

# Activities & Achievements

July – September 2018



## HIGHLIGHTS

CEO: James Pearson



Kym Shilton, Partner at Deloitte, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Philip Davies, Partner at Deloitte Financial Advisory, A.F (Tony) Shepherd AO, GWS Chairman and Former BCA President, the Hon Julie Bishop MP at the Australian Chamber Business Leaders Summit cocktail reception.

This quarter the Australian Chamber maintained a strong and influential profile in national policy debates on **major political, economic and workplace relations issues affecting Australian business**.

We spoke on many media platforms to give a national business response to the **leadership spill** in Canberra, calling on the Federal Government to put good policy and the long-term national interest ahead of political opportunism.

After years of hard work, the Parliament's rejection, again, of **tax cuts** for larger businesses, which would have benefitted all businesses, was a huge disappointment. The Government's decision to walk away from **National Energy Guarantee** (NEG), a policy that had broad based community and business support was similarly disappointing.

We are keeping pressure on the government to put in place key proposals from the ACCC to **cut energy costs now**, to adopt the measures in the NEG to provide investment certainty that will support affordability and increased reliability in the longer term, and help to meet Australia's emissions reduction commitments.

In the wake of the appointment of the new Cabinet, we have **met with new Ministers** responsible for issues that impact our members the most and are meeting with their opposite numbers in the Labor Party and influential cross-benchers.

**"If you are not at the table, then you are probably on the menu. It's our job, as Australia's largest voice for small business, to make sure that small business is not just heard, but listened to,"**

James Pearson, Business Leaders Summit Opening Cocktail Reception.

Over the quarter, we took a strong position on a number of prominent issues in the **Industrial Relations space**. We have been urging the Crossbench to back the **Government's Ensuring Integrity Bill** – to put a stop to unlawful and unacceptable conduct of some trade unionists, by introducing disincentives to break the law, and to back the Government's bid to bring in five days domestic violence leave for all employees, consistent with the decision of the Fair Work Commission for award employees earlier this year.

We also responded strongly to one of the most significant industrial relations changes in years – the **Workpac vs Skene case**, a ruling which allowed someone engaged and paid as a casual employee entitlements to paid annual leave as well.

We **resisted calls for lower skilled migration**, following a big drop in permanent migration numbers. We argued the failure to plan adequately for population growth in the capital cities has led the government to a populist response by cutting back on migration, which is starving regional Australian employers of skilled workers.

On the vocational education front, **we welcomed Minister Michaelia Cash's** appointment as Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education, and hosted her first engagement in her new portfolio at our National Skills Week Luncheon.



Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education pictured with vocational students from William Blue Dining Restaurant at an Australian Chamber luncheon marking National Skills Week.

We have been busy hosting networking events and meetings with all sides of politics as we lobby on behalf of members. The stand out event of the quarter was our **Business Leaders Summit**. We had strong engagement from the new Cabinet, senior members of the Coalition, the Opposition and the cross-bench and welcomed a record number of Parliamentarians to our opening reception.



Business Leaders Summit Energy Panel: Energy Minister the Hon Angus Taylor MP, Australian Energy Regulator Chair Paula Conboy, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy the Hon Mark Butler MP, ACCC Chair Rod Sims and Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Mark Stone.

This quarter we welcomed Cabcharge, Intralot and The Bank of China to our Business Leaders Council, bringing total membership to 65.

## Workplace Relations

**Director:** Scott Barklamb **Chair:** Theresa Moltoni OAM

The September quarter has seen the Australian Chamber's Workplace Relations team respond to a significant **Federal Court decision (Workpac v Skene)**, which has thrown the employment of millions of Australians working casually into doubt. The Chamber is not only seeking and supporting solutions, but working to equip members to respond to employer concerns.

The team met with the new **Fair Work Ombudsman**, and continues to advocate for pragmatic, supportive approaches to compliance with the Fair Work Act, awards and minimum wages. The team also spoke publicly against criminalisation of workplace relations non-compliance.

A number of submissions were lodged during the quarter, including **support for flowing on the unpaid domestic violence leave standard** awarded by the Fair Work Commission in February (a sound result for employers) into the statutory National Employment Standards, and the key employer response to proposed **modern slavery reporting legislation**. The Chamber also appeared before various Parliamentary inquiries.

Work has also commenced on **employer input into the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australia**, the first of its kind globally. The Chamber has been invited to sit on the reference group guiding the inquiry.

## Public Affairs and Advocacy

**Director:** Duncan Bremner **Chair (Campaigns):** Terry Wetherall

**“Business has every right to be alarmed at the sight of another outbreak of short-term politicking in Canberra at a time when business wants a clear signal from all political parties that they understand what the national interest requires is strong, long-term policy settings for business, and that means the national energy guarantee and it means backing business tax cuts,”**

James Pearson, *The Australian*, Monday August 20, 2018.

Over the quarter, the Australian Chamber maintained a strong media profile in national policy debates on **energy, company tax, skilled migration and workplace relations**.

In July, we **responded strongly to the fall in the migration intake**, arguing that politicians were risking our successful skilled migration program by linking it to the public's frustration with our crowded capital cities. The Australian Chamber was the lead employer voice on the issue. Our commentary ran nationally across SBS, the ABC, and Macquarie Media, and in print in Fairfax and the Guardian.

We provided a high profile response to the **political turbulence** and eventual outcome of the leadership spill in Canberra. We held a press conference at parliament house and led the business voice in calling for long-term policy certainty to be put ahead of short-term political opportunism. Grabs from James' press conference featured nationally on Sky News, Channel Ten, Seven News and ABC News, and ran in print across The Guardian, News Corp and Fairfax publications.

In August, we criticised the **Senate's decision to vote against tax cuts** for business of all sizes. Following the decision, we urged the Federal government to extend and make permanent the instant asset



write-down and to accelerate the legislated tax cuts for small, medium and family businesses.

This quarter, took a lead public role in the **national energy debate**. The Federal Government's decision to drop the National Energy Guarantee (NEG) was disturbing for business. We have and will continue to urge the Federal Government to deliver short and long-term solutions to Australia's energy crisis.

**We began our regular column residency with Fairfax's regional network.** So far, the Australian Chamber has submitted opinion pieces addressing the key concerns of small business and the future of work. Our columns will provide a platform to promote our agenda to regional Australia.

Over the quarter we put out 45 media releases and featured in 444 media items across print, online and broadcast media.

These items reached over 24 million people, equating to a total Advertising Space Rate (ASR) of \$6.2 million. This quarter we also attained 341,500 impressions on Twitter.



**“Businesses can’t put off paying their power bills so politicians need to stop putting off decision making,”**

Australian Chamber CEO, James Pearson said in an address to the press on the National Energy Guarantee at Parliament House.

## Employment, Education and Training

**Director:** Jenny Lambert **Chair:** Denita Wawn

**“The delay in finalising the Skilling Australians Fund arrangements to address the apprenticeship crisis, is symptomatic of the lack of a shared vision amongst all Governments about the future of VET and a commitment to ensure it is adequately funded to meet Australia’s skill needs.”**

Jenny Lambert.

This quarter saw the Australian Chamber take a dominant role in the **migration debate** with media outlets running our views on temporary and permanent migration. We formed a working group of members in August to **draft a migration and population policy** for consideration at the November General Council meeting. We also met with the Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Shayne Neumann MP and the new Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon David Coleman MP. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' decision to further postpone a review of the **statistical classification of occupations** (known as ANZSCO), is so concerning



Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs the Hon David Coleman MP with Australian Chamber CEO James Pearson and Employment, Education and Training Director Jenny Lambert.

that we have publicised the issue, drawing it to the attention of a number of relevant Ministers, and will be meeting soon with the new Minister responsible for the ABS to encourage him to prioritise and resource the review. ANZSCO is critically important to migration access as well as labour market planning.

We continued to push for the remaining State Governments to sign the **Skilling Australians Fund National Partnership Agreement** to boost apprenticeship numbers, while encouraging the states that have signed

to put forward industry-supported projects under the agreement. We also made a written representation at the COAG Skills Senior Officials Group meeting in August, to ensure State and Territory Government representatives consider business' views in finalising their plans.

We gave evidence to the **Senate Red Tape Committee** on occupational licensing and made submissions to the Department of Education and Training on the **Apprenticeship Support Network** and on **women in STEM** to the Department of Industry and Science.

This quarter Jenny Lambert was appointed to the **Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment** and continued engagement on other advisory boards including, Employment Services, VET Student Loans, Disability Employment Services, Veterans' Employment, the Career Education Working Group and the Board of Manufacturing Skills Australia.

## Economics and Industry Policy, and Sustainability

**Director:** Adam Carr **Chairs:** Don Rankin, Mark Stone AM

“...the need for long-term and consistent policy to encourage investment and deliver increased reliability, while meeting our emissions reduction commitments, is as pressing today as it was before the leadership of the government changed last week”

James Pearson.

During the September quarter, we saw quite a bit of political disruption and change.

Alongside members, we advocated for the Government to combine the **National Energy Guarantee** (NEG) with recommendations made by the ACCC in their Electricity supply & prices inquiry final report.



2nd annual ICC Australia Asia Pacific International Commercial Mediation Competition.

In our advocacy efforts we met with Minister Frydenberg's and Minister Canavan's senior advisors, and attended the **COAG Energy Council's Stakeholder meeting**.

The newly dubbed “**NEG-plus**” reflected our policy stance on energy and looked to be a significant policy win for Australian businesses and households. We are now working with the new Energy Minister Angus Taylor to ensure Australia's energy policy does not stagnate.

We participated in **NAB's Small Business Customer Advisory Council** and the **ATO Small Business Stewardship Group**. We discussed with Andrew Thorburn, CEO of NAB, access to finance for small businesses. We also met with senior advisers to Shadow Minister Andrew Leigh, Shadow Minister Mark Butler and Shadow Treasurer Chris Bowen to discuss policy priorities.

With members, we appeared before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics as part of their **inquiry on Impediments to business investments**. We completed submissions to the government's consultation on: a new data sharing and release legislation; designing a modern ABN system; and, modernising Australia's business registers.

## Trade and International Affairs

**Director:** Bryan Clark **Chair:** Peter Hood

We completed work on the **Trade Community System** proof of concept and held three successful launch events in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. The project has attracted national and international interest and is now moving into the pilot and commercialisation stages.

We participated with members in the national series of workshops conducted by Austrade into **a national brand under which to market Australia to the world**. We raised our concerns over the fragmented approach to the international market across various federal and state level agencies and industry bodies covering goods, investment and service industries such as tourism.

We conducted the **2nd annual ICC Australia Asia Pacific International Commercial Mediation Competition in Melbourne** attracting thirteen teams from New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and India. The event was won by the University of NSW narrowly defeating the team from OP Jindal University from India. Plans have now commenced for the 2019 competition.

In our trade advocacy work, we lodged submissions and appeared at hearings for parliamentary inquiries into the **Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP11 / CPTPP)** and **SME Access to Australia's Free Trade Agreements**.

With the change in leadership of the Liberal party, we are now strengthening relationships with the new trade Minister, Simon Birmingham and his staff, who are well known to us.

## Work Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation

**Associate Director:** Jennifer Low **Chair:** Nola Watson

#PartandParcel, a campaign focused on improving Work, Health and Safety in the Small Business sector was launched by the Australian Chamber at Parliament House in Canberra. Phase 1 saw us engage with members, Safe Work Australia (SWA), federal MPs and Senators, federal, state and territory regulators, small business commissioners and unions. We had high engagement from small business owners through social media.



“Our members are telling us – they don’t have a problem with the legislation, and don’t have an issue with enforcement, it’s more that employers just need to know where to find information specific to them and how to put it into practice”

Senate inquiry into industrial deaths opening statement from Jennifer Low.

We worked with our chemical industry members to engage with the **Minister for Rural Health**, Senator McKenzie on an alternative model for stakeholder engagement into industrial chemicals; supported our

ACT members in articulating concerns to the **Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations** regarding the Work Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2018; and submitted a joint response with Chamber NT to the Tim Lyons review of the Territory regulator, **NT Worksafe**.

In late August, the Australian Chamber appeared before the **Senate Education and Employment References Committee in Fremantle**, where we challenged perceptions of business accountability in relation to workplace incidents and fatalities and put to the committee a number of recommendations to improve safety outcomes nationally.

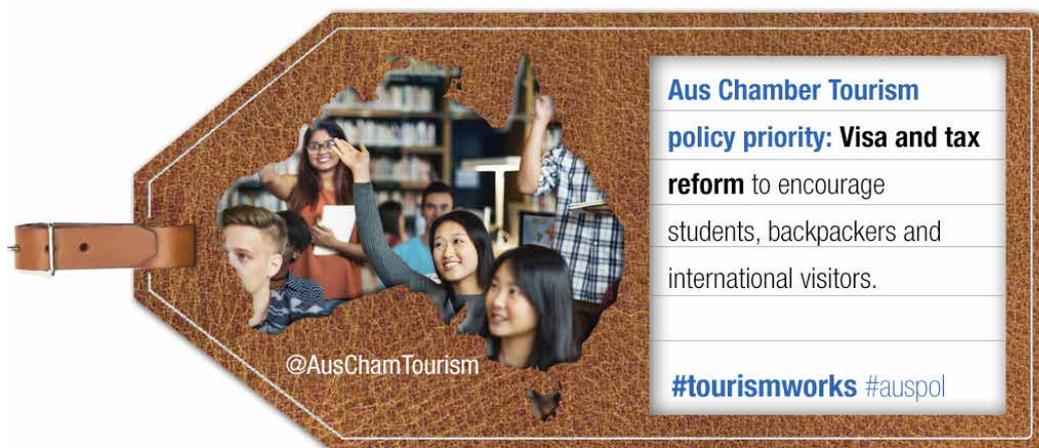
After a long 12 months, September saw us finalise the overhaul of the **WHS VET qualifications** being managed by PwC and we reached a compromise at Standards Australia which saw the approval of **adoption of international standard ISO 45001** with: the inclusion of a foreword and preface (that articulated our concerns) and agreement to develop additional guidance to support SME’s utilising the standard.

## Tourism

**Director:** Jenny Lambert. **Executive Chair:** John Hart

This quarter was once again successful for the Australian Chamber-Tourism with the **draft Beyond 2020 Strategy** presented to the then Minister of Trade, Tourism and Investment, the Hon Steven Ciobo MP, by the Beyond 2020 Committee, which includes Australian Chamber-Tourism Executive Chair, John Hart. Further work will be undertaken on the strategy with the new Minister, the Hon. Simon Birmingham. At this quarter’s Tourism Visa Advisory Group meeting, data presented to the group showed a **continued decline in Working Holiday-Maker numbers**, which has prompted a change to the Australian Chamber-Tourism’s policy to actively support future growth of the program, which is important to visitation and to the tourism workforce.

*The Tourism Works for Australia campaign moved into its third phase of activity, with renewed imagery and campaign messaging to feed into the pre-Election period.*



## Business Leaders Council Events

**Director:** Paul Nicolaou

**17 July** Reception with Stephen McBurney, Commissioner, Australian Building and Construction Commission at Lander & Rogers, Melbourne.



Steve Knott AM CEO AMMA, Scott Barklamb Director Workplace Relations Australian Chamber, Denita Wawn CEO Master Builders, Stephen McBurney Commissioner ABCC, Suresh Manickam CEO National Electrical & Communication Association, Derek Humphery-Smith Partner Lander & Rogers.

**2 August** Reception with the Hon Craig Laundy MP, then Minister for Small and Family Business, the Workplace and Deregulation at MYOB, Melbourne.



James Pearson CEO Australian Chamber, Tim Reed Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer MYOB, the Hon Craig Laundy MP and Samantha Reed CEO Chemistry Australia.

**31 July** Luncheon with the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, then Minister for Urban Infrastructure and Cities at JLL, Brisbane.



The Hon Paul Fletcher MP, Megan Motto Chief Executive Officer Consult Australia and Jeremy Johnson President Australian Chamber.

**6 August** Reception to mark the release of Professor the Hon Bob Carr's book "Run for Your Life" at the City Tattersalls Club, Sydney.



Professor the Hon Bob Carr with Jodi McKay MP, Shadow Minister for Transport, and Shadow Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight.

**15 August** Luncheon to launch an Australian Chamber and Heart Foundation joint initiative ‘Business Women Champions of the Heart’, with Patron Lucy Turnbull AO, at MinterEllison, Sydney.



Sally Sinclair CEO National Employment Services Association, Joyce Di Mascio CEO Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia, Patricia Forsythe Executive Director Sydney Business Chamber, Melina Morrison CEO Business Council of Co-Operatives And Mutuals (Back), Patron Lucy Turnbull AO, Megan Motto CEO Consult Australia (Back), Gill Stapleton Executive Director Direct Selling Australia, Elizabeth McIntyre CEO Think Brick Australia, Nola Watson President NSW Business Chamber (Back), Samantha Read CEO Chemistry Australia, Mobinah Ahmad Executive Officer NSW Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

**29 August** Lunch with Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education, marking National Skills Week. Hosted by William Blue Dining Restaurant the event showcased their students’ impressive vocational skills.



NSW Business Chamber CEO Stephen Cartwright with Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash.

**27 September** Breakfast with Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, Assistant Minister for Home Affairs on Modern Slavery Bill and Reporting Requirements for Business.



Australian Institute of Credit Management Chief Executive Officer Nick Pilavidis with Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC.



## 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. The Australian Chamber membership list can be viewed online at [www.australianchamber.com.au/membership/current-members/](http://www.australianchamber.com.au/membership/current-members/)

# OUR MEMBERS

## CHAMBER



## INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

