



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Letter to the Editor of The Age by ACCI Chief Executive Peter Hendy - Work and Family Test Case - 24 January 2005

Another Approach to Parents at Work

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

Professor Peter McDonald's comments on the family provisions case (Opinion 17/1) being considered by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, omit several salient facts.

First, Professor McDonald is not a disinterested academic observer. He was a witness for the ACTU in this case and his recent public intervention in this matter must be considered in that light.

Second, this case is not restricted to dealing with the five union-initiated measures that would make it easier for parents to combine work with their family responsibilities. The commission is also considering better alternatives proposed by employers.

Third, the ACTU has opposed these sensible proposals. These include opposing greater employee choice in how leave is taken and opposing employees being able to exchange monetary entitlements for additional leave where they wish to.

Fourth, Professor McDonald ignores the additional capacities for individuals to manage their working and family lives that all parties to this case have agreed upon, including a historic increase in access to carers' leave from five to ten days a year.

The challenge of balancing our working and family lives remains complex. Discussion of this issue in our homes and workplaces is not assisted by telling only part of the story.

Peter Hendy
Chief Executive
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry