



the voice of the industry

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## Housing industry seeks greater flexibility

HIA has asked the Fair Work Commission to consider changes to the *Building and Construction General Onsite Award* that help employers and employees in the residential building industry stay connected despite the impacts of COVID-19.

“Home builders and trade contractors are feeling the impacts of COVID-19 in their business every day.

“They want to keep their staff and keep them employed despite the decline in home building activity as a result of COVID-19. The current Onsite Award that applies to our industry simply does not give both sides the necessary flexibility to do this,” said Melissa Adler, HIA Executive Director - Industrial Relations.

“Last month, 99 modern awards were changed to address COVID-19 impacts but building and construction was left off the list.

“The changes we have put forward largely reflect the changes to workplace arrangements available to employers covered by those 99 modern awards and employers eligible for JobKeeper Payments.

“The application would also help those employers who remain ineligible for JobKeeper the same flexibility as other businesses.

The proposals also address the need for building businesses to comply with COVID health and hygiene requirements by recognizing that extra time during the work day may be needed to carry out building work.

“It is important that everyone on construction sites can prevent the spread of COVID-19,” Ms Adler said. “Offering greater options in the Award regarding, for example start and finish times, would support businesses appropriately schedule their work while still being able to get the job done.”

“The Prime Minister’s comments this week regarding the need to realign our current industrial relations system and support job creation are consistent with this application.

“A positive response from the Commission, combined with further advice from Treasury to address the unique situation home builders face under the JobKeeper arrangements, would be a welcome outcome.

“With up to half a million jobs at risk in the residential building industry keeping employees connected with their workplaces and keeping businesses in business must be a priority. Any measures that can help facilitate this are now critical.

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