



TRANSCRIPT

ACCI ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE PETER ANDERSON ON ABC RADIO'S "AM" PROGRAM- "PAY FOR COMMUTING" - 18 MARCH 2008

Cash for commute: union call

Reporter: Lisa Millar

TONY EASTLEY: There are tens-of-thousands of AM listeners making their way to work this morning. Australians are spending more time commuting to and from work and unions believe they should be paid for it.

That's the argument being put forward today by Unions NSW which says employers need to become innovative about working conditions.

But employers don't like the idea and question what sort of work can be done on a crowded bus or train or indeed in a car.

Lisa Millar reports.

LISA MILLAR: Getting to and from work is becoming a longer exercise for the nine million Australians who have to commute each day.

And according to Unions NSW a lot of them are using that time to work - thanks to improvements in technology.

The union's secretary John Robertson says it's time people were paid for it.

JOHN ROBERTSON: We've for years had this notion of, you can work from home and no-one monitoring whether you're sitting at your computer keyboard every minute of the day. It's about output. We've got to apply the same sorts of approaches as one of a range of options available to making Sydney a much more liveable city.

LISA MILLAR: According to a report by the Australia Institute, full-time workers a few years ago were spending an average four hours and 10 minutes travelling to and from work.

It was worse for people in Sydney - four hours and 43 minutes a week. Next was Melbourne, then Brisbane. Canberra was the easiest place to get around. The commuting times have only risen since then.

JOHN ROBERTSON: Now if that three hours could actually be considered part of your work time, you are effectively giving back three hours of their life that they can spend with their family, that they could be putting back into their local community and we can change the way people's lives are created by changing the way we think about work.

I think we've got to break out of this clock-watching mentality that some managers have and say it is the time at which people become productive is when we ought to be counting them as hours of work.

LISA MILLAR: The Australia Institute says if people were paid for that travel time, they'd get an extra \$84 a week.

John Buchanan is with the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney.

JOHN BUCHANAN: Well, this is a fundamental break with principles of Australian industrial law. Its always been assumed, generally speaking, that a workers got to find their way to work unless you are in a fly-in, fly-out situation but I think, you know, we've got to have standards appropriate for modern times and the principles that we have exist at a time when workers lived very close to their workplaces. Those principles might have been right at the turn of the last century but at the beginning of this century, we are in a very different situation. So I think a change is probably in order.

LISA MILLAR: But Peter Anderson - the acting director of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry says it won't work.

PETER ANDERSON: Well, its neither a fair nor a practical suggestion. It seems to me to be penalising employers for some of the failings in the public transport system.

LISA MILLAR: He wonders just what kind of work people can do on increasingly crowded buses and trains and he says employers are just as worried about the long commuting times.

PETER ANDERSON: Half are being forced as a result of delays, in their own frustrations, to arrive at work late or to arrive at work in a frustrated state of mind where they've had to bustle and hustle their way through over-crowded, late or delayed trains and buses.

TONY EASTLEY: Peter Anderson - the acting director of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry ending that report from Lisa Millar.