

## **View from Canberra February 2015**

### *What happened?*

That was the question on the lips of political pundits, and interested observers, on the Sunday morning following the Queensland State Election. While results have not been finalised it appears that we will see a new Premier lead a minority government in Queensland.

### *What does this mean?*

I will look at the reasons why the Queensland election was such a surprise and what it means for the bus industry in next month's column, with a view to the NSW election that will be held at the end of March.

Federal leadership speculation is rife in Canberra, and while some of it is the "Canberra insider talk" that the PM spoke about in interviews there is an awful lot of smoke for there not to be any fire. The coming weeks will be interesting to say the least and we could see major upheaval in the ranks of the Government.

Like their Labor predecessors, the circus surrounding Coalition Government's leadership has distracted from the real discussion we need to be having about reforms which are vital to the Australian economy and way of life. This discussion of reform needs to be held between our parliamentarians, our regulators and with the Australian community.

A discussion which the BIC believes should include reforms on how we move people in our cities and regions and how we manage Australian workplaces to deliver the most effective outcomes for businesses across the economy. Including the bus operators, bus manufacturers and the parts and service suppliers that make up our industry.

Through the Australian Public Transport Industrial Association the BIC has taken leadership in the industrial relations space and the development of the Passenger Vehicle Transport Award which covers workplace conditions in bus operations.

We have seen early signs that the Coalition Government will seek a mandate to reform the workplace relations system at the next federal election. This extends to how casual and penalty rates are determined amongst other things. While we have been told Work Choices is "dead, buried and cremated" industry and employer groups like the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia have been calling for changes to wage rates to address growing unemployment and stagnating growth in the Australian economy. There are uncertain times ahead in the industrial relations area.

This is why on March 24 in Canberra the BIC will be holding a National Industrial Relations Seminar which will bring together key speakers from the Federal Government, Opposition and the Fair Work Commission to outline what the future industrial relations environment holds for bus and coach industry businesses.

The morning session will see "The Government's Industrial Relations Strategy" presented by Senator the Hon Eric Abetz, Minister for Employment and "The Alternate Government's Industrial Relations Strategy" presented by the Hon Brendan O'Connor, Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations. This will be followed by a presentation from the Fair Work Commission on the 4 Yearly Review of Modern Awards.

The Seminar will include strategic information for business as well as practical sessions aimed at giving attendees the tools to handle their workplace environments. Afternoon sessions will include "Preparing for an Unfair Dismissal application" presented by Tim Capelin, Piper Alderman, and an outline of the second edition of the National Industrial Relations and Workplace Healthy and Safety Guide presented by BIC's National Industrial Relations Manager, Ian MacDonald.

More information about the Seminar Program, accommodation options and how to register are available at the Industry events page on the BIC's Ozebus website [www.ozebus.com.au](http://www.ozebus.com.au). It will be a sitting week in Canberra so I encourage you to book your flights and accommodation early to avoid missing out.