



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## HOW MODERN ARE MODERN AWARDS?

Statement by Mr Peter Anderson, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's largest and most representative business organisation, has warned that many of the new industrial awards operating from 2010 will not meet flexibility and productivity objectives if old award rules are simply translated into the modern award system.

"Creating national industrial awards is difficult. The new system must be given a chance to work but cannot be quarantined from criticism."

"Today's award modernisation will not be worth all the trouble if awards end up looking like the old set of rules again or tie up industry with inefficient work practices."

"Although the Australian Industrial Relations Commission is doing a worthy job rewriting industrial awards, most of the modernisation is amalgamating existing awards to reduce numbers but is not making the content modern."

"Some unions have already set up disputes because the employer wanted the type of flexibility that the government had promised."

In some states and in some industries labour costs will go up not because an employee is working differently but because awards are being amalgamated into fewer numbers. Action by chambers of commerce and industry associations have achieved phasing in periods for many of these costs.

"The complexity of a large number of awards applying in a single workplace may be reduced, but content is more important than numbers."

A draft catch-all award decided last Friday risks expanding award regulation into the unknown, including some areas of managerial and professional employment. This has generated uncertainty for no good reason.

"A modern safety net is needed, but an amalgam of old rules dressed up as new awards does not have history on its side.

*This statement is an abridged extract of an opinion piece by ACCI Chief Executive Peter Anderson 'Old Awards Decked Out in New Rags' published in today's Australian newspaper.*

For further information:

David Gregory

Director of Workplace Policy

03 9668 9950 / 0417 052 390

Brett Hogan

Director of Communications

03 9668 9950 / 0407 273 884

*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.*

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