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Organising for the future

Please address all correspondence to the National Secretary

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26 June 2009

Christopher Brown  
Managing Director, TTF

Bill Healey  
CEO, AHA

Dear Mr Brown and Mr Healey,

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding developing a more collaborative approach to addressing long-term viability of the accommodation hotels sector. The LHMU remains very concerned about problems in this sector and is committing significant time and resources to addressing them.

As you are aware the LHMU has for almost two years sought assistance from the AHA and the TTF to address serious problems in the hotel sector. After extensive attempts to work with the AHA and the TTF separately proved fruitless, the LHMU, at the urging of key leaders in industry and government, has embarked on an innovative program of direct consultation with workers, owners, operators, customers and policy makers.

LHMU welcomes the apparent change of heart on the part of both the AHA and TTF to recognise the important role of workers as key stakeholders in the sector and potentially the best advocates for the sector in the community.

We note that you have arranged a meeting on 30 June "in order to ascertain how we can work collaboratively together." LHMU resources are currently allocated to our existing consultation program which will preclude us from participating in this meeting. Please also note that arbitrarily arranging a meeting and contacting a Minister with less than a weeks notice, no consultation and no regard for the availability of LHMU personnel shows a lack of respect and is a very poor way to attempt to build bridges.

It remains difficult for the LHMU to work collaboratively with the AHA. The LHMU believes the unprecedented anti-worker campaign lead by the AHA to undermine the Rudd Labor government's IR laws places AHA at the ideological extreme of employer unions and risks seriously undermining the credibility of the sector.

At a time when many organisations are retreating from a Howard-era class warfare approach it is disappointing to see the AHA and accommodation hotels embrace that approach.

We are similarly disappointed at the TTF's decision to stand shoulder to shoulder with the AHA, and are left considering the TTF another spear carrier for the AHA's outdated neo-liberal workplace agenda. The TTF has clearly abandoned its previous attempts to differentiate itself as more progressive and less partisan than the AHA.

We are well advanced with our program of industry consultation and are satisfied that our final position paper will accurately and credibly reflect the views of industry stakeholders. We do not believe our program will be assisted by passing the views of stakeholders through the philosophical and ideological sieve of either of your organisations.

We do acknowledge AHA and TTF are important industry stakeholders in their own right (although it remains a little unclear precisely what if any authority the organisations have to act in a decision making capacity for any of the direct industry participants), and therefore we would welcome your contribution to our program directly on your own behalf. We would like to meet with you at a mutually convenient time to receive your feedback on the issues raised in our discussion paper. If this is unsuitable for you we are also willing to receive a written response from you and commit to ensuring your views are given proper consideration by us.

You should note that we remain strongly of the view that the sector must address its labour market problems in the context of any plan to reform the industry. Community awareness that jobs in hotels are low wage, precarious jobs with poor training and career paths is a fundamental problem for the sector that must be addressed.

The AHA's strategy to lock in low pay and trade away employee consultation and rostering rights takes the industry in the wrong direction.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the AHA and the TTF on a broader agenda at an appropriate point in the future once the AHA's extreme, radical industrial relations approach has run its course and we have completed our industry consultation program. We will then be well placed to develop a joint approach for advocating in the best interests of workers, customers, owners, operators and other stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Miles  
National campaign director  
*better jobs, better hotels*