

Dear Sir/Madam

*Re: Submission for consideration of proposed bill "Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No. 2) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013".*

I am a radiographer employed by Queensland Health for the last four years and I feel compelled to compose a submission for consideration by the Committee. Previously in my professional career I have also worked for the private enterprise in the same field of expertise.

I am highly concerned at the intent and consequential impact of some points raised which will affect radiographers, sonographers and other Allied Health professionals.

The main concern I have with the Bill is the 'award modernisation process' as this will streamline interdisciplinary awards all under the same umbrella. Health Practitioners and Allied Health Professionals are all unique bodies, be it radiographers, sonographers, physiotherapists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists – they are all unique in their matter of work. Clauses between these disciplines will and should differ due to their work nature, specialities and skill sets and for such diverse and unique HPs, this should be encompassed by their own set of awards which adequately address issues similar and unique to each profession. To streamline this into a generic and scant award will not only strip away conditions, allowances and provisions for individual skill sets deemed worthy by prior cohorts but it will fail to retain, attract and progress these professionals in the Public Sector. This will reduce efficiency, team morale and the ability to provide public services in a timely manner. 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. For example, radiographers have a duty of care to ensure radiation (which is undetectable yet harmful) is administered in a professional manner. They work in ionising radiation environments where they receive radiation doses to themselves to allow health services to be provided and diagnoses and treatments achievable, and the reasoning behind the extra week of annual leave due to the nature of their work. Every health professional have certain awards deemed only at their profession, and maintaining the current structure of awards will 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.

Other issues I have include bargaining entailing tighter timeframes and a vastly decreased percentage of items which can be actively discussed and negotiated. By removing this entitlement is suspicious and concerning, as

bargaining pay rate rises should be benchmarked against the cost of living and CPI.

Also, by imposing limits in the ability in taking protective action in the workplace removes the reserved part of the industrial right of the worker. Removing the right to speak out the ability to evoke industrial action are an implication that other democratic processes are failing. A bargaining process is necessary to protect the rights of both parties, and by doing so will put the scales out of balance and should not be supported.

Another concern which raises alarm is the introduction of the Public Service Commission to approve agreements in the future. An independent component ensures processes and agreements are fair and equitable, and should be a prerequisite. 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.

I have addressed only some of my primary concerns with the proposed Bill. My understanding in the objectives and underlying implications of these amendments is the government's intentions in addressing issues of the "employment relationship" such that it potentially benefits them as an employer and does not and appears to not intending to make any provisions to protect the rights and liberties of those of the workforce, Queensland Health employees and all those of the Queensland Public that will consequentially be affected by these changes either directly or indirectly.

Yours Faithfully

Joanna Chiang

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