



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Your Ref 11 September 08
Our Ref DM2-434104

Mr John Carter
Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
PO Box 6100, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Carter

I refer to your letter of 11 September 2008 to Ms Lisa Paul, Secretary, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department), inviting submissions to an inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment and Workplace Relations into the *Building and Construction Industry (Restoring Workplace Rights) Bill 2008* (the Bill). The Secretary has asked me to reply on her behalf.

The Government's *Forward with Fairness Policy Implementation Plan* includes a number of commitments in relation to Australia's building and construction industry, including a commitment to retain the Australian Building and Construction Commission (the ABCC) until 31 January 2010. At that time the Government will replace the ABCC with a specialist building and construction division of the inspectorate of Fair Work Australia. The Government has consistently maintained that this process will be conducted in a measured and consultative way, taking into account the views of all stakeholders.

Consistent with its commitments, the Government has commenced a process of extensive consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure that the transition to those new arrangements will be orderly, effective and robust. On 22 May 2008, the Deputy Prime Minister announced the appointment of the Honourable Murray Wilcox QC to consult widely with industry stakeholders on the transition to the specialist division (the Wilcox consultations). His Honour is due to provide his final report by the end of March 2009. A discussion paper inviting submissions from stakeholders was released by his Honour on Thursday 9 October 2008. A copy of that paper is attached for your reference. The discussion paper is also publicly available at www.workplace.gov.au/wilcox.

As the Wilcox consultations are ongoing, it would be inappropriate for the Department to pre-empt the outcome of that process at this time.



Should you wish to seek further information about the Wilcox consultations, you may wish to email the Wilcox Consultation Secretariat on fwa_building@deewr.gov.au, or contact me on (02) 6121 7922.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'M. Maynard', written in a cursive style.

Michael Maynard
Group Manager
Workplace Relations Implementation Group

9 October 2008