### 2023 Annual Report & Business Review



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# President's Message

In recent times, we have seen renewed public discourse about the relationships between business, government and civil society. A variety of views have been expressed regarding business activities in a range of areas.



As a leading business organisation, ACCI is crystal clear about its mission and purpose. We have an unequivocal commitment to building a positive, productive business environment in Australia. There is a shared belief that a thriving responsible business sector supports economic growth that is the foundation for a prosperous and secure society. For this reason, what happens in business is vital for all Australians.

In May 2023 we saw a federal budget surplus, the first in fifteen years, helped by windfall revenue from high commodity prices. The positive result was welcomed but arrived against a backdrop of significant looming challenges.

The fall-out from rapidly escalating inflation has been felt acutely by business as well as the broader community. The insidious impact of inflation spreads across every sector and across the entire value chain. ACCI's economic policy team has been at the forefront of proposals to help address this problem. At the same time, ACCI has delivered strong public advocacy in support of responsible fiscal and monetary policies targeted at delivering a sustainable future for Australia.

Business also continues to deal with the twin perils of labour and skills shortages. Added to this are fears about the prospect of a more inflexible labour market as a result of legislative and regulatory changes. These threats have seen business come together with a united voice. Through

this co-operation and ACCI's own campaigns, ACCI is seeking to encourage practical solutions in the interests of business, job creation and a resilient economy.

On the international front, ACCI continues to fortify its position within the global business network, deepening collaboration with influential organisations such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the OECD, and the International Organisation of Employers. These strategic alliances help us to tackle common challenges faced by businesses worldwide.

In June 2023, ACCI and several other Australian Chambers of Commerce came together with their counterparts at the World Chambers Congress to engage in discussions on multilateral trade, innovation, and sustainability. We congratulate Business NSW and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry who were both recognised in the global awards program for their innovative Chamber initiatives.

ACCI is strongly committed to meeting the needs of members. Under the leadership of the CEO and Executive Management, the ACCI team is relentless in its focus on representing your interests and I congratulate them for their considerable achievements over the past year.

I thank all members for your support and active engagement on key issues and look forward to ongoing collaboration in the future.

#### Nola Watson President

# CEO's Message

Over the past year Australian business has grappled with a delicately balanced mix of operating factors. Ongoing pressure on business input costs and consumer price inflation have been met by a deliberate strategy on the part of the Reserve Bank to raise interest rates, tighten credit and to clamp residual excess demand. We have seen the real impact that this has for many sectors of the economy and for businesses of all sizes.



While labour and skills shortages have eased somewhat from the peak conditions experienced in the previous year, these issues have continued to present significant pressures for businesses across a range of sectors and for numerous occupations.

With these factors in mind, ACCI's advocacy has firmly focussed on efforts to boost labour supply and to keep the Australian economy at, or near, full employment for as long as possible. We have been actively involved in the establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia; the development of a new Universities Accord; and have provided detailed input to the review of Australia's migration system.

The federal government's ill-considered proposed changes to workplace relations laws have consumed significant bandwidth in the latter part of the year.

Few issues have generated such unity of purpose across the entire business community and there are widespread concerns about the far-reaching impact on casual employment; labour hire and service contracting; digital platforms; independent contractors and sub-contractors; and the road transport sector.

ACCI has been pleased to join with a coalition of other leading business organisations to express unified and firm opposition to a flawed approach that will do nothing to promote stronger productivity, and which will make it much harder for employers to create more jobs in the future.

Wisely, the Senate has voted to extend the timeframe for review of the legislation until early 2024, providing a better opportunity for the full impacts to be more fully explored.

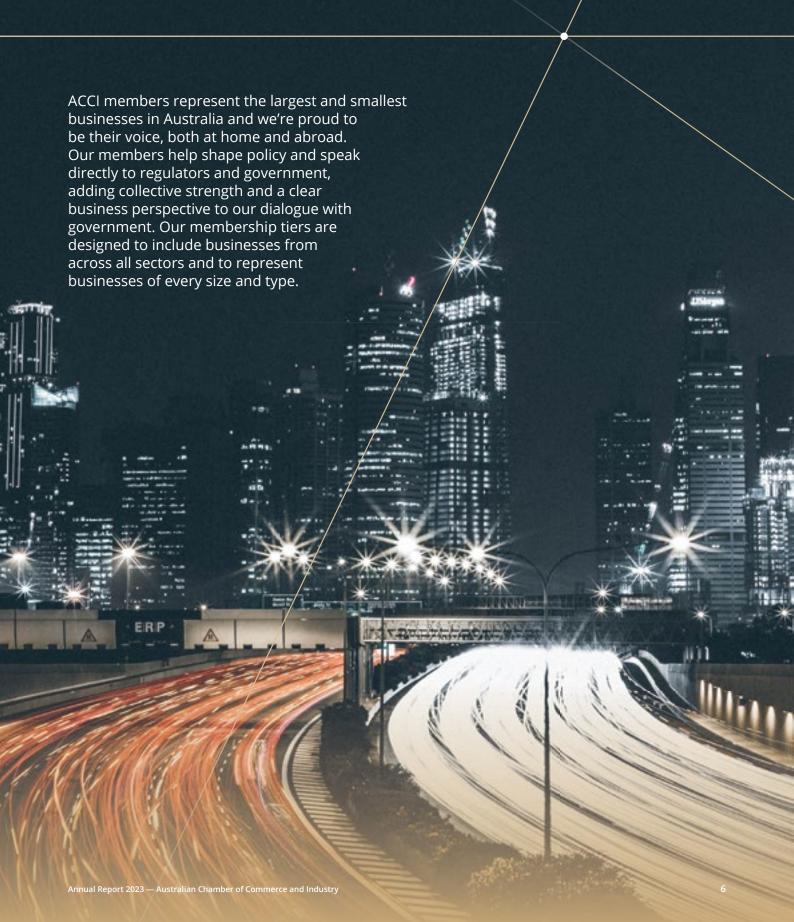
Early in the year, ACCI senior management and members of the Board spent time carefully considering how to position the organisation in relation to the Voice referendum.

It was determined that while ACCI should signal strong support for ongoing and meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, we should also adopt a neutral position on the referendum question, leaving the choice of a 'Yes' or 'No' vote to the conscience of individual voters. In the end, I feel that this was the right and prudent choice for ACCI, its members, and the broader business community.

At an operational level, we have undergone further significant organisational change within the ACCI secretariat over the past year. A key part of the process has seen a consolidation of staff resources in Canberra, reflecting the key focus of our external advocacy in the nation's capital. At the end of this process, I am confident that we have reinforced and sharpened our capability in key areas of public policy, and that we have a well-focussed balance of skills that will enable the team to deliver a strengthened mix of member engagement opportunities in the year ahead.

#### Andrew McKellar Chief Executive Officer

# ACCI Membership Network



### **Chamber Members**

The chamber network represents the combined power and influence of the peak business group in every Australian state and territory, giving ACCI unrivalled geographic representation and reach. We aim to complement the work they do in their own jurisdictions at the national level.







Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Business Chamber Queensland



Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia Limited



Business SA



Chamber of Commerce NT



Canberra Business Chamber



Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce & Industry

### Industry Association Members

Industry associations bring sectoral horsepower and expertise through their own networks at national, state and territory level to boost our national policy and advocacy. Together with our chamber members, they represent the breadth and depth of the Australian economy and the businesses that drive it.



Accommodation Australia



ACCORD Australasia Limited



Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association



Animal Medicines Australia



APRA AMCOS



Aust Arab Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Australian Airports Association



Australian Automotive Dealer Association



Australian Beverages Council Limited



Australian Business Events Association



Australian Cabinet and Furniture Association (ACFA)



Australian Convenience and Petroleum Marketer's Association (ACAPMA)



Australian Dental Association Inc



Australian Dental Industry Association



Australian Finance Industry Association



Australian Hotels
Association



Australian Made Campaign Ltd



Australian Regional Tourism



Australian Resources and Energy Employer Association (AREEA)



Australian Restructuring Insolvency & Turnaround Association



Australian Retailers Association



Australian Steel Institute



Australian Tourism Export Council



Australian Travel Industry Association



Australian Trucking Association



Australian Tyre Industry Council



Australian Veterinary Association



Boating Industry Association



Bus Industry Confederation



Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals



Caravan Industry Association of Australia



Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia



Chemistry Australia Ltd



Clubs Australia



Clubs NSW



Concrete Masonry Association of Australia



Consult Australia



Consulting Surveyors National



Consumer Healthcare Products Australia



CPA Australia



Cruise Lines International Association



Customer Owned Banking Association Limited



Franchise Council of Australia



Governance Institute of Australia



Housing Industry
Association



Independent Food Distributors Australia



Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA)



Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia



Insurance Council of Australia



Large Format Retail
Association Ltd



Live Performance Australia



Master Builders Australia Limited



Master Plumbers' and Mechanical Services



National Automotive Leasing and Salary Packaging Association



National Electrical & Communication Association



National Employment Services Association



National Fire Industry Association



National Retail Association Limited



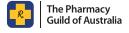
National Road Transport Association Limited



National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA)



Outdoor Media Association



Pharmacy Guild of Australia



Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC)



Recruitment, Consulting and Staffing Association Australia & New Zealand



Restaurant & Catering Australia



Think Brick Australia



Tourism Training Australia

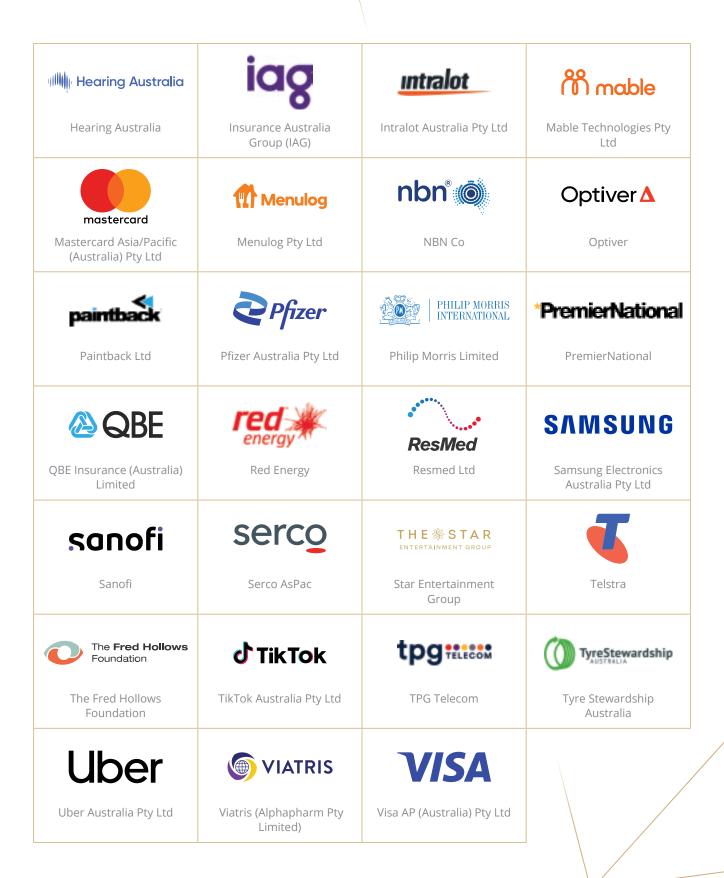


Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce

### Business Leaders Council Members

ACCI's Business Leader Council membership provides a platform for corporate business to directly engage with ACCI's activities by facilitating access and networking between the corporate sector, federal legislators and policy makers.

Abbott	abbvie	ACADEMIESAJUSTRALASIA THE POSSERUTES AND INFORME	(airbnb
Abbott Australasia Pty Ltd	Abbvie Australia New Zealand	Academies Australasia Group Limited	Airbnb Australia Pty Ltd
Allianz 📵	ALLIED &	amazon	ASURIA
Allianz Australia Limited	Allied Express Transport Pty Ltd	Amazon Australia	Asuria People Services
AusDiagnostics	Australian Payments Plus	BROWN&CHASE SEARCH & HR ADVISORY	CHUBB.
AusDiagnostics	Australian Payments Plus Limited	Brown & Chase	Chubb Insurance Australia Limited
<b>SECIMIC</b>	clover <sup>⋄</sup>	Commonwealth Bank	Construction Specialties
CIMIC Admin Services Pty Ltd	Clover Pipelines Pty Ltd	Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Construction Specialties
CROWN	DOORDASH	<b>ferrovial</b> construction	Global Blue
Crown Resorts	DoorDash Technologies Australia	Ferrovial Construction	Global Blue Australia Pty Ltd



## Staff



Andrew McKellar
Chief Executive Officer



David Alexander Chief of Policy and Advocacy



Chris Barnes Head of Business Development & International Affairs



Karen Edwards Chief of Staff



Jessica Tinsley Director, Workplace Relations | General Counsel



Peter Grist
Principal Economist,
Director Economics,
Industry and Sustainability



Natalie Heazlewood Director, Skills, Employment & Small Business



Jennifer Low Director, Health, Safety, Resilience & Digital



Ashley Gardiner Director, Media & Communication



Andrew Hiebl Director, Membership & Engagement



Alexa Gioffre Executive Officer



Lachlan Smith Policy Adviser Trade & International



Jack Morrish Senior Policy Adviser Workplace Relations



Simon Farrow Policy Adviser Workplace Relations



Anshika Gupta Economics Policy Adviser Economics & Industry



Samantha McKenna Policy Adviser



Tanya Roy Policy Adviser Health, Safety, Resilience & Digital



Ryan Clough Media Adviser



Jaqueline Lau International Business Development Officer



Ying Cai Finance Manager



Angela Hannan Events Manager



Sam Richardson Project Manager



Chris Connor Finance Officer



Olivia Geikie Events & Communications Coordinator



Evie Ramirez Office Coordinator

# **Board Members**



Nola Watson President



Hon Mark Birrell AM Deputy President



Ray Sputore Immediate Past President



Daniel Hunter Director, CEO – Business NSW



Lyall Gorman Director, President – Business NSW



Adrian Kloeden Director, President – VCCI



Nicolle Jenkins Director, Chair – CCIWA



Geoff Gwilym Director, CEO – VACC



Tony Schiffmann Director, President – CCIQ



Nikki Govan Director, President – Business SA (Retired October 2023)



Karyn Sobels President – VCCI (Retired September 2023)

# Financial Snapshot

#### Financial Performance

ACCI reported an operational deficit in 2022-23 largely due to a drop in subscription revenue and an overall increase in expenditure on staffing, events and travel in the post-pandemic period. There was an increment in the fair value of financial assets from unrealised equity investment gains. Guided by ACCI's revised Strategic Plan, the organisation has been focused on building a financially sustainable organisation through effective financial management, revenue diversification and growth.

#### Subscription Revenue

Revenue in 2022-23 fell by \$450,000 from Industry Association and Business Leaders Council member resignations, reflecting the current economic environment.

	2021722	2022/23
Revenue & Expenditure	\$'000	\$′000
Total revenue & other income	6,576	5,889
Total expenditure	6,386	6,983
Operating surplus/(deficit)	190	(1,095)
Total comprehensive income/(loss)	(119)	(978)
Assets & Liabilities		
Total assets	8,921	7,527
Total liabilities	1,332	916
Net assets	7,589	6,611

2021/22

2022/23

# Strategic Plan

ACCI's three-year Strategic Plan was updated in 2022 to guide effective decisions that use resources intelligently for the benefit of members. The Strategic Plan provides a broad vision and purpose statement supported by core strategic priorities and actions.

#### Our vision

To make Australia the best place in the world to do business so that Australians have the jobs and living standards to which they aspire.

#### Our purpose

Provide a voice for Australian businesses at national and global levels. Facilitate our member connections and mobilise the breadth, diversity and scale of the network.

#### Our strategic objectives

Policy development/thought leadership: Create member-led, evidence-based policy that addresses immediate business needs and drives future-focused thought leadership.

- Establish robust mechanisms to gather evidence for policy development;
- Develop a two-way channel for member-led collaboration;
- Strengthen influence with decision makers, thought leaders and government;
- Establish clear decision-making frameworks for better prioritisation.

Advocacy/influence: Be an influential voice for business.

- Use credible evidence and data to influence policy;
- Target advocacy channels through strategic and sophisticated means;
- Set the agenda through insights-driven campaigns
- Build a significant external media presence.

Member focus: Provide value for our members and ensure they are the centre of everything we do.

- Build meaningful touchpoints along each step of the member journey;
- Provide opportunities for members to engage and network;
- Engage with members for policy insights, knowledge sharing and learning.

A sustainable organisation: Ensure the organisation is set up for success in the long run.

- Develop a financially sustainable business model;
- Ensure the organisational structure is fit-for-purpose;
- Embed a future-focused mindset and culture to anticipate business needs;
- Create a clear and robust governance framework around compliance and risk.

### Governance

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) is a member-based not-for-profit which is limited by guarantee with a Board of Directors governed by the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and Memorandum and Articles of Association. Membership comprises State and Territory Chambers of Commerce and National and State Industry Associations.

#### **General Council**

General Council is a council of members that oversees governance and determines policy on current issues, which provides a mandate for advocacy on matters of importance to the business community. It is advised by the Board, policy committees and working parties that meet between Council meetings. Senior office bearers, executives from ACCI's member organisations, ACCI Board members, and senior members of staff attend General Council. General Council usually meets three times each year. Nola Watson is Chair of General Council for the reporting period.

#### Board

The Board of Directors is responsible for corporate governance, performance monitoring, and the strategic direction of the company. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate management structures are in place and such structures operate efficiently and transparently. Members at the Annual General Meeting elect Office Bearers and note the eligible Chamberappointed Board members. At the 2022 Annual General Meeting, Nola Watson was re-elected President and Board Chair while Mark Birrell, was also re-elected Deputy President.

#### Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee

The Board is supported by the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee. The Committee operate under Terms of Reference approved by the Board. It was established to assist the Board in discharging its responsibilities regarding oversight of risks, management financial reports, compliance with laws and regulations, and investments. The committee Chair is Board member Tony Schiffmann.

#### **Governance Activities**

Key governance documents include the Strategic Plan, Risk Management Register, Board agendas and support materials. These documents are used by the Board to oversee administration and financial accountability. Underpinning business systems and processes allow the Board to play an appropriate and central role for ethical and responsible decision-making and building capacity within ACCI. The Strategic Plan is a rolling three-year plan and was updated to cover the 2022-25 period. The Risk Management Register is focused on strategic issues, which are reviewed regularly. Board meeting processes are structured to address strategic issues, governance, and performance management. KPMG provides independent audit services and has verified that the annual financial statements provide a true and fair view of our finances and operations for the last financial year. The external auditor makes an annual declaration of independence. A policy of rotation of auditors is in place. KPMG attends relevant Board meetings and the Annual General Meeting to address any member questions.





Minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic at the 2022 Business Leaders Summit in the Theatrette, Australian Parliament House, Canberra.



Housing Industry Association Managing Director Jocelyn Martin at the August 2023 General Council, Crowne Plaza, Hobart.



Australian Retailers Association chief executive officer Paul Zahra at National Electric Vehicle Strategy event at Sydney Motorsports Park.



L-R: Minister for Energy Chris Bowen and Business NSW Chief Executive Officer Dan Hunter at the 2022 Business Leaders Summit in the Theatrette, Australian Parliament House, Canberra.



ACCI Deputy President Mark Birrell AM speaks to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at the 2022 Gala Dinner, Great Hall, Australian Parliament House, Canberra.



L-R: Australian Chamber – Tourism Executive Chair John Hart and ACCI Director Nikki Govan at August 2023 General Council, Crowne Plaza, Hobart.



L-R: CCIWA Chief Executive Officer Chris Rodwell, ACCI Director Tony Schiffmann, Business Chamber Queensland Chief Executive Officer Heidi Cooper and ACCI Director Nicolle Jenkins before the 2022 Gala Dinner, Australian Parliament House, Canberra.

# Membership and Events

ACCI's membership and events functions have undergone significant restructuring during the year. Membership and events operations have relocated from Sydney to ACCI headquarters, Commerce House in Canberra. This relocation will enhance the synergy and effectiveness between policy committees and the vital membership function, in line with ACCI's strategic objective to provide value for our members and ensure they are at the centre of everything we do.

ACCI keeps members informed about and involved in policy discussions related to the focus policy areas, each supported by a member-led committee. The committee structure empowers members to impact the organisation's policy agenda directly. ACCI actively collaborates with its members to provide valuable input into public debates and government processes. This collaboration occurs through various means, including engagement with traditional media, events, social media, and digital technology, and making submissions to the government that influence policy development in these areas. Parliamentary committees, departmental officials and ministerial advisers seek ACCI's submissions as a critical element of their policy development cycles. These documents are highly regarded because of the representation of members' input.

ACCI membership also provides members unparalleled access to key decision-makers. Membership facilitates relationships, enhances government strategy, and opens doors to high-level discussions. Members can access decision-makers and expert policy staff, influence policy development, engage with government and the business community, and attend prominent events such as budget addresses and the annual Business Leaders Summit and Gala Dinner.

Membership provides exclusive access to key international bodies that serve the global business community, such as the International Chamber of Commerce, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD, and the International Organisation of Employers.

October 2022	
12 October	Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor Address, Melbourne
November	
4 November	CEO Forum (online)
30 November	ACCI Business Leaders Summit, Canberra
30 November	ACCI Gala Dinner, Canberra
December	
1 December	ACCI General Council, Canberra
13 December	End of year celebration with Allegra Spender MP, Sydney
February 2023	
3 February	Start of year networking event, Canberra
22 February	NBN webinar, online
March	
1 March	ACCI General Council dinner, Canberra
2 March	ACCI General Council, Canberra
April	
19 April	Chris Bowen, Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Western Sydney
20 April	Professor Peter Dawkins, director, Jobs and Skills Australia (online)
21 April	Networking event, Canberra
27 April	Agrifood Workforce Summit, Brisbane
28 April	CEO Forum (online)

May	
4 May	Dr Derek Bopping, assistant director- general, Australian Cyber Security Centre, Sydney
16 May	Post-Budget Address with Treasurer Jim Chalmers, Sydney
25 May	CEO Forum (online)
July	
6 July	CEO Forum (online)
6 July	Networking event, Sydney
26 July	Mary Wooldridge, chief executive officer of Workplace Gender Equality Agency (online)
August	
3 August	CEO Forum (online)
23 August	ACCI General Council dinner, Hobart
24 August	ACCI General Council, Hobart
September	
1 September	Networking event, Canberra
14 September	CEO Forum (online)
19 September	Murray Furlong, general manager, Fair Work Commission

# Policy

### Economics, Industry and Sustainability

# Energy and climate change were the critical issues for the Economics, Industry and Sustainability Committee over the past 12 months.

The gas market in Australia is in a state of dysfunction, and the government has been scrambling to find an answer. Following the latest crisis in the gas market in December 2022, the government adopted a heavy-handed regulatory response, legislating a temporary price cap of \$12 per gigajoule. The cap was initially for 12 months and then extended to 2025. The government also introduced a mandatory code of conduct for negotiating gas supply contracts.

ACCI has advocated for long-term solutions rather than stop-gap measures throughout the crisis. In our submissions and consultation with the government, ACCI argued that price caps and mandatory codes of conduct do little to address the core issue of ensuring enough gas supply in the system. Such intervention would deter vital investment in gas exploration and gas field development, impacting long-term supply. We promoted more comprehensive reforms to remove regulatory barriers to gas exploration, develop a national gas strategy and produce an energy roadmap.

The safeguard mechanism is a core component of the government's ambitious commitment to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050. In our engagement with the government, we agreed that the covered facilities should contribute their fair share of the abatement task. Production-adjusted emissions baselines will encourage facilities to reduce their emissions intensity. ACCI stressed the importance of crediting and trading in the safeguard mechanism to provide flexibility, enabling facilities to optimise the timing of their investment in low-emissions technology. Governments should give emissions-intensive, trade-exposed facilities tailored support through financial assistance programs.

ACCI has worked closely with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and several multinationals in responding to the government's consultation on the new Multinational Tax Transparency - Tax Changes Bill. While intended to deliver on Australia's international

commitments, several matters could have been more consistent with the OECD standard, particularly country-by-country (CbC) reporting requirements. Through our advocacy, we have raised concerns around the additional data disclosures, materiality thresholds, a lack of safeguards for commercially sensitive data and the timing of its introduction relative to the OECD timetable. The introduction of the CbC reporting requirement has been delayed by 12 months to July 1, 2024, to enable time for further consultation with industry. ACCI continues to engage with Treasury on developing the legislation through a confidential consultation process.

ACCI again contributed to the budget process, preparing a pre-budget submission and participating in the budget lock-up on May 23. We actively engaged in the Fair Work Commission's 2023 Annual Wage Review through three written submissions and representation at hearings of the Expert Panel.



Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers at the post-budget lunch.

ACCI has been very active in representing member's views through written submissions and presenting at a hearings of the Senate Environment and Communications Committee on the Safeguard Mechanism (Crediting) Bill 2022, and the Senate Economic Legislation Committee, on the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation Bill 2022 and on the Tax Laws Amendment (Making Multinational Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency) Bill 2023.

### **Employment and Skills**

Since the 2022 federal election, the Employment and Skills team have engaged as the government implemented several reforms to the Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education and migration sectors.

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) was central to this, which replaced the National Skills Commission. ACCI supported the legislation through three submissions and two appearances at the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment. Parliament passed the legislation in August. The Minister for Skills and Training, Brendan O'Connor, invited ACCI to join the JSA consultative forum to provide strategic advice.

A tripartite ministerial advisory board will provide expert advice to JSA, providing a crucial voice for industry in forming current and emerging workforce skills, training and needs. ACCI negotiated with the government to ensure four positions on the board for leading employer representative organisations.

The Universities Accord review began in November 2022, to which ACCI made two submissions and an in-person appearance before the panel. The interim review report contains 70 recommendations, including ACCI-supported proposals for integrating higher education and VET, skills pathways, recognition of prior learning, work-integrated learning, links with industry and implementation of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) recommendations.

The team has engaged with the government on migration, providing submissions to the Parkinson review of the migration system. ACCI has attended several roundtable discussions with the minister before the government's response in late 2023. We are pleased that permanent migration will remain relatively stable at 190,000, in line with ACCI's advocacy.

ACCI deputy president Mark Birrell AM, Employment & Skills Committee chair Peter Daly and ACCI Director of Skills, Employment and Small Business Natalie Heazlewood represented ACCI at the 111th International Labour Conference in Geneva. International Labour Organization members agreed to recommendations on quality apprenticeships. Advocating for members, ACCI worked to provide the foundation for a skilled, motivated, productive and empowered workforce.

The Employment and Skills Committee met four times over the year, holding a face-to-face meeting at Parliament House in Canberra in November 2022, which included a briefing by Minister O'Connor. ACCI's membership of external committees, including the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Workforce Blueprint Steering Group, Strategic Industry Advisory Committee, HERC IP Framework Advisory Committee, Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment, Industry Advisory Committee on Veteran's Employment and Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration continued during the year and are vital in ensuring representation of members' interests at the highest level.



L-R: VCCI Chief Executive Officer Paul Guerra, Board Member Karyn Sobels, Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor and ACCI Chief Executive Officer Andrew McKellar at Skills and Training Address, Melbourne.

### Data, Digital and Cyber Security

During the inaugural year of an enhanced focus on data, digital and cyber security policy, ACCI has hit the ground running. The newly established Data, Digital and Cyber Security Forum held its first meeting in January. During 2023, the forum met three times and progressed a targeted work plan with some key deliverables already achieved. These include ACCI's submissions to the Privacy Act Review (Attorney-General's Department), the Cyber Security Strategy (Department of Home Affairs) and the Safe and Responsible AI in Australia discussion paper (Department of Industry, Science and Resources).

Building digital literacy and capability across businesses of all sizes and industries was another critical area of focus. ACCI participated in the federal government's working group for digital tech skills, formed following the 2022 employment summit, with a proposal for a new 'earn-while-you-learn' program for digital tech skills. ACCI joined the Jobs and Skills Council for Technology, Business and Finance. ACCI contributed to the workforce planning review and development of project plans to look at advancing a national 'standard' for digital literacy and competency and the impact of Al on skills.

Data privacy issues have been another priority for the forum. ACCI has engaged with the Attorney-General's, Home Affairs and Finance departments. The primary concern is the transition of small businesses to higher compliance requirements if the proposed removal of the small business exemption proceeds.

ACCI continues to explore how businesses can use the proposed digital identity program to reduce privacy compliance burdens. ACCI has liaised with counterparts through the Business at OECD's Committee on Digital Economy Policy for ideas to strengthen data governance and digital practices whilst ensuring we remain in step with our international trading partners.

A key objective arising from forum discussions has been to increase awareness and understanding of business opportunities in these fields, which ACCI continues to facilitate through government-industry briefings, submissions and information dissemination.

Following a spate of high-profile cyber security attacks last year, the federal government announced plans to release a Cyber Security Strategy in late 2023. ACCI has been liaising with members, relevant departments and ministerial offices during the development of this strategy.

An integrated approach to privacy, cyber security and the digital economy is necessary when considering the impact on small businesses. Changes in one area need to avoid creating problems in another. Even with this, there remains a risk of relevant parts of government becoming increasingly siloed as work progresses with a breakdown in industry engagement and consultation, which we will need to stay vigilant on.



L-R: Andrew McKellar — ACCI CEO; Philippa Cogswell — Cybersecurity Partner from PwC Australia; Mallika Sathi — Vice President, Cyber & Intelligence and Digital Identity from MasterCard; Nola Watson — ACCI President; Richa Arora — Partner, Cyber and Digital Trust at PwC Australia; and Sarah Hosey — General Manager Security and Privacy Assurance, Risk and Consulting from nbn at the Dr Derek Bopping, assistant director-general, Australian Cyber Security Centre keynote, Sydney.

### **Small Business Committee**

ACCI has made significant strides with the continued representation of critical small business concerns and establishing our Small Business Committee after extensive member consultations.

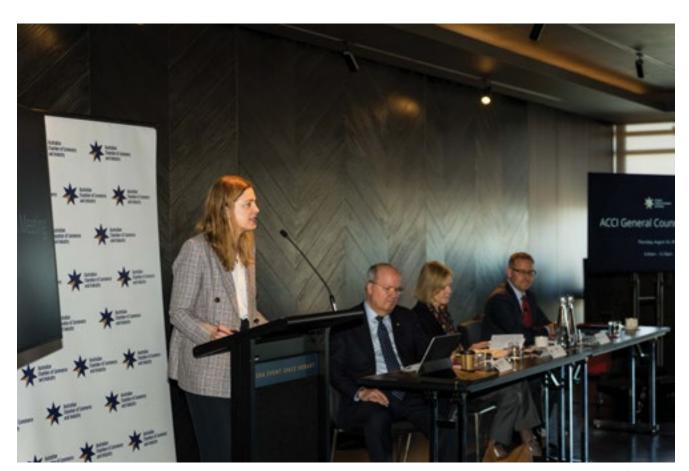
Issues include advocacy for an extension to the Technology Investment Boost. The government will target leftover funding towards small business digitalisation following the committee's engagement with Senator David Pocock, who supports the initiative.

ACCI members met with Dr Craig Emerson to provide comment on the statutory review of the Payment Times Reporting Act 2020. The final report contained many ACCI recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the payment times register.

We appeared before the Senate Committee on Paid Parental Leave to advocate for a red tape reduction. The committee report recommended several vital initiatives ACCI had requested, including that Services Australia administer it.

ACCI provided a detailed submission on the Privacy Act review, strongly advocating for continuing the small business exemption. Additionally, we have been actively working to minimise adverse impacts on small businesses through changes to industrial relations. We have also provided input to the federal government's Small Business Energy Incentive and the Energy Efficiency Grants for small and medium enterprises.

The committee has met twice and heard from Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bruce Billson. It has regularly engaged with Minister for Small Business Julie Collins to advance small business issues.



Minister for Small Business Julie Collins addresses General Council, Hobart.

### Trade and International Affairs

ACCI is the voice of Australian business in international forums where policies are made, as the exclusive Australian partner of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Business at OECD (BIAC) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).

Substantial progress to increase ACCI's profile as the voice of Australian business internationally has been made over the year. A full agenda of trade negotiations and policy has seen ACCI leading advocacy by:

- contributing to the Australian Government's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy.
- progressing the Simplified Trade System agenda.
- providing business perspectives to the government's consideration of the OECD's Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct.

These initiatives build upon direct engagement with government agencies and trade negotiators across trade issues. The sixth edition of the ACCI National Trade Survey was launched by the Minister for Trade, Don Farrell, and a senior representative of our sponsor, ANZ Bank, in October.

ACCI contributes to a range of government consultative forums that canvass emerging issues, including the Anti-Dumping Commission International Trade Remedies Forum, the Department of Home Affairs National Committee for Trade Facilitation and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) rules of origin consultative committee.

The ICC Australia National Policy Committee has benefitted from engagement with key government contacts, with guest speakers from DFAT and the Simplified Trade System Implementation Taskforce, discussing current free trade agreement negotiations and domestic policy settings.

ACCI's chamber network is a crucial component in Australia's trade architecture, with export documentation specialists in every state and territory supporting businesses to trade internationally. In addition to Australia's existing trade agreements, the chamber network has assisted with the successful implementation the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement and Australia-UK free trade agreement.

Significant value is derived through ACCI's international partnerships, particularly with enhanced international strategic engagement. New appointments to international policy commissions and posts ensure Australian business' international partnerships develop. In addition to our representation on the board of BIAC and the IOE, Andrew McKellar was elected to the World Chambers Federation

General Council. This adds to the responsibilities of ACCI President Nola Watson as World Chamber Federation (WCF) Vice-Chair for Oceania and Southeast Asia.

Members have been appointed to BIAC and ICC policy commissions, including in leadership roles. During the year, Andrew Hudson, Rigby Cooke Lawyers partner, was appointed vice-chair of the Business at OECD Trade Committee.

At the 2023 ICC World Chambers Congress in Geneva, ACCI was represented by President Nola Watson and Chief Executive Officer Andrew McKellar. ACCI Head of Business Development and International Affairs Chris Barnes attended the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit and the ICC regional meeting for the Asia-Pacific.

During the year, ACCI was pleased to have held meetings with key stakeholders, including the Secretary-General of the OECD, Mathias Corman, the Australian Ambassador to the United States, Kevin Rudd, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Cindy McCain.



ACCI Head of Business Development and International Affairs, Chris Barnes, at ICC Regional Meeting for Asia-Pacific in Jakarta.

The ICC Australia Arbitration Committee is a significant drawcard for new members. Following its launch at Australian Arbitration Week in October 2022, the Committee has held several successful events and provided new opportunities for members to engage with the ICC's work. Events hosted at the Australian Embassy during Paris Arbitration Week, in Perth during Australian Arbitration Week and a session on the cutting-edge topic of dispute resolution in space technology and digital infrastructure hosted in Sydney were among the year's highlights. The Arbitration Committee has also launched an online webinar series, Conversations with ICC Australia, to connect Australian professionals and hear from fascinating guests specialising in dispute resolution.

ACCI continued its long association with the Australian Export Awards, lending the expertise of staff to judge the awards. Our continued support of the ICC Australia-Australian Disputes Centre Asia Pacific Commercial Mediation Competition is preparing the next generation of dispute resolution practitioners to succeed, and help to keep trade flowing, with 32 teams from across the region competing in this year's competition.

#### **Tourism**

Following the pandemic, the tourism industry continued to rebuild in 2023, returning to 2019 levels. Australian Chamber - Tourism will continue working with the government to improve conditions for and support the tourism industry as it rebuilds.

This year, Australian Chamber - Tourism formed two working groups with a keen focus on the future of the tourism industry. The Future Traveller Working Group met twice to develop an infrastructure plan to ensure safe and efficient travel that improves travel experience.

The Sustainable Tourism Advisory Committee focused on providing advice and guidance to the tourism industry and stakeholders on initiatives and strategies for the pathway towards net zero. It met three times during the year.

In its pre-budget submission, Australian Chamber - Tourism focused on initiatives to overcome constraints to growth and capitalise on the potential of the visitor economy. These included measures to ensure Australia remains an attractive destination in a highly competitive international market, including attracting business events. Australian Chamber - Tourism also called for visa reform, a freeze of the Passenger Movement Charge (PMC), improved passenger facilitation, reform of the Tourist Refund Scheme and measures to address workforce shortages.

Australian Chamber - Tourism welcomed additional funding in the budget for Tourism Australia to continue their crucial work in encouraging international tourists.

Unfortunately, the government imposed a \$10 increase on the PMC, hindering the return of international tourism arrivals to Australia.

We also advocated directly to federal ministers during the year, most notably the Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator Don Farrell, who joined the committee for several roundtable meetings. In addition, Australian Chamber - Tourism executive chair John Hart met Senator Farrell several times. Regular briefings have also occurred with Austrade.

Australian Chamber - Tourism has also written to several ministers on issues including the foreshadowed changes to the working holidaymaker and international student visas, and the federal government's decision to deny Qatar Airways additional flights to Australia. We also developed an initiative with members to reimburse working holidaymaker visa fees across 140 tourism and hospitality employers to stimulate their return to Australia.

Australian Chamber - Tourism provided a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors, with John appearing at the hearing.

We maintained committee membership of the OECD (BIAC) Contact Group on Tourism, the Home Affairs Tourism Visa Advisory Group, and the THRIVE 2030 Workforce and Skills Working Group, among many other committees and working groups established to facilitate the rebuilding of the visitor economy.



Australian Chamber - Tourism members meet with Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator Don Farrell at Australian Parliament House, Canberra

### WHS and Health

The Safe Work Australia (SWA) work program expanded at the end of 2022 as the focus shifted from COVID-19 to silica, chemicals and psychosocial hazards. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has reinstated ACCI's SWA social partner funding. The reinstatement followed several years of lobbying successive governments and recognises the increasing activity and the ongoing importance of tripartite engagement. The grant will allow ACCI to deliver new resources for the member network on crucial issues such as psychosocial risks, workers' compensation and WHS capability and leadership.

Silica has been a priority issue for governments, SWA and the federal Department of Health since the wave of silicosis cases in 2018. In late 2022, SWA proceeded with a consultation regulatory impact statement (RIS) for managing the risks of silica at work. ACCI members engaged early on with significant concerns about the impacts on several industries, including manufacturing, construction and mining. At the February 2023 meeting of WHS ministers, although ACCI achieved a win with our requested changes to the phrasing of the minister's agreement, several problematic proposals were ultimately accepted by ministers for progression by SWA, along with a targeted cost recovery implementation statement (CRIS) on a potential prohibition of engineered stone. ACCI also joined the expert advisory group to develop the National Silicosis Prevention Strategy to ensure alignment of work with SWA activities and minimise adverse proposals for industry.

With several inter-related silica and other matters ongoing, ACCI continues to lead strong industry advocacy to WHS ministers and relevant authorities on the importance of adequate consultation, evidence-based decision making and consideration of practical implementation issues and broad economy-wide impacts.

In June, National Cabinet changed the Impact Analysis Framework, removing the mandatory assessment of all regulatory proposals likely to have a significant community or economic impact by the Office of Impact Analysis (OIA).

Our work with the OIA had been paying off in increased scrutiny of SWA and their subsequent ruling that several chemicals of industry concern would require RISs.

In response to SWA deciding to discontinue any RISs afoot, ACCI began a strong coordinated advocacy campaign with members and peak non-members directed at WHS ministers and jurisdictional regulators. These efforts proved successful, with final decisions now resting with WHS ministers.

Following the release of the model Psychosocial Regulations, ACCI worked with several regulators to try and ensure consistent adoption of the regulations and model code. Engagement occurred with the federal, South Australian (through Business SA) and ACT governments.

To complement the new legislation, ACCI collaborated on new guidance on work design, produced a conceptual model explaining the overlap of the regulations and the hierarchy of controls and spoke to the importance of work design on industry-targeted podcasts and webinar briefings. Through SWA, we also provided feedback on a new Sexual and Gender-based Harassment Code.

In preparedness for further COVID-19, flood and bushfire emergencies, ACCI launched a new webpage with streamlined information for businesses on what to do and who to contact during emergencies. We also continue to liaise with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) on their disaster funding review and national action plans.

As the focus on COVID-19 wore off, ACCI met with international counterparts through the US Council for International Business to discuss business learnings from our response to COVID-19 and future preparedness. We also engaged with the Department of Health as they began discussions around the role and functions of an Australian centre for disease control. In the international space, ACCI continues to participate in the Business at OECD Health Forum.

ACCI worked with members of the Health Forum to finalise the policy position paper, 'Securing the future of Australia: Maximising the potential of our MTP sector - medical technology, biotechnology and pharmaceutical'.

The paper discusses the One Health government framework, future workforce, the digital revolution in health, investment needs for a world-leading health industry, and what further action government and industry need to take to ensure a resilient health system.

### Workplace Relations

Australia's workplace relations system is undergoing its most notable change since the introduction of the Fair Work Act. The Secure lobs, Better Pay Bill passed Parliament in December 2022. This legislation overhauled the enterprise bargaining system, introducing three new streams of multi-enterprise bargaining. In addition, it introduced new laws relating to fixed-term contracts, flexible work, equal remuneration, unpaid parental leave, pay secrecy, job advertisements and anti-discrimination. It also abolished the Australian Building and Construction Commission and Registered Organisations Commission.

ACCI strongly advocated for sufficient parliamentary scrutiny and amendments to this legislation. While this endeavour was unsuccessful in halting its passage, there were some improvements. The government has committed to reviewing the modern awards system; a reduction in complexity would be welcome.

As the legislation is implemented, ACCI continues to focus on ensuring employers are across the changes. ACCI released a guide to the non-bargaining changes to the Fair Work Act. As the year progressed, ACCI was involved in the first test cases of the new multi-enterprise bargaining provisions. We remain concerned about how these changes will impact certain sectors.

The Protecting Worker Entitlements Bill passed Parliament in June. This legislation contained less controversial changes, primarily regarding superannuation, migrant

workers, unpaid parental leave and employee deductions. Nevertheless, ACCI advocated for amendments to the bill to improve its application in practice for employers.

The government introduced the Closing Loopholes Bill on September 4. The legislation proposes changes to arrangements for casual employment, labour hire and employee-like provisions for so-called digital labour platforms. The legislation also proposes changes to road transport, union delegate rights and rights of entry, wage theft and other matters. The bill is now before a committee inquiry, due to report on February 1, 2024.

The consensus among business organisations is that the bill is fundamentally flawed. ACCI and other groups are presenting a united front to oppose passage of the bill. This work involves coordination with other groups, which has occurred through joint media statements and press conferences, and support for a prominent advertising and social media campaign.

ACCI's submission to the inquiry was released on October 14. In summary, the submission contends that the legislation will hinder, not help, efforts to boost productivity. The submission says the legislation will inhibit future wage growth by increasing the rigidity, risks, and costs of employing people, thereby damaging labour market outcomes. It will undermine the growth and viability of businesses. These outcomes contradict the purported economic objectives of the Employment White Paper. Small businesses are already facing fatigue from the extent of legislative changes. The rate of legislative change far exceeds a manageable level for small businesses; extensive changes will harm compliance, and penalties for non-compliance will rise. The "small business" exemptions in the bill do not go far enough and are a tacit admission that the proposed changes will hurt businesses of all sizes.

# Media and Communications

Over the past 12 months, ACCI's Media and Communications team has continued to support the organisation's strategic action (under the 2022-25 Strategic Plan) to set the agenda through insights-driven campaigns and to build a significant media presence.

Compared with other prominent business organisations, ACCI maintained a substantial 41 per cent share of voice.

This dominance was especially noteworthy during discussions surrounding the federal government's new industrial relations legislation, which took place in two legislative tranches, one in November 2022 and the other in September 2023.

Throughout the year, chief executive officer Andrew McKellar was the primary media spokesperson for ACCI. High-profile appearances included the ABC's Q+A program on September 4 and Channel 10's The Project earlier that same day. ACCI appeared on Sky News and the ABC news channel, providing the perspective of the ACCI network in these national forums.

ACCI's stable of frequently-quoted experts expanded during over the year. ACCI also appeared on ABC's The Drum and contributed opinion pieces to prominent publications such as the Daily Telegraph, The Australian, The Australian Financial Review and The Canberra Times.

In this non-election period, campaigning has focused on the government's industrial relations legislation. This has occurred in partnership with state chamber members and other national business groups. In November 2022, a joint letter signed by the chief executive officers of ACCI and the state and territory chambers were published as a full-paid advertisement in several national and capital city metropolitan newspapers. This itself generated earned media coverage on the news pages. Earned media activity spiked during this period until the legislation was passed by the Senate on December 1.

ACCI actively engaged in several joint activities with other business organisations. ACCI participated in the 'Find A Better Way' campaign, which focuses largely on the 'same job, same pay' provisions of the legislation, with the Minerals Council of Australia, Australian Energy Producers, the Australian Resources and Energy Employer Association, the Business Council of Australia, the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, Master Builders Australian the National Farmers Federation and the Recruitment, Consulting and Staffing Association. This campaign has involved free-to-air and subscription television, digital, radio and newspaper advertising.

In addition, ACCI participated in the 'Defend Your Rights' campaign initiated by Master Builders Australia, which is focusing its attention on independent contractors, subcontractors and small businesses. The 'Defend Your Rights' campaign has scope beyond the construction industry to other sectors including IT, health, retail, hospitality, aged care and support, freelancers and professional services. ACCI has also participated in joint media releases, and press conferences at Parliament House, regarding industrial relations.

Beyond the industrial relations focus, ACCI leveraged its media presence to advocate for its member-led policy positions in skills, migration, tourism, small business, energy, productivity and the economy, and workplace health and safety.

ACCI has continued to use social media to convey its advocacy and messaging to a broader audience, with LinkedIn proving to be the organisation's strongest platform. ACCI's overall social media following grew by 20.5 per cent from October 2022 to September 2023, representing a rate of growth that was 55 per cent faster than the previous year.



L-R: ACCI CEO Andrew McKellar; Australian Ambassador to the US, Dr Kevin Rudd; Head of Business Development and International Affairs Chris Barnes; Chief of Staff Karen Edwards; Chief of Policy and Advocacy David Alexander at Commerce House, Canberra.



L-R: Master Plumbers chief executive with Minister for Small Business Julie Collins at General Council, Hobart.



L-R: British High Commissioner Victoria Treadell and Chief Executive Officer Andrew McKellar mark the beginning of the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement.



L-R: AVCCI Chief of Policy and Advocacy David Alexander, OECD Secretary General Matthias Cormann and Head of Business Development and International Affairs Chris Barnes at Commerce House, Canberra.



L-R: ACCI Chief of Policy and Advocacy David Alexander; Work Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain; Chief Executive Officer Andrew McKellar; Head of Business Development and International Affairs Chris Barnes in Canberra.



L-R: Accord Australia executive director Bronwyn Capanna and Australian Dental Association chief executive officer Damian Mitsch at ACCI networking event, Sydney.



L-R: Director Karyn Sobels, Master Builders Australia chief executive officer Denita Wawn and Director Ray Sputore at General Council, Hobart.



Pharmacy Guild of Australia director of workplace relations and business Scott Harris at General Council, Hobart.

# Policy Submissions

1	A case for an extended unpaid carer leave entitlement?
2	A Migration System for Australia's Future
3	Annual Wage Review 2022-23
4	Australian Apprenticeship Services and Supports Discussion Paper
5	Australian Chamber – Tourism Pre- Budget Submission
6	Australian Cyber Security Strategy 2023- 2030 Discussion Paper
7	Australian Domestic Gas Market Security Mechanism Extension and Draft ADGSM Guidelines
8	Australian Skills Guarantee Discussion Paper
9	Australian Universities Accord
10	Australian Universities Accord Interim Report
11	Climate-related Financial Disclosure
12	Competition and Consumer (Gas Market Emergency Price) Order 2022
13	Draft Sexual Harassment Code
14	Draft Statement of Principles - Fair Work Commission
15	Draft Tower Cranes Code
16	Employment White Paper

17	Employment White Paper Submission
18	Fair Work Legislation (Protecting Worker Entitlements) Bill 2023
19	Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022
20	Gas Market Code of Conduct Consultation 2023
21	Global Agreement on Corporate Taxation
22	Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Bill 2023
23	Incident Notification Review
24	Independent review of Commonwealth Disaster funding, Alternate Standards Development Model
25	Inquiry into Australia's Tourism and International Education Sectors
26	Inquiry into the perceptions and status of vocational education and training
27	Inquiry into all Federal Government decisions relating to any proposals since 2016 for additional services to Australia's airports
28	Inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia
29	Inquiry into National Reconstruction Fund Corporation Bill 2022
30	Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services

31	Jobs and Skills Australia Amendment Bill 2023 (Provisions)
32	Jobs and Skills Australia discussion paper
33	Jobs and Skills Australia Study Discussion Plan
34	Legislating the Objective of Superannuation consultation
35	Lifting Productivity at Australia's Container Ports
36	Migration Amendment (Australia's Engagement in the Pacific and Other Measures) Bill 2023 and the Migration (Visa Pre-application Process) Charge Bill 2023
37	Migration, Pathway to Nation Building
38	Multinational Tax Transparency Bill and Making Multinational Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency Bill
39	National Silicosis Prevention Strategy
40	National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Data Streamlining) Amendment Bill 2023 [Provisions]
41	Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Improvements for Families and Gender Equality) Bill 2022
42	Planning Australia's 2023-24 Migration Program
43	Pre-Budget Submission 2023-24
44	President's Statement on Expert Panels
45	Privacy Act Review Report
46	Productivity Commission Australia's Maritime Logistics System Inquiry
47	Productivity Commission's 5-year Productivity Review – Advancing Prosperity
48	Promoting economic dynamism and business formation (House of Representatives standing committee on economics)

49	Reforming Australia's Domestic Gas Security Mechanism
50	Response to the 'Safe and Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Australia' discussion paper
51	Review of Queensland's Electrical Safety Act
52	Review of the Franchising Code of Conduct
53	Role and Functions of an Australian Centre for Disease Control
54	Safe Work Australia Consultation Paper on proposed Engineered Stone prohibition
55	Safe Work Australia Consultation Regulation Impact Statement: Managing the risks of respirable crystalline silica at work
56	Safe Work Australia National Compliance and Enforcement Policy
57	Safeguard Mechanism Reform
58	Securing Australia's Domestic Gas Supply Review
59	Securing the future of health in Australia: Maximising the potential of our MTP sector (ACCI policy publication)
60	Simplified Trade System Public Consultation Statutory Review of the Payment Times Reporting Act 2020
61	Submission on Alternate Standards Development Models
62	Treasury Laws Amendment (2022 Measures No. 4) Bill 2022



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