15 April 2013

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

As Queensland's peak body for small and medium businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2013 (the Bill).

CCIQ is concerned that many of the proposed changes in the Bill would have the effect of increasing the already significant burden that the *Fair Work Act 2009* (FW Act) places on small and medium businesses. It is also disappointing that the amendments do little to address any of the existing issues in the FW Act that have been raised by industry as requiring urgent change.

CCIQ's submission to the Inquiry is constituted by its *Workplace Relations Blueprint: A workplace relations framework for modern businesses*. The CCIQ Workplace Relations Blueprint was developed following extensive consultation with Queensland businesses, and sets out 13 recommendations that address some of the most crucial areas for reform in the current workplace relations system.

We consider that its Workplace Relations Blueprint provide reasonable and common-sense solutions to some of the problems that some businesses are experiencing with the FW Act. At the same time, it also highlights the reasons for CCIQ's opposition to the content of the Bill.

With respect to the issues that are addressed in the Bill, CCIQ draws the Committee's attention to the following specific sections of the Blueprint:

- Recommendations 1, 6 and 7 relate to the national minimum wage, the National Employment Standards (NES) and the modern awards.
    - These recommendations focus on keeping the employee safety net sustainable, and ensuring that it, along with the modern awards, are relevant and sustainable in modern workplaces.
- Recommendation 2 relates to flexibility arrangements.
    - This recommendation favours measures that would reasonably enhance the capacity of employers to put in place flexible working arrangements. This includes bringing back individual statutory agreements (subject to certain stringent protections), or removing unnecessary restrictions from the use of Individual Flexibility Arrangements that are already in the Act.
- Recommendation 9 relates to industrial action and union involvement in the workplace.
    - This recommendation seeks to restore appropriate limits on union involvement in the workplace and to limit the potentially harmful effects of industrial action.
- Recommendation 12 relates to the Fair Work Ombudsman and the Fair Work Commission.
    - This recommendation emphasises the need for both bodies to be more balanced and effective in the performance of their roles, and to ensure that they do not become unnecessarily interventionist or intrusive in the decision-making processes of individual workplaces.
- Recommendation 13: This recommendation encompasses a number of other workplace relations issues, including casual working arrangements and workplace bullying.

CCIQ believes that this Blueprint will provide useful guidance to the Committee with respect to the approach that small and medium businesses are seeking in relation to the specific matters contained in the Bill.

We look forward to the release of the Committee's report.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Behrens
General Manager, Advocacy – CCIQ