



Combined Small Business Alliance of Western Australia Inc. (CoSBA)

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NEXT MEETING: BOARD MEETING

To be advised

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ATTACHMENTS:

ACCC Graeme Samuel Invitation.pdf
IBC – FUNCTION.PDF
Media Release small business finance.pdf
SBA_Buswell_Breakfast.pdf



“Small Enterprise Network”

We are advised that on Wednesday 17 February, at 12.30pm in Melville, the CCI are launching their “Small Enterprise Network” - which they say is aimed at providing small business with 'their own voice', and it is understood that the launch will be a media launch.

We understand that among those who will be attending are: Kate Lamont - who is to be the inaugural Chair of this new group; James Pearson-CCI; John Nicolau-CCI; Troy Buswell, Minister for Small Business and Ljiljana Ravlich, Shadow Minister for Small Business.

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There is no indication that the SBDC, CoSBA, IBC, Local Chambers or other small business organisations have been invited to attend.

This new network sounds suspiciously like something that could be utilised to assume the role and functions Small Business Centres, if/when Buswell/Barnett/Grylls decides to hand the administration of the SBCs and other Government small business support services over to the CCI. If this turns out to be the case, such would be a reprehensible act of betrayal of small business by this pro-big business Government.

ATO Small Business Liaison Group Meeting

The next WA SBLG meeting has been scheduled at 9.30am on Tuesday 2nd March 2010. It was suggested at the December meeting that the request for agenda items should be sent out about 6 weeks prior to the meeting date, so that forum members have sufficient time to canvass their members for issues. CoSBA members please send your tax agenda items to our representative of the SBLG: Stephen Knight advisor@iinet.net.au

Jacky Finlayson appointed SBDC MD

Jacky Finlayson has been appointed as the acting Managing Director of the Small Business Development Corporation. CoSBA congratulates Jacky and wishes her well in her appointment.

New CEO for Small Business Centre Stirling

The Small Business Centre Stirling is pleased to announce the appointment of its new CEO Angelo Daniele. Angelo has owned and operated his own business for 14 years and over the last few years has been employed at high level in a semi government agency. CoSBA welcomes Angelo, who can be contacted on ceo@stirlingbec.com or on 9240 6337.

Interest rates left on hold at 3.75%

The Reserve Bank of Australia has today decided to leave the official cash rate on hold at 3.75 per cent, going against widely held expectations the central bank would lift rates by 25 basis points. RBA governor Glenn Stevens said the decision to leave the official rate on hold was due to limited available information regarding the impact of some lenders raising their rates more than the central bank's.

"Lenders have generally raised rates a little more than the cash rate over recent months and most loan rates have risen by close to a percentage point," Mr Stevens said in a statement. "Since information about the early impact of those changes is still limited, the Board judged it appropriate to hold a steady setting of monetary policy for the time being." (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *WA Business News*, Daily Business Alert, 2.2.10)

Trading lobby in disarray

WA's most vocal opponent to extended shopping hours is under fire from IGA bigwigs and colleagues - undermining his campaign. Premier Colin Barnett confirmed on Friday he had been approached by IGA Distribution WA general manager Silvestro Morabito and individual IGA shop owners who were concerned about damage being done to the IGA brand by the strong stance of WA Independent Grocers Association president John Cummings.

Mr Cummings has long been the leading critic of deregulated trading in WA. Mr Barnett said: "Silvestro came to me (before Christmas) concerned that the IGA name could be damaged because it was being seen as standing in the way of choice for consumers.

"Before that, I'd spoken to a few IGA store operators who just came up to me at various events and said, 'I just want to tell you, we don't agree with the position that has been portrayed by the (WA) IGA and, in fact, we quite welcome weeknight trading and we don't even mind Sunday trading'.

"A number of the operators say, 'I just want to tell you, basically what John Cummings is saying is not necessarily what all of us think, there's a division of opinion. We think there can be deregulation'." Mr Barnett understood Mr Morabito was to have discussions with store owners. Mr Morabito refused to comment.

The Premier's revelations of division in the opposition ranks follows last month's PerthNow poll showing 62 per cent of 400 respondents preferred 9pm as the closing time for shops on weeknights, while 20 per cent said they wanted 8pm. Only 8 per cent said they wanted shops to close at 6pm or 7pm, with the result contradicting claims by Labor that the public doesn't want 9pm weeknight trading.

But Mr Barnett still wants 9pm weeknight trading across all of Perth within this term of his Government, calling the expansion of tourism precincts "a second-best option, but the only way we can go forward". (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Sunday Times*, 31.1.10)

Unions won't pay strikers' fines

Woodside is suing the construction union for allegedly organising industrial action on the Pluto project, as the union revealed it will not pay fines for the striking workers. The \$12 billion Karratha project also faces industrial action on another front, with Total Marine maritime workers at Pluto and other Australian projects planning a 48-hour strike from midnight Sunday. Woodside started Federal

Court action for damages against the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union late yesterday over a two-day strike in December.

CFMEU secretary Kevin Reynolds said he would seek legal advice on the matter but would not comment on claims the union had encouraged the workers to down tools. Mr Reynolds said the union had already told the 1600 striking workers the union could not afford to cover any individual fines for the latest action.

The striking workers, who yesterday defied a Federal Court order to return to work, could each face fines of up to \$22,000 for the allegedly unlawful strike. Failure to return immediately could lead to contempt of court charges, potentially punishable with a six-month jail term. The union paid fines of about \$6000 each for 107 rail workers prosecuted for unlawfully striking on the Perth to Mandurah rail line project in 2006. But Mr Reynolds said there were significantly more workers involved in the Pluto strike, which started on Friday.

"We have told them that no union in the country has the financial ability to cover that," Mr Reynolds said. Woodside is also suing assistant union secretary Joe McDonald for his role in the December strike, which was over the ongoing accommodation dispute. It is understood the damages claim could be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars and the union could face further fines of up to \$110,000 for each industrial breach. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The West Australian*, 29.1.10)

Gillard refuses to act on illegal strike

WORKPLACE Relations Minister Julia Gillard has refused to intervene in the wildcat strike crippling the \$12 billion Pluto project on the North West Shelf, saying the industrial relations system is working perfectly well. West Australian Premier Colin Barnett said the strike, involving 1660 workers at the Woodside project, was the first major test of the new industrial relations system and it was not good enough for the Deputy Prime Minister to "sit on the side watching events".

He said that if the workers who earn at least \$140,000 a year - continued to strike illegally in defiance of orders by Fair Work Australia and the Federal Court, Ms Gillard would need to begin her own legal action. "If those workers do not return to work immediately, and by that I mean within the next 24 hours, then the federal government needs to institute legal proceedings," Mr Barnett said. He said the industrial relations system was now the responsibility of the commonwealth and the Rudd government needed to show some muscle.

When asked on ABC radio whether the federal government could intervene in the Pluto strike, Ms Gillard said: "The industrial umpire has to deal with it. We've got an industrial dispute where our industrial umpire is there dealing with it, issuing orders the system is working. The matter can now go to the Federal Court in terms of fines and penalties." (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The West Australian*, 29.1.10)

Unions probed over 'no ticket, no start' claims

THREE of the nation's most militant unions are under investigation for alleged breaches of the federal workplace laws, including that they tried to impose a "no ticket, no start" rule on projects in Western Australia.

The Fair Work Ombudsman confirmed yesterday it had launched an investigation into complaints against the Maritime Union of Australia, the Transport Workers Union and the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union. The Australian understands it is alleged the unions have placed pressure on workers engaged on projects in northwest Western Australia to sign up. In some cases, they have been accused of trying to impose a no ticket, no start approach, in which employees do not get work unless they agree to join a union.

The ombudsman is also examining claims that unions attempted to coerce employers into entering enterprise agreements, with the unions as bargaining agents. Federal sources stressed the investigation was at an early stage and the allegations had not been substantiated.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's investigation into the three unions prompted a strong attack by MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin, who last night called on federal Labor to scrap the watchdog. Mr Crumlin vigorously denied the allegations, insisting his union had never tried to coerce employees into joining the union. He said the ombudsman was a Howard government "anachronism" and had been retained by Labor only because of the conservative approach to industrial relations by Kevin Rudd and Ms Gillard.

Mr Crumlin attacked the ombudsman for confirming an investigation into unsubstantiated claims, saying the body was "chasing a cheap headline". He said the role and responsibilities of the ombudsman should be taken over by Fair Work Australia, whose members were better qualified to assess workplace complaints. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 29.1.10)

Business slams 'good faith' rule

The Business Council of Australia has warned that the Rudd government's new workplace bargaining rules are too vague and could hamper attempts to lift workplace productivity. *The Fin Review* (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *WA Business News*, Daily Business Headlines, 29.1.10)

Pluto strike threatens other projects

A picket line involving more than 100 striking Pluto workers yesterday threatened to stall operations at a second major North-West resource project, amid reports the prolonged dispute is causing jitters among Asian investors.

It comes as the Australian Mines and Metals Association warns that Asian customers are watching the dispute closely, with several updates a day on strike developments. Chief executive Steve Knott returned from North Asia yesterday where investors expressed concern at increasing industrial disputes in WA, claiming it was "very much on the radar in terms of investment decisions".

Shire of Roebourne president Nicole Lockwood said locals were unsympathetic to the strike, claiming the fly-in, fly-out workers should be grateful they did not have to pay exorbitant Karratha rents of about \$1500 a week. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The West Australian*, 30.1.10)

Workers at war over Woodside strike

BITTER divisions have broken out among striking workers at Woodside's \$12 billion Pluto project in the Pilbara, as the nation's peak union body yesterday demanded the workers end their illegal action. More than 100 angry workers formed a picket line at the North West Shelf project near Karratha and tried to stop those wanting to work from returning.

Woodside said 200 returned to work yesterday but about 1500 continued the action over an accommodation dispute. "Not too many people went across the picket line, which is good," one of the striking workers told *The Weekend Australian*. Some workers who crossed the line in buses covered their faces and were taunted with cries of "scab". (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 30.1.10)

Woodside workers end Pluto strike

Striking workers at Woodside Petroleum's \$12 billion Pluto liquefied natural gas (LNG) processing plant in Karratha are back on the job. They returned [Monday] morning after an eight-day strike over accommodation arrangements at their remote camp in Western Australia's north-west.

However, what happens next is hazy. The unions claimed today they were due to meet Woodside management in Perth on Monday but the company said it was not aware of any such meeting. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The West Australian*, 1.2.10)

Government counts cost of Pilbara strike

Workers involved in an unlawful strike at Woodside Petroleum's \$12 billion Pluto liquefied natural gas project have backed down after they were threatened with heavy fines, but business leaders have warned the costly dispute is a sign of growing industrial turmoil in Western Australia's Pilbara. *The West* (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *WA Business News*, Daily Business Headlines, 1.2.10)

Union forces \$50,000 pay hike

SHIPPING company Total Marine Services has caved in to union threats of further strike action and agreed to wage and allowance increases of up to \$50,000 over three years for workers servicing the lucrative oil and gas industry.

Together with an escalating dispute between Woodside Petroleum and its Pilbara workforce, the Total Marine deal confirms that Western Australia's minerals-rich north has become the front line in a new industrial push that employers warn could spread throughout the resources sector. Employer groups have used the Total Marine agreement to attack the Rudd government's workplace laws, warning that the deal could flow across the shipping industry. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 2.2.10)

Perth house prices surge 11.5%

The residential property sector in Perth appears to be on the cusp of another boom with a housing group forecasting a recovery in detached housing starts this year while a new house price gauge surged 11.5 per cent over the past year. The Australian Bureau of Statistics today said the Perth house price index rose 5.7 per cent in the December quarter, the highest capital city growth for the period. Over the year, the Perth index climbed 11.5 per cent.

Today's data confirms the upward trend as outlined last week by Australian Property Monitors which said the median house price in Perth rose 8.7 per cent to \$512,000, while RP Data said the median price grew 6.5 per cent to \$490,000. Nationally, the ABS said the house price index rose 5.2 per cent in the December quarter, compared with an upwardly revised 4.4 per cent in the September quarter. In the year to December, the house price index rose 13.6 per cent.

ACTU calls on Rudd government to raise superannuation guarantee

THE ACTU will press the Rudd government to back the union movement's long campaign to increase workers' superannuation guarantee to 15 per cent by 2015. ACTU president Sharan Burrow said the Intergenerational Report was further reason to increase superannuation guarantee payments and introduce incentives for workforce participation by older employees and women.

Ms Burrow said the union movement, which wants the guarantee initially increased from 9 per cent to 12 per cent by 2012, believed the report showed workers were falling behind in providing for their retirement. "Unless action is taken soon, this will place an unbearable burden on future generations of workers and taxpayers, and drag down the national economy," she said yesterday. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 2.2.10)

Economy heading for investment boom

Decisions on business investment projects over the next six months will be the key to whether the country heads for another investment boom, an independent forecaster says. The economy benefitted from strong investment spending prior to the global recession, buoyed by businesses funnelling profits from the resources boom back into capital and infrastructure spending.

The latest Access Economics-Arup Investment Monitor released on Wednesday shows there are 145 projects worth about \$161 billion outstanding, with a decision on whether to go ahead expected to be made during 2010. Access Economics director David Rumbens says a bulk of these projects were scheduled to commence in 2010, so decisions are likely to be made in the next six months. "The decisions on those projects will mark the difference between investment stabilising at a high level and a further move up to an all-out investment boom over the next couple of years," he said when releasing the report. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *WA Business News*, *Daily Business Headlines*, 3.2.10)

Business to appeal against 'flawed' Fair Work ruling

IN a new test of federal Labor's workplace laws, employers will challenge a Fair Work Australia decision to throw out an agreement between one of the nation's biggest aged-care operators and two unions that would have allowed employees to work more flexible hours without paid overtime.

Business groups said the decision was the latest example of the industrial tribunal making a flawed interpretation of the Fair Work Act and called into question the legitimacy of thousands of workplace agreements. News of the appeal came as Australian Industry Group chief executive Heather Ridout warned that a separate tribunal ruling involving retail giant Woolworths had cast doubt on the validity of hundreds of workplace agreements.

Employers will now appeal against both decisions, with business organisations increasingly concerned the newly empowered tribunal has become more interventionist and willing to knock out agreements supported at the enterprise level by companies and unions. The National Retailers Association and the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry said yesterday they would support the appeal. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 4.2.10)

Gillard to back Woolies over Fair Work rule

The federal government will support a push by giant retailer Woolworths to overturn a Fair Work Australia ruling that appeared to open the way for broader arbitration of workplace disputes. *The Fin Review*. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *WA Business News*, *Today's Business Headlines*, 4.2.10)

Building industry watchdog set to keep teeth

LABOR'S attempts to wind back the powers of the building industry watchdog appear unlikely to succeed before the federal election, with the Coalition and Family First's Steve Fielding yesterday reaffirming their opposition. Labor had wanted to replace the Australian Building and Construction Commission with a special inspectorate with watered-down powers on February 1. However, the government has been frustrated by the Senate.

The office of Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard yesterday reaffirmed she would continue negotiating with Senator Fielding and Independent senator Nick Xenophon to try to push the legislation through the Senate this year. The bill is on the parliamentary notice paper but it is unclear whether it will be brought on for debate this week.

Opposition workplace relations spokesman Eric Abetz said Labor's bill attempted to emasculate the powers of the ABCC. "Our position is very strong that the Cole royal commission exposed a culture of illegality, crime and thuggery," he said. "It seems to me that ABCC has done a fantastic job in bringing some law-abiding behaviour back into the construction sector."

Senator Fielding said the building industry required a tough regulator to combat militant union conduct, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia. "Given the amount of infrastructure spending that is going on and will continue to go on over the next five years, I think it's important that we have productivity that the government has just outlined needs to happen. We need a strong cop on the beat, not a toothless tiger," he said.

Employers want the Coalition to reject Labor's proposal to allow the watchdog's coercive powers to be "switched off". Business is also unhappy with the proposed safeguards that will apply to the use of coercive powers. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 4.2.10)

Former Labor finance minister warns of wages blowout

FORMER Labor finance minister Peter Walsh believes the \$50,000 pay rise without productivity trade-offs won by offshore oil and gas workers could lead to a repeat of the 1974 wages breakout.

His fears were backed by Melbourne barrister Stuart Wood, who acted against the Maritime Union of Australia in the 1998 waterfront dispute. He ridiculed union leader Paddy Crumlin's comment that critics of the pay deal had an outdated understanding of productivity. "Prior to the last election it was predicted we would see a return to 1970s-style wage breakouts. Now we're seeing them. Who are the dinosaurs?" Mr Wood said. (SOURCE/EXTRACT: *The Australian*, 4.2.10)



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