



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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WORKCHOICES FINE TUNING SHOULD END UNION SCARE CAMPAIGN

The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) has welcomed today's announcement by the Prime Minister to provide added protections for lower paid workers on individual contracts.

The decision should eliminate concerns within certain sections of the community that WorkChoices is merely about cutting the take-home pay of Australian workers.

AHA Director National Affairs Bill Healey said: "The decision should now enable a balanced debate on which political party has the best industrial relations platform to cope with the challenges of a 21st century economy. The massive expenditure by trade unions on a media campaign has made it difficult for Australians to objectively assess the actual impact of the recent IR changes.

"The AHA believes that sufficient safeguards existed in the original reforms to protect workers, especially given the strong bargaining position created by high employment levels."

Demographic changes will mean that labour shortages will be a constant feature of the Australian economy over the next decade. All businesses will need the flexibility to negotiate employment arrangements with individuals or collectively without the interference of third parties.

Many of the benefits of WorkChoices will only emerge as business owners and their staff develop the necessary skills to collaboratively negotiate terms and conditions that meet the needs of individuals and specific workplaces.

The AHA believes that changes announced today will enhance a worker's right to decide whether they wish to retain or cash out penalties and allowances contained in awards that were established in a different economic environment.

The focus should now shift to whether the incremental changes introduced by the Howard Government are better for the long-term health of the Australian economy than the upheaval that will occur with the dismantling of the IR system proposed by Labor. The establishment of Fair Work Australia will create massive administrative and operational costs and uncertainty for the economy.

More importantly it will focus attention on Labor's proposals to alter unfair dismissal laws and increase union access to workplaces. These changes send a shiver up the spines of small business operators who are the growth engine of a modern economy.

The AHA believes the Labor Party needs to reconsider the platform announced last week and critically assess whether reintroducing aspects of our old industrial age IR system will help drive the productivity improvements required in a modern global economy.

For further information:

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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 operated by the major chains.