



# CAMPAIGN UPDATE SPRING 2008

**yourrightsatwork**  
worth fighting for

# Time to deliver Your Rights at Work

**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 President  
Sharan Burrow



ACTU Secretary  
Jeff Lawrence

## Businesses are still using WorkChoices



Sydney Morning Herald

**Major companies are continuing to use the unfair Work Choices laws that remain in place to deny workers collective bargaining rights and to rip them off.**

### Telstra plan to cut wages bill

Recently it was revealed that Telstra management has a secret agenda to slash their wages bill. In a classic business strategy of divide-and-conquer, company documents reveal that Telstra management intends to pick off workers section by section, targeting those with less collective strength. The strategy by Telstra management was exposed at the same time Telstra CEO Sol Trujillo was rewarded with a pay rise of more than \$1.5 million.

### Harvey Norman rip off

Retail giant Harvey Norman was recently caught red-handed taking advantage of confusion over the fact that WorkChoices is yet to be fully scrapped. The company was found offering an Australian Workplace Agreement to a staff member, months after the Federal Government scrapped them. The Harvey Norman AWA paid a flat hourly rate of just \$15.29 with no penalty rates for weekend work -- leaving the sales worker up to \$146 a week worse off compared to the award, depending on sales commission.

### Workers forced to meet in toilet

Business lobby groups want to keep restrictions on workers' access to unions in the workplace. This is despite recent revelations that union members were forced to hold a meeting sandwiched between two cars in a factory loading dock -- under a surveillance camera and while garbage trucks drove in and out. This incident follows another case in which factory workers were forced by their employer to hold union meetings in the women's toilet area.

# Our campaign goals

We are now beginning the countdown to make sure our campaign goals are achieved. Here is a summary of our six key goals and the progress so far:



**1. No AWA individual contracts** The former Liberal Government's AWA individual contracts cut the pay and conditions of thousands of workers. Australian voters sent a clear message that there should be no new AWAs.



*We have largely achieved this goal and there will be no new AWAs. As current WorkChoices AWAs expire we need to make sure employers, such as Telstra, make the transition to union collective agreements.*

**2. A strong safety net** Australian workers must have a decent and comprehensive safety net. There should be a combination of legislative minimum standards and a modern and easy to understand award system to provide a floor of dignity for all workers in Australia.



*The Rudd Government has begun restoring a safety net of awards and minimum legal standards — unions remain concerned to see that no worker is left worse off by award modernisation.*

**3. Collective bargaining rights** All workers should have the democratic right to collectively bargain on all matters if a majority of the workers in their workplace want to.



*Business wants restrictions in Labor's IR laws on: the content of workplace agreements; the ability to take industrial action; low paid and other workers' access to multi-employer bargaining; and the right of workers to make common claims.*

**4. Right to union membership and representation** Every worker should have the right to join a union and should have access to representation and information in their workplace.



*Businesses are continuing to prevent workers from access to unions in their workplace and to sideline unions from collective bargaining.*

**5. Protection from unfair dismissal** Job security and protection from being unfairly dismissed are important rights that all Australian workers deserve.



*Business groups are opposing the Rudd Government's moves to restore workers' rights to unfair dismissal protection and want to stop casuals, apprentices, seasonal workers, trainees and other workers from being protected.*

**6. An independent umpire** A genuinely independent workplace umpire should be established to resolve disputes.



*Business groups are lobbying hard to make Labor's proposed umpire, 'Fair Work Australia', a toothless tiger that is powerless to deal with employers that act unfairly.*

## EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL WORKERS



## If you think all Australian workers have the same rights – think again.

*The Howard Government's special laws for the construction industry ban almost all industrial action by building workers and impose severe anti-union restrictions.*

*The draconian Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) has over-the-top powers to compel workers to attend interrogations and jail them for refusing to co-operate.*

*Construction workers can be fined up to \$22,000 each for stopping work or jailed*

*for six months if they won't answer questions about a union meeting.*

*You can support equal rights for construction workers by joining the Rights on Site campaign.*



## DID YOU KNOW...

*Australians who voted for the Rudd Government believe the new IR laws should:*

- ***Immediately restore collective bargaining rights for workers - 85% agree***
- ***Immediately improve unfair dismissal protection - 89% agree***
- ***Allow workplace agreements to include measures which improve energy efficiency in the workplace and help tackle climate change - 79% agree***
- ***Allow workplace agreements to include provisions restricting use of contractors and labour hire that undercut employees - 65% agree***
- ***Ensure that an independent umpire can step in and finalise an agreement in cases where employees and employers cannot reach agreement - 82% agree***

## HEALTH & SAFETY STANDARDS

**Every Australian has the right to go to work and to come home safely. With this basic aim in mind, unions have launched a new campaign to deliver the highest standards for harmonised workplace health and safety laws.**

**At present there are nine different workplace health and safety laws operating in Australia. The Federal, State and Territory Governments have agreed to simplify these laws but unions are worried that employer groups see this as an opportunity to downgrade existing standards.**

**To find out more or to get involved in the campaign, contact Steve Mullins, ACTU OHS Officer – [smullins@actu.asn.au](mailto:smullins@actu.asn.au)**


# Your Rights at Work the campaign continues...

*Your support over the coming months will be crucial to getting rid of the rest of WorkChoices.*

*We must make sure that all politicians and the big business lobby know they cannot ignore the vote of the Australian people at the last election to get back their rights at work.*

*We need to continue the campaign to restore workers' rights, to build stronger unions and to get the best possible new IR laws through the Parliament.*


## WHAT CAN YOU 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 hotline 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](http://www.rightsatwork.com.au/joinin)**

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**2008**