

ACTUS WORKPLACE LAWYERS

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Australian Government releases issues paper ahead of the Jobs and Skills Summit

On 17 August, the Australian Government released an issues paper ahead of the Jobs and Skills Summit which will be held on 1 and 2 September at Parliament House. The Prime Minister will chair the Summit.

The issues paper deals with the five key themes that will be covered at the Summit:

- Maintaining full employment and growing productivity.
- Boosting job security and wages.
- Lifting participation and reducing barriers to employment.
- Delivering a high-quality labour force through skills, training and migration.
- Maximising opportunities in the industries of the future.

Workplace relations issues are largely dealt with in the issues paper under the 'Boosting job security and wages' theme. The paper expresses concern about:

- The major decline since 2010 in the number of enterprise agreements and the number of employees covered by enterprise agreements;
- The impact of labour hire, casual, rolling fixed term and gig economy work arrangements on job security and wages;
- Wage underpayments; and
- Gender pay inequity.

The paper raises the following issues for discussion:

- How can bargaining be revitalised to help boost productivity and sustainable wage growth?
- How do we ensure emerging employment practices benefit workers' economic security?
- How can we achieve equal opportunities for women and close the gender pay gap?
- How can we ensure workplaces are safe and fair, particularly for those people at higher risk of harassment, discrimination and other breaches of workplace minimum standards?

Following the Summit, the Government intends to issue a White Paper on Employment and call for submissions from interested parties to develop a comprehensive blueprint for Australia's future labour market.

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