

Hon Rob Lucas MLC

Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations

Thursday, 19 April 2012

WHS Regulatory Impact Statement urgently required

A damning report of the impact of Labor's controversial work, health and safety laws commissioned by the Victorian Government is a serious warning to South Australian small businesses that the Weatherill Government must not ignore.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers report, released today, shows there will be a \$3.44 billion cost over five years to Victorian businesses, with transition costs of more than \$800 million.

Shadow Industrial Relations Minister Rob Lucas said the report confirmed the long-running concerns about the legislation raised by South Australian businesses were legitimate.

"This report makes it clear it is imperative for the Weatherill Government to immediately undertake its own regulatory impact statement to assess how this Bill will impact on South Australian businesses and costs.

"Western Australia has also refused to sign up for the changes until it has completed its own regulatory impact statement.

"It is concerning that the Weatherill Government is refusing to commission a similar report in South Australia. The Government is clearly fearful about what such a report would reveal."

"There is nearly united business opposition to the bill, and the PWC report confirms the reforms will unacceptably hurt business and reduce productivity.

"Industrial Relations Minister Russell Wortley's claims that the legislation will reduce the cost of regulation and red tape are clearly untrue. The impact of these laws will be felt just as badly here in South Australia as they will be in Victoria.

"The Weatherill Government must not continue to ignore the very serious consequences of trying to force this legislation through Parliament, and must not kick small businesses when they are down.

"Struggling South Australian homebuyers also cannot afford the massive increase in house prices if this bill is implemented.

Contact: Rob Lucas 0419 867 196

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twitter.com/rob_lucas

“Furthermore, the PWC report found that if businesses are already complying with a more general duty in the current Victorian laws, the greater specificity in the Model WHS laws is unlikely to translate to significant safety benefits.

“It begs the question, why exactly is Labor placing a multi-billion dollar burden on business when there is unlikely to be any great improvement in workplace safety?”

Mr Lucas said the report made it increasingly unlikely that Victoria would support the current model Bill.

“Although the Bill has been passed by the Commonwealth and a couple of states, the Bill in New South Wales was significantly amended, and both the Victorian and Western Governments have indicated they don’t support the current bill and at the very least will amend the Bill.”

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