

## Media Release

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Thursday, 4 October 2007

### **Granada Tavern Prosecutions. The Howard Government gets another \$24 750 in revenue but Tasmanian Workers get more of Workchoices**

Unions Tasmania today welcomed the prosecution and fining of the Granada Tavern for applying duress to staff to sign AWA/Individual contracts. However Secretary, Simon Cocker described the process as overly legalistic and not a just outcome for workers. The fine is also low compared with the maximum penalty.

Commenting on the outcome of the prosecution Unions Tasmania Secretary Simon Cocker said:

Employees who have suffered this kind of abuse from their employer will feel a moral victory today. Emily Wills showed a lot of guts and stood up for her rights but for every Emily Wills there are hundreds of other employees who have been disempowered and crushed by the Howard Government's unfair laws. Not everyone has the courage to stand up to their employer and risk losing their job.

The \$24750 fine does not go to the workers as compensation for the anguish caused by the disruption to their lives. The money goes to the Federal Government. A fine as low as \$24750 cannot be seen as a just outcome. The Granada Tavern would have saved much more than that in a year by cutting the penalty rates of their employees.

The Howard government has set up a confusing, legalistic process to replace what was once a simple and fair Award system.

Before Workchoices employers like the Granada Tavern knew the legal minimum they had to pay their staff. If employees were underpaid they could go to the Industrial commission and, using a simple process without the need of lawyers, they could claim back-pay. Now the Federal Government has created two new massive government departments and a system where you have to hire lawyers and go to court if an employer does the wrong thing. The system is complex and expensive.

All Australians really should be asking themselves why the Howard Government has squandered hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars setting up a massive bureaucracy, advertising it on television, hiring lawyers and running court cases to replace a simple effective and fair system based on Awards and collective bargaining. It is scandalous.

Fining employers thousands of dollars will never compensate Tasmanian workers for the loss of their basic rights to collectively bargain and to seek help from their union and it will never put back a strong safety net for low paid workers in this state.

Joe Hockey will probably try to come out and say this is an example that the Government's workplace laws are working. This decision doesn't prove that at all. It proves the Government's workplace laws are complex, expensive and a complete, incompetent bungle on his part.

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