

Media Statement

Industry welcomes Parliamentary Secretary Frydenberg's push to improve regulator culture: speech at Accord "Rebalancing Regulation" Conference

Sydney, Friday 29 August 2014. Industry leaders attending yesterday's policy conference in Canberra for the hygiene, cosmetic and specialty products industry have welcomed the Abbott Government's push to shift the focus of Australian regulators to actual risks rather defaulting to bureaucracy and red tape.

Speaking at the Accord Conference yesterday, Parliamentary Secretary Josh Frydenberg outlined progress with the government's deregulation agenda and the opportunities this presents for boosting productivity and industry investment.

Business leaders attending spoke favourably after the event about the comprehensive reform agenda being progressed under Mr Frydenberg's oversight.

Accord vice-chair and Managing Director of Estee Lauder Companies Mr Terry Little said: "Industry has been frustrated that past promises to improve the regulatory environment going back to the Rudd government have not materialised. Instead my business has seen a ballooning of regulation and red tape. It is good to see this problem getting serious attention and the industry looks forward to seeing early results."

Also at the event, Managing Director of The Heat Group Ms Gillian Franklin said: "The government's proposed measures appear to be well thought out. Addressing problems with regulator culture is essential to rebalancing the way regulators interact with business. Regulators and industry need to recognise that they need each other. And we need to work effectively to make Australian businesses more globally competitive."

The Accord Conference also heard examples of current regulations that are adversely impacting on the industry's global competitiveness.

"As an industry that relies heavily on innovation to meet evolving consumer and environmental needs, it is essential Australian regulation facilitates the ready introduction of new ingredients, products and technologies," Accord Policy Director Craig Brock said.

"Unfortunately, much of the regulation currently applied to the everyday products our industry produces like household cleaners and cosmetics is out of step with more pragmatic approaches adopted overseas.

"At yesterday's Conference we heard examples of Australian over-regulation of low-hazard polymer ingredients which are widely used in all sorts of products. These are exempt from regulatory assessment in the US and EU, but are subject to costly and time-consuming assessment in Australia by the industrial chemicals regulator, NICNAS.

"In fact Australian regulation of these types of ingredients is so poorly calibrated that it penalises polymers derived from natural starches that have desirable environmental characteristics, such as the ability to readily break down in the environment.

"Ultimately it is Australian consumers who are losing out here. Poorly designed local regulation has become a barrier to the introduction of newer, more environmentally friendly products.

"Any moves the government can make to get regulators to face up these issues and to seek solutions are most welcome. In the past the need to streamline regulation and reduce red tape has attracted bipartisan support. It is hoped this continues," Mr Brock said.

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