

Governing Body

335th Session, Geneva, 14–28 March 2019

GB.335/INS/14(Add.)

Institutional Section

INS

Date: 13 March 2019

Original: English

FOURTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

Addendum

Obituary

Mr George Polites

1. The Director-General announces with deep regret the death, on 5 February 2019, of Mr George Polites, long-serving Employer member of the Governing Body and delegate to the International Labour Conference.
2. Mr Polites, an Australian national, died at the age of 100, having been born some months prior to the Treaty of Versailles and the founding of the ILO. In his home country, Mr Polites was a seminal figure in the history of business representation and industrial relations. For over four decades, he made significant contributions to industry in a number of capacities. In particular, he led the Australian employer movement through some turbulent periods, and successfully represented employers in tribunals, the media, and in collective bargaining.
3. Prior to his service in World War II, Mr Polites worked in the railways and the public engineering department of his home State of Victoria. In 1950, he joined the employer movement for the first time. He played a key role in the formation of both the Confederation of Australian Industry (CAI) in 1977, and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) in 1992. From 1959 to 1977, Mr Polites served as Secretary of the Australian Council of Employer Federations (ACEF) and then as the inaugural Director General of the CAI Industrial Council from 1977 to 1983. In addition, Mr Polites served as a national business leader and advocate under eight Australian Prime Ministers. Through his hard work and dedication, he contributed to establishing many of the key employment rights enjoyed by Australians today.

4. Mr Polites also actively contributed to the development of industrial relations on a global level, seeking to promote the rights and interests of employers and workers worldwide. During his time at ACEF and CAI, Mr Polites was an Employer delegate to the International Organisation of Employers. At the ILO, he was a key player in some of the major debates that took place in the Organization during the 1970s and 1980s. He served as deputy Employer member to the Governing Body from 1972 to 1978; regular Governing Body member from 1978 to 1984; Employer Vice-Chair on the Committee on the Application of Standards during the periods 1971–78 and 1980–83; and deputy member of the Selection Committee in 1979. Furthermore, he was instrumental in Australia’s ratification of the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) in 1979. This led to the formation of Australia’s National Workplace Relations Consultative Council which continues today.
5. Mr Polites was a successful negotiator and a man of consensus who worked with trade unions and governments and enjoyed their strong respect. In 2001, he was granted some of Australia’s highest civilian honours in recognition of his service to industrial relations and to Australian society, including the Centenary Medal. He will be remembered for his great intellect, constructive approach to negotiation and unfailing commitment to social justice, tripartism and labour rights.

Draft decision

6. *The Governing Body paid tribute to the memory of Mr George Polites and invited the Director-General to convey its condolences to the family of Mr Polites and to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE).*