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Industrial Relations (2)

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Industrial Relations framework in Australia today

- 2.1 Background
 - 2.1.1 Industrial Relations Acts
 - 2.1.2 Federal framework
 - 2.1.3 History of regulation
- 2.2 Australian Industrial Relations Commission
 - 2.2.1 Members of the Commission
 - 2.2.2 Panel system
 - 2.2.3 Bargaining division
 - 2.2.4 Constitution of the Commission
 - 2.2.5 Full bench
- 2.3 Prevention and Settlement of disputes
 - 2.3.1 Dispute settling procedures
 - 2.3.2 Public interest
 - 2.3.3 Right to strike
- 2.4 Discrimination
- 2.5 Minimum entitlements for employees
- 2.6 Certified agreements
- 2.7 Wage fixing principles and safety net adjustments
- 2.8 Decisions

3.0 Political ideologies in industrial relations

- 3.1 Liberal
- 3.2 Labor

4.0 Scope of industrial relations

5.0 Unions and management - the dominant issues

- 5.1 Unions
 - 5.1.1 Union influence
 - 5.1.2 Job protection
 - 5.1.3 Wage justice
 - 5.1.4 Work environment
- 5.2 Management
 - 5.2.1 Productivity and efficiency
 - 5.2.2 Unified workforce
 - 5.2.3 Affordable wages
 - 5.2.4 Competitive business

6.0 Factors that shaped the industrial environment of the 90s.

- 6.1 Workplace Relations Act 1966 (Nov '96)
 - 6.1.1 Principal object of the Act
 - 6.1.2 Key reforms
 - 6.1.3 Certified Agreements vs. Australian Workplace Agreements.
- 6.2 Transfer of industrial relations powers by the Victorian Government to the Federal Government.
- 6.3 Global economic pressures
- 6.4 The Award system

7.0 Summary

Purpose:

To develop an understanding of the Australian Industrial Relations system and how it is changing to meet the challenges beyond the year 2000.

Aims:

To be able to describe the Industrial Relations processes that apply in Australia today.

Objectives:

As an outcome of completing this topic you will be able to:

- To investigate the industrial relations systems past and present.
- To study the role and functions of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.
- To examine political ideologies and industrial relations.
- To establish the dominant issues influencing the attitudes of unions and management.
- To study the factors that shaped the industrial environment of the 90s.

Introduction

Industrial relations is regarded as a major issue in the future development of Australia as a strong competitor in global markets beyond the year 2000. Over the past three decades Australian workers have secured some of the best working conditions in the world through the actions of unions.

However, this has come at a cost to industry which has experienced significant downsizing over the past three years in particular.

Responding to the severe economic downturn in 1991/92 industry embarked on heavy cost cutting measures in order to remain competitive. This has seen a sharp rise in unemployment which remains a major concern today.

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Politicians, business, and union leaders recognise that Australia must become more competitive in order to achieve jobs growth.

A number of initiatives were taken but improvements have been either slow or very small. These include enterprise bargaining, award restructuring, micro economic reform, and employee agreements in lieu of State Awards (Vic. only). Industrial relations were seen as a major element of the Liberal party's election strategy in 1996. Since winning Government in May '96 the Liberal

Government has put a major effort into passing the Workplace Relations Bill through both Houses of Parliament.

The Labour Party and the unions have been steadfast in their opposition to any weakening of union influence in the workplace. Such issues as compulsory union membership in certain industries, the retention of the 'Award' system, and union involvement in all enterprise bargaining negotiations are most important to their belief in a viable and workable industrial relations system.

The future that lies ahead has many challenges, and the success or otherwise in their outcomes rests with the ability of all parties to recognise the changes that must be made. The ability to compromise where significant differences remain can be very difficult as ideologies can be in conflict with the changes proposed.

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