



Notification of Changes – Summary and Historical Context of the Legislative Provisions

A brief explanation of the historical context surrounding the reporting obligation to notify changes is provided below. This information is intended to promote a better understanding of the reporting obligation, as well as an understanding of some of the purposes of the obligation.

As an overview, the statutory requirement for federally registered organisations to notify the relevant regulator of changes to records:

- appears to have been part of the relevant legislative scheme for over a century,
- has varied in terms of the time periods allowed for the changes to be notified to the relevant regulator,
- is an essential, fundamental and appropriate statutory obligation which provides transparency to members and the regulator.

Summary of the current provisions relevant to notifications of changes

'RO Act' means *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

'RO Regs' means *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Regulations 2009*.

Subsection 233(2) of the RO Act provides that:

An organisation must, within the prescribed period, lodge with the Fair Work Commission notification of any change made to the records required to be kept under paragraphs 230(1)(b), (c) and (d), certified by



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declaration signed by the secretary or other prescribed officer of the organisation to be a correct statement of the changes made.

Civil penalty: 60 penalty units.¹

Subsections 230(1)(b), (c) and (d) of the RO Act provide that:

- (1) An organisation must keep the following records:
 - (a) a list of the offices in the organisation and each branch of the organisation;
 - (b) a list of the names, postal addresses and occupations of the persons holding the offices;
 - (c) such other records as are prescribed.

Regulation 147 of the RO Regs provides that:

For paragraph 230(1)(d) of the Act, the following records are prescribed in relation to an organisation:

- (a) a record of the name of each branch of the organisation;
- (b) a record of the name of each branch that commenced operation in the previous 12 months;
- (c) a record of the name of each branch that ceased operation in the previous 12 months;
- (d) a record of the address of:
 - (i) the office of the organisation; and
 - (ii) the office of each branch of the organisation;
- (e) a record of each election that must, under the rules of the organisation, be held during each year commencing 1 January:
 - (i) for an office in the organisation; and
 - (ii) for an office in a branch of the organisation;
- (f) a record of the number of members on 31 December in the previous year;
- (g) if the organisation has entered into an agreement mentioned in subsection 151(1) of the Act – a record of the number of members of the organisation who were, on 31 December in the previous year, ineligible State members, in relation to the organisation, within the meaning of section 150 of the Act.

¹ Section 4AA, Crimes Act 1914 defines a penalty unit as \$275. 60 penalty units is \$16 500.



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Regulation 151 of the RO Regs provides that:

For subsection 233(2) of the Act, for the lodgment of notification of any change to the records, the period of 35 days, beginning on the day after the day when the change is made, is prescribed.

Section 5 of the RO Act provides that:

The standards set out in this Act:

- (a) ensure that employer and employee organisations registered under this Act are representative of and accountable to their members, and are able to operate effectively; and
- (b) encourage members to participate in the affairs of the organisations to which they belong; and
- (c) encourage the efficient management of organisations and high standards of accountability of organisations to their members; and
- (d) provide for the democratic functioning and control of organisations; and
- (e) facilitate the registration of a diverse range of employer and employee organisations.

Brief chronological history of the legislative provision

- 1913** The history of the provision for registered organisations to notify changes to relevant statutory body can be traced back to 1913. The Conciliation and Arbitration Regulations 1913, contained the 'Returns of Officers' provision at regulation 19, which required updates of lists of office holders to be provided within 14 days of any change.
- 1928** The Conciliation and Arbitration Regulations 1928 contained requirements relating to records at regulation 20 and this requirement bears similarity to the obligation set out in s 233(2) of the current RO Act. From 1928, the statutory requirement in accordance with regulation 23 was that changes to the records of registered organisations were to be filed with the relevant regulator within 14 days.
- 1989** In 1989, the obligation on a registered organisation to notify the relevant regulator of changes to office holders was found in regulation 131, and notifications of changes were required to be lodged within 35 days. The requirement transitioned into the Industrial Relations Act 1988 by virtue of section 268(4) taking effect in March 1989.



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- 1988** The Industrial Relations Act 1988 was replaced by the Workplace Relations Act 1996.
- 2002** The Workplace Relations Amendment (Registration and Accountability of Organisations) Act 2002 placed the reporting obligations of registered organisations into a separate schedule. This amendment introduced Schedule 1B to the Workplace Relations Act 1996, which was the original RAO (Registration and Accountability of Organisations) Schedule. The RAO schedule included section 233 which is very similar to the provision in s.233(2) of the current RO Act.
- 2009** The RAO schedule later became the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.

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This guidance note is not intended to be comprehensive. The Fair Work Commission does not provide legal advice. Users must rely upon the relevant legislation, which is set out in the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*, the *Fair Work Act 2009*, the *Fair Work (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Act 2009* and the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Regulations 2009*.