

Activities & Achievements

October – December 2018

HIGHLIGHTS

CEO: James Pearson

This quarter, in the lead up to the Federal Election, the Australian Chamber has played a **prominent and influential role in national policy debates** affecting members and the businesses they represent.

After a strong lobbying effort, we were delighted at the **Government's decision to accelerate tax cuts** for small, medium and family businesses with turnover up to \$50 million, and welcomed the extension of the instant-asset write down for another year.

We argued strongly on Industrial Relations and **challenged the self-interest of big unions** in the 'Change The Rules' campaign.

Over the quarter, **we called out big unions** on casual employment, wages growth and job security and highlighted the dangers to business and workers of their proposal to return to industry-wide bargaining.

We took a lead role with members in **resisting threats to casual employment**. In December we welcomed new government regulation that will make clear that current and former casual employees cannot double dip for entitlements and highlighted the importance to employers and employees of the flexibility that casual work allows.

We continue to **lobby the Government to bring energy costs down** for households and business, by putting in place the key recommendations of the **ACCC** to cut energy costs now. At the same time, **we renewed our calls** for the Government to adopt the measures in the **National Energy Guarantee (NEG)** to provide investment certainty that will support affordability and increased reliability in the longer term, and to help meet our international emission reductions commitments.

Ahead of the **COAG meeting** in December, we called on political leaders to resist populist pressure to cut migration and recognise the benefits that a strong migration program delivers to all Australians, in a **major policy launch at Parliament House**. Our policy position, **'Migration Works For All of Us'** gained national coverage in print and broadcast media, continuing our prominent advocacy on the issue.

On the vocational education front, we welcomed the commitment the Prime Minister made at our Annual Dinner to **review and reform**

“Australian businesses, large and small, are under pressure like never before, as a result of increased international competition and rising costs. As we turn the corner into 2019 and head towards the next election, we need the major parties and cross-benchers to show leadership and support policies that will boost business confidence and encourage investment.”

- James Pearson, December Press Conference, Parliament House.



Jenny Lambert and James Pearson pictured at the *'Migration Works For All of Us'* policy launch with Marcellus Heleta, general manager and Hao Chen the owner of RAKU - a Japanese Restaurant in Canberra.

the VET system and to ensure that all of the money collected by the **Skilling Australians Fund (SAF)** migration levy is spent on VET. At the same time, we highlighted the need for more progress through the SAF, and **called for action** from the Commonwealth and states and territories.



Master Builders CEO Denita Wawn, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Australian Mines and Metals Association CEO Steve Knott AM and Australian Chamber President Jeremy Johnson at the Business Leaders Annual Dinner.

In December we welcomed the **improvement in the budget bottom line** announced by the Government in its **MYEFO**, and urged the government to encourage businesses to invest, to create jobs and wealth for all Australians.

We **continued our engagement** with Labor, the Coalition and influential crossbenchers this quarter, hosting a number of meetings and networking events, to ensure Australian business continues to have a place in important policy discussions. The stand out event of the quarter was our **Business Leaders Annual Dinner**. We had strong engagement from political and business leaders, policy makers and regulators, the diplomatic corps and the media.

Workplace Relations

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

Our workplace relations team has continued to actively **combat the ACTU's campaign** to rewrite Australia's industrial relations legislation to artificially advantage unions and union officials, and impose damaging **industry wide bargaining, nationwide strikes, and minimum and award wage increases** well above inflation and unaffordable for many businesses. Through both traditional and social media, we led the national debate on **wage growth, properly regulating industrial relations in the building and construction industry, and industrial disputes**. The Chamber's Director of Workplace Relations, **Scott Barklamb delivered a major speech on minimum wages** and enterprise bargaining, which was reported nationally. Members were provided with updated campaign resources to respond to union political rallies.

The end of 2018 saw **encouraging movement on legislation** to address priority concerns actively prosecuted by the Chamber and members.

In December, the Morrison Government addressed substantial uncertainties for casual employment, regarding potential double payment for leave, created by the Federal Court's decision in **Workpac v Skene**. This followed extensive lobbying by the Chamber and members.

Two further bills we strongly supported were passed during the quarter; the first **abolishing the automatic 4-yearly reviews of modern awards** (a process which has absorbed the resources of our network for more than 4 years and cost millions of dollars) and better empowering the Fair Work Commission to facilitate rather than hold up agreement making. The second, extending the national award test case on **unpaid domestic violence leave** to employees not covered by awards. The Chamber addressed the **Senate Education and Employment Committee** in support of the domestic violence leave changes.

In the final hours before the Christmas break, we addressed a **full bench of the Fair Work Commission** on how it should exercise its new discretion in approving enterprise agreements.

Submissions during the quarter addressed sham contracting, as well as work towards a major Chamber submission to the **National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment** due in February. **Modern Slavery reporting legislation** passed during the quarter, strongly informed by a long campaign of Chamber engagement.

The Chamber's workplace relations and media teams met with the **Minster for Industrial Relations** and Shadow Minister, with the ACTU and national industry bodies, and with key figures such as the incoming **Chair of the Senate Education and Employment Committee**.

Internationally, we worked with international organisations and employer groups in other countries on issues which impact business and employment in Australia, including: how labour regulation might adapt to the **changing future of work** and a proposed new **treaty on violence and harassment at work**.



Scott Barklamb meets with the head of ILO Asia Pacific and colleagues to discuss the future of work and supporting the role of the private sector throughout the region.

Public Affairs and Advocacy

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

This quarter the Australian Chamber has strengthened its profile as **Australia's leading business voice**, using public advocacy to advance our agenda in national policy debates on workplace relations, migration, energy and vocational education and training.

We provided a strong high profile response to the **union political rally** in Melbourne, and subsequent rallies across October, calling out the big unions for misinforming union members and the Australian public about how Australians work and the way our industrial relations system operates.

Our commentary was picked up nationally across broadcast and print media, and was repeated on national TV by the Industrial Relations Minister.

This quarter, Australian Chamber CEO, James Pearson debated **ACTU President Michele O'Neil** on Sky News and **ACTU Secretary Sally McManus** in a union special on ABC's program **the Drum**. Issues included, the relevance of modern unions, industry-wide bargaining, casual employment and wages growth.

“Migrants don’t take jobs, they create jobs – they fill the jobs particularly in our rural and regional communities, that Australians are unable or unwilling to do. Together with effective investment in educating and training Australians for the jobs of today and tomorrow, a strong and well managed migration program is essential to meet the many skills demands of Australia’s modern and diverse economy.”

- Jeremy Johnson, Business Leaders Annual Dinner Address.

In November, we hosted our **Business Leaders Annual Dinner** at the National Gallery of Australia. Australian Chamber President, Jeremy Johnson addressed guests on key priorities for the Australian Chamber in the areas of migration, vocational education and training, energy and workplace relations. The event gained significant media attention, with **record numbers of journalists in attendance**.

In launching the Australian Chamber *‘Migration Works For All of Us’* policy position paper in December, James **called on political leaders ‘to be bold and outward looking’** and to recognise the benefits that a strong migration programs delivers to all Australians at a press conference. James’ commentary was repeated nationally across Fairfax, ABC News, SBS News, and the Australian Associated Press. The policy position paper also featured as a topic of discussion for two consecutive nights of ABC’s program, The Drum.

Over the quarter, we put out **35 media releases** and featured in **384 media items** across print, online and broadcast media.

These items reached over **27.1 million people**, equating to a total advertising space rate of **4.4 million**.

This quarter we attained **375,400 impressions** on Twitter.



James Pearson in panel discussion with Sally McManus (ACTU Secretary), Paul Karp (The Guardian) and Judith Sloan (Economist) on The Drum in November.

Employment, Education and Training

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

This quarter saw the launch of the Australian Chamber’s migration and population policy paper, *‘Migration Works For All of Us’*, continuing our leadership position in the migration debate. The launch coincided with the **COAG meeting of First Ministers** with population policy a prominent agenda item. We also made a submission to the **Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry** into the effectiveness of the current temporary skilled visa system in targeting genuine skills shortages.

The Prime Minister made two important announcements in the Vocational Education and Training sector at the Australian Chamber Annual Dinner. **A review of the VET sector**, chaired by **Steven Joyce**, former **NZ Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment** was announced, with consultations currently underway and the expansion of the adult apprenticeship wage incentive to 25 years. These were favourable outcomes from our advocacy efforts.

This quarter Jenny continued her engagement on a number of advisory boards including the **Australian Industry Skills Committee**, the **Employment Services Advisory Panel**, **Disability Employment Services**, **Veterans’ Employment** and the **Board of Manufacturing Skills Australia**.



Jenny Lambert explains why a steady migration intake is important to the national economy on Sky News with David Speers, following the launch of the *‘Migration Works For All of Us’* policy position paper.

Economics and Industry Policy, and Sustainability

Director: Adam Carr (outgoing) Jenny Lambert (acting)

Chairs: Don Rankin, Mark Stone AM

This quarter the Australian Chamber's Economics and Industry Policy (EIP) Team went to a tax forum hosted by the **Tax and Transfer Policy Institute**. This was an insightful forum where attendees discussed the difficulties in implementing reform. Attendees agreed that the failure of meaningful reform reflected recent lack of political leadership and understanding.

We continued to advocate for energy policy that addressed the energy trilemma – cost, emissions and reliability. We did this in meetings with **Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's** office, **Environment Minister Melissa Price's** office and **Energy Minister Angus Taylor** and his team. We met with the office of the Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the **Hon Mark Butler MP** to discuss the Federal Oppositions' approach to energy policy and worked with regulators the **Energy Security Board (ESB)**, the **Australian Energy Market Operator** and the **Australian Energy Regulator**.

Through our Economics, Industry and Sustainability Committee, the broader membership and the secretariat, we successfully **advocated for bringing forward the tax cuts** for small and medium enterprises and advocated against government changes to **research and development (R&D)** tax incentives, which had the effect of making it more difficult to access R&D incentives.

We lobbied against the government's proposed changes to capital gains tax (CGT), which would have the effect of restricting some legitimate small business owners from accessing the CGT tax concession, and appeared before a Parliamentary Committee **inquiry into policies and process to limit and reduce red tape**. We spoke about; the need for harmonisation of regulation across jurisdictions and suggested that existing regulation needed to be simplified and that an audit of regulation was required, in consultation with industry, to determine whether current regulations were fit for purpose.

Trade and International Affairs

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

Over the quarter, we engaged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, the Department of Home Affairs and Embassy representatives. Activities and Achievements include **progress on trade agreements** including the RCEP, CPTPP and EU; development of the **new Civil and Maritime Security Strategy**; participation on the **National Trade Facilitation Committee** and the DFAT **Non-Tariff Barriers working group**; testimony at the review of the **Peru-Australia Free Trade Agreement** by the Joint Standing committee on Treaties (JSCOT) and submissions to the DFAT **review of "Soft Power"**.

After 23 years of persistent advocacy we are now seeing the government take a much stronger interest in the **Indian Ocean Rim**. Our most recent advocacy work has resulted in the **Anti-Dumping Commission** agreeing to consider a **National Interest Test** as recommended by the Productivity Commission in 2009.

Internationally, the Chamber represented members at the annual meeting of the **Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chamber of Commerce and Industry** in Istanbul and discussed the implementation of the **Paris Climate Agreement at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP24)**.



Bryan Clark discussing WTO reforms and opportunities for Australia and other like-minded nations with WTO Deputy Director General Mr Yi Xiaozhun at the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI) in Istanbul in November.

Work Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation

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

We worked closely with **Marie Boland**, the **Independent Reviewer** of the model WHS laws, and **Safe Work Australia** to ensure our members concerns with draft recommendations were heard, and, with members, lobbied Jobs and Industrial Relations **Minister Kelly O'Dwyer** and state and territory **WHS Ministers**.

For **Safe Work Month** we produced a video promoting our positive take on the month's theme, **"A moment is all it takes"**. We gave members branded hi-viz vests, encouraging them to wear and profile on social media throughout the month.

We made videos addressing workplace mental health and the challenges for SMEs and **apprentice mental health**. This use of video content resulted in a **227% increase in social media engagement**.

During **Safe Work Australia** October and November meetings, we **successfully opposed a new model Code of Practice** on Formwork and saw amendments made to the **Worker Representation and Participation Guide** in our favour, correcting legal inaccuracies and misleading content. We also **facilitated two new small business fact sheets** on "Officer Duties" and sought changes to the Health Monitoring Guides for PCBU's prior to publication.

“Small Business owners do not have a problem with the health and safety legislation itself. They don’t even have an issue with its enforcement. They just need to know where to find information specific to them and how to put it into practice.”

- Jennifer Low on the Chamber’s Part & Parcel campaign

Australian Chamber @AusChamber · 9 Oct 2018
 Our president, Jeremy Johnson and @AusChamberCEO James Pearson, checked in with Jen Low, our WHS&WC Associate Director in #Perth today. Did you take a moment for health and safety today? Share your #mysafetymoment with us this #nationalreturntoworkmonth



We continued to represent employers in working groups progressing the inaugural **National Return To Work Strategy** and made a **submission** in response to the strategy discussion paper.

The **WHS&WC Committee** met in November progressing two position statements on **psychological risk** and **violence/sexual harassment** at work as well as finalising a new work plan for 2019.

Our **#PartandParcel WHS Initiative for small businesses** achieved considerable engagement with small business owners on social media and with Marie Boland and regulatory agencies and will be extending through to June 2019.



Minister Simon Birmingham addresses guests at the Coalition Friends of Tourism luncheon in mid-October on the synergies between trade and tourism and outlines the Governments plans to promote the regional tourism sector, prior to a panel discussion.

Tourism

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

October started on a high for Australian Chamber – Tourism with a **Coalition Friends of Tourism lunch**, a committee meeting and a **roundtable session with Minister Birmingham**. The Friends of Tourism event consisted of a panel on regional tourism, in particular Agritourism.

The focus on Agritourism was linked to a report released on the same day by new member, **Australian Regional Tourism (ART)**. The report examined the barriers to the growth of **Agritourism in Australia**. Damien from Turalla Truffles in Bungendore presented on the panel and gave a great grassroots account of the experience of an operator.

The Roundtable with Minister Birmingham raised a number of key issues on the agenda for Australian Chamber – Tourism, focusing on the **Beyond 2020 Tourism Report** and visa issues.



Coalition Friends of Tourism Lunch at Parliament House Canberra in October.

In the period following the committee meeting, the balance of the year has featured some furious activity in the policy space, which has included meetings of the **Austrade Labour & Skills Roundtable**, the **Passenger Facilitation Committee**, the **Tourism Access Working Group** and the **Tourism Visa Advisory Group**.

Australian Chamber – Tourism Chair, John Hart presented at the **Australian Regional Tourism Conference** and Meeting Place for the **Australian Tourism Export Council** in Darwin. The forums with operators demonstrate that the industry is still performing well, although being challenged by a number of barriers to productivity and profitability.

Business Leaders Council Events

Director: Paul Nicolaou

8 October Lunch with the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, Leader of the House and Minister for Defence at Ernst & Young, Sydney.



Rebecca Kenny Certica CEO, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP and Adam Goodes Indigenous Defence & Infrastructure Consortium (iDiC) CEO.

30 October Reception with the Hon Ed Husic MP Shadow Minister for Human Services and Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy at MinterEllison, Sydney



Claire Rawlins, Senior Vice President, Strategic Advisor – APAC for Salesforce with the Hon Ed Husic MP.

7 November Reception with the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP, Shadow Assistant Treasurer, Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity, Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits and Shadow Minister for Trade in Services at the Mastercard Experience Centre, Sydney.



Cassandra Smith, Asia Pacific Public Policy Director at Mastercard, Chris Siorokos Asia Pacific Public Policy Director at Mastercard and the Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP.

15 November Luncheon with the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Minister for Education and Training and Shadow Minister for Women at Clayton Utz, Sydney.



The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP providing an address at a Business Leaders Council Luncheon in Sydney.

19 November Dinner with the Hon Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Home Affairs & Former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh at Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Sydney.



The Hon Peter Dutton MP, Nick Kaldas APM MAICD, Chairman Stratum Global, Karen Webb APM NSW Police Force Assistant Commissioner and Former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh.

5 December Christmas Drinks with Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Commissioner Roger Featherston at Red Energy, Melbourne.



Ben Lazzaro Australian Made Campaign CEO and ACCC Commissioner Roger Featherston.

17 December Christmas Drinks Reception with the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Federal Member for Curtin at Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Sydney.



Australian Chamber President Jeremy Johnson with the Hon Julie Bishop MP

19 December The Inaugural Australian Chamber Health Forum with Department of Health Secretary Glenys Beauchamp PSM at PWC, Sydney.



Department of Health Secretary Glenys Beauchamp PSM with Josh Bihary Manager of Government Relations and External Affairs at Pfizer and Australian Chamber Health Group Chair Martin Bowles PSM.



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/

OUR MEMBERS

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