



your rights at work
worth fighting for

**A national campaign in support of the rights
of working Australians**

The Australian Way of Life

From 1st July, the Howard Federal Government takes control of the Senate and therefore has a free hand to change laws.

Radical change is being proposed which threatens your rights at work.

What do working Australians want and need?

Hopes

- Decent job, good income
- Be safe at work, come home alive and without injury
- Respect, recognition of hard work
- Quality of life outside work
- Sense of security about the future

Fears

- Losing job, drop in income
- Getting injured, health problems
- Not having enough for retirement
- No chance to get ahead

What does Big Business want for you?

Abolish all awards and replace them with just six conditions

NO penalty rates for weekend or shift work

NO limit on hours worked

NO allowances

NO overtime

NO rostered days off

NO annual leave loading

NO wage increments

YES US style minimum wages

YES 5 year individual contracts with no scrutiny for fairness

What does Big Business take for themselves?

Last year 40 CEOs in the big business lobby
paid themselves \$173 million

OR

Over \$4.3 million each

OR

\$166,346 per fortnightly pay

Fairness is a fundamental flaw?

*" A fundamental flaw is that people have tried to use industrial relations policy as a tool to achieve not only productivity and growth in the economy, but **fairness.**"*

Michael Chaney
Business Council Chief
The Australian, 1 April 2005

What does the Howard Government say?

*"An emphasis on **fairness only leads to regulatory excess and inefficiency**"*

*The sentiments behind the Big Business blueprint are a "**good summary of the government's intentions**"*

Kevin Andrews
Federal Minister for Workplace Relations
Speech, 25 Feb 2005 and
Australian Financial Review, 16 Feb 2005

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

1. Remove employment conditions from awards

- **1.6 million people rely on awards** for wages and conditions.
- **Millions more** on agreements rely on awards to underpin their conditions

The Howard Government wants to get rid of:

- **All state awards**
- **Conditions in federal awards** like:
 - × skill based wage rates
 - × long service leave
 - × union picnic day
 - × converting long term casuals to permanent

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

2. Change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower

- For 100 years, the Industrial Relations Commission has set and increased minimum wage rates in awards – currently \$467 per week (\$12.30 per hour)
- **Howard Government has asked the Commission for minimum rates \$44 a week lower than they are now** - Commission didn't allow it
- **Govt wants new system to get lower minimum wages**
- **Similar to USA:** minimum wage is \$5.15 per hour and no increase in 8 years

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO
2. Change the way minimum wages are set
to make them lower

When asked for a guarantee that minimum wages wouldn't be lower under the Howard Govt's new system, the federal Minister said:

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

Kevin Andrews
Federal Minister for Workplace Relations
ABC Radio, 12 April 2005

GOVERNMENT WANTS

3. Individual contracts to undercut existing rights and conditions

THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT SAYS

*"We should be trying to move to an industrial relations system where **the predominant instrument is the individual contract...** where there's ease of entry, ease of exit..."*

Peter Costello, The Age, 19 February 2005

GOVERNMENT WANTS

3. Individual contracts to undercut existing rights and conditions

WORKERS SAY

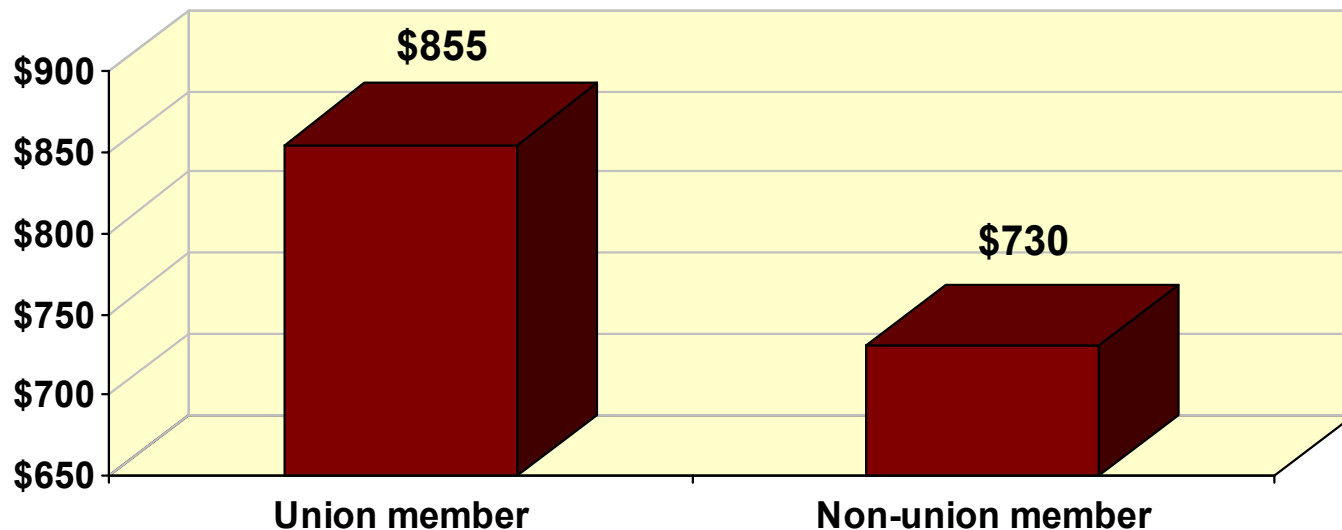
"I was offered an individual contract – AWA – that would mean a pay cut of about \$150 a week. Instead of being paid by the hour I would only get 55 cents a kilo for the mushrooms I picked. When I refused to sign the AWA, I was sacked."

A comment from a mushroom farm worker whose employer tried to force her on to an AWA

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

4. Keep unions out of workplaces and reduce bargaining rights

Union members' average pay advantage - \$125 per week



GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

4. Keep unions out of workplaces and reduce bargaining rights

UNION ACCESS TO WORKPLACES

- **Written notice of reason for visit** to employer at least 24 hours earlier
- **Not allowed to agree on better access** in collective agreement
- **Managers can restrict** where unions meet workers and monitor discussions
- **Visits only allowed once every six months** (if recruiting)

BARGAINING

- **Complex secret ballots** before any industrial action (like strikes)
- **Limits on industrial action**, like reason for taking action, how long it lasts
- **Big penalties** for unions and workers if complex laws are breached

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

5. Abolish redundancy pay and protection from unfair dismissals for small business employees

- **3 million Australians work in small businesses.**
- These workers will have **no rights if they are unfairly dismissed**. They will have **no right to get redundancy pay** if they are retrenched.
- Will the Government stop at small business?

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO

6. Reduce the powers of the Industrial Relations Commission

- For over 100 years, state and federal Industrial Relations Commissions have settled disputes and set minimum conditions in awards
- **You need an independent umpire to go to when things can't be settled at the workplace**

Government wants to:

- **Abolish** state Industrial Relations Commissions, and
- **Take away many powers** of federal Commission

Human cost of the planned changes

- Lose basic rights at work
- Shift power to business at expense of working people
- Make it harder to get ahead
- Many will be working harder and longer for less
- Impact on the Australian way of life

Unions will fight for our basic rights at work

- **A strong safety net** of decent wages and conditions
- **Your right to bargain collectively** for fair pay and conditions and reject individual contracts
- **Your right to join a union** and access benefits of membership
- **A strong, independent Industrial relations Commission** to set fair minimum wages and conditions and settle disputes

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP Information campaign

- Tell as many people as possible about the Howard Government's plans
- Campaign info, petitions and updates at:
www.rightsatwork.com.au
- Tell your local Liberal or National and ALP MP that you oppose their Government's plans
- National week of action 27 June - 1 July
- Paid advertisements - fundraising

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP Your workplace and other workplaces

- **Stay organised at your workplace.** Make sure your employer keeps negotiating with you collectively.
- **Take a workplace decision to stand up for each other and support the Rights at Work Charter.** Also get your employer to sign the Rights at Work Charter. Lodge your workplace support of the Charter at **www.rightsatwork.com.au**

REMEMBER:

- You are entitled to basic rights at work that are supported by international law.
- The Govt's changes won't just affect you – also the wages and conditions of your kids, family, friends.

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