

# **FUTURE DIRECTIONS** **2014 - 2015**



## **CONTINUING THE CHANGE PROGRAM**



FairWork  
Commission

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL WORKPLACE RELATIONS TRIBUNAL





# Introduction

This document represents the second stage of the Fair Work Commission's change program, **Future Directions**. This program continues the work we began in October 2012, which saw more than 25 initiatives completed by December 2013.

This second stage of our change program builds on the foundation of the first and includes an evaluation of some of the work already undertaken and the introduction of new pilot projects.

The **Future Directions** program is grouped under four key themes:

- Promoting Fairness and Improving Access;
- Efficiency and Innovation;
- Increasing Accountability; and
- Productivity and Engaging with Industry.

The second stage of **Future Directions** will again include a range of initiatives grouped under these four key themes. This work will be undertaken over a two-year period, with the flexibility to enable us to change and update initiatives as appropriate and continue to meet the needs of the community we serve.

This change program has been developed from the ground up, with extensive consultation undertaken with Commission Members, staff, our key stakeholders and the community generally.

The initiatives set out in this document respond to the change nature of the work of the Commission, from a tribunal dealing predominantly with collective disputes between represented parties, to an increasing number of self-represented citizens pursuing individual rights-based disputes.

The initiatives also reflect the continuing importance of the Commission's role in promoting cooperative and productive workplace relations.

The Commission operates in an economic, social and industrial environments which are constantly changing. Our objective is to respond appropriately to these changes and to continually improve the services we deliver to the community.

As always, the implementation of this stage of **Future Directions** is a collective effort, requiring the commitment and support of Commission Members, staff and our key stakeholders. I wish to thank all those involved for their ongoing support in the development and implementation of **Future Directions**.

**Justice Iain Ross AO**  
President

# Promoting Fairness and Improving Access

During the first phase of *Future Directions*, the Commission focused on providing information and assistance to self-represented parties. These initiatives acknowledged the changing nature of the disputes before the Commission and recognised that access to information was a cornerstone of ensuring a fair hearing and access to justice.

The Commission will continue this work by maintaining or expanding existing initiatives, as well as introducing new projects to assist self-represented parties to matters before the Commission.

## Initiatives

### *Improving Access to Information Materials*

1 By late 2014 we will develop further benchbooks and make them available online.

2 By the end of 2015 we will provide access to audio files of most Commission hearings.

### *Assistance to Commission Clients, in Particular Self-Represented Parties*

3 In 2014-15 we will review the scope of the current pro bono lawyer program in order to provide these services on a broader geographical and jurisdictional basis.

4 By the end of 2014 we will pilot an information kiosk in the Sydney Registry. We will assess how the kiosk is used by persons attending the Registry and whether it should be rolled out to other Registries. An information kiosk will enable applicants to complete and lodge forms electronically and access information both about the Commission and other agencies.

5 By mid 2015 we will produce further "Virtual Tours" of various aspects of the Commission's functions including anti-bullying and general protections.

6 By the end of 2014 we will establish processes for Commission staff to assist self-represented applicants by identifying issues in their application about which they may wish to seek legal advice.

### *Greater Access to Commission Services*

7 By early 2015 we will have reviewed and updated all of our forms.

8 During 2014 and 2015 we will improve access to, and presentation of, information and advice through:

- Continued improvement of the materials provided on our website;
- Enhancing the website's capacity to search and collate content of collective agreements;
- Conducting education webinars that enable clients to obtain detailed, targeted information.

9 During 2014 and 2015 we will examine how we can more effectively use technology, including live streaming of significant matters and improved access from remote areas.



## Efficiency and Innovation

The Commission undertook fundamental technology upgrades as part of the first phase of **Future Directions**. This included upgrades to our video-conferencing equipment, web platform and building an online lodgment portal. The next phase of **Future Directions** will build on this with further technological innovations that will increase the Commission's efficiency and improve its service delivery.

- 10 In 2014 we will begin preparation for conducting the Commission's first paperless Annual Wage Review in 2015.
- 11 All visitors to Commission premises from July 2014 will have WiFi access, including in hearing rooms.
- 12 Following the pilot program for unfair dismissal conciliation conferences, in 2014 and 2015 we will explore further uses of SMS alerts for Commission matters.
- 13 We will examine ways in which Commission staff can work more efficiently, such as:
  - By introducing a facility enabling lodgment of multiple related applications as a single "bulk" lodgment; and
  - By examining the cost effectiveness of "smart forms" for our most popular forms.
- 14 In 2014 and 2015 we will introduce an electronic case management system which will significantly reduce costs for the parties and for the Commission, assist in improving processing times and enhance access to information.
- 15 By mid 2015 we will review the processes for determining applications for the approval of enterprise agreements to ensure the most timely and efficient resolution of these matters.

## Increasing Accountability

The transparency and accountability of courts and tribunals ensures ongoing public trust and confidence in these institutions. The Commission introduced a range of performance benchmarks in the first stage of *Future Directions* in order to transparently report on our work. Over the next two years we will continue to build on the range of information the Commission releases about its work, both for the broader community and for those who have matters before us. We will also look to gauge client satisfaction with the Commission's services to determine any areas for improvement.

**16** During the next two years we will evaluate our performance against the International Framework for Tribunal Excellence to identify further measures to improve our performance against the Framework.

**17** In 2014 we will take a "snapshot" of a day in the life of the Commission to capture client satisfaction with any Commission services that were provided on that day.

**18** In mid 2015 we will run a pilot program to provide clients with selected application benchmark information as a guide to how long their application may take to be dealt with through to finalisation.

**19** In 2014 we will develop a performance indicator framework in order to provide greater reporting across a broader range of matters before the Commission.

**20** In 2014 we will take steps to enhance the transparency and accountability of the Commission through:

- Investigating options for research into the Commission's public value; and
- Facilitating an external review of the Commission's performance indicator framework.

**21** By late 2014 we will develop additional timeliness benchmarks for unfair dismissal matters.



# Productivity and Engaging with Industry

Improving productivity is an important consideration for any public institution. The Commission also has a legislative obligation to perform its functions in a manner that promotes harmonious and cooperative workplace relations.

A range of initiatives will be embarked upon in this next phase of **Future Directions** to continue our engagement with a broad range of stakeholder groups, with a view to better understanding how the Commission can provide services that better meet their needs.

## Public Engagement

**22** Throughout 2014 we will conduct mock hearings in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra and Hobart.

**23** By September 2014 we will consult with a broad range of clients in developing a communication strategy which improves the public's understanding of our services and role.

## Stakeholder Engagement

**24** In 2014 we will further facilitate the exchange of views with our key stakeholders by establishing new user groups, including a pilot program with community legal centres.

**25** In 2014 we will explore ways in which we can provide better services to small business.

## Workplace Engagement

**26** In 2014 we will continue the Australian Workplace Relations Study to capture the views of both employers and employees, resulting in the production of the first Australia wide statistical dataset linking employer data and employee data.

**27** In consultation with key stakeholders, in 2014 and 2015 we will develop and implement a strategy for the promotion of cooperative and productive workplace relations that facilitate change and foster innovation.

## Research Community

**28** In 2014 we will continue to engage with the research community by co-sponsoring a series of papers and accompanying lectures delivered in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart.

## Productivity

**29** In support of the recommendation contained in 'Towards more productive and equitable workplaces - an evaluation of the Fair Work legislation', in late 2014 we will conduct and publish qualitative research to identify clauses in enterprise agreements that enhance productivity or innovation.

**30** By mid 2015 we will conduct research to map the location and business needs of parties to assist in determining how we can provide services that more effectively and efficiently meet their needs.

# Links to the Future Directions strategy

## Website

[www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/operations/strategy-vision-future-directions](http://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/operations/strategy-vision-future-directions)

## Future Directions 2012-2013 Strategy

[www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FutureDirections.pdf](http://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FutureDirections.pdf)

## Future Directions Progress Report and Engagement Strategy

[www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-ProgressReport-Mar-2013.pdf](http://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-ProgressReport-Mar-2013.pdf)

## Future Directions Progress Report – Breaking down the barriers to justice

[www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-BreakingDownBarriers-May-2013.pdf](http://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-BreakingDownBarriers-May-2013.pdf)

## 2013 Final Progress Report

[www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-FinalProgressReport-Dec-2013.pdf](http://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/resources/FD-FinalProgressReport-Dec-2013.pdf)



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