

1 November 2013

COMMUNIQUÉ

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS SELECT COUNCIL ON WORKPLACE RELATIONS – 1 NOVEMBER 2013

The Council of Australian Governments' Select Council on Workplace Relations (the Council) was held in Melbourne on 1 November 2013. The Council considered a range of workplace relations and work health and safety issues.

The Chair of the Council, Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, provided Members with an overview of the Coalition Government's reform priorities. Minister Abetz confirmed the Government's commitment to restoring balance to the national workplace relations system, reducing the regulatory and red-tape burden on business and working cooperatively with states and territories to implement these important reforms.

The Council noted the progress and timing to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission. Minister Abetz advised the Council that legislation to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission will be introduced in the Spring Sittings of Parliament and will include amendments to re-instate industry specific provisions and penalties.

The Council noted the Government's commitment to strengthen the transparency and accountability of registered organisations through amendments to the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009* to align the obligations of registered organisations and their officials with the *Corporations Act 2001*. An independent Registered Organisations Commission will be established with enhanced compliance and investigation powers to regulate and educate registered organisations on their obligations.

Minister Abetz advised that a range of other reforms, as outlined in the Government's *Policy to Improve the Fair Work Laws*, would also be implemented. These include a commitment to engage the Productivity Commission to review the workplace relations framework and to engage in a review of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal.

The Council noted that a Post Implementation Review of the *Fair Work Amendment (Transfer of Business) Act 2012* will commence in early 2014 and be progressed as expeditiously as possible.

The Council discussed progress on the implementation of model work health and safety laws. Members agreed to continue working through Safe Work Australia to maximise the degree of uniformity around Australia. The Council noted the upcoming 2014 Council of Australian Governments Review of model work health and safety laws, the review of the *Inter-Governmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety*, the review of Safe Work Australia's roles and functions and the five-yearly review of the content and operation of model work health and safety laws in 2016-17.

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Attendees included:

- Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, Minister for Employment (Commonwealth)
- The Hon. Robert Clark MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Victoria)
- The Hon. Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC, Assistant Treasurer (Victoria)
- The Hon. Mike Baird MP, Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations (New South Wales)
- The Hon. Michael Mischin MLC, Attorney General and Minister for Commerce (Western Australia)
- The Hon. David O’Byrne MP, Minister for Workplace Relations (Tasmania)
- The Hon. Jarrod Bleijie MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Queensland)*
- Mr Andrew Kefford, Deputy Director-General, Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, Workforce Capability and Governance Division – proxy for Minister Corbell (Australian Capital Territory)*
- Mr Bryan Russell, Executive Director, SafeWork SA – proxy for Minister Rau (South Australia)*
- Mr Doug Phillips, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Business – proxy for Minister Tollner (Northern Territory)*
- Mr Ken Simpson, Commissioner for Public Employment – proxy for Minister Elferink (Northern Territory)*

Apologies:

- The Hon. John Rau MP, Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (South Australia)
- The Hon. David Tollner MLA, Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Business (Northern Territory)
- The Hon. John Elferink MLA, Attorney-General and Minister for Public Employment (Northern Territory)
- The Hon. Andrew Constance MP, Minister for Finance and Services (New South Wales)
- Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Attorney-General and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Hon. Simon Bridges MP, Minister of Labour (New Zealand)

* Participating via teleconference