

Employment

The barriers to entry into the Australian labour market, particularly for the low skilled, poorly educated or socially disadvantaged or for those who lack connections, self-confidence or even good looks, are serious indeed. We've built a huge wall across the road to employment and every rule, every regulation, every Award is just another brick in the wall, and all our job subsidies, training schemes and labour market programmes are just feeble attempts to scale the wall.

- The traditional employee – employer relationship, has become so regulated that we have, in the words of Richard Epsteinⁱ

“.....created a legal edifice of stunning complexity. Protective laws abound on every conceivable aspect of the subject: health, safety, wages, superannuation, unionization, hiring, promotion, dismissal, annual leave, long service leave, retirement, discrimination, access and disability. The volumes of regulation, rulings, and cases on each of these bodies of law would take a treatise to summarize fully.”

- While in Australia we are pleased to have more than 10 million people in the workforce, we should also be deeply concerned that 20% of working age people, a total of 2.6 million, are reliant on welfare benefits as their primary source of income. Of this vast number, those on disability support pensions comprise about 33% while a further 20% are lone supporting parents. The move from welfare to work however is compounded by the extraordinary impediments to employment in our current labour market. While these workplace regulations supposedly seek to 'protect' the interests of those in work they effectively block out many others.
- Family First believes it is time to acknowledge the inevitable and create, enshrine and protect in legislation employees and employers right to have the freedom to determine what is in their common interest.

- We simply cannot continue to place obstacles in the path of those who choose to work differently. The nature of economic life and the labour market have changed - and so have the opportunities the global economy affords. Those who want to move out of the regulated world of 'traditional employment' must be permitted to do so.

ⁱ Richard Epstein, *Simple Rules for a Complete World*, Harvard University Press, 1995