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WORKPLACE RELATIONS REFORM – TIME FOR A RATIONAL DEBATE

“Today almost every workplace relations reform proposed by employers, their representative associations and the Coalition is labelled by the unions and the ALP as a return to Work Choices. Most of this labelling is wrong,” said John Lloyd, Executive Director, Work Reform and Productivity at the Institute of Public Affairs.

“The IPA will keep a scorecard to record the number of times reform proposals are incorrectly labelled as Work Choices. This will help bring some accountability to the debate” Mr Lloyd said.

The IPA has posted a summary of what constituted Work Choices and the elements of Work Choices retained in the present system, it can be viewed at <http://ipa.org.au/publications/1999/work-choices>

“The Work Choices mantra of the unions and the ALP will be a regular feature of politics during the next year. The result will be a debate that will frequently become irrational. It will be characterised by unsubstantiated accusations, slogans, and personal vilification. Stand by for an intense smear and fear campaign” said Mr Lloyd

Dave Oliver, the anointed ACTU Secretary, announced a desire to instigate a community-backed political strategy. The purpose is to defeat Tony Abbott. Mr Oliver told The Australian that a campaign was needed “because, no doubt, despite what Tony Abbott is saying out there that Work Choices is dead, buried and cremated, we know that will not be the case.”

Workplace relations is a dynamic policy discipline. It changes and adapts to economic, social and political developments.

“The economic future presents challenges and the electorate is entitled to expect a debate that focuses on changes to improve the workplace relations system. A discourse that canvasses policies to facilitate workplace flexibility, help our firms to compete, encourage investment and generate jobs growth would be beneficial. Unfortunately this will likely be buried under the Work Choices hysteria.

“Some Work Choices changes were excessive. Other Work Choices changes were incremental and vindicated as improving the management of workplace relations. A number were retained in the Fair Work package. This in itself is proof that not all Work Choices initiatives were bad” said Mr Lloyd.

The keeping of scores started at the beginning of March. The March 2012 tally stands at four instances of incorrect Work Choices labelling.

The scorecard will be regularly updated.

Media comment: John Lloyd, Director Work Reform and Productivity Unit on 0417 130 634.

**Institute of Public Affairs, Level 2, 410 Collins St. Melbourne
ph: 03 9600 4744 fax: 03 9602 4989 www.ipa.org.au**