

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (Agreement Validation) Bill 2004

Submission no: 7

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The Agribusiness Employers Federation ('AEF') has represented the interests of Australia's major pastoral houses (including household names such as Elders Limited, Landmark AWB and Roberts Limited) and other non-farm agricultural enterprises since 1946.

AEF is a non-government, non-profit organisation funded by its members, and is a registered organisation under the *Workplace Relations Act, 1996*.

The pastoral industry is unique in a number of respects. Our members conduct business through over 700 service centres spread throughout Australia. Our membership services the needs of rural producers in the fields of:

- Agronomic advice
- Insurance
- Livestock
- Merchandise
- Purchase and sale of wool, cattle, sheep and other saleable goods
- Rural Finance
- Real Estate
- Wool

Our membership shares the common focus of developing sustainable profits for our clients through improving the production and marketing performance of Australia's rural industry.

Our members employment arrangements are exclusively in the federal arena with a combination of Certified Agreements, Australian workplace agreements and Awards. The ongoing validity of industrial instruments such as Certified Agreements is important to our membership hence this submission.

AEF is a member of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. AEF has had the opportunity of considering the submission made by ACCI and adopts and endorses that submission.

The legislation proposed by the Government is a welcome, practical, common sense approach to the issues raised in the Electrolux Decision. AEF supports the proposed legislation and welcomes the continuation of this approach in other areas of industrial relations reform such as a unitary unfair dismissal system

In particular AEF submits that;

1. The Workplace Relations Amendment (Agreement Validation) Bill 2004 is supported and should be enacted.
2. The Bill deals in a practical common sense manner with the issue concerning the validity of agreements made under the Workplace Relations Act 1996 which arises the High Courts decision in Electrolux Home Products v AMWU v Others

3. The issue is one which can only be appropriately dealt with by legislative amendment.
4. It is in the interests of industrial parties to agreements made before the High Court decision not be void by virtue of the High Court decision.
5. The manner in which the Bill seeks to achieve this objective is supported.

Christopher Platt
Executive officer
Agribusiness Employers Federation
23 November 2004