



UnionsACT

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Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Madam/Sir

RE: Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industry) Bill 2011

UnionsACT is the Australian Capital Territory's peak union body, representing 24 affiliated unions and more than 30,000 union members. I am writing in support of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia's (TCFUA) detailed submission to your current inquiry into amendments to the *Fair Work Act* aiming for better worker protections in the TCF industry. These protections are important for ACT TCF workers.

It is vital that the *Fair Work Act* be strengthened as much as possible with regard to TCF worker protections.

The number of people doing informal home-based work in the ACT industry is difficult to quantify. Research conducted by the TCF Union in 1995 suggested a ratio of four clothing outworkers for every one formal worker. This is consistent with the general conclusion of the union that at any given time there are between four and ten outworkers for every one formal worker in the clothing industry. As the formal sector has grown there is no reason to think that the informal sector has not grown as well. The difficulties in determining an accurate number of outworkers demonstrate the necessity of the Amendment Bill including stronger transparency measures for the long and complex supply chains of the TCF industry.

A crucial aspect of increased transparency will be stronger right of entry provisions.

Right of entry is a worker's right to access collective representation to pursue legitimate industrial interests. While UnionsACT supports stronger right of entry provisions for all

workers, we agree with the TCFUA that the particular difficulties of monitoring conditions of workers in the TCF industry should be recognized in the *Fair Work Act*.

Thank you for this opportunity to represent the views and concerns of ACT union members. While there is insecure work and while there are insecure workers in any industry, all workers are at risk from the spread of exploitative practices. We hope that the committee will retain and strengthen worker protections in the Amendment Bill. Please contact me on _____ or _____ if you wish to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely,

Kim Sattler
Secretary