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A long To Do list for new Federal Government Ministers

Article by James Pearson CCI, West Australian column

Christmas has come early for some of the Ministers in the Federal Government.

New Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten is responsible for the promised review of the Fair Work Act in 2012. The review should be his first priority, and carried out by an independent authority such as the Productivity Commission.

The government's industrial relations changes have swung the balance of power too far in favour of unions, and that is being exploited, to the detriment of employers.

Small businesses are hamstrung by the loss of flexibility, and employers large and small have to negotiate with unions on issues that are the prerogative of management and don't belong in industrial relations bargaining.

New Industry and Innovation Minister Greg Combet can encourage the innovation that is vital for local businesses to succeed in an increasingly tough international marketplace. There is much to learn from the sophisticated resources and energy companies in WA and the many local businesses supporting them.

Manufacturing Minister Kim Carr has an important task to support the efforts of the local manufacturing sector to become more competitive.

Small Business Minister Mark Arbib will know that Australia, and WA in particular, is a high cost place in which to do business. Reducing red tape and lowering costs should be a top priority.

Most workers employed in the private sector are working in small businesses. The new Minister should look for ways to help the sector generate employment and remain profitable..

CCI will work with WA Senator and Minister Chris Evans, who retains responsibility for Skills, to support private sector training and apprenticeships as part of CCI's strong Vocation and Educational Training commitment.

New jobs requiring special skills are being created for young Western Australians, and for older workers who bring many years of experience to their work. The role for

government in helping employers get the skilled workforce they need, when they need them, will be crucial.

2012 ought to be a year of practical reforms that enables WA to realise its enormous potential.

That includes making sure major projects can go ahead on time by allowing them to attract interstate and overseas workers to supplement local labour.

It also includes improving WA's infrastructure bottlenecks, including roads, telecommunications, port and rail, to accelerate the benefits; and providing WA with the GST funds we need to support our rapidly expanding economy.

That's a long To Do list. I wish the ministers and their parliamentary colleagues a restful and enjoyable Christmas.

It is going to be a busy New Year.