



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## UNION CAMPAIGN AGAINST WORKCHOICES EXPOSED: OHS CLAIMS DO NOT STACK UP

Statement by Mr Peter Hendy, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's peak council of business organisations and representative of employers on the Australian Safety and Compensation Council, today released details in the August edition of our *ACCI Review* of new research which rebuts union claims about the effect of WorkChoices on health and safety.

Last May, after the mining accident in Beaconsfield Tasmania, unions claimed that OHS training by unions needed to be allowed in agreements made under WorkChoices.

This claim gave the impression that union provided OHS training had been a common feature of workplace agreements between unions and employers until WorkChoices.

New research conducted by ACCI debunks this claim. ACCI has examined all 549 agreements certified by the AIRC in December 2005 (pre-WorkChoices, with 439 of them involving approximately 20 unions). Not one of these agreements included OHS training by unions. WorkChoices has made no practical change to OHS training arrangements. Before WorkChoices, OHS training in Australia generally was employer initiated or provided, and this remains the case.

The research also concludes that:

- prior to WorkChoices it was rare for a workplace agreement – even union agreements - to specify OHS training by a particular provider, and even rarer for that provider to be a union;
- WorkChoices has left intact all employer duties under OHS laws;
- unions can still reach private agreements with employers on union OHS training;
- most OHS training in Australia is delivered by private providers at the initiation of employers, not unions; and
- the level of death and injury in workplaces has declined over the very period that workplace relations regulation has encouraged direct workplace discussion of employment conditions.

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*The August ACCI Review also contains articles about ACCI's submission to the Australian Fair Pay Commission for the 2006 Minimum Wage Review and our concerns about the impact of the extraterritorial application of national laws on business.*

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