



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

MEDIA RELEASE

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INDUSTRY LET DOWN BY NSW GOVERNMENT STUNT ON OHS

Statement by Mr Peter Hendy, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's largest and most representative business organisation, has warned that the NSW Government's decision to walk out of the tripartite Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) will undermine moves towards national consistency and better health and safety regulation in Australia.

By refusing to talk at a national level to other governments and peak union and employer bodies, the NSW Government is failing to provide political leadership for OHS law, policy and practice to be improved.

NSW is also undermining its own commitment to the ASCC's ten-year National OHS Strategy, which the NSW Government signed in 2002. That Strategy sets out national targets for OHS improvements.

The NSW Government yesterday walked out of the ASCC because the Council would not accept four preconditions which NSW tried to unilaterally impose on other Council members.

NSW is only one of eighteen members of the Council. Dictating preconditions to other governments, employers or unions is bad faith, especially when the preconditions ignore important issues.

The NSW preconditions (tri-partism, resources, compliance and no reduction in standards) ignored other relevant issues such as prevention activities, reasonableness of duties, practicality of regulations, reduction in red-tape and the role of education and promotion.

A political stunt such as this is a backward step for OHS. It sends a very negative message to the public at large. Governments lose credibility when they walk away from dialogue on workplace safety but then expect employers and employees to work together on these very issues.

The ASCC is Australia's peak tripartite body on OHS and workers' compensation policy. In 2005 it replaced the former National Occupational Health and Safety Commission. It comprises all governments (federal, state and territory) employers (represented by ACCI) and employees (represented by ACTU). International labour standards made in June this year require governments to work with union and employers on national bodies such as the ASCC.

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