

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Legislation Committee

Inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Bill 2005

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Secretary,
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
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*** Submission to Senate Inquiry into WorkChoices legislation ***

My name is Ben Blackburn, and I'm a young person, who has previously been on an AWA in the retail/poultry industry, and have first hand experience of how these "**Individual Contracts**" are negotiated, particularly amongst younger, more vulnerable employees. They (younger employees) have virtually no say in the process – its "**take it or leave it**" basically – "**sign the AWA or you won't get the job**".

I'm concerned with the absurd notion, embedded within the Howard Government's advertising, that this legislation will offer greater "**Choice**". I find the Howard Government's unsolicited advertising campaign, as a sham on the Australian taxpayer and a disgrace to all things politically decent in this country. It is not a public information campaign. The Howard Government has crossed the line with its unnecessary spending spree, resembling a pack of drunken sailors. The propaganda is Liberal Party spin, and ought to be paid for by the Liberal Party, not us taxpayers.

I will always feel more confident with a union representing my best interests, as opposed to some heavy-handed, rouge employer, walking all over the top of me, and caring little for my family commitments. Collective bargaining needs to be retained in Australia's Industrial Relations laws. I lack confidence in the Howard Government's regulatory, prescriptive approach to IR reform generally, with its fixation on more AWA's and workplace agreements lasting even longer, making it harder for hard-working Australian's like me, to get out of a dud deal with his/her rouge employer.

I'm also concerned with the following elements of the "WorkChoices" legislation:

- *The chronic lack of time the Howard Government has allowed for this Senate Inquiry, with the aim of minimising political damage to the Liberal Party – between 5 and 12 days is a joke on the democratic processes of which this country is proud
- *The severe lack of consultation with the Australian Community – the package was drawn up in secrecy, based on Liberal Party ideological beliefs, not genuine reform
- *The complex structure of the so-called "simpler, fairer" unitary IR system – replacing 4000 awards with millions of dodgy "**Individual Contracts**"
- *The lack of evidence released by the Howard Government that actually proves that AWA's create more jobs in Australia – there is little – it's just Howard's rhetoric – the economic modelling of the Howard Government is very dubious to say the least
- *Unions "**right of entry**"
- *Award simplification
- *Strike pay
- *Reform of unfair dismissal laws

- *The lack of evidence released by the Howard Government that actually proves that AWA's increase workplace productivity – there is none – it's another Howard myth
- *The Howard Government extreme, radical agenda to strip away at the Minimum Wage, which is already too low, putting further pressure on living standards – the Howard Government has a poor record with the AIRC – it has opposed every Minimum Wage increase, argued by the ACTU, since it took office in March 1996
- *The inadequate re-sourcing of the “WorkChoices” info line, the people who take these calls are ill prepared for legitimate questions about the reforms and have not been sufficiently trained to deal with members of the public on the telephone
- *The inadequate consideration of the legislation's impact on Small Business
- *Sick leave entitlements
- *Annual leave entitlements
- *Public holiday entitlements – work on Anzac Day and Boxing Day provisions
- *Carers/Parental leave entitlements

Furthermore, I believe the creation of the “**Fair Pay Commission**” is a gimmick by the Howard Government, a smoke-and-mirrors trick, to undermine the success of the AIRC – our “**Independent Umpire**” to settle disputes.

The legislation will undermine workers' individual right to “**freedom of association**” with effective union representation in the workforce, in a pathetic attempt by the Howard Government to undermine collective bargaining processes in Australia.

This “WorkChoices” legislation is an unfair, draconian attack on the hard-fought working standards and conditions of Australian Workers, which will create lower wages, a weaker economy and a fall in workplace productivity.

John Howard's “WorkChoices” - ideologically-driven legislation, is a cruel blow for working men and women, which is more about the Liberal Party's obsession with destroying the Union Movement and the ACTU, then delivering real prosperity for decent, hard-working Australian men and women.

I trust that you will take my concerns seriously and deal with my submission in good faith, with the **courtesy of a timely reply**, by mail correspondence.

Kindest Regards to all Senators/Committee Members,



Mr. Ben Blackburn

Mail correspondence to the following Address: