

IPA MEDIA RELEASE

Institute of Public Affairs | Australia's leading free market think tank

22 August 2016

NEW WORKPLACE VOLUNTEER LEGISLATION IMPORTANT BUT MUCH MORE SHOULD BE DONE

Today's announcement of new federal legislation to prohibit enterprise agreement content which restricts the ability of emergency management organisations to manage volunteers is welcome, but more significant workplace relations reforms still need to be pursued and implemented, according to free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA).

"It is encouraging that the Turnbull Government has been quick out of the blocks to implement its election promise in this area" said Brett Hogan, Director of Research at the IPA.

"However, while there is widespread community concern about the devastating effect of the current union power-grab on the culture and effectiveness of the Victorian Country Fire Authority, this is only one example of a wider trend of unions using the Fair Work Act to insert clauses into workplace agreements that give them influence over the management of business operations," said Mr Hogan.

"Unions should not be able to use the system to put their own interests before those of employees, volunteers, management, customers or shareholders," said Mr Hogan.

"Victoria's 60,000 volunteer firefighters are the backbone of the State's fire management regime, and their ongoing role must be respected" according to IPA Legal Fellow Aaron Lane.

"However, while this draft legislation is welcome, there is a lot more structural reform that the Turnbull Government needs to pursue," said Mr Lane.

"During this parliamentary term, the government should put freedom to work and freedom to hire at the heart of the workplace system, making it easier for the unemployed to obtain and keep a job, increasing competition between institutional interests and re-examining the need for Australia's current mess of conflicting and contradictory safety nets."

"The abolition of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal earlier this year showed that workplace relations reform is possible if a problem with the current laws is identified and explained, and the Government identifies and sticks to a solution," said Mr Lane.

For media and comment: Brett Hogan, Director of Research, Institute of Public Affairs, bhogan@ipa.org.au or 0407 273 884 or Aaron Lane, Legal Fellow, alane@ipa.org.au or 0400 838 630.