

The Queensland Employee Relations Environment Context

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For many Australians, both employers and employees, the workplace continues to be a place of harmony where each goes to work discharges their individual responsibilities and continues to get on with life. This is confirmed by government statistics that suggest that 1,000 people per week are migrating to Queensland, Australia to live. The attraction is lifestyle affordable property and housing, progressive government development and support for new business initiatives and low unemployment.

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This is confirmed by government statistics that suggest that 1,000 people per week are migrating to Queensland, Australia to live. The attraction is lifestyle affordable property and housing, progressive government development and support for new business initiatives and low unemployment.

In addition there are a large proportion of immigrants coming to our shores from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand to name a few.

Sadly amongst this good news there are some concerns amongst employers and employees alike. Over the last 10 years with out-placing, downsizing, outsourcing, redundancies, and other interesting forms of industrial justification for off-loading employees, the workplace has been experienced as difficult and for some a house of pain™.

However, the industrial relations environment in Queensland and Australia continues to evolve in response to business concerns, community expectations and continuing pressure on the government to ensure that unemployment is kept low with the additional concern of the Commonwealth Government on the continuing drain on the welfare system.

There continues to be some pessimism by employers about the economy and a lack of trust which has seen a delay in employing more full-time workers especially in the small to medium enterprise sector. This is confirmed by research which suggests that the participation of casual and contract employment has increased markedly. However, Queensland has made some large inroads into creating an environment conducive to small business growth.

Because of the reducing birth rate in Australia it is estimated that by 2010 the percentage of employees aged between 45 and 60 years of age will be 65%. Many industries are not presently equipped to cope with this radical change in age demographics and it is now time for industry and government to work together preparing the way ahead.

Recent studies have belied the myth in respect to older workers and concluded that mature workers are productive, however, there still continues to be muddled perceptions about age related workers (Productivity of Mature and Older Workers: Employers' Attitudes and Experience ACIRRT 1996).

Grey power will increasingly become more important as enterprises endeavour to stay ahead of the pack and retain mature aged workers who have skills, experience and competencies to contribute to industry and business.

The industrial relations arena continues to be highly regulated and subject to many acts. These include,

• Common Law

• Australian & State Industrial Relations Acts/Regulations

• Workplace Relations Act 1996 • Federal

- Workplace Health & Safety Acts
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Trade Practices Act 1974 • section 53B
- Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 & other Tax Legislation

A move towards

- Awards • State & Federal
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA)
- Australian Workplace Agreements
- Increased workplace mediation before legal action

We are making progress in employer / employee relationship there are many enterprises and employees who continue their day to day businesses without having experienced these concerns.

Employers can take measures that increase their understanding and educate employees to understand their rights and responsibilities and thereby protect themselves for various workplace issues.

Small business is not an easy road especially in start up mode but there is help available. For other helpful articles please visit www.biz-momentum.com

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