

[[Previous](#)] [[Major News - Federal Politics - Workplace Issues](#)] [[Next](#)]

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Unions drive Ford to sidestep new laws

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Car **industry** unions are pushing for Ford Australia to defy the federal government by entrenching limits on the use of contractors under a side deal accompanying a new enterprise bargaining agreement.

The government has sought to remove limitations on the use of contractors in formal agreements made under the new Work Choices system, but car unions want Ford to sign a common law deed that falls outside the legislation.

The secretary of the AMWU's vehicle division, Ian Jones, said unions were seeking pay rises of 6 per cent a year for about 6000 Ford workers, plus a 6 per cent boost to the existing 9 per cent employer superannuation contributions over the life of the three-year deal.

Mr Jones said the proposed side deal would continue existing terms and conditions including guaranteeing unions could access Ford sites without giving notice; reinstating unfair dismissal protections scrapped by Work Choices; and retaining limits on casuals.

He alleged the federal government was "bivouaced at Campbellfield [one of two Ford sites] and playing virtually a direct role in the bargaining process".

A Ford spokeswoman declined to comment on the government's role or on whether the company would sign a common law deed, saying it received input from a range of parties. "But we know what's right for our business and we will negotiate a suitable outcome," she said.

Workplace Relations Minister **Kevin Andrews** warned last year that the government expected **workplace** reforms in return for \$4.2 billion in public funding to the car **industry** over the next decade to compensate for tariff cuts.

A spokeswoman for **Industry** Minister Ian Macfarlane said a report on the

Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme would be made to federal cabinet by July or August.

The funding was "set in concrete", she said, adding the report would cover the overall scheme and state of the **industry** rather than only dealing with **workplace** reforms.

The push to limit contractors at Ford comes as the government is drafting legislation that seeks to insulate 1 million independent contractors from **industrial** laws and unions, partly by overriding state laws.

The NSW branch of the Transport Workers **Union** has argued the new law will disadvantage thousands of owner-drivers by removing access to **industrial** tribunals to resolve disputes, their right to collectively negotiate contracts and be represented by a **union** and their access to a tribunal to protect investments in goodwill.

The **union** is pushing unfair contracts claims before the NSW **Industrial** Relations Commission covering 60 delivery drivers for Lion Nathan's Tooheys brewery in Sydney.

TWU assistant state secretary Wayne Forno said the Tooheys' case showed how owner-drivers would be left without redress under the Independent Contractors Act.

Caption :PHOTO: While car unions are demanding caps on the use of contractors at Ford, the TWU is getting behind owner-drivers. Photo: PAUL JONES

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[[Previous](#)] [[Major News - Federal Politics - Workplace Issues](#)] [[Next](#)]

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