

Bryan Noakes AO (1930 – 2020)

It was with great sadness that the members and staff of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) learned in January this year of the passing of Bryan Noakes AO.

Bryan was a significant, respected and widely-liked figure across the political and industrial divide in Australia who worked tirelessly for decades to represent the business community and the national interest.

Following work early in his career on the nation-building Snowy Hydroelectric project, Bryan led national advocacy, strategy and negotiations for Australian employers for 40 years, firstly with the Australian Council of Employer Federations (ACEF), through the formation of the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) in 1977, and then as part of the ACCI network from 1992.

This was a period of profound challenge in Australian industrial relations, as post war growth gave way to the economic and industrial tumult of the 1970s, which in turn led to major reforms in the 1980s and 1990s.

Bryan was at the centre of this critical period in our industrial relations history, developing close relationships with prime ministers and industrial relations ministers on both sides of politics, and with the leaders of the Australian trade union movement.

Internationally, Bryan was a proud and passionate member of the ILO Governing Body and led Australian employer delegations to numerous annual International Labour Conferences. He was recognised for his significant work protecting the fundamental rights of both employers and trade unionists throughout the world through the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA). Bryan was also instrumental in the creation of an employer voice for the Asia Pacific region, through the Confederation of Asia Pacific Employers (CAPE).

In recognition of his domestic and international service to industrial relations, Bryan was awarded one of our nation's highest civilian honours, becoming an officer in the Order of Australia (AO) in 2003.

On a personal level, Bryan was a dear friend and mentor to those who came after him at ACCI and throughout the Australian employer movement. Throughout his life Bryan remained a profound thinker and analyst on Australian and global industrial relations, and was an important source of counsel, mentorship, support and friendship to those who came after him at ACCI and across our network.