

**INQUIRY INTO OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSOLIDATE
TRIBUNALS IN NSW**

Organisation: Australian Industry Group

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AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY
GROUP

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Re. Inquiry into opportunities to consolidate Tribunals in NSW

The Australian Industry Group ('Ai Group') is pleased to provide its views in response to the Issues Paper released in October 2011 relating to the *Inquiry into opportunities to consolidate Tribunals in NSW* being undertaken by the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice.

Ai Group is one of the largest national industry bodies in Australia, representing employers in the manufacturing, construction, automotive, food, transport, information technology, telecommunications, printing, on-hire and other industries. Ai Group and its affiliates represent the interests of more than 60,000 businesses, including thousands within NSW.

Ai Group is supportive of the NSW Government's efforts to make the access to justice quicker, cheaper and more effective and provide an effective use of taxpayer funds.

It is acknowledged in the Issues Paper that significant changes in the IRC's jurisdiction, including the introduction of the *Fair Work Act 2009* and the referral of NSW's industrial relations power to the Commonwealth for private sector employees has resulted in a large reduction in the IRC's workload and this is reflected generally in the involvement of Ai Group and our members with the IRC.

The IRC's jurisdiction and subsequent workload will further be reduced when the *Work Health and Safety Act* commences in 2012

Ai Group's longstanding policy position is for a single related workplace relations system and jurisdiction to cover all employees. It would be consistent with its position for NSW to cede its remaining industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth and work within the national *Fair Work Australia System*.

In 1996 the Victorian Government referred most of its industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth. Ai Group strongly supported the move at the time and our support has proven to be well founded.

The experience in Victoria has been a very positive one for employers, employees, Governments and the community. The fact that the Victorian Government has not sought to rescind the referral over the past 15 years confirms this view.

The fair and efficient workplace relations arrangements which apply in Victoria and the Territories highlight that there is no logical reason why the same national workplace relations system cannot, and should not, apply to all employers and employees – including corporations, sole traders, partnerships and all levels of Government.

However, current regional IRC members who hold dual appointments with FWA perform an important function in providing important services for FWA in regional areas should not be overlooked in any changed arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Goodsell
DIRECTOR – NSW