

**Inquiry into the future of the working week**

**Dissenting report from**

**Leanne Castley MLA**

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**14 September 2023**

1. I support flexible working arrangements voluntarily entered into between employees and employers.
2. At the inquiry's hearing on 25 May the Chief Minister gave the following evidence to the Committee.

Asked about a trial of a 4 day working week Mr Barr said:

- *"This is not an issue on my agenda at the moment to be frank. I am very happy for a committee process. I am not going to be doing anything until I have seen the committee report."*
- *"It is not something that is going to happen immediately."*
- *"The next time we would potentially consider anything would be next year's budget. So this is not something that is going to be pursued in the short term, but I am open to a medium-term consideration."*
- *"to be frank, this is not something that we have devoted considerable resources too, and we are not in a position to do so at the moment."*

Later in his evidence the Chief Minister said this:

*Mr Barr: I will make one other point, which I perhaps should have clarified at the beginning. If the question is that the ACT public sector moves to a four-day working week and everything else in the economy remains the same, that is a slightly different question. My assumption is that this is a society-wide change. It is not that the ACT public sector operates in an entirely different world to the rest of the economy and the rest of society. That is something the committee may wish to grapple with. There is discussion about trials, and that is one thing. These sorts of changes over economic history have been society wide. Some groups started them first, obviously, but something for the committee to dwell upon is: is this something that is going to change for everyone? My view is that, if you are going to do this, you are going to do it for everyone. We need to think about the implications. The ACT public sector cannot operate in a bubble that is completely isolated from everything else that happens in society. When going down this path, we have to contemplate what it means economy wide, society wide, and presumably nation wide as well.*

*THE CHAIR: Will you take that on as a part of the modelling for the public service? Will you consider business—*

*Mr Barr: We would have to consider that, which is why I need to be clear. I wish the committee well in its deliberations, and I am sure you will deliver an excellent and thought-provoking report, but implementing something like this is not a straightforward exercise. It is very complex and it does have broader implications. We have touched on some of them today.*

*THE CHAIR: Especially in New South Wales. We are so closely tied.*

*Mr Barr: Indeed, yes, but even in just our own service delivery. For me, it is pretty fundamental that, if we are moving to four days, it is across the board, so that would have implications for schooling and it would have implications for a range of other things. At this point, I am yet to see evidence to suggest that productivity would address all of it. I accept there will be productivity in many areas, but it is not going to cover the full implication of this. As Ms Wilson said, a flip side to this is the services that would have to be reduced to do this fairly across society.*

3. As the person with whom the buck for introducing a four day working week in the ACT would ultimately stop, Mr Barr injected a note of realism into the evidence before the inquiry.

Mr Barr's argument that, *"The ACT public sector cannot operate in a bubble that is completely isolated from everything else that happens in society,"* was well made, as was his observation that, *"implementing something like this is not a straightforward exercise."*

4. I do not believe this inquiry has sufficiently made out an argument to justify recommendations 2 and 3. For this reason, and on the basis of the points made by the Chief Minister, I dissent from recommendations 2 and 3.