

# Activities & Achievements

January-March 2017

## Highlights

### CEO: James Pearson

This quarter the Australian Chamber was a major voice in national debate on a range of **issues vital to business**, including company tax, apprenticeships and penalty rates.

We worked with members to respond to the Fair Work Commission's **changes to penalty rates**, which will support small businesses to create work opportunities and meet the needs of customers, and are continuing to build public support in order to avert a parliamentary challenge.

We released our **Pre-Budget Submission**, outlining spending and revenue proposals that will allow the government to futureproof Australia against threats that may emerge.



Australian Chamber CEO James Pearson speaking on ABC News 24

**Animal Medicines Australia** and the **Australian Automotive Dealer Association** have joined as Industry Association members, bringing our tally of industry associations to 68.



Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Samantha Read, CEO, Chemistry Australia and Australian Chamber CEO James Pearson at a Business Leaders Council event hosted by MYOB in Melbourne.

We welcomed **Hewlett Packard Australia** as a new Business Leaders Council member, bringing the total to 45.

We are pleased to welcome to our staff **Adam Carr** (Director of Economics and Industry Policy), **Jamie Crain** (Director of Business Development), **Sarah Hope** (Membership and Marketing Manager), **Amy Keenan** (Media and Campaigns Manager), **Tom Stobo** (International Business Support Officer), **Michelle Coppin** (Executive Support Officer) and **Kaisi Chen** (Finance Officer). We also farewelled several staff.

“It is becoming increasingly clear to everyone involved in workplace relations that our system needs repair. Unfair dismissal, the application of general protections, agreement making and rules for the taking of industrial action are good places to start.”

James Pearson, Financial Review, January 23

## Economics and Industry Policy

**Director:** Jenny Lambert (acting) and Adam Carr (incoming)

To build public support for the **Enterprise Tax Plan**, the Australian Chamber conducted an analysis of the impact of previous company tax cuts. It found that following three cuts over the past three decades, government revenue from company tax had increased within two years.

As part of our efforts to improve public finances, we released a detailed **Pre-Budget Submission** that warned of the dangers of prolonged budget deficits and offered practical ideas to bring spending down to less than 25 per cent of GDP. Our submission also identified areas suitable for investment of public funds to expand economic opportunities.

“Australia’s public finances remain in heavy deficit. Our productivity growth is lagging historical performance, workforce participation remains stagnant and private sector investment is weak ... putting at risk the high living standards Australians expect.”

James Pearson, AAP, February 3

We lodged submissions to the **Productivity Commission** on the administration of the Australian Consumer Law and on ideas for improving Australia’s productivity. We made a submission to **Treasury** on the funding model for Australia’s financial regulator.

We met with organisations including Standards Australia, the Productivity Commission, Treasury, the Department of Industry and the Office of Best Practice Regulation.

In the **Australian Chamber-Westpac Survey of Industrial Trends** for the March quarter, Australia’s manufacturers posted a third straight quarter of improved performance, buoyed by strength in new orders, output, overtime and employment.

“Businesses are being held back and are concerned by excessive bureaucracy, skills shortages and energy prices, and these are the key issues the Government needs to address if it is going to better support NSW business owners this year.”

Stephen Cartwright, NSW Business Chamber



## Employment, Education and Training

**Director:** Jenny Lambert

The Australian Chamber has made the case for giving more people a chance to do an **apprenticeship or traineeship** through a joint policy statement with other peak business groups and a meeting with the relevant Assistant Minister.

Our **committee meeting** was addressed by the CEO of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (Mark Paterson AO) and the Chair of the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (John Pollaers).

We have provided employer guidance into the Federal Government’s **JobActive PaTH** to ensure the online platform to support the program is accessible.

“Locking away Victoria’s gas reserves until 2020 restricts our state from making any significant progress and instead leaves us at the mercy of international gas prices.”

Mark Stone AM, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



The Federal Government’s **Vocational Education and Training Student Loans Advisory Group**, which is chaired by an Australian Chamber representative, met three times. The **Careers Strategy Working Group**, on which the Australian Chamber has a representative, met twice.

We attended the Federal Government’s **multicultural roundtable**, a meeting of the **Migrant Workers Taskforce** and the **Indigenous Employment Forum**.

## Trade and International Affairs

**Director:** Bryan Clark

The Australian Chamber made a detailed submission to the Federal Government's **Foreign Policy White Paper**, in which we explained that Australia needs to strengthen its competitiveness as other countries strengthen theirs, otherwise we risk declining global influence.

As part of our efforts to promote **women's economic empowerment** across Indian Ocean Rim nations, we held events in Indonesia and South Africa in partnership with local chambers of commerce.



In Jakarta we attended the **Indian Ocean Rim Business Summit** and participated in Austrade's **Indonesia Australia Business Week**.

We provided business input to the Federal Government on several **trade agreements** under negotiation, as well as the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

We hosted an **ICC Academy** roadshow across four Australian cities to promote its training opportunities as part of our involvement in the International Chamber of Commerce.

“In trade agreements, including the TPP, Australia generally commits to removing our remaining barriers. But we don't need to wait for the TPP for us to reduce our barriers.”

James Pearson, *Financial Review*, January 23

## Sustainability

**Policy advisor:** Joe Doleschal-Ridnell

To make the case for a secure energy future, the Australian Chamber made a detailed submission to the Chief Scientist's **review of the National Electricity Market**.

We told the review Australia can achieve a secure energy system and lower carbon emissions through putting in place sensible policies that allow us to overcome the **current energy crisis** by developing our abundance of natural energy resources.

We met with the **Chief Scientist**, Dr Alan Finkel, to explain our position that Australia was losing our historic advantage of affordable and secure energy, making it a less competitive place to do business.

With South Australia experiencing crippling energy outages, we wrote to federal and state ministers, as well as the Australian Energy Market Operator, to propose some immediate solutions. This contributed to South Australia narrowly **avoided a further brownout**.

## Tourism

**Policy advisor:** Gemma Sandlant (acting)

Australian Chamber – Tourism's **Pre-Budget Submission** featured recommendations including delivering cost-effective ideas to streamline visa processes, overhauling the Tourist Refund Scheme, supporting infrastructure, funding promotional activities and improving workforce skills.





John Hart, CEO, Restaurant and Catering Australia; The Hon Steven Ciobo, MP, Minister for Tourism; Brian O'Gallagher, acting CEO CCINT; Greg Ireland, President, CCINT; Hon Kate Jones, QLD Tourism Minister; Stephanie Facey, CEO, Austrade and Australian Chamber CEO James Pearson.

Our **committee** met in Darwin to discuss tourism policy priorities, followed by an event in which we hosted Federal Tourism Minister Steven Ciobo, four state ministers, the CEOs of Austrade and Tourism Australia, as well as many of our members.

We also attended the **Austrade Tourism and Hospitality Labour and Skills Roundtable** in Canberra.

## Workplace Relations

**Director:** Scott Barklamb

The Australian Chamber network's strong advocacy at the Fair Work Commission led to a watershed decision on **penalty rates** for hospitality, retail, pharmacy and fast food awards. The Australian Chamber has remained a vocal advocate for penalty rates change, providing a forum to coordinate employer responses and lodging a submission to guide the implementation of the decision.

Our support for the **Australian Building and Construction Commission** contributed to amendments to bring forward the starting date for Building Code compliance, helping to restore the rule of law to more construction worksites.

Our advocacy, along with that of other leading employer representatives, contributed to the Federal Government tabling legislation to **repeal the four-yearly review** of the Fair Work Act. We also sought to ensure that agreements cannot be rejected on the basis of small paperwork errors.

We provided expert support to an **International Labour Organisation** workplace relations capacity-building session in Bangkok for employers, unions and governments in Southeast Asian garment-producing countries.

We continued to make the case that domestic violence is a community issue that requires a community response. Our opposition to a union claim for **domestic violence leave** won the support of at least one of the three Fair Work Commission members hearing the claim.

We lodged submissions to **parliamentary inquiries** into superannuation guarantee non-compliance and gender segregation in the workplace. We appeared before a committee assessing the paid parental leave bill.

We have also lodged our submission to the **Annual Wage Review**, which determines the minimum wage.

**“With 725,000 people out of work, including 259,000 young people, we need to find it easier to help employers take on new staff, including through bringing penalty rates into line with community expectations.”**

James Pearson, Sydney Morning Herald, February 22

## Work Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation

**Director:** Paul Cristofani

The Australian Chamber's advocacy with **Safe Work Australia** and state regulators is allowing us to influence the strategic agenda of governments.

We are building upon the Australian Chamber's record of technical input into regulation and policy to develop a **holistic approach** to our involvement in these issues.

We remain engaged in about 20 specialist policy working and advisory groups, and now have the scope to engage proactively in influencing governments through SWA's **Strategic Agenda** leading to 2025.

We have urged SWA to focus on helping enterprises to use work health and safety as a positive, values-led **driver of business change** rather than focusing just on compliance.

We have met with the leadership of SWA to explain this approach, and are gaining traction. Experience in major companies gives us confidence that reframing thinking about work health and safety will allow businesses to use WHS to **transform business improvement** in areas including human resources, workplace relations, corporate affairs and organisational effectiveness.

## Biz Better Together

**Manager:** Adelina La Vita (outgoing)  
and Sarah McGregor (incoming)

Our workplace productivity initiative has published over **80 articles** on the Biz Better Together website, and a further 20 articles are in development.



The **Mobile-ising Women in Business** event in Canberra was successfully delivered in partnership with the Canberra Business Chamber.

We have commenced work on a coordinated effort among employers for **National Safe Work Day** coming up in October.

## Media and Campaigns

**Senior Manager:** Ari Sharp

The Australian Chamber has been active in **public debate** on issues including penalty rates, company tax and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Australian Chamber staff undertook more than **25 broadcast interviews**, on outlets including ABC News 24, Sky News, 3AW, 6PR, 2GB and ABC radio across the country. We also achieved more than **90 mentions** in print media outlets including the Daily Telegraph, The Australian, The Financial Review and The Guardian.

**Opinion pieces** by the CEO were published in the Financial Review (on the case for taking unilateral action to liberalise trade) and in The Australian (on making our cities more productive). The Australian Chamber also issued more than **25 media releases**.

**Online**, we achieved more than 150,000 impressions on Twitter, more than 80,000 website page views and reached more than 12,000 people via Facebook.

In Melbourne we hosted the second **Australian Chamber Communications Summit**, where communications staff from across the network gathered to discuss the theme "Advocacy in the time of populism".



## Business Leaders Council Events

**Director:** Paul Nicolaou

**February 22:** Lunch with Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance, hosted by Corrs Chambers Westgarth in Sydney.



Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann with Melina Morrison, CEO, Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals.

**March 16:** Cocktail Reception with Senator the Hon Kim Carr, Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, and panel discussion with Samantha Read, CEO, Chemistry Australia, hosted by MYOB in Melbourne.



MYOB CEO Tim Reed and Senator the Hon Kim Carr.

**“Australia can improve its international competitiveness, without putting the budget at risk, by cutting the tax rate, as we have in the past with great success under Labor and Coalition governments.”**

James Pearson, Financial Review, February 13

**“The business of chemistry is at the nucleus of the Australian economy; it provides inputs that enable 109 of Australia’s 111 industries. Becoming Chemistry Australia recognises this central role.”**

Samantha Read, Chemistry Australia



Senator the Hon Kim Carr with Geoff Gwilym, Executive Director, VACC.



**March 24:** Breakfast with Charles Ng, Associate Director-General of Promotion, Invest Hong Kong, and panel discussion in Sydney.



Charles Ng, Invest Hong Kong; Helen Sawczak, Australia China Business Council; James Laurenceson, Australia-China Relations Institute and the Hon Warwick Smith, Australia-China Council.



John Fraser, Secretary to the Treasury and Ross Greenwood, Nine Network.

**March 29:** "Upfront and Personal" luncheon with John Fraser, Secretary to the Treasury, interviewed by Ross Greenwood, Nine Network's Business and Finance Editor, hosted in conjunction with NSW Business Chamber in Sydney.

**March 31:** Social media luncheon, "Opportunities and Risks for a Hyper-Connected Marketplace", hosted by KPMG in Sydney.



Greg Daniel, KPMG Social Media Intelligence Group; Mia Garlick, Facebook; Matt Tindale, LinkedIn and Suzy Nicoletti, Twitter Australia.



## About the Australian Chamber

The Australian Chamber represents over 300,000 businesses in every state and territory and across all industries. Ranging from the top 100 companies to small and medium businesses, our network employs more than 4 million people. The Australian Chamber membership list can be viewed online at [www.acci.asn.au/our-members](http://www.acci.asn.au/our-members).

**AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER MEMBERS:** BUSINESS SA | CANBERRA BUSINESS CHAMBER | CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NORTHERN TERRITORY | CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND | CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA | NEW SOUTH WALES BUSINESS CHAMBER | TASMANIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY | VICTORIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

**MEMBER NATIONAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS:** ACCORD – HYGIENE, COSMETIC & SPECIALTY PRODUCTS INDUSTRY | AGED AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AUSTRALIA | AIR CONDITIONING & MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION | ASSOCIATION OF FINANCIAL ADVISERS | ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF NSW | AUSTRALASIAN PIZZA ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIA ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY | AUSTRALIAN AUTOMOTIVE DEALER ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN BEVERAGES COUNCIL LIMITED | AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN DENTAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS & INDUSTRIES | AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF TRAVEL AGENTS | AUSTRALIAN GIFT & HOMEWARES ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES OPERATIONS GROUP | AUSTRALIAN MADE CAMPAIGN LIMITED | AUSTRALIAN MINES & METALS ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN PAINT MANUFACTURERS' FEDERATION | AUSTRALIAN RECORDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN RETAILERS ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN SELF MEDICATION INDUSTRY | AUSTRALIAN STEEL INSTITUTE | AUSTRALIAN SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION AND RADIO ASSOCIATION | AUSTRALIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL | AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION | ANIMAL MEDICINES AUSTRALIA | BOATING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | BUS INDUSTRY CONFEDERATION | BUSINESS COUNCIL OF CO-OPERATIVES AND MUTUALS | CARAVAN INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | CEMENT CONCRETE AND AGGREGATES AUSTRALIA | CHEMISTRY AUSTRALIA | CHIROPRACTORS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | CONSULT AUSTRALIA | COUNCIL OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION AUSTRALIA | CRUISE LINES INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA | CUSTOMER OWNED BANKING ASSOCIATION | DIRECT SELLING ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | EXHIBITION AND EVENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA | FITNESS AUSTRALIA | HIRE AND RENTAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | HOUSING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | LARGE FORMAT RETAIL ASSOCIATION | LIVE PERFORMANCE AUSTRALIA | MASTER BUILDERS AUSTRALIA | MASTER PLUMBERS' & MECHANICAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | MEDICINES AUSTRALIA | NATIONAL DISABILITY SERVICES | NATIONAL ELECTRICAL & COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL FIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL ONLINE RETAILER ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL RETAIL ASSOCIATION | NATIONAL ROAD AND MOTORISTS' ASSOCIATION | NSW TAXI COUNCIL | OIL INDUSTRY INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION | OUTDOOR MEDIA ASSOCIATION | PHARMACY GUILD OF AUSTRALIA | RECRUITMENT & CONSULTING SERVICES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND | RESTAURANT & CATERING AUSTRALIA | ROOFING TILE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA | SCREEN PRODUCERS AUSTRALIA | THE TAX INSTITUTE | THINK BRICK AUSTRALIA | VICTORIAN AUTOMOBILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE