

**INTRODUCTION OF JULIA GILLARD
Ai Group PIR Conference Hyatt Hotel
Monday 3 December 2007**

**By Heather Ridout
Chief Executive Australian Industry Group**

It is a pleasure to have joining us once again at our Ai Group PIR Conference, Julia Gillard, fresh from her swearing in today as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment, Workplace Relations and Social Inclusion.

I think we should take this opportunity to warmly congratulate Julia on her appointment.

Julia was with us at our last Conference but of course a lot has changed since then.

I said when asked about her taking on such a mega portfolio that it was a very, very big task but if you give a very capable woman a big task they tend to do it extremely well.

We have a deep interest in all areas of her portfolio from all aspects of education and training to the changes to Workchoices.

We had a lot of constructive dialogue with both Julia and Kevin in the lead-up to the election.

Today is a continuation of that dialogue with the new reality of Labor in power.

At the weekend, Julia outlined a two stage timetable for Government's new workplace relations legislation which we'd be interested in hearing more about today.

The first stage being the implementation of transitional arrangements relating to the abolition of AWAs in the first sitting of Parliament next year.

The second stage, including changes to agreement making, unfair dismissals and many other areas, would not start until the middle of the

year, with many of the key changes coming into effect from January 2010.

During this process, we are very pleased that Labor has undertaken to consult widely about its substantive industrial relations legislation including releasing an exposure draft.

Ai Group will play an important part in those consultations.

Can I say here that Ai Group was strongly supportive of the essential thrust of the architecture of Workchoices including the move to a unitary national workplace relations system for corporations.

We had concerns with Labor's original Forward with Fairness policy released in April. Substantial modifications were made to the ALP policy in August which addressed many of the issues which Ai Group had raised. This included, for example the retention of the ABCC until 2010, retaining the existing right of entry laws, allowing immediate access to courts if unlawful industrial action is taken and allowing AWAs to continue for their full term –up to five years.

There are still several areas of potential concern depending upon how the legislation is structured and drafted. The collective bargaining elements of the policy are one area of particular interest to PIR Members, and as you are aware we have raised a number of issues about this element of the policy.

We look forward to continuing to consult with you about this and other areas of the legislation to ensure that the final outcome is fair and balanced for all parties, and does not impede business efficiency.

As the Government introduces its proposed changes we believe there should be substantial efforts made to remove some of the overregulation and we will work with the Government on that.

Julia's time is short today with her first Ministerial meeting this afternoon.

Please welcome the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.

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