

# Change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower

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We need an independent umpire to set minimum wages that are fair  
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## Important changes coming from 1 July 2005

*The Howard Government has said it will use its new Senate powers to take away many of your basic rights at work.*

*The Government wants to change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower.*

**The Howard Government has opposed every minimum wage increase since 1996. The minimum wage is currently \$467 a week (\$12.30 per hour) but if the Howard Government had its way minimum wage workers would be at least \$44 a week - or \$2,288 a year - worse off than they are now.**

For more than 100 years minimum wages in Australia have been set, reviewed and increased by an independent body, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. This system ensures that low paid workers and their families are not left behind.

The Howard Government believes that minimum wages in Australia are too high. It wants to change the way minimum wages are set by taking away the powers of the independent Australian Industrial Relations Commission to set fair minimum wages.

Under the Government's plans minimum wages would probably be set by a "panel of experts" - who will be people specially chosen by the Government to make sure wages stay low.

This will reduce the living standards for many people who are only just keeping their head above water.

Unions don't want this USA-style system. In the USA minimum wages are just US\$5.15 an hour and haven't increased for 8 years, leaving many working families living below the poverty line.

*When asked to guarantee that minimum wages would not be lower under a new system, the Howard Government Minister, Kevin Andrews said:*

*"I am not in the business of giving guarantees for or against anything."*

*Kevin Andrews, ABC Radio, 12 April 2005*

### HOW THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT WANTS MINIMUM WAGES TO BE LOWER

Before the Howard Govt was elected in 1996	MINIMUM WAGES UNDER THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT		Business wishlist...
	Current situation - since 1996	Expected govt changes - 2005	
<p>The independent Industrial Relations Commission decided award wage rates following annual application by ACTU and submissions from employers.</p> <p>Award wages had to be fair and enforceable and maintained at a relevant level.</p>	<p>Howard Government opposed reasonable increases - asked for minimum wage rates to be \$44 lower than they are now.</p>	<p>Govt to stop independent Industrial Relations Commission from setting minimum wage safety net.</p> <p>New Govt appointed panel to decide wage rate with aim of keeping minimum wages lower.</p> <p>Possibly only one minimum wage rate for all types of work.</p>	<p>USA-style system of one minimum wage for all types of work.</p> <p>No annual review or increases to minimum wage rates.</p>