



December 2017

# NATIONAL NEWS

## Engaging members with a stronger presence

When I took over as CEO in July, I introduced a series of practical modifications to enhance AMIC's profile in the industry and enrich its services to members.

In effecting these changes, we have prudently focussed on the need for AMIC to maintain and improve its charter of providing high levels of member services, ensuring that members continue to get maximum value for their membership.

The amendments include the development of an improved and interactive website, a dynamic communications and public relations plan and a greater use of social media.

We have established an office in Canberra so that AMIC now has a more powerful

presence to lobby government for a better business environment for our industry, particularly with processor issues.

We have also streamlined the staffing structure for the retail and smallgoods sectors so that we now have a Northern Retail Manager and a Southern Retail Manager who are each responsible for membership services across their respective regions.

Other initiations cover several more areas of processes and procedures that will empower AMIC to deliver better products and services to members. An example includes keeping abreast of and informing members of the upcoming new meat labelling legislation.

2018 will see a new chapter in AMIC's evolution

as all of these changes will materialize then – most within the first quarter – putting AMIC on track to lead the industry and advance the needs of our members.

As this is the last newsletter for 2017, I would like to thank members for their support of AMIC and wish all of you a happy and safe festive season.

*Patrick Hutchinson*



## The 2018 National Competitions



We have arranged an exciting program in a picturesque location for the upcoming National Competitions and Awards Dinner. It will all take place in the heart of Victoria's scenic Yarra Valley on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. THE RACV Country Club in Healesville is the main venue where guests will enjoy charming rooms with scenic views and judging for all competitions will take place.

Competitors in the National Sausage King,

Best Butchers Burger and Apprentice of the Year competitions will get together at the informal Meet & Greet cocktail function at the Club's Gazebo on Friday evening, February 9<sup>th</sup>.

On Saturday morning everyone will convene for breakfast at Zonzo Estate, an award-winning winery and a holiday destination just 10 minutes' drive in the beautiful Yarra Valley.

A Trade Show will be ongoing during Saturday's judging and the Awards Dinner will conclude the event that evening in the Club's ballroom.

AMIC thanks our Industry Partners for sponsoring this event and we wish all competitors the best of luck.



## Thank you to our 2018 National Competition Industry Partners



## The Northern Region



### Headed by Rob Mollison - Regional Manager Northern, Retail & Smallgoods

This region covers Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It is supported by Paul Sandercock (WA), Darren Moore (QLD & NT), Craig Wright (NSW) and Kym Rugendyke our Administration & Events Coordinator. We are fortunate to have such a skilled team with excellent experience and knowledge supporting our region.

AMIC supports membership across many key industry drivers and pillars, including:

- Human Resources via our Meat Industry Award, Fair Work and membership support services
- Industry Training and Development
- Food Standards/Safety via the respective National and State based bodies
- Industry partnerships, delivering industry outcomes

It is clear that in any member-based organisation the key is to listen to members and then respond and advise. Interaction with members through our events and services is what helps direct AMIC in how it supports you. We encourage your feedback on how we can improve AMIC's services and potential future activities. AMIC is *your* industry body and as members you will influence its future direction.

Over the past 6 months we have been working on national programs and services with the objectives of:

- Providing value in your AMIC Membership
- Supporting our industry
- Creating an environment where AMIC members can become better business owners

We will soon be announcing an exciting calendar of activities in the New Year which has been designed with the help of membership input.

I have been part of AMIC for nearly three years; initially just in Queensland and now in NSW as well. In this time I have witnessed the passion and commitment of members towards their businesses and towards our industry as a whole. The AMIC team is here to assist and support your businesses across a whole spectrum of industry inputs.

**Office:** 07 3352 4600 | **Rob:** 0414 446 074  
**Darren:** 0409 588 072 | **Craig:** 04 38 166 643

## The Southern Region



### Headed by Oliver Stankovski - Regional Manager Southern, Retail & Smallgoods

This region encompasses Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia and has an experienced and capable team consisting of: Paul Sandercock & Denise Webster (SA), Patricia McCarthy (Member Services Events/Administration Officer) and Phillip Stocker (Member Services Officer).

As Manager, I have a strong commitment to service delivery and will ensure full stability through the change-over process. I am open to your feedback to improve business processes and will listen to your needs and determine the best possible solutions for you.

AMIC is here to guide and support you on how to become better retailers and how to avoid the many pitfalls within our industry. This can only be achieved through collaboration between AMIC and its members.

AMIC represents retailers, processors and smallgoods manufacturers and confers with members, governments and industry groups to influence policy and provide technical and other advice to the industry.

We represent you on many committees - ranging from technical, food standards, food safety and export - to ensure the best trading environment possible.

The most important aspect of a member-based organisation is to listen to its members and then respond accordingly by providing feedback and advice. Interaction with members through our events and services is what helps AMIC understand how it can support you.

In the next year, we will hold a number of member engagement activities that will provide you with the opportunity to connect with AMIC on industry topics and offer feedback on initiatives. Member Network Meetings are important events as they allow you to liaise with guest speakers and AMIC representatives while being updated on relevant industry issues.

Member interaction and communication are our main focus and we are fully committed to providing the opportunity for members to discuss these topics that relate to you going forward. The current plan is to visit AMIC members once yearly, however, with the adoption of a number of new initiatives, we anticipate a better level of engagement through regular contact with members.

We are now planning our events calendar for 2018 and are excited with what the year ahead will bring.

If you have any questions, whether you are an industry supplier or a member, please don't hesitate to call me to discuss them.

**Office:** 03 9699 2760 | **Oliver:** 0437 757 005  
**Paul:** 0409 364 100 | **Phillip:** 0437 696 707

**We wish all members and their teams a Happy, Safe and Prosperous Christmas trading period.  
We look forward to seeing you all actively engaged in our services and events in 2018.**

# Save Your Energy This Christmas

If there's one thing you don't want to deal with at Christmas, it's negotiating new energy contracts for your business.

At a time of the year when there's already enough going on, it's something you can easily do without. However if you're on a fixed energy contract that ends this December, you might have to.

This is an important factor for two reasons. First, electricity prices aren't the same as they were 2-3 years ago. If you've been locked into a contract you may not know what the rest of the population have been experiencing. Price hikes and an uncertain energy market have been less than pleasant on the hip pocket. This also means that you and your business will be in for an awakening when you see the current energy rates.

Second, it means if you don't play your cards right you could waste your time and money with the wrong energy broker. Luckily, Make it Cheaper are here to be your Christmas miracle. Amazingly simple and completely free, with one call to Make it Cheaper they will be on the case, searching far and wide to negotiate the best tender for you and your business.

At Make it Cheaper, small, medium, large and even multi-site businesses are our speciality. Utilising a large number of leading energy retailers means we can negotiate a competitive bespoke price for your needs.

Simply give us a call on **02 9086 2216** or email [amic@amic.org.au](mailto:amic@amic.org.au) with a copy of your bill and we'll get on the case of finding you the best deal from our panel of retailers.

And the cherry on top the Christmas pudding? The whole service is completely free. Now that's what I call a Merry Christmas.

**Note:** This service is not available to members in NT and TAS. Certain restrictions also apply to WA and QLD (ERGON) due to market regulation.



## Notice on Mail Diversion

Please note that with our organizational changes, mail sent to the South Australia office will be forwarded to the Victorian office and mail to the Western Australian office will now go to the Queensland office. We have consolidated our offices to the following four with these mailing addresses:

### National Office

PO Box 1208, Crows Nest NSW 1585  
T: 02 9086 2200 | E: [admin@amic.org.au](mailto:admin@amic.org.au)

### Southern Office

Suite 301, Level 3, 88 Albert Road, South Melbourne VIC 3205  
T: 03 9699 2760 | E: [VICAdmin@amic.org.au](mailto:VICAdmin@amic.org.au)

### Canberra Office

c/o Regus Serviced Offices  
15 Moore St, Canberra ACT 2600 | T: 02 6169 4164

### Northern Office

PO Box 266, Red Hill QLD 4059  
T: 07 3352 4600 | E: [qldadmin@amic.org.au](mailto:qldadmin@amic.org.au)

## Oxygen. Water. Cash flow.

**Cash flow is the lifeblood of your business, and at times like these it's never been more important.**

Consolidate your accounts with Commonwealth Bank and you'll get a clear, cost-effective picture of your position. Plus, with instant transfers between linked accounts and 24/7 real-time access, you'll get a fast, accurate view of what keeps your business alive.



For more information, contact **AMIC** on **02 9086 2200** today.

**CommonwealthBank** 

**Important Information:** Terms and conditions issued by Commonwealth Bank of Australia are available on request. You should consider whether or not this product is appropriate for you. Commonwealth Bank of Australia ABN 48 123 123 124.

# How do I know when an employee has abandoned their employment?

One of the most frustrating situations for an employer, especially in a small business, is when an employee does not show up for work and makes no contact with the employer.

The employer may assume various reasons as to why the employee is not at work, but of course there is usually only one reason, which the employer does not know about in these situations.

Questions arise as to whether the employee has resigned or whether I am able to terminate them for not contacting me and not showing up for work. An employer should not jump to any conclusions. The first question to ask is, 'What is Abandonment of Employment'?

## Abandonment of employment is.....

Usually when an employee is absent from work without a reasonable excuse for an unreasonable period of time without having communicated to the employer any reason for the absence.

## What is the legal position?

Neither the Meat Industry Award 2010 or the Fair Work Act 2009 contain an abandonment of employment clause. Therefore, although it is not compulsory, it is recommended that members have a policy in place to address such circumstances so that it is clear to all parties.

For an employee to have abandoned their employment, it must be clear that the employee has demonstrated an intention to no longer be bound by the terms of the contract of employment.

If after a number of attempts you still can't get a response from the employee, then your next action would be a formalised one. Send a letter by registered post informing the employee of the situation and request them to make contact within a certain time frame, who to contact and by when, as well as advising the employee that failure to respond may be interpreted as their abandonment of employment.

Should there still be no contact from the employee, then a final letter is sent a short time later informing them that they have abandoned employment and will receive their termination entitlements in accordance with their relevant industrial agreement or award and or employment contract.

However, in cases where the employee has been absent on account of suspected or known personal illness or injury, and they haven't made contact and haven't sent through a medical certificate covering the absence or advised of such as yet, there are other legalities that must be considered before abandonment of employment is determined.

## Can the employee claim unfair dismissal?

There have been attempts by employers to have unfair dismissal claims struck out on the basis that the employment was abandoned and, therefore, the employment was not "*terminated on the employer's initiative.*" If such an argument were successful, the circumstances surrounding the claim would be irrelevant – if the employment was not terminated on the employer's initiative then the employee was not dismissed and, therefore, there cannot be an unfair dismissal.

However, the act of abandoning the employment does not terminate the employment. The abandonment gives the employer the right to elect to terminate the employment and, by electing to do so, the employer has chosen to terminate the employee. It follows that an unfair dismissal claim is available.

That does not of course mean that the dismissal is unfair. In these circumstances, the fact of the abandonment will usually be the reason which the employer relies upon to justify the dismissal. The Fair Work Commission will then look at all the circumstances of the case, including but not limited to the employee's acts that are said to constitute abandonment, and make a decision as to whether the dismissal was harsh, unjust or unreasonable. It is therefore crucial that the employer reasonably satisfies itself that the employee has in fact abandoned their employment, exercises procedural fairness in dismissing the employee and considers whether the dismissal may be considered harsh.

These legalities relate to requirements within the Fair Work Act, anti-discrimination laws and workplace safety laws. Checking to ensure compliance with these requirements before addressing these matters is important.

If you need assistance with an employee issue where you think they have abandoned their employment or even a long term illness or require assistance in establishing an abandonment of employment policy, please contact the AMIC on (02) 9086 2220.