

CoSBA



Combined Small Business Alliance of WA (Inc)



Date: 22 September 2011

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Minister for Small Business
Parliament House
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Senator Chris Evans
Minister for Workplace Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600

Dear Ministers O'Brien and Evans

Re: NATIONAL WORKPLACE SAFETY LAWS

With reference to a feature article in the 15 September 2011 edition of *WA Business News* under the heading "Survey a Manifesto for reform: Pearson", that reported on the CCI-WA *Business News* 'Cost of doing Business' survey, in which, the report, amongst a number of issues, reported on "OH&S", stating, in part:

"Of all the major issues around the cost of labour, the regulatory burden of occupational health and safety laws was the biggest issue to respondents in the CCI-WABN 'Cost of Doing Business Survey'.

More than 50 per cent identified it as a major compliance cost pressure.

With harmonisation of OH&S rules due to take place at the start of 2012, it is hoped that the regulatory burden for companies that operate across more than one state will be reduced, even though most states will retain some unique elements of their own regulations.

The report from the CCI-WA Business News survey recommends that a review of the harmonised regulations should be undertaken to assess its need, including the likelihood of it achieving a successful outcome.

It also recommends assessment of nonregulatory initiatives that have a proven track record of reducing workplace injuries."

Whilst in reading of the report it could be characterised as being "one size fits all", in that, it does not differentiate between the needs of big and small business, by addressing the special needs of small business. The scope of the report is qualified, by stating:

"RED tape, 'green' tape, labour rates, access to finance, industrial relations, and tax are all real issues for business at every level. Yet these burdens, generally referred to as the cost of doing business, seem to get little traction at a political level."

Notwithstanding, CoSBA supports the general thrust of the report, in particular the report on "OH&S" quoted above. Accordingly, again we wish to express to both Governments our grave concerns as to the adverse impact that the "harmonised-one size fits all" workplace laws will have on small business.

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In so doing, we wish to draw your attention to an article aired on ABC TV's *Lateline Business* on Tuesday night (20.9.11), in which Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA) and the Independent Contractors Australia (ICA) added their voices to the OH&S debate by clearly articulating their concerns with the laws and advocating the imperative for the laws to take into account the special needs of small business, a position which CoSBA unequivocally supports.

Yours faithfully

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



OLIVER MOON
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Hon Tony Abbott MP, Leader of the Federal Opposition; Hon Colin Barnett, Premier Western Australia, Senator Nick Sherry, Minister for Small Business, Senator Eric Abetz, Shadow Minister for Workplace Relations; Hon Bruce Billson, Shadow Minister for Small Business.