

MEDIA RELEASE

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300,000 workers say No WorkChoices in WA!

UnionsWA today launched its *No WorkChoices in WA* campaign to protect the wages and conditions of 300,000 Western Australian workers, which are under serious threat from the State Government.

Treasurer Troy Buswell recently appointed a former Howard Government industrial relations advocate to review the State industrial relations system and recommend areas for legislative reform in areas including:

- Individual versus collective agreements;
- The award safety net;
- Minimum wages;
- Statutory minimum conditions of employment; and
- Unfair dismissal.

The review is due to report to government later this year and the State Government is expected to announce its intended changes soon after. The 300,000 workers that will be affected by the changes work predominantly in the Western Australian public sector and in unincorporated small businesses.

Launching the *No WorkChoices in WA* campaign in Kings Park today, UnionsWA Secretary Simone McGurk said Western Australians needed to realise that there was a very real danger that Mr Buswell and Premier Colin Barnett could introduce WorkChoices style changes in WA.

“Colin Barnett was a senior Minister in the Court Government when it introduced individual contracts and cut minimum standards for Western Australian workers,” Ms McGurk said.

“When in Opposition, Mr Barnett supported the Howard Government’s WorkChoices laws, which abolished the award safety net and cut minimum standards in Australian workplaces.

“At the same time, Mr Buswell said he supported individual contracts.

“With Mr Barnett and Mr Buswell now in government and with a former Howard Government industrial relations advocate reviewing our local workplace laws, there is a very real danger we will see WorkChoices style changes introduced in WA.”

Ms McGurk said the introduction of WorkChoices style changes in Western Australia would damage important government services.

“More than 120,000 of the workers likely to be affected by any changes to Western Australian workplace laws will be people employed in the public sector. This will include people delivering important public services, such as health, education, policing and child protection. It will also include people employed to protect our environment and monitor safety on our mine sites and in other workplaces,” she said.

“If the State Government introduces changes to our workplace laws that cut minimum standards, it will become more difficult to attract and retain people in our public sector, particularly as we enter a new Gorgon-led boom, and the quality of important public services will deteriorate as a result.

“This deterioration in public services will be particularly harsh, coming on top of budget cuts already announced by Mr Buswell, which require government departments to arbitrarily cut 3 per cent of expenditure this year, irrespective of the services they deliver.”

Ms McGurk said the No WorkChoices in WA campaign would be run until the State Government guaranteed that it would:

- Not introduce WorkChoices style individual contracts in Western Australia;
- Not erode minimum standards or the award safety net system in Western Australian workplaces;
- Maintain the role of the WA Industrial Relations Commission as the independent umpire;
- Maintain protections against unfair dismissal; and
- Maintain and improve public services in WA.

No WorkChoices in WA will feature an intensive television advertising campaign supported

More information about the campaign could be found at www.noworkchoicesinwa.com.

Ends.

MEDIA CONTACT: Simone McGurk, UnionsWA, 0407 199 890