



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW WORKPLACE RELATIONS LAWS TURN BACK CLOCK

Statement from AHA National Chief Executive Officer Bill Healey about the introduction of new workplace relations legislation into Parliament today:

"The AHA does not accept that the new powers Fair Work Australia has to intervene and arbitrate on bargaining disputes in certain enterprises will only be used on rare occasions.

"The provisions will encourage unions in a broad range of industries to implement pattern bargaining and wait for Fair Work Australia to impose conditions on the business in complete contradiction to previously stated Labor Party policy.

"Many of the essential elements of a fair safety net already exist in Australia – we have a high minimum wage, access to free universal health care, affordable tertiary education, a generous social welfare system by OECD standards and a well-established retirement savings scheme.

"This safety net will be enhanced by a clearer set of base-level entitlements through the 10 National Employment Standards and modern awards.

"These awards will be reviewed every four years and this is when any resistance to enterprise bargaining in sectors employing low-paid workers should be taken into account.

"It is anticipated that unions will try to use the new laws to increase membership, which is now just 14% of the private sector workforce, and achieve improved benefits without providing productivity offsets.

"We anticipate there will be a string of major campaigns using the old heavy-handed approach.

"These will fail and ultimately ensure unions end up niche players, representing a declining number of workers quarantined within a particular set of industries.

"Sadly, many businesses in the service sector will have to endure increased compliance costs and disruption in the process."

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The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) is the pre-eminent tourism and hospitality industry organisation in Australia. It has around 5000 members operating general and accommodation hotels. It has a national office and branches in each State and Territory. It also has a discrete branch to represent the interests of its accommodation members that covers four and five-star properties.