



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER
AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY**

(Reference: [Inquiry into the future of the working week](#))

Members:

**MS L CASTLEY (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR J DAVIS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

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THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Milne (Ph: 620 50435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 11.03 am.

JOZWIK, DR CAMILLA, Neurologist, Calvary Bruce Public Hospital and ACT
Neurology Centre

MACKIE, MS ROSE AMY SAUNDERS

REMEDEI, MS JUSTINA

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to the public hearing of the economy and gender and economic equality committee inquiry into the future of the working week. Today the committee will hear from a panel of individuals from the community. We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on today, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution that they make to the life of this city and the region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

The proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, please clearly articulate that you are taking the question on notice.

With respect to our first panel, we welcome Ms Mackie, Ms Remedi and Dr Jozwik. Please confirm that you are appearing as individuals.

Dr Jozwik: Yes, I am.

Ms Mackie: Yes.

Ms Remedi: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. I would like to remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered to be a contempt of the Assembly. Please confirm that you understand the implications of the statement and that you agree to comply with it.

Dr Jozwik: Yes, I agree.

Ms Mackie: Yes, I have read the statement and I understand it.

THE CHAIR: Are you online, Justina?

Ms Remedi: Yes; I understand.

THE CHAIR: We are pressed for time, so unless you have a quick, two-minute opening statement, we will go straight to questions. Are you happy to go straight to questions? Great.

I will kick off. Thank you for your submissions, firstly, but nobody really touched on

casual workers. Could you give me your thoughts on how this would work for casual people?

Dr Jozwik: We do not have a lot of casual workers in my profession. I work in private consulting, private business, and also in the public hospital system. The closest we have is locums, which are like casual staff—doctors that fill in from elsewhere. All of our staff are usually permanent or contracted.

THE CHAIR: Ms Mackie, what are your thoughts?

Ms Mackie: I would be interested in how the Assembly sees that working. I was a casual worker for a long time, and I think that there is not a huge amount that needs to change with regard to casual work. It is casual work for a reason. This would affect people who are on a more standard roster, and especially those working a five-day week, Monday to Friday.

An interesting middle ground at my workplace is that we have people who are part time, who work a very odd, seven-day-a-fortnight roster, so I am really intrigued by how you would handle someone who is not on a Monday to Friday roster but who have a set number of hours. It is not the same as being a casual. In my mind, they would have to be potentially compensated in their pay a little bit. Maybe their hours would not change, because they are already not doing a five-day working week, but people who might be on a five-day work week could potentially be working four days and may be earning the same. Maybe you would have to reflect that in the pay of someone who is already on, say, a 3.5-day week.

THE CHAIR: Ms Remedi, do you have any thoughts on casual workers, and even the possibility of sick leave for casuals?

Ms Remedi: I do not have experience personally, but I imagine that any time over those four days would be considered overtime and would be paid accordingly. That is my thought.

MS ORR: Thank you for your submissions. I thought they were really interesting. It is also really interesting that everyone here this morning is female, and there is a strong gender theme that runs through the submissions along the lines of balancing work and caring responsibilities, and having enough time to do everything that you would want to do in your day or your week.

I would be interested in getting a bit more elaboration on how you would see a four-day work week better helping with your work-life balance, and particularly drawing on some of the parts where you have noticed that you have worked reduced hours, and what benefits you have seen from that.

Dr Jozwik: I have already dropped down to a four-day work week, as of this year. I was previously doing two half-days for the last year and a half, and prior to that I worked part time, when I finished my training. Before that I did five days a week, on call, after hours and weekend shifts. I have seen both sides of the spectrum, and four days a week is definitely beneficial. It allows more time to be spent with my daughter; do errands, general housekeeping and attend appointments. There is just a better

quality of life. You have that extra day to do things.

I do four days, but effectively it is still a five-day week for me. I just do a lot of stuff after hours. I do letter corrections, dictations and reporting of investigations after hours, so it is flexible, but I have that whole day to spend on doing as I wish, and I think I am much happier for that.

MS ORR: Just to clarify, you are doing the same amount of hours that you do in a five-day week; you are just doing them over four days?

Dr Jozwik: Yes.

MS ORR: When you were working for five days instead of four days, how did you manage to do all of those things that you have just said became so much easier when you went to the four-day week?

Dr Jozwik: It is really hard. You try to leave work early, and you try to schedule an appointment either at the beginning of the day or at the end of the day, when you might be doing some admin in your office. Essentially, your children are in child care for five days a week, so you do not spend as much time with them, and you are trying to shuffle work around daily commitments as well.

MS ORR: Now that you are on four days, with one day for those personal activities that you need to undertake, as part of your existence, do you find that you are doing any of that during the four days that you are at work, or do you leave it all for the day that you know will be available for your own personal activities?

Dr Jozwik: I leave my personal activities for the day off, yes.

MS ORR: Is it fair to say that you are probably more focused on work during the four days that you are there, as opposed to when you were working for five days and you had to juggle the two?

Dr Jozwik: Yes, definitely; and, on those days, I am happy to stay back until 6 pm, if needed, to finish the work because I know that I have Thursday off, which is the case at the moment.

MS ORR: Rose, do you want to add anything? You alluded to some of this in your submission, too.

Ms Mackie: I work a four-day week at the moment. I was put in the job when it was five days and asked for it to be four days. I have also worked five days when I have been acting in higher positions that have required those five days at that point in time, so I have experienced both sides. The main thing that I want to stress today is the mental and physical energy that you have for other things when you are working for four days.

For me, volunteering with the ANU Film Group is something I would not bother to do if I was working for five days. I would not have the time or energy. Babysitting my nieces and nephews is something that I would not be doing as often. Visiting my

parents and helping my neighbours with hedge trimming: those are the kinds of things for which, if you work for five days, you do not have the energy.

I think it is good that you brought up the gender aspect to all of this, Ms Orr, because the five-day work week really was designed for someone with a partner at home who was managing the house, which is a full-time job, especially if you have kids, which I do not. I am 26. The five-day work week is designed for you to have someone at home. I find that, with working for four days, even without having children, the fifth day generally, for me, is a life admin day. I attend appointments, I check in on my parents and I clean the house, and the weekend can actually be the weekend.

MS ORR: With your four-day working arrangement, is it the same amount of hours worked over four days, or do you have four days and the same workload? I am trying to distinguish between the different models that people are implementing.

Ms Mackie: Yes, it is a good question. When I asked to go to four days, I said, “I will be giving you five days worth of work but I will only be here for four days,” and I am only getting paid for four days. I am not working longer hours on that Monday to Thursday that I work, but I feel, and my manager sees, that I am actually giving the same output as my colleagues who are in the same job and who are there for five days, because I have a bit more energy on the four days that I am there. I am more focused throughout the day. I am not flagging on the Friday afternoon, as we all know a lot of people do, because I am more focused during the four days that I am there.

MS ORR: That is interesting. We heard a bit of evidence from the teachers union that a lot of teachers will also be reducing their hours. One of the arguments for the four-day work week is that your output stays the same. From the testimony you have just provided, that seems to be the case more often than not. How do you feel about having to take a pay reduction in order to work for four days a week when your output is still the same, to your boss? Do you think that is equitable?

Ms Mackie: No, I do not think it is equitable; but, for me, keeping my mental health and my energy mean that it is worth it. Taking the pay cut is worth it, to keep my mental health where it is at. I put a call out on Instagram to people, so I have a few fun comments from other people in their 20s, and one person in their 40s with four kids. A lot of them are in four-day work week situations where they have willingly taken that pay cut, because the effect it has on their ability to manage their mental health, be there for their friends and partake in community activities makes it worth it. No, I do not think it is equitable, because I do think I am giving the same output as some people who are working for five days, but for me it is worth it, at the moment.

MS ORR: I have one for Justina, too. You have gone into a lot of detail on the benefits to women, and certainly in starting to breach some of the gender inequality that exists to this day. Do you want to elaborate on the opportunities you see for a four-day week helping to bridge that gender divide within the workforce, and in personal lives?

Ms Remedi: I was not speaking so much from experience, but more from academic articles and from looking at the 35-hour work week that they had in France. So far, we have been talking about how it benefits women, and helping them to balance their life,

but a reduced work week can actually help men to take on more of those responsibilities, and not just help women to balance them more. With the current work hours, there is a large gap between men and women's work hours. That gap encourages women to take on more of the housekeeping roles, so women are more likely to take on these part-time roles; they are more likely to take flexible work, but that just enables them to do more housework.

If there was a standard reduction in work hours, men would also take a reduction in work, despite being less likely to do so, if it was not mandated. In that way they can balance out the housework and all of those other tasks. That was actually seen in France. Men were more engaged in housework and child care, and that took the burden off women.

Another thing was that women who took part-time work before the 35-hour work week, when it was 39 hours, were more inclined to take full-time work as opposed to part-time work, because a little bit more of an increase in hours was more feasible than a large increase in work hours. Again, husbands were working less. So you could assume that housework was reduced for women, and they could balance out their paid work hours in that way.

MR DAVIS: Thank you so much, all of you, for your submissions. There is one thing that I want to pick up on from your submission, Ms Mackie, and I am interested in everyone else's perspective. Devil's advocate: we hear from employers that moving to a four-day work week or flexible work conditions would see a reduction in productivity and impact their bottom line, their ability to deliver goods and services to market et cetera. But you have a line in your submission where you said that you work a four-day work week without a decrease in productivity and output. Would you, Ms Mackie—and others—observe how a four-day work week for you or flexible work conditions still allows you to deliver the same, if not greater, output with that flexibility?

Ms Mackie: I suppose it is about having the mental energy. When you are there on those four days, you are really there. When you are at work for five days, sometimes you spend Monday morning settling in, and you spend Friday afternoon sliding off, sometimes. I noticed it in my behaviour; when I switched to four days, I rocked up and I was right into it. I continue right until the end of the Thursday. For me it is Monday to Thursday. I certainly have not seen a decrease in productivity. I have the same number of projects, if not more, as my colleagues who are in the same job. There was never any conversation about, "You've gone to four days, so we're going to do X, Y and Z." I maintained my workload. So I really have not seen that.

It also means that, when we are in a really busy period, like all workplaces have—hopefully, you have some ebbs and flows—I will work that extra fifth day as required, and take time off later, or just work overtime, if that is really necessary. If there is a particular meeting on my day off, as sometimes happens, I will switch my days around, I will tune in or I will come in physically, just for that meeting. The way I manage it is that I still sometimes rock up when it is really required, but it means I have the energy to do that.

MR DAVIS: I do want to go to the others, but I want to pick you up on the ebbs and

flows. Whether it is the public service or a small business like a corner store, every workplace will have ebbs and flows in its workload, hopefully—although this Assembly sometimes is a different beast. Most places have ebbs and flows. You mentioned that you would work that fifth day and take a day at some other time.

Could we dive into that a little bit deeper? I am reflecting on conversations I have had with employers in my electorate who instinctively feel concerned about this sort of move. It sounds to me like you have been able to provide your employer with flexibility to step up when there is the ebb—or the flow, as it were—and come back when the workload is slower. Could you talk a bit more about that flexibility that has been provided to your workplace?

Ms Mackie: We had an all-staff meeting the other day at my work. We were talking about how we should not all be working at 100 per cent capacity all the time, because if 100 per cent of you is already used up and someone says, “I really need this done in the next two weeks,” you are trying to give 120 per cent, which is impossible, and you have even less time for yourself and your family at home, as we have already talked about.

I actually do not think we should be at 100 per cent capacity all the time. We should be at 85 per cent. That means when you get a flow coming in and there is a really hectic period at your workplace, you have that extra 15 per cent to give, and you are then given that break. You go back to four days, or whatever it may be, for that particular person. It makes it fairer for your employer to ask that of you, if your standard is the four days, and you have it to give; whereas if your standard is five days and you are being asked to come in on Saturday, you really do not have that to give them.

MR DAVIS: That makes sense. Does anyone else want to offer some reflections on that?

Dr Jozwik: Yes. Our workplace would be amenable, in the public hospital system, to a four-day work week. Maybe, from the junior doctor perspective, it would be a little bit more difficult; you would probably need extra staff, if you went to a four-day work week, because the hospital needs to be staffed 24/7. They would probably look at longer shifts for the junior doctors, and an extra day off. Some departments already do that. For example, the emergency department does an alternating four-day, three-day roster.

When you are qualified as a consultant, you have a lot more flexibility. Consultants do a standard five-day business week, with the occasional on-call shift. That can be consolidated into four days easily. It would probably be flexible work done from home. A lot of non-clinical work that we do in the public hospital system can be done from home. We check emails, we do presentations and we write assessments for medical students. The list goes on. That can all be done at home. We all have the possibility of accessing the hospital system, the computer network, from home.

It can also be done through longer shifts. We do 40-hour weeks in the public hospital system, so it could be done through four 10-hour shifts. A lot of departments would be happy to do that, if it meant having an extra day off and extra rest relief.

MR DAVIS: I want to pick you up on that. Again, if I reflect on things that my constituents have said to me around this inquiry, it is about those frontline services—doctors in the emergency room. The first red flag goes up for the average person, who says, “What will that mean about presenting at the emergency room if I’m sick and everyone’s on a four-day work week?” Could you explain to the committee a bit more how that works practically, those flexible work conditions that are already there for frontline health care workers? Also, do you have any reflections on how more flexible work conditions might support the territory government to recruit and retain more healthcare workers?

Dr Jozwik: The emergency department and the intensive care unit function very differently to other units in the hospital. They are staffed 24/7 reasonably well. For example, the intensive care unit does a week on, week off. When you do the week on, you do 12 or 13-hour shifts, and you get the whole week off afterwards. They function very differently. With the emergency department, when I was working there, we did four days one week and three days the next. You did seven days, and you did long shifts in that time. You did your seven days—80 hours in those seven days.

I do not think they will be affected. It is more about looking at the inpatient ward work. That would probably have to be a flexible four-day week. You could not have everyone on a four-day work week with a three-day long weekend. You would probably have to stagger who does the four days when. You could possibly keep a five-day work week and have different staff on, on different days, and still have that two-day weekend. We could look into having a rigid four-day work week and have a three-day weekend, but you would have to increase the staffing on the weekend and effectively make the hospital well-staffed seven days a week. People could have investigations on the weekend, or allied health reviews on the weekend, which are minimal at the moment.

MR DAVIS: Based on your experience of working in the public healthcare system, you are confident that the government could implement four-day work weeks and flexible work conditions in hospital without any reduction in healthcare provision?

Dr Jozwik: Yes. It may require extra staff and extra funding, depending on the model; but, yes, I think we could.

MR DAVIS: Justina, I appreciate that we have not got to you yet. Do you have any reflections on that conversation that you would like to offer?

Ms Remedi: Yes, I have had a few thoughts about your question regarding whether productivity could decrease. As I mentioned before, those working part time could fill the gap by taking up more full-time roles. In fact, in France, the purpose of the 35-hour work week was to create job sharing, and to reduce unemployment. I think unemployment was at 15 per cent, so that is why they reduced the work week. You do not necessarily have a three-day weekend for everyone, but people work around the week, and everyone works for four days. In that way, you have more opportunities for people to fill those gaps in the reduced work days.

THE CHAIR: I was hoping to pick up on what the thoughts are for those 24/7

frontline services, and you have explained that beautifully. Ms Remedi, you referenced France a lot. Is it a trial, or is it fully functioning in France now?

Ms Remedi: It was not a trial. However, it is not functioning anymore. It was eroded over time with successive governments, especially certain conservative governments who opposed it.

THE CHAIR: Can you explain that a little bit more for me? If the trial was working, why did they reverse the plan?

Ms Remedi: There were many benefits, and some people thought it was not working in some ways. The benefit for gender equality was not the main goal; it was one of the observed outcomes. I am not sure why—

MS ORR: Is it fair to summarise that it was put forward as an unemployment measure, to decrease unemployment, and once that objective had been achieved, they were not looking at the other aspects of what could be achieved; they prioritised differently? It was never intended to be a four-day work week in the way that we talk about it now, with a major shift in a reduction in working hours for work-life balance. That is what I took from what you were saying; is that correct?

Ms Remedi: Yes.

MS ORR: Most of the other witnesses so far have indicated a preference for a model which is 100-80-100—the same pay and conditions but less working hours. Do you have a view on this model, given that you are not necessarily working in that model that has been put out as preferred by everyone? There are equity issues that have come up in the discussion we have had today. Is there a preference for a model, if we were looking at a more systemic change, rather than an individual change?

Dr Jozwik: I do not think 100-80-100 would work in a public hospital system. We cannot see patients quicker. We cannot take the patients home with us. For us there would have to be more flexible work hours after work, and keep those 40-hour work weeks either across four days or at home.

Ms Mackie: I suppose it would be about giving a bit of trust in various workplaces and supporting them. There will certainly not be a model that works for every workplace. That just will not happen. It will have to be up to workplaces to figure out with their staff how they continue offering their services. I work at a cultural institution. It is open for seven days a week, so we have people on a funny, seven-day fortnight roster, which I used to work, and you have a whole host of staff who do Monday to Friday. I imagine the part of the institution that is Monday to Friday—not just the tourist part, I suppose—is still Monday to Friday, but you would have some people doing a different set of four days out of the five days. It would have to be figured out at that kind of organisational level.

THE CHAIR: Ms Remedi, do you have any thoughts on Ms Orr's question?

Ms Remedi: Is the question whether we should keep 40 hours within four days or reduce the hours within four days?

MS ORR: It is more about whether you have a preferred model, with respect to all of the different models that are out there for a four-day work week.

Ms Remedi: I would prefer reducing work hours, not compressing the work week. I have some concerns about intensifying the work week and the burden that that might bring, if we expect people to do the same in less time, especially for women who are balancing household tasks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for coming along today or joining us online. When it is available, a copy of the proof transcript will be forwarded to you, to provide an opportunity to check the transcript and identify any errors. I do not think there were any questions taken on notice. Thank you very much.

Hearing concluded at 11.31 am.