 2000; White & Keith, 1990). Presser's (2000) longitudinal study found that the timing of work was associated with separation among parents but not childless couples, suggesting that the presence of children increases the strains and complexity presented by nonstandard work times. Nonstandard work times may contribute to parents' health (including mental health) via fatigue and disruption to biological systems (in the case of night work), and because parents find it harder to maintain the social and family relationships important to their own well-being (Taylor, Briner, & Folkard, 1997). Both cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence shows an elevated risk for depression when employees work nights, evenings, or rotating schedules (Akerstedt, Knutsson, Alfredsson, & Theorell, 1984; Bildt & Michelsen, 2002; Costa, 1996; Poissonnet & Veron, 2000). Evening and night work is associated with increased risk for injury (Dembe, Erickson, Delbos, & Banks, 2006) and some reviews point to associations with cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal disorders (Harrington, 2001). It is not known whether weekend work increases the risk for parent mental or physical health problems. Although it may disrupt social and family relationships (La Valle et al., 2002), weekend work is unlikely to alter sleep and physiology. No study, to my knowledge has demonstrated positive health outcomes associated with working nonstandard schedules.

My own research on children's outcomes is based on Canadian data as Australian data was not then available (Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006; Strazdins, Korda, Lim, Broom, & D'Souza, 2004). It should be noted that the studies are cross sectional and no causal influence can be made. In these studies we found associations between nonstandard work schedules worked by parents and children's emotional and behavioural difficulties, especially for younger aged children (under five years old). These associations were evident when either or both parents worked nonstandard times. We tested pathways through poorer family functioning, parent depressive symptoms, and more hostile and ineffective parenting and found that these were also associated with parent work at nonstandard times. These pathways partially explained the associations with children's wellbeing. Furthermore, we found evidence that the strength of association tended to be stronger among the less socioeconomically advantaged families, and speculated that lower income explained this vulnerability. Our study was of dual earner, couple headed families. Another study using Australian data found evidence of an association between parent work at nonstandard times and poorer adolescent mental health. This association was only observed in lone parent (and not dual parent) families (Dockery, Li, & Kendall, 2009).

A recent review of the association between children's wellbeing and parental work at nonstandard times found that the majority of research points to negative health impacts on children (Li et al., 2012). Not all studies however find negative effects (e.g., there is no evidence to date that rates of

childhood obesity varies by parental work schedules), however none of the studies reviewed have shown positive effects on child outcomes. The review concludes that where there is any negative association with children's outcomes the links vary according to children's age. Poorer mental health and cognitive functioning tends to be evident in younger aged children, whereas the association between adolescent health and parent nonstandard work schedules is mostly confined to externalizing or risky behaviours. The review also identified that children in low socioeconomic status families appear to be at particular risk from any negative health impacts when their parents work on weekends, evenings or nights (Li et al., 2012).

Based on the above review of the evidence my answers to the following are:

1a. Does the performance of work by workers on evenings and nights and or on weekends have consequences for the workers who perform such work? In terms of employed parents there is evidence of mental and physical health impacts, however much of the research has considered night and evening schedules, less attention has been given to weekend work and its possible health impacts. In my view the major impacts of weekend work on adults will be socially based that is, flow from disruptions to family, social and community engagements. It should be noted that some parents do choose and prefer to work weekends, evening and nights, although such preferences might be based on the extra income this work affords (in terms of current pay loadings) as well as being able to share parenting.

1b. The families of the workers who perform such work? There is a reasonable body of evidence showing associations to poorer cognitive outcomes and poorer mental health in children when their parents (mothers or fathers) work at nonstandard times. A few studies do not find a negative effect, and no study points to a positive association with child outcomes.

2. If the performance of such work does, in my opinion have adverse consequences for any or all of the above groups, please describe the nature of these consequences and that factors which may affect the extent of those consequences. My review focusses on health outcomes and (in the case of children) the family environment. The nature of these consequences is detailed above. To date research has identified low socioeconomic resources as a factor that may amplify negative associations with children's health. Socioeconomic resources include income, parent education and the skills and status jobs confer. In my previous research I have recommended that one way to support families when parents work nonstandard times (and therefore avert possible health impacts) is to increase family resources, including income, to help buffer any strain.

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