

# **SUBMISSION**

**To**

**Senate inquiry into the Workplace Relations Amendment (WorkChoices) Bill 2005.**

**From**

**The Sydney Branch of the Amalgamated Manufacturing Workers Union –  
Retired Members Association**

**9<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

This Branch of the Amalgamated Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) Retired Members Association (RMA) wishes to express its opposition to the totality of the Industrial Relations Bill as proposed by the Australian Government. This opposition stems from a number of grievous concerns held by this Association and its members as expressed by them in the various means.

We are opposed to the effects perceived by us to be certain to accrue from the proposals of the Australian government. We are opposed to the Government's I.R. proposals whether these affect our members directly or indirectly as we will attempt to submit and explain herein.

## **The perceived direct effects to our membership.**

Despite much which has been said to the contrary, AMWU RMA does not believe that wages in general will not plunge to the lowest possible level resulting from the Government's I.R. proposals. Indeed we believe that it is one of the direct aims of the exercise. Given the examples set by similar legislation which has debased the standard of living in New Zealand and - in Australia itself when, in Victoria and Western Australia, Conservative governments introduced I.R. akin to that proposed by the Australian Government with apparently the same target of assuaging the power of the 'big end of town' against the interests of the average Aussie battler.

Well might the Prime Minister and the relevant Minister say that it is not intended that the Minimum Wage be reduced, but AMWU RMA believes that this assertion is made with tongue in cheek as we attempt to show below.

Senior Australians within AMWU RMA's ranks well remember the attempts of the Menzies Government to 'peg' the Basic wage of the time when, to the great gratitude of ordinary Australians the I.R. Commission of that time ruled in favour of fair play for Australians (more on this subject later). Whilst the effect of such pegging would not result in cuts in the numerical value of wages, said wages would remain static vis-a-vis uncontrolled prices and profits with the resultant REAL cut in the REAL value of wages and the living standards these wages beget for Australians. AMWU RMA unflinchingly believes that this is the true intent in, connection to wages, of the Government's I.R. proposals which AMWU RMA thoroughly rejects on this one of many reasons perceived by us.

From the above examples and the extensive experience existing in the ranks of senior Australians within our membership and gained from the 'school of hard knocks', AMWU RMA is convinced that as a result of drastically diminishing pay rates, a number of things will happen as follows:

Since the setting of the Pension (for Pensioners of all ages) is derived from a formula reflecting a percentage of the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE) then it follows that any reduction of the Average wage will create a reduction in the Pension – and not only the Age Pension as we believe that other crucial social payments will be affected.

For another direct effect of an I.R. regime such as that proposed by the Australian government, AMWU RMA submits that its membership does not live in a bubble free of all the constraints and resultant declining living standards which would be suffered by the general public, our members, Pensioners and others, would have to purchase goods in the same places that the general public would patronise where the decline of wages (and Pensions) in both numerical and real terms would hit an already gravely marginalised pensioner community more heavily than the rest of the community.

### **The perceived indirect effects on our membership.**

As stated above pensioners do not reside in a bubble. They are gravely concerned at the prospect of an Australia where loved ones (sons, daughters, nieces, nephews etc.) existing on a greatly diminished standard of living which we believe will be the result of the I.R. proposals of the Australian Government.

We are greatly opposed to the demeaning and diminishment represented by the portent of the Government's I.R. proposals.

Given the important role that the principle of the separation of powers plays in the creation of democracy, we are appalled at the Government's intended diminishment or even total deletion of an arm – a most important one – of this nation's Legal System by an abrasive and bullying Government such as the current one and we are most gravely concerned with the slide into democratic mediocrity which this aspect of the Government's I.R. intentions represent.

We condemn not only the above but most particularly the abuse of government funds for no other purpose than the political one of creating more power in the already over powerful hands of employers, particularly in large corporations, which are even now usurping the operations of democratically elected governments and the sovereignty of many peoples the world over.

We condemn the short space of time made available to the citizens to tell the Government where it should go, forcing people to create a popular voice such as this document under the duress of time.

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