

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for making an allowance for my submission in response to the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No.2) and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013.

I am a radiographer employed by Queensland Health and have a nine year history with the organisation and feel compelled to compose a submission for consideration by the Committee. I have worked for private enterprise in the same field of expertise earlier in my professional career.

There are several points which I find extremely concerning on their intent and consequential impact upon not only radiographers but others covered by the 'Allied Health' umbrella.

The first concern relates to the 'award modernisation process' which indicates streamlining of the award to such an extent that it's barely distinguishable between disciplines. For such a diverse and unique brand of Health Practitioners to be encompassed by a generic and scant award not only strips away conditions, allowances and provisions for specialities and skill sets that were previously deemed worthy of such provisions by prior cohorts but fails to provide any incentive to retain, attract and progress the covered professions in the Public Sector. Clauses in effect which pertain to radiographers are going to differ from those who practice speech pathology, physiotherapists or social work. Working alongside and administering radiation is specific to just a few and clauses within the agreement address standards of mitigation in order to maintain a safe and healthy workforce and patient cohort. There is great value on maintaining the current structure of awards as they adequately address the issues that are both similar and unique to each profession and provide a robust framework for equity across the state. This safety net in the form of the award and associated bedded provisions is what attracts high quality health workers and maintains the standard and competitiveness with private enterprise which is integral in maintaining the balance between the two sides.

The second concern relates to bargaining entailing tighter timeframes and a vastly decreased percentage of items which can be actively discussed and negotiated. Removing the entitlement to bargain pay rate rises which are usually benchmarked to the rise in cost of living is extremely suspicious and consequently pay rises which are simply 'handed down' would not need to be explained or standardised. In light of the recent payrise for MPs in the order of 8.9%, it is in stark and direct contrast to the paltry 1.5% that HPs have been offered for EB3 which is ascertained to be below the rise in the cost of living (CPI) and dealt out to the reasoning of 'budget restrictions' and 'cost cutting'. If this Bill were to be successful, there would more of these discrepancies and unfair dealings from the employer to employees. Moreover, by shortening and restricting the time taken to finalise bargaining would lead to a rushed and hurried attempt at reaching agreement that could be delayed even further by the employer resulting in a unfinished and inadequate product that does not address the current and developmental needs of the workforce that could arise from circumstances outside of their control.

The third issue pertains to imposed limits in taking protected action in the workplace, usually a reserved part of the industrial right of the worker. These limits suppress the voices of the worker even further and heavily impede the right to speak out and flag injustices that have occurred or could occur due to poor decision-making by the

employer in the workplace is deemed severe enough by the collective to disrupt normal working patterns in protest. Decisions to evoke industrial action are not taken lightly and seen as a last resort when other democratic processes are failing. By weighting the scales too much in one party's favour can never be seen as fair or equitable and should not be supported as a result.

The fourth concern relates to the introduction of individual contracts and destabilisation of permanency of the employee above a certain income bracket in favour of the current process. There are so many unsettling characteristics of this component. There will be a great sense of the unknown when it comes to permanency of these employees whose remuneration will boil down to their ability to negotiate and the character of the negotiator in preference to the skill and knowledge they offer their respective department and district. This amendment serves to desecrate the chances of recruiting highly qualified employees who have proven to be integral in the process of regulating and improving service delivery to the community.

The last part which raises alarm is the introduction of the Public Service Commission to approve agreements in the future. An independent component is sought as a prerequisite to umpire in order to ensure the process and agreements are fair and equitable. By removing the 'independent umpire' in place of an affiliated Public Service Commission could not possibly pretend to be objective or an indifferent judge and would probably result in an unfair outcome for employees.

The attack on public service employees and the agreed upon methods for bargaining and all things industrial is one which is multi-faceted and bent on the dismembering of the democratic right of the worker to attempt a proper relationship with the employer and have the resource and opportunity to challenge any change or unsafe instruction from the employer. It is not the intention of employees by any means to restrict or burden the employer with red-tape and delay to important functions required for quality service provision. It is however, extremely apparent that there are unfair agendas on the table which result in dishonour to the employee.

It is with distress that I compile this submission in the hope that it will shed some light of the impact this Bill would be responsible should it be legislated.

Yours faithfully



Rebecca Griffin

