

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE SELECT COUNCIL ON WORKPLACE RELATIONS

The Select Council on Workplace Relations was held in Melbourne on 11 April 2014. Members considered a range of workplace relations and work health and safety issues.

The Chair of the Select Council on Workplace Relations, Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, noted that on 13 December 2013 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed that its Council system would be streamlined. The Select Council on Workplace Relations has now been revoked by the Prime Minister and consequently will not continue to its full term as a COAG Council. In order to progress any significant outstanding issues, Commonwealth and state portfolio Ministers with responsibility for workplace relations and work health and safety policy work will meet as needed and will also consider important matters out-of-session.

The Select Council on Workplace Relations noted meetings held with the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency to discuss the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Awareness and Management. Members noted the importance of this critical health and safety issue. They generally supported the strategies on awareness, research and international leadership but noted the cost and feasibility of removal and identification strategies would be difficult to achieve in the timeframes provided in the Plan. Members sought further consultation on these issues.

The Chair advised that the Coalition Government has introduced into Parliament the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 on 19 March 2014 to amend the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. Members noted that further amendments will be introduced in response to two national reviews in 2013.

The Select Council endorsed the changes to the model work health and safety laws that had been agreed by Safe Work Australia.

The Select Council on Workplace Relations considered the terms of reference for the review of the *Inter-Governmental Agreement for Regulatory and Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety*. Members noted that the Department of Employment will commence this review in the second half of 2014 with completion by June 2015. Members noted that COAG is considering the scheduled work health and safety reviews at its next meeting.

The Chair provided an update on the establishment of a Royal Commission to conduct a review into matters relating to Trade Union Governance and Corruption.

The Chair concluded the meeting with an acknowledgement that this would be the final meeting of the Select Council on Workplace Relations and thanked Members for their contributions to the important work of overseeing the national workplace relations system and maximising national uniformity of work health and safety laws across Australia.

Attendees included:

- The Chair, Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, Minister for Employment (Commonwealth)
- The Hon. Jarrod Bleijie MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Queensland)
- The Hon. Andrew Constance MP, Minister for Finance and Services (New South Wales)*
- The Hon. John Rau MP, Deputy Premier, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (South Australia)
- The Hon. Gordon Rich-Phillips, Assistant Treasurer – proxy for Minister Clark (Victoria)
- The Hon. David Tollner MLA, Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Business (Northern Territory)
- Mr Brian Bradley, Director-General, Department of Commerce – proxy for Minister Mischin (Western Australia)
- Mr Michael Hobby, Principal Advisor, International Strategy and Partnerships, Trade and International Environment Branch, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment – proxy for Minister Bridges (New Zealand)*
- Mr Andrew Kefford, Deputy Director-General, Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate – proxy for Minister Corbell (Australian Capital Territory)*
- Mr Simon Overland, Secretary, Department of Justice – proxy for Minister Gutwein (Tasmania)
- Ms Vicki Telfer, Executive Director, New South Wales Industrial Relations – proxy for Minister Baird (New South Wales)*.

Apologies:

- The Hon. Mike Baird MP, Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations (New South Wales)
- The Hon. Simon Bridges MP, Minister of Labour (New Zealand)
- The Hon. Robert Clark MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations (Victoria)
- Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Attorney-General and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Hon. John Elferink MLA, Attorney-General and Minister for Public Employment (Northern Territory)
- The Hon. Peter Gutwein MP, Treasurer (Tasmania)
- The Hon. Michael Mischin MLC, Attorney General and Minister for Commerce (Western Australia).

* Participating via teleconference