



MEDIA RELEASE

IR Changes Damaging to Jobs and the National Interest

19 March 2013

Groups representing small, medium and large businesses employing millions of people across all sectors of the Australian economy are calling on the federal government to abandon changes to industrial relations laws that will take the nation backwards and harm jobs.

The call has been made today by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australian Industry Group (AiG), Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA), and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) in a joint letter to members and senators from across the parliament.

The groups say, in the national interest, proposals for a return to compulsory arbitration of workplace disputes, expanded union rights of entry and access to non-union employees, and matters relating to bullying and rostering included in the Fair Work Act should not go ahead.

If the government insists on proceeding with these regressive proposals, introduced to appease powerful union interests regardless of the damaging impact on small, medium and large businesses, the four business groups ask non-government parliamentarians to prevent the passage of the legislation in its current form.

The government's recently announced second tranche of amendments to the Fair Work Act 2009 will put further stress on businesses struggling to adjust to competitive pressures and, as a result, risk jobs and job prospects in this country.

Like the review of the Fair Work Act, the second tranche amendments fail to address the changes required to workplace laws to support businesses to stay competitive in a changing economy, and to retain and employ more workers.

Instead, this tranche of amendments includes a number of provisions which are likely to harm the economy, businesses of all sizes and jobs. These include:

- introducing arbitration for intractable disputes
- introducing greenfields (new projects) agreement arbitration inadequately responding to issues associated with rights of entry of trade union representatives and location of meetings with trade union representatives
- requiring that awards and agreements include a provision that employers consult with employees and their unions before changing rosters or working hours
- taking statutory action to entrench penalty and shift loadings in the cost of the labour market
- the unorthodox approach of using an IR tribunal, the Fair Work Commission, to address workplace bullying.

The business groups are united that the government's approach runs counter to the interests of the broader economy, is almost entirely outside the considerations and recommendations of the FW Act review, and fails the government's own test of good policy design and good regulation making.

Changes to industrial relations laws should be considered from the perspective of what is good for the whole economy, not just unions. In the interests of jobs, productivity, and the viability of Australian business, the government's proposals should not go ahead.

For further information contact:

David Turnbull, Director of Communications, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, telephone 02 6273 2311, mobile 0419 272 802

Gemma Williams, Australian Industry Group, mobile 0401 664 047

Tom Reid, Media and Government Relations Adviser, Australian Mines and Metals Association, 0419 153 407

Scott Thompson, Director, Media and Public Affairs, Business Council of Australia, telephone (03) 8664 2603, mobile 0403 241 128