



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Letter to the Editor of The Age by ACCI Workplace Relations Manager Scott Barklamb - National Workplace Relations Reform - 2 June 2005

IR reforms won't gut workers' rights

By Scott Barklamb – Workplace Relations Manager, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

WHILE Tim Colebatch (Opinion, 31/5) is right to say the Commonwealth's proposed workplace relations reforms will improve the capacity of Australian business to grow and create jobs, he is wrong to stray into predictions of lower wages and reduced job opportunities.

Contrary to previous dire predictions, increased wages and record jobs growth followed the workplace reforms of the 1990s. Experience tells us that building on these reforms will yield further gains.

The claim that small business employees will be able to be "fired at any time without a cent" is just not correct. Employees in all businesses will retain protection from unlawful dismissal (eg gender or age discrimination) and retain current notice entitlements.

The prediction that proposed thresholds for access to unfair dismissal and redundancy pay will "create a powerful disincentive to small firms to grow big" is also wrong. Comparable thresholds for redundancy pay, equal opportunity, trade practices and tax laws have been in place for more than a decade. There is no evidence that such thresholds have retarded business growth.

Debate on workplace laws will be best served during coming months by properly understanding the operation of the current and proposed system and recognising the extent to which reforms will retain existing rights while increasing productivity, efficiency and job creation.

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