



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

MEDIA RELEASE

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AFTER-SCHOOL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE FOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND FAIR WORK SYSTEM

Statement by Mr Peter Anderson, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australia's largest and most representative business organisation, has called on Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott to each support changes to industrial awards in the retail industry that would allow after-school employment of young people.

Retail employers have lodged an appeal to a Full Bench of the industrial relations tribunal, Fair Work Australia, against a 9 July decision which ruled that the retail award would not be changed to allow after-school employment of less than three hours.

This decision was made despite evidence indicating young people, particularly in regional areas, had lost jobs because the award required a minimum engagement of three hours but these young people were only available for the limited period after school and until stores closed at 5.30pm.

ACCI will be intervening in the appeal hearing and asking the tribunal to focus on the after-school problem caused by the 3 hour minimum rule. ACCI is not proposing that the tribunal alter the 3 hour minimum rule for other purposes.

“No IR system is durable if it costs young people their jobs.”

“Given that the tribunal has found that the adverse employment effect on some young people has been “significant”, the responsible course is to alter the currently inflexible 3-hour minimum rule so that young people can work after school on shorter rosters, and not complicate the appeal with red-herrings about how this might effect earnings or rosters at weekends or at other times.”

“This case provides an opportunity for the fair work system to find a mid point between setting a minimum standard but not making that standard so inflexible that it costs jobs.”

“The Government has repeatedly said that the fair work system strikes the right balance. This case brings that claim under scrutiny for after-school workers in the retail industry and their employers.”

“This case is also a prime example of why workplace laws need to be changed either by the IR tribunal or by legislation as the system develops. When in 2007 the government announced its intention to create new awards, few expected a national law making it unlawful for a shopkeeper to employ a young person for two hours after school.”

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