



FACTsheet

Spring 2008



TIME TO DELIVER YOURRIGHTSATWORK

While the Rudd Government has begun to get rid of WorkChoices there is still much more to be done.

Employers have now been banned from using new AWAs and a new safety net of minimum legal standards and awards for all workers is being set up.

This is good, but it is now time for Australian workers to get all of their rights back.

We want to see fair industrial relations laws that give workers strong collective bargaining rights, protection from unfair dismissal and the protection of a powerful independent umpire.

We also want construction workers to get the same rights as everyone else and to make sure Australia has the best possible health, safety and workers' compensation laws.

In the coming months we need to remind all Parliamentarians that Australians voted for the full dismantling of WorkChoices.

ACTU

Push back by business

Since the election last November, big business and the Liberal Party have been defending WorkChoices and trying to stop the Rudd Government from implementing key elements of its 'Forward with Fairness' IR policy, including:

- Big businesses are pressuring Labor to not give workers protection from being sacked unfairly for another two years and to allow employers to continue to sack a wide range of employees unfairly:

"The new unfair dismissal laws are also obviously closely interrelated with the role and powers of Fair Work Australia. Again it is logical that the new laws come into operation on 1 January 2010."

"Short term casuals (up to 12 months); irregular casuals; fixed term [employees] (held to include apprentices); fixed task; seasonal employees; and trainees. It is very important that all of these exemptions [from unfair dismissal protection] are retained and Ai Group will continue to stress the importance of them to the Government." (Heather Ridout, Ai Group CEO, Speech to Qld IR Society 16/5/08 - Attachment 10)

- Employers are pushing to limit collective bargaining by restricting the content of agreements and curtail unions:

"A number of business groups are pushing the government to limit the scope of matters that can be covered by workplace agreements, despite Labor's pledge to allow employers and employees to bargain on any matters they choose. (AFR 10/4/08)

"The Rudd government's key business advisers on industrial relations are considering ways to restrict the content of workplace agreements, curtail the growth in union power and discourage strikes under Labor's next wave of employment law reforms." (AFR 12/3/08)

- Business is also supporting keeping WorkChoices restrictions on the right of workers to access unions in their workplace:

"Although the [new] legislation will ban AWAs, Labor's reforms will not alter the national system of industrial relations, tough restrictions on union rights to enter workplaces and disincentives for industrial action that were key parts of WorkChoices." (AFR 20/3/08)



- Employers warn government against workers' right to collective bargaining and call to retain WorkChoices limits on role of independent umpire to settle and arbitrate disputes:

"Ai Group's preferred position is that the Government retain an entirely voluntary bargaining system... [whereby] employers should not be legally compelled to bargain [even if a majority of employees in a secret ballot vote in support]."

"Ai Group is worried about the Government's compulsory arbitration proposal and will continue to argue it should be abandoned... In Ai Group's view, access to arbitration should not be extended beyond the circumstances presently provided for in the [WorkChoices] Act." (Heather Ridout, Ai Group CEO, Speech to Qld IR Society 16/5/08)



- Employers now expect a 'satisfactory outcome' to their demands for changes to the IR policies the Government presented to the public at the last election:

"The Government have put in place a number of commitments around secret ballots around secondary boycott retention, right of entry arrangements, pattern bargaining commitments which should be quite helpful going forward... Then what happens when you can't get agreement and access to arbitration [is an outstanding concern], and that is something that there's a lot of dangers attached to it if we get this wrong. And we are very confident that we will be able to work with the Government to get some satisfactory outcomes." (Heather Ridout, Ai Group CEO, ABC TV 7.30 Report 14/5/08)



WHAT YOU CAN DO...

➔ **Tell your local MP or Senator how important your rights at work are.** Remind both Government and Liberal members that the Australian people voted for rights at work and strong collective bargaining rights—including the choice for workers to be represented by a union and to bargain on all matters.

➔ **Get involved in union campaigns and public events** around important issues for Australian workers and their families such as construction workers' rights, paid maternity leave and against companies that do not respect workers' rights.

➔ **Make sure employers who exploit workers are kept in check.** Contact the Union Hotline on **1300 362 223** if you know someone being hurt by unfair IR laws and the legacy of the former Liberal Government's WorkChoices.

➔ **Be active through your union** – strong unions are the best way to protect your rights at work and improve your wages and conditions. If you are not already a union member call the Unions Australia hot line on **1300 4 UNION (1300 486 466)**.

➔ **Sign up to Email updates** – Join nearly 200,000 supporters on the Rights at Work website **www.rightsatwork.com.au/joinin**