



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

MEDIA RELEASE

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UNIONS PUSHING WRONG OHS ISSUES

Statement by Mr Peter Anderson, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's largest and most representative business organisation, says that an advertising campaign starting today by the ACTU about harmonisation of OHS laws in Australia is trying to overturn independent recommendations in favour of punitive and pro-union OHS rules.

It is completely wrong for the ACTU to suggest that employers are looking to use the national harmonisation process to water down OHS regulation. Our goal is improved OHS outcomes.

"Fair OHS laws need a balance of carrot and stick. The ACTU campaign is almost all stick. Punitive approaches to OHS work in a few cases but the real difference in workplace safety is made when employers and employees accept mutual responsibilities for prevention and openly communicate about OHS issues."

"Behind the emotive message of this union campaign is a push for laws that would give union officials the right to prosecute for OHS breaches, a law that makes an employer guilty of unsafe work practices unless they prove their innocence, and more rights for shop stewards elected as OHS representatives to stop work in a business."

Much of this is at odds with the draft national laws recommended by an independent panel, and endorsed by the nation's Workplace Relations Ministers.

"While industry and employers should take a leadership role, the move to national laws must establish workable new regulation for the private sector, including small business, if it is to be effective and durable. Unless OHS laws are workable, balanced and well targeted they won't last."

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ACCI represents over 350,000 businesses in every State and Territory and all industries. Our network employs around 4 million employees, ranging from the top 100 companies to tens of thousands of small and medium businesses.

www.acci.asn.au

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LEADING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS