

Northern Territory



industrial relations society

GPO Box 1292 Darwin NT 0801
www.irsnt.asn.au

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2006

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Committee has been busy, as usual. We are in the process of putting together a great Annual Convention for this year. Mark your diaries for 24-26 August 2006 when our Convention commemorating the Walk-off from Wave Hill station and the growth of industrial relations will be held. We have engaged the services of Essential Experiences and Events to assist us to make this year's Convention another success. Early bird booking information will be distributed soon.

We have also developed a great package of Lunch 'n' Learn events including a visit to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and some interesting interactive workshops. (See "Professional Development Seminars" below). Thanks to Chris Hancock and Linda Blair for their work in putting the programme together.

Unfortunately, work commitments have again claimed Committee members. Our Editor of this Newsletter Jennifer Laurence has had to resign her position. Leigh Greig our Treasurer has also had to resign. Both of them are a great loss to the Committee, as we became used to their excellent work and energetic commitment.

We are fortunate to have gained Sharon Scurr as a Committee member and welcome her. See our call for a replacement Treasurer below.

Colleen Atkinson

President

COMMITTEE MEETING

The next committee meeting will be held on **Thursday 20 April 2006**. If you have any items that you wish to be placed on the agenda, please contact IRSNT Secretary Linda Blair at linda.blair@nt.gov.au

MEMBERSHIP

Application forms for Membership/Renewal 2005/2006 can be found on the IRSNT website at www.irsnt.asn.au

TREASURER

The current treasurer of the Society has recently tendered her resignation and the Committee is calling for any members who may be interested in taking on this role. We do not expect the role to be overly time consuming and the Committee is considering engaging a book-keeper which would further reduce the Treasurer's workload.

Please contact Chris Hancock (chris.hancock@nt.gov.au) if you are interested in taking on the role or would like further information in relation to it.

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EVENTS DIARY

Report on Lunch and Learn 22ND February – David Sweet, Partner, Cridlands Lawyers, Insurance & Employment Law Group

David Sweet provided a very interesting case study in regard to unfair dismissal. The case was complicated by allegations of discrimination and harassment and provided participants with food for thought as they worked through the facts of the case with David's guidance. The session was well attended and the IRSNT thanks Cridlands for supporting the event which also included providing the venue and refreshments.

Chris Hancock

IRSNT Annual Convention, SkyCity, Darwin – 24 – 26th August 2006

The IRSNT Annual Convention dates have been confirmed for three days commencing on Thursday 24th August. This year's Convention theme, "From Little Things Big Things Grow," co-incides with the 40th year anniversary of the "Wave Hill Walk-Off."

In 1966, 200 Aboriginal cattle workers and their families, led by the Gurindji people, walked-off Wave Hill Station, approximately 600 kilometres south of Darwin, striking for better pay and conditions. The nine-year strike developed into a successful claim for return of traditional Gurindji lands by the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off is considered a key event in the chronology of both the Aboriginal land rights movement and industrial relations and reform in Australia. Gurindji elder Vincent Lingiari (1908–1988), an Aboriginal rights' activist who initiated the Walk-Off, was awarded the Order of Australia for his services to Aboriginal people.

If members have suggestions for speakers, please contact Colleen Atkinson via email at colleen.atkinson@nt.gov.au

Stay tuned for further information.

IRSNT Professional Development Seminars 2006

The IRSNT schedule of events is shaping up to be an informative and exciting program. In addition to lots of networking opportunities and social functions, topics to be canvassed throughout the year include:

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| 31 March | Portable long service leave for the NT Construction Industry |
| 12 April | Site visit to the AIRC for a run down on protocols and procedure |
| late May | Introduction to Advocacy course presented by His Honour Justice Trevor Riley (Supreme Court NT) |
| 17 & 18 June | Advocacy Course presented by His Honour Justice Trevor Riley and Commissioner Lawson (AIRC) |
| July | Debate: IR - Can We Live Without It? |
| September | Employment Agreements: How to Develop Them |

Visit the IRSNT website and watch for notices by email and in the Newsletter.

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Conferences

ACROD National Industry Association for Disability Services, Inaugural National Conference on Social Participation – Star City, Sydney 30-31st May 2006

The inaugural ACROD National Conference on Social Participation has been designed specifically for providers and funders of services for people with disability including day activities, post school options, recreation, community access, leisure, community participation, lifestyle options, alternatives to employment, transition to work, adult training and support and community life skills.

Further information can be found at www.acrod.org.au

The Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work (ACREW) Conference - Tuscany, Italy, 1-4th July 2006

ACREW has been established to promote research and scholarship in the broad area of work and employment. ACREW, in association with the Department of Kings College, London is holding its annual conference themed "Socially Responsive, Socially Responsible Approaches to Employment and Work" will be held in Tuscany, Italy in July 2006. The conference program is designed to appeal to researchers in human resource management, industrial and employee relations, organisational behaviour, and general management. Further information can be found at www.monash.edu.au

The Monash University Prato Centre is located in an eighteenth-century building, the "Palazzo Vaj," in the historic centre of Prato, an ancient Tuscan city, now famous for its textile manufacturing. The Centre is twenty minutes by train from central Florence, Italy.

Early bird registrations close 5 May 2006.

Our Work ... Our Lives: National Conference on Women and Industrial Relations, Rydges Hotel, Southbank, Brisbane 12-14 July 2006

The Queensland Working Women's Service and the Griffith Business School at Griffith University is hosting a three day conference focusing on the impact of various parts of the Work Choices legislation such as changes to unfair dismissal law and the award system and their effect on job security, pay equity and productivity. The conference is designed to appeal to policy makers, business people, unionists, HR and IR practitioners, activists on womens' issues and anyone interested in gender and work.

Further information can be found on the IRSNT website or for conference paper and program inquiries telephone (07) 3875 7619.

... OF INTEREST/IN THE NEWS

Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005 – Commencing March 2006

The *Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005* ("the Act") has been approved by Parliament creating a new National workplace relations system for Australia. At over 760 pages long, it makes major amendments to the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*.

Most of the provisions of the Act are not yet operative. The Federal Government has announced that the operative date for most provisions will be some time in March 2006.

The operation of the Work Choices legislation heralds a new era in workplace relations in Australia with major changes to workplace agreement making, awards, the safety net of minimum conditions, termination of employment, the role of unions, and nearly every aspect of the employment relationship.

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Boeing Industrial Dispute, 23rd February 2006

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) has instructed its NSW counterpart to butt out of one of the nation's longest-running workplace disputes, involving aviation giant Boeing. The order by the AIRC full bench was welcomed by the company, but both the Australian Workers Union (AWU), which represents the workers involved, and the NSW government, have hinted the battle isn't over yet.

The AIRC issued an order to restrain the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) from dealing with the matter.

The 25 workers at the centre of the dispute, who repair and maintain the RAAF's F/A-18 Hornet jet fighters at the Williamtown RAAF base near Newcastle, returned to work last week. The employees walked off the job last June over Boeing's refusal to negotiate a collective agreement with their union.

A complex industrial battle has ensued, with the matter crossing from federal to state jurisdiction after NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca referred the matter to the NSW IRC last year. The matter was progressing through the state tribunal after the NSW IRC full bench found it more likely to be solved in the state jurisdiction than the federal.

However, Boeing last week applied to the AIRC for an order to restrain the state tribunal and the AIRC full bench found the matter fell into the federal jurisdiction and restrained the NSW IRC from further involvement.

"It is ordered that the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales be and is hereby restrained from dealing with the matters ... to the extent that they are matters provided for in the Metal, Engineering and Associated Industries Award 1988," the full bench said in its orders.

While Boeing welcomed the AIRC's decision, AWU national secretary Bill Shorten said the union would take legal advice and consult with its members on Friday before deciding how to proceed.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Unlike the new Work Choices legislation, there are almost too many choices when it comes to sourcing information online in relation to employment, industrial relations, human resources, business and industry! Over the past few months, I have attempted to highlight some of the main "voices" in the debate and included links to the Commonwealth Government, the ACTU and peak industry bodies. I am always interested in sites that members find useful and interesting and, of course, the sites highlighted through our newsletter are simply sites that I have noted. Here are this month's selections:

The Queensland Government's Department of Industrial Relations website at www.dir.qld.gov.au/industrial/ is informative and easy to navigate.

Work Choices – The Path Ahead for HR

An interesting article published online at www.humanresourcesmagazine.com.au highlights some of the challenges facing HR practitioners in the lead-up to commencement of the Work Choices Act. The following extract from the article usefully summarises the focus of the commentary:

"The consequences of the sweeping changes contained in the legislation will be different for every employer, depending on the make-up and composition of the organisation's workforce and the employment obligations that apply. This upheaval places enormous responsibility on HR professionals to come to grips with the bill and at each step of their practice carefully consider the impact, if any, it will have on the way HR management has previously been conducted."

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The Welfare to Work Package: Creating Risks for People with Mental Illness

This paper by Sally Cowling provides a critical perspective of the how the Federal Welfare to Work package will worsen the employment prospects for those suffering from mental illness. A full copy of the paper can be found at the Centre of Full Employment and Equity ("COFfee") website of the University of Newcastle at <http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee>

Australian Industry Group

The Australian Industry Group ("Ai Group") is a leading Australian industry organisation representing 10,000 employers in manufacturing, construction, automotive, telecommunications, IT & call centres, transport, labour hire and other industries. Ai Group's members operate businesses of all sizes throughout Australia and represent a broad and expanding range of sectors. Ai Group has published a number of fact sheets regarding the new Work Choices legislation, primarily for business operators, but with relevant information for both employers and employees alike. Ai's website is www.aigroup.asn.au and visitors may sign up for membership to access publications.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Apologies to all members who have been awaiting this edition of the IRSNT Newsletter. The Newsletter aims to be published monthly and will resume regular publication throughout 2006.

Disclaimer

The contents of this Newsletter are provided as general information only. The IRS NT accepts no liability for and gives no undertakings, guarantees, or warranties concerning the accuracy, completeness or fitness for purpose of the information provided.

Feedback and contributions are welcome and should be directed Linda Blair
linda.blair@nt.gov.au

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