



SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION COMMITTEE:

FAIR WORK LAWS AMENDMENT (PROPER USE OF WORKER BENEFITS) BILL

United Voice is a union of 120,000 workers organising to win better jobs, stronger communities, a fairer society and a sustainable future. Our members work across a wide variety of industries, including aged care, health, early education and care, education, property services, hospitality and manufacturing. We do the essential work that keeps Australia running, every hour of the day, every day.

WE OPPOSE THE FAIR WORK LAWS AMENDMENT (PROPER USE OF WORKER BENEFITS) BILL ("THE BILL") IN ITS ENTIRETY.

The Bill is yet another means by which to control and interfere in the internal running of unions. Following on from the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment (Ensuring Integrity) Bill 2017 and numerous superannuation system bills aimed at severing the connection of unions to the very superannuation industry which they created, this Bill should be seen as part of a blunt political attack against trade unions' legitimate role in the community.

Similarly to the Ensuring Integrity Bill, there has been no consultation with our union, despite the Bill's imposition of substantial new regulation on our union and its members. The extremely truncated timeframe in which affected parties have been given to make submissions has meant that we are unable to make a full submission covering the detail of the Bill. United Voice supports the submission of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

In our submission no grounds have been made out which support the imposition of further and more onerous regulation on unions. A mere six months ago, in May 2017, a new and stringent governance regime came into effect with the establishment of the Registered Organisations Commission ("ROC").

As part of the establishment of the ROC, significant changes were made to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009 ("RO Act") including increased penalties for existing offences, the introduction of new penalties for existing offences and the introduction of new criminal offences. Financial reporting requirements were increased and penalties related to financial reporting and financial duties were increased or otherwise introduced.

“
**THIS BILL SHOULD
BE SEEN AS PART OF
A BLUNT POLITICAL
ATTACK AGAINST
TRADE UNIONS'
LEGITIMATE ROLE IN
THE COMMUNITY.**”





SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION COMMITTEE:

FAIR WORK LAWS AMENDMENT (PROPER USE OF WORKER BENEFITS) BILL

“ THIS BILL DOES NOTHING OTHER THAN IMPOSE MORE UNWARRANTED REGULATION ON BODIES WHICH ARE ALREADY REGULATED AND WHICH FUNCTION IN THE INTERESTS OF MEMBERS. ”

In its latest report, the ROC notes compliance rates in the order of 98-99% for the lodgment of financial and annual reports. There is simply no demonstrable reason for increased financial reporting requirements.

Our members join their union freely. They have a right to access our financial records and a right to participate in the running of the union. Our union is run by and for its members. There are over 530 positions filled by ordinary working people on our Executives and Councils.

Volunteers on our executives all receive financial training pursuant to the RO Act, and as of the introduction of the ROC, face severe penalties if they fail to undertake the training.

This Bill does nothing other than impose more unwarranted regulation on bodies which are already regulated and which function in the interests of members. Indeed, we are accountable first and foremost to our members.

United Voice is one of Australia's oldest and biggest unions. Yet our size does not change who we are. We are a non-profit, member-run organization, comprised of leadership which is overwhelmingly volunteer. The Bill targets trade unions alone among other comparable entities such as not-for-profit community organisations, sporting clubs and volunteer associations.

The extent of regulation and interference in internal affairs, down to the level of requiring a union to submit its internal policies to the regulator, is unparalleled. It certainly is not a feature of corporate regulation, despite persistent misconduct, which harms workers, consumers and the economy, and includes wage theft, fraud, insider trading and money laundering.

WE URGE THE COMMITTEE TO REJECT THE BILL IN ITS ENTIRETY.



JO-ANNE SCHOFIELD
NATIONAL SECRETARY, UNITED VOICE