

Fair Work Ombudsman - Anna Booth - Opening Statement
Senate Estimates 25 October 2023

- At just over 7 weeks into my term as Fair Work Ombudsman, I would like to take this opportunity to speak to the Committee about my background and what I am hoping to achieve in this role.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman's purpose and functions include the promotion of harmonious, productive, cooperative and compliant workplaces.
- These functions significantly contribute to supporting national economic prosperity and social inclusion, which are clearly articulated objects of the Fair Work Act.
- I am driven to approach our work with this important context in mind.
- I began my career in the union movement, at the Clothing and Allied Trades Union and later the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, working to address the exploitation of predominantly migrant women workers. That saw me join the governing body of the ACTU, the ACTU Executive.
- I went on to roles in corporate Australia, including as a Board member of large companies. This allowed me to see our workplace relations system from the perspective of employers and appreciate the many challenges inherent in managing a sizable and productive workforce.
- Additionally, as a third-party neutral mediator in my own small consulting business CoSolve, and serving as Deputy President of the Fair Work Commission, I have worked to promote outcomes that are of mutual value to employers and employees through co-operative and collaborative approaches.
- It is very early in my term as Fair Work Ombudsman.
- My initial priority has been looking inwards - to meet my staff and understand all the cogs in this machine and how they work together to advance its purpose.
- Now I am beginning to look outwards, meeting our stakeholders in the workplace community to understand their priorities.

- I am pleased to say that within the OFWO I have observed a group of people working hard, and cohesively, to achieve a purpose that is compatible with the stakeholders' shared priorities: maintaining workplace standards for Australian workers and ensuring a level playing field for compliant employers. This purpose has been advanced under the capable leadership of my predecessor, Sandra Parker whose achievements are well known to the Committee.
- I want to build on this leadership to further this purpose.
- I am keen that the Fair Work Ombudsman continues to be seen as an impartial regulator that applies the law as it stands, as well as an important source of education and advice.
- While enforcement remains essential to compliance, access to reliable information on workplace laws, along with early-stage resolution of issues via information, advice and dialogue are also important elements of our role.
- I am also keen to see the workplace community own and act on its responsibilities.
- By working collaboratively, we will be able to be more effective in upholding workplace standards for Australian workers and levelling the playing field for compliant employers.
- I look forward to answering your questions at this hearing, and at hearings to come.