



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IR LAWS A JOB WELL DONE

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By Peter Hendy, Chief Executive, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The remarkable jobs growth since Work Choices started this year does not satisfy academic David Peetz (Opinion, September 7). Last week's Australian Bureau of Statistics data reveal 175,800 jobs were created since March, more than 80 per cent of them full-time.

Peetz tries to discount this by arguing that the rate of jobs growth was higher in 1994 when unfair dismissal laws were introduced.

The data show this to be incorrect. From March to August 1994, 121,660 jobs were created, for a growth rate of 1.6 per cent, whereas the rate was 1.7 per cent over the same period since the introduction of Work Choices.

An even more important point that Peetz neglects to mention is that in 1994 the economy was recovering from one of the largest recessions in Australia's history. Jobs grow strongly immediately after a recession because an economy catches up.

What is remarkable about the jobs growth since Work Choices is that it is happening on top of the jobs growth from 13 years of economic expansion. These are not catch-up jobs after a recession. They are new jobs, real jobs and extra jobs.

It was argued by the then NSW Labor premier Bob Carr that the 1994 unfair dismissal laws were job-destroying. Work Choices makes hiring staff less risky because it has changed unfair dismissal laws. After a generation of effort, we now have an unemployment rate with a 4 in front of it, unthinkable a few years ago. We should do everything to keep it that way. The last thing we should do is tear up the workplace laws that help make it possible.

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