

11 June 2002

Committee Secretary
Legislation Committee - Australian Senate

By E-mail: eet.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary

Re: Inquiry into Small Business

Further to correspondence forwarded to us on the 22 March 2002, we write in response to the request for submissions into the above Inquiry. We note that you have already been provided with a submission from the ACTU. Having read that submission, we indicate support for its content.

It should be noted that the level of small business concentration in Queensland is substantial. The nature of that small business varies, to include both retail trade, accommodation etc, and communication services. The use of statistical data that caps small business at less than 20 employees can often belie the contemporary nature of employment.

It is reasonable to assume that there are large businesses by way of financial commitment, and monetary turnover, particular those evident in the information technology areas, whose employment levels maybe very small. Such businesses may remunerate their staff at the higher end of the scale, and be leaders in training / skills enhancement and technology adoption, by virtue of the niche market they work in. Those businesses can be contrasted with the other more traditional types of small business, for example those operating in the retail trade, which may also be un-unionised, and in which remuneration is at award wage rates, and where investment in staff is marginal, to say the least.

As such, it is difficult to reconcile two quite conflicting types of small business. This suggests that to target such a group for peculiar or unique industrial arrangements based on their employment size, is not to recognise the changing business face, and to create too many generalities about a business sector which often has very little in common. Such considerations need to be borne in mind when developing a regulatory framework which seeks to exclude certain groups based on non more than size of business.

The QCU has found within the Queensland context that the state legislation we operate under, which seeks not to delineate based on size of workplace as it relates to say unfair dismissal, has created an equal playing field amongst business operating within this

jurisdiction. In areas such as redundancy, there is a concentrated effort on the QCU's part to remove the exemption provision, for businesses employing less than 15 employees, which applies in the instance of award employees access to redundancy entitlements. This also is seen as a further example of removing an antiquated division based on workplace size. It remains to be seen how this issue is resolved, but it is an interesting activity to consider.

We hope the above information, used as an adjunct to the ACTU submission, assists this committee in its inquiries.

Yours faithfully

Grace Grace
General Secretary