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Volunteers at risk from Labor's WHS bill

Many volunteers in volunteer organisations face massively increased risks of fines and penalties under the Labor Government's new work safety laws, Shadow Industrial Relations Minister Rob Lucas said today.

"Legal advice from Parliamentary Counsel has confirmed that if a volunteer organisation employs one person for three hours on a weekend, it will no longer be considered a 'volunteer association' under the new Work, Health and Safety Bill," Mr Lucas said.

"This will mean hundreds of clubs and organisations will be subject to the onerous requirements applying to businesses under the Bill and 600 pages of associated regulations.

"Under Labor's bill it will mean the management committee will not only have significantly increased responsibilities for its part time employees, but also to all of the unpaid volunteers working for the organisation.

"Under current South Australian work safety laws this level of legal responsibility for volunteers does not exist. Labor's bill will obviously increase the chances of litigation against hard-working volunteer committee members where a volunteer might be injured.

"Some of the maximum penalties in Labor's bill are proposed to be a \$600,000 fine or five years imprisonment, or both.

"Labor's bill will also mean that for the first time unions in SA would also have right of entry into premises of volunteer organisations if they claim they are checking up on work safety issues.

"This is just another example of the massive increase in union power on all work sites under Labor's bill. It is also an indication of the power the unions have over the Labor Party in SA whether it is led by Mr Rann or Mr Weatherill, who is seen by unions as being a 'union-friendly' Premier."

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