

Memorandum of Understanding

Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA)

and

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

29 August 2022

COSBOA and the ACTU share an ambition for Australia that is centred on fairness, equity and prosperity for small business owners and workers alike. It is an Australia where every person, whether they be workers, contractors or small business owners, are entitled to safe, healthy and fairly remunerated work.

The ACTU and COSBOA observe that, in many vital respects, the needs of small businesspeople are different to the needs of big business. Whilst we recognise that the rights of workers should not be determined by the size of your employer we do recognise that legislative and regulatory frameworks, institutional and corporate policies and business practices are often designed around the needs of big business – to the disadvantage of workers and small businesses.

The ACTU and COSBOA understand the challenges working people and small businesses face in a society where economic activity in most industries is dominated by a small number of very large corporations. Individuals who contend with large corporations face a fundamental power imbalance, whether those individuals are small business people or workers employed in major supply chains. This power imbalance not only reduces the access to justice for those excluded from economic power, but potentially undermines the economic potential of our country and the vision Australians have for their future.

Accordingly, COSBOA and the ACTU have collaborated to develop this MOU to advance their shared values and goals and agree to:

1. Jointly undertake policy development in line with our shared goals
2. Share information on the respective experiences of working people and small business
3. Collaborate to undertake advocacy and lobbying activities to advance our shared goals and values
4. Work cooperatively to ensure safe, healthy and harmonious workplace relations in the small business sector
5. Jointly undertake activities that ensure that supply chains are safe and fair and that workers receive fair and legal entitlements.

6. Support a bargaining system that enables small business to build bespoke agreements that meet their unique needs. We envisage a system in which small businesses and their associations can make agreement to suit their sectors needs either as individual businesses or as groups of businesses.

An annual program of work will be established to meet these shared values and goals and will be monitored by an advisory board that will meet three times per year comprising of four representatives of both the ACTU and COSBOA.

Both organisations understand that there will be differences of opinion in certain areas of policy and accept that these differences will be debated in an open and transparent way. Notwithstanding any differences, our advocacy will always strive to be to the benefit of the Australian community as a whole.

Both organisations will continue to develop and publicise independent policies and opinions.

Both organisations will endeavour to communicate with each other on issues of mutual agreement and also areas of disagreement.

This MoU is not intended to create legally binding obligations.

The MoU may be amended by mutual agreement in writing by the signatory organisations.