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ANF Industrial Action A Dangerous Precedent

John Lloyd, Director, Work Reform and Productivity at the Institute of Public Affairs said today that the ANF's defiance of orders to suspend industrial action was extraordinary.

Fair Work Australia's decision to suspend the ANF industrial action was based on concerns about the threat posed to the health of the Victorian community. It is inconceivable that the ANF's defiance will not continue to affect Victorian patients.

Mr Lloyd called on the Victorian Government and the Fair Work Ombudsman to take a firm stance against the union's action. The ANF leadership should clearly understand their defiance can have serious legal consequences, including strong penalties.

This represents a disturbing new development in Australian industrial relations. It reflects a growing militancy amongst the leadership of Australian unions. They are increasingly prepared to engage in protracted negotiations and disputes with the intention of forcing employers to submit to increasingly unreasonable demands.

They also show a callous disregard for the effect of their actions on workers and on the Australian community.

'The ANF's decision to defy the ruling does not inspire confidence in the Fair Work system,' Mr Lloyd said. 'Unions are returning to militant tactics in order to obtain concessions from employers, and the Fair Work Act only entrenches union privilege.'

Serious questions are now emerging about the capacity of the Fair Work system to curb the militancy of union leadership. Also, it appears almost impossible for the unions to accept the need to change work practices and improve productivity.

The apparent deficiencies of the system have to be addressed with urgency. Otherwise jobs and investment in the future will suffer.

Media Comment: John Lloyd, Director Work Reform and Productivity. +61 417 130 634