Dear Jennifer,

I wish to thank you and the commissioners for inviting the MCCSA to your Adelaide consultation on 14/2/08 and I apologise again for being late.

I have consulted with our workers and sector and it seems that the most urgent issue is in regards to the CALD youth sector. Accordingly, our submission to the Commission relates to this and is attached.

As I was leaving the meeting, Commissioner Armstrong raised with me the Issue of the 'black economy' (or cash payment for work) which I had raised at a previous consultation. It would be great if the Commission could look into this (see dot-point 5 in our submission).

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to raise concerns with the Commission.

Yours sincerely

Vivien Hope  
Executive Officer  
MCCSA
The CaLD population of the youth sector is one of the most vulnerable to wage discrimination and arbitrary conditions due to issues such as: Limited life skills, reluctance of employers to take them on, lack of experience and opportunities, family and community obligations, little knowledge of wage and taxation rights and responsibilities, large number of ‘at risk’ youths (ie dropping out of school, homelessness etc).

Young workers are more likely to be in casual or part-time employment roles that offer little or no long-term development prospects; this should be offset with a higher minimum wage to give incentive to stay on the job rather than collect government benefits.

Youth are over-represented in both unemployment figures and as low wage earners; although the unemployment rate is at an all time low of 4.3% this does not really reflect the difficulty that some parts of the demographic are having in obtaining permanent or full time employment and surviving day to day.

Part time employment has become a tool of survival for many young people, especially those who are studying as Centrelink benefits fall beneath the poverty line of income, thus the minimum wage is critical for this sector of the population.

The minimum wage is beneficial if enforced however we are coming across many cases where young workers are being exploited and not receiving the minimum wage and this is not being picked up at taxation time or through the appropriate mechanisms. CaLD youth are afraid to speak out for fear of losing their job.

Yes the minimum wage may be ‘balanced' to ensure competitiveness in the market place, however there should be other policies that ensure employers take on low wage earners etc, rather than taking it out on the workers by way of earnings.

The minimum wage ($522.12) is not realistic, while it is based on GDP it does not match with real living expenses especially for young people who have greater difficulty in the areas of housing, transport and health.