

# Modern Workplace: Modern Future

A Blueprint for the Australian Workplace Relations System  
2002-2010

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **WHAT IS MODERN WORKPLACE: MODERN FUTURE?**

*Modern Workplace: Modern Future* is a policy Blueprint prepared by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the type of workplace relations system that we should develop in Australia over the next decade.

### **WHAT IS THE 'WORKPLACE RELATIONS SYSTEM'?**

The 'Workplace Relations System' encompasses the laws, the policies, the institutions and the attitudes that affect the rights and obligations of employers, employees, trade unions and employer organisations, and the dealings between them.

### **WHY IS THE 'WORKPLACE RELATIONS SYSTEM' IMPORTANT?**

The Workplace Relations System creates the framework within which employers and employees work. It sets the rules for minimum wages, conditions of employment and dispute resolution. Those rules, and by whom and how they are set, affect the rights of private businesses and private employees. They have important economic and social consequences for productivity, employment and living standards.

### **WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY?**

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) is Australia's peak national organisation of business associations. Over 30 of Australia's major employer organisations formed ACCI as a peak body

to represent their collective interests on national issues, such as employment and workplace relations policy. ACCI is also involved in many other areas of policy, such as tax, economics, superannuation, population, environment, small business, industry, education, training and trade.

### **WHO DOES THE ACCI REPRESENT?**

ACCI represents private business and private employers. Through the ACCI employer organisation network, over 350,000 employers of all sizes across all industries have their voice heard on national policy.

### **WHY IS ACCI RELEASING THE MODERN FUTURE: MODERN WORKPLACE BLUEPRINT?**

Australians, including our business community and governments, need to be challenged to develop one of the world's best Workplace Relations Systems. ACCI and its member organisations believe that our economic security and our standard of living depends on a prosperous private sector that competes in a global economy, that employs more Australians and that provides even greater opportunity and reward. We need to continuously improve our Workplace Relations System if Australia is to create more jobs, reduce unemployment and attract new businesses.

### **IN A FEW WORDS, WHAT IS THE VISION OF THE MODERN WORKPLACE: MODERN FUTURE BLUEPRINT?**

Jobs. Living Standards. A Better Future. The Vision of the Blueprint is for 'A Workplace Relations System that empowers employers and employees

across the nation to work co-operatively and make decisions in their shared interests that lead to more jobs, higher living standards and a better future.' This is the challenge for employers and employees, and policy makers.

### **HOW CAN THE VISION OF THE BLUEPRINT BE ACHIEVED?**

Only by a lot of hard work and sensible long term decisions being taken in the workplace, and by tribunals, governments and parliaments. The *Modern Workplace: Modern Future* Blueprint highlights changes that have already been made to the Workplace Relations System over the past decade which have taken us part of the way. The Blueprint then recommends the next steps - further changes to workplace attitudes, policies and laws that will take us closer to achieving this vision by the end of this decade.

### **HOW WAS THE BLUEPRINT DEVELOPED?**

The Blueprint is the product of careful thought and analysis of the Workplace Relations System by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and its member organisations. In developing the Blueprint, ACCI has drawn on the many years of experience of employers and employer organisations with the Workplace Relations System and with employment regulation.

### **HOW DOES THIS BLUEPRINT DIFFER FROM OTHER POLICY STATEMENTS ABOUT WORKPLACE RELATIONS?**

The *Modern Workplace: Modern Future* Blueprint is not theoretical, bureaucratic, academic or econometric. It is prepared by and for the people in our community who take risks to create our national wealth and opportunities – employers and small business people. It is the collective view of multiple industries, in urban, regional and rural sectors, and across large, medium and small businesses. What real employers say and do, does and should matter.

### **WHY IS THE BLUEPRINT NECESSARY?**

Workplace Relations policy is a difficult area for governments and political parties because of the many vested interests in the system. The Blueprint will help governments and politicians chart a course through these vested interests. We must have the maturity to recognise that the interests of employers and employees in each workplace are shared interests. The Blueprint supports a system designed around workplace choice, freedom, fairness and mutual goals.

### **WHY IS THE BLUEPRINT A DECADE LONG PROPOSAL?**

In a contentious area like Workplace Relations policy there are many fixed attitudes and traditional ways of doing things. While employers know that improvements have to happen, it is better for changes to laws and systems to occur in an orderly and deliberate way. Many of the proposals in the Blueprint require fresh thinking on the part of employers, employees, tribunals, unions and governments - and that does not happen overnight. Other proposals require development, consultation and support. Whilst some short-term improvements can be made, others can only happen in the medium and longer term. Because all political and industrial parties should share the vision of the Blueprint, it is important that changes cover a number of terms of government. There should be an attitude of making continual improvement in the workplace relations system over the course of the decade.

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#### **HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE *MODERN WORKPLACE: MODERN FUTURE* BLUEPRINT?**

25 Brisbane Ave, Barton ACT 2600 \* PO Box E14, Kingston ACT 2604

**Telephone:** 02 6273 2311 \* **Facsimile:** 02 6273 3196 \* **Email:** [acc@acci.asn.au](mailto:acc@acci.asn.au)

Level 4, 55 Exhibition St, Melbourne VIC 3000 \* PO Box 18008 Collins St East, Melbourne VIC 8003

**Telephone:** 03 9668 9950 \* **Facsimile:** 03 9668 9958 \* **Email:** [melb@acci.asn.au](mailto:melb@acci.asn.au)