

May 2009

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Industrial Relations
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

By facsimile: 02) 6205 0157

Dear Minister,

Re: National Review of Occupational Health and Safety Laws

I understand that all Governments agreed to harmonise OHS laws *provided there would be no reduction to existing OHS standards.*

As a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) in the finance industry, I write to voice my strong objections to several of the recommendations made by the Panel appointed by the Federal Labor Government, to review these OHS laws.

I object to any new, proposed laws that will:

- Increase the risk of victimisation and harassment of HSR's by giving an employer greater powers to remove me from my voluntary, employee representative HSR role;
- Require that I may only assist workers on OHS matters after they are in dispute;
- Weaken OHS consultation with workers (*by requiring that an employer consult only where "reasonably necessary" with "directly affected" workers*);
- Require I undertake competency training for a volunteer, HSR role;
- Reduce the ability of my Union to pursue suspected breaches (*by requiring 24 hours notice to inspect documents and by failing to expressly identify that a Union can copy documents/take photographs as part of investigating breaches*);
- Remove the right of Unions to undertake prosecutions. To the best of my knowledge WorkCover NSW has never prosecuted a bank for OHS breaches as a result of an armed hold-up. My Union the Finance Sector Union of Australia (FSU), has undertaken several, successful prosecutions in these circumstances. This has led to improved workplace health and safety outcomes throughout bank's retail networks, including beyond NSW.

Workers voted out the Howard Government because they took away our workplace rights and protections. Before taking office Labor gave a clear OHS commitment they would **"uphold existing safety standards"**. If the problems I have identified are not addressed, safety standards will certainly not be upheld, much less improved.

I therefore call on you Minister to fix these problems. I look forward to receiving your reply and request it be sent to my email address at

Yours faithfully

(Sign and print name)