

Forum Focus: Health & Community



Chairman's message

During recent months the Health and Community Forum has focussed its attention on the imposts of conducting business in the health and community sectors to better understand the areas where CCI can add value to its members.

The cost pressures identified are consistent with those matters described in the CCI paper on the cost of doing business in WA, in particular:

- the consequences of significant workforce shortages;
- industrial relations policy and regulatory settings;
- poorly framed occupational safety and health settings; and
- excessive red tape.

In the context of an increasing population and an ageing demographic, health and community sectors face some unique challenges in the near future including:

- staffing the newly commissioned Fiona Stanley hospital and an expanded St of God hospital in Murdoch;
- responding to the flow on effect of the pay equity and low paid bargaining applications; and
- finding ways to respond to the labour and cost pressures that arise from a growing and very active mining and resources sector.

To ensure that we are focussed on the key issues that will make a difference when conducting business in WA, members of the Health and Community Forum will be conducting a workshop early in the New Year to absorb the learnings from the previous year, grasp the challenges in the New Year and set our priorities accordingly.

In the meantime may you enjoy the Christmas celebrations and return refreshed and looking forward to what is set to be another challenging but exciting year ahead.

Finally on behalf of the Forum I would like to acknowledge the role and leadership of Anne Bellamy. Anne's insight and presence has helped shape CCI's response to the needs of the health and community sectors over many years. The most recent expression of this focus was the formation of CCI's Social Policy Committee - a unique expression of the importance of a healthy and vibrant community on the wellbeing of the business sector. We thank Anne for her work and wish her well in her new endeavours.

Vaughan Harding



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2012-2013 Pre-Budget Submission

With next year's budget the last before the next state election, the focus of CCI's 2012-13 Pre-Budget Submission is on ensuring the government takes action to finish the reforms that it has started. This forms the main theme for this year's submission.

The recommendations are:

1. Cut the payroll tax rate by at least 0.5 per cent, and increase the payroll tax exemption threshold to \$1.4 million, so that genuine small businesses are on average exempt from payroll tax. The payroll tax exemption threshold should also be indexed to address bracket creep.
2. Continue to work with industry to implement the remaining recommendations of the Skilling WA document, in particular developing initiatives to attract and retain under-represented groups into the workforce, such as targeted training funding for youth unemployment and programs that will better match jobs for the unemployed and under participating groups to give them the skills they need for employment.
3. Amend IR legislation to ensure that if a public holiday falls on a weekend, businesses are not forced to pay penalties to employees for an additional day. An amendment to section 49I of the Industrial Relations Act is needed to ensure the OSH right of entry in WA is consistent with the generic right of entry under the Fair Work Act.
4. Streamline the approvals process by establishing a single decision making authority, and rolling-out the online Environmental Assessment and Regulatory System (EARS) across all approvals agencies as recommended by the Review of Approval Processes in Western Australia.
5. Develop a strategic direction for WA, which brings together plans for the State's energy, water, economic and social infrastructure, and workforce needs, as well as protecting the State's finances. Such a plan should be tied to a long term vision for the State, and remain flexible to changing priorities and economic conditions.
6. Reduce growth in recurrent government spending, by implementing the findings of the Economic Audit Committee and broader public sector reform. Amending the Public Sector Management Act 1974 to allow for involuntary separations and lift the freeze on attraction and retention benefits is a priority area for reform. The government also needs to look at ways to improve agency performance and accountability. In this regard, agencies and CEOs/Directors General must have a meaningful and measurable set of performance indicators to ensure they deliver outcomes.
7. Determine the appropriate Local Government boundaries for metropolitan and regional WA, to ensure there is an appropriate rate base and legislate for the amalgamation of particular local governments, should the relevant local governments refuse to do so voluntarily.
8. Continue the path towards cost reflective pricing in electricity tariffs, as outlined in the 2011-12 Budget. Urgently deliver an ambitious Strategic Energy Initiative that sets down the Government's immediate and ongoing commitment to a secure, reliable and competitive energy market in WA.

Sufficient and appropriate funding will need to be allocated to the Office of Energy to deliver this agenda.
9. Develop a State Preventative Health Plan, to encompass all aspects of preventative health from birth onwards. Such a plan should be separately administered within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and focus on education, marketing, and encouraging employers to establish preventative health programs.

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CCI Workplace Participation Forum: Utilising the Untapped Workforce - 4 November 2011

Featuring a number of Western Australian business leaders, including an address by Richard Goyder, Wesfarmers Limited, the CCI Workforce Participation Forum was held on Friday 4th November 2011.

The Forum provided attendees with an insight into some strategies to increase workforce participation in order to address the skills and labour shortage facing Western Australia. There is a large section of the community that employers, with some flexibility and process, can engage to fill some of the shortages.

Speakers, including Forum member Dr Penny Flett, Brightwater Care Group and Disability Services Committee member, Sue Robertson, Edge Employment Solutions, presented participants with insight into the reality of engaging, managing and retaining a wide range of under-represented groups, including Aboriginal people, mature age employees, women in the workforce and people with disabilities.

2012 Advocacy Agenda

Each year the CCI Advocacy team, in consultation with members, determines the policy priorities for the year ahead.

Having consulted with members late last year, the CCI Advocacy Team has identified the following list of priority issues for 2012

- Productivity – examining ways to lift Australia's flagging productivity.
- Participation – the issue of labour shortages remains a priority for WA employers. This paper will examine what changes are needed to increase the participation levels among certain groups, including older people, indigenous Australians, women and people with a disability.
- 2013 State Election Plan - setting out the issues of importance to business in the lead up to the March 2013 State Election. It will be similar to the previous state Strategies for Growth document.
- WA Vision – as part of CCI's efforts to convince Government of the need to develop and implement a State plan, this document will act as a vision statement for WA and highlight the need for a long term plan.

These papers will be in addition to the advocacy work already being undertaken by the team which includes the health and community sectors.