



Media Release

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Tax cuts won't give workers fair pay and conditions

John Howard & Peter Costello have promised tax cuts but these will not compensate working families for the impact of the Work Choices laws and the Govt's plan to push a further 1.5 million workers onto AWAs if it is re-elected, Simon Cocker, Unions Tasmania Secretary said today. The Treasurer Peter Costello has made it clear that Workchoices is designed to keep wages low. As recently seen in the United Petroleum case in Tasmania the Workchoices laws make it possible for employers to strip out employee entitlements and radically cut their take home pay. A tax cut is small compensation when you've lost up to \$190 a week under Workchoices.

A recent government-funded study by Sydney University found workers on the Howard Government's AWA individual contracts earn on average \$106 a week less than workers on collective agreements. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures in Tasmania back this up.

The Coalition's plan to push an extra 1.5 million workers onto AWAs, as revealed in a once confidential Department of Employment and Workplace Relations document recently reported in the media is also of great concern. The government should come clean about which agencies will be put under pressure to offer AWA contracts as a condition for obtaining Federal government funding if the Coalition Government is re-elected.

The \$20 a week tax cut for average workers promised by the Liberals yesterday is nowhere near enough to cover the loss in pay from Work Choices & the increases in housing, petrol, and other living costs for working families.

Secretary of Unions Tasmania, Simon Cocker said:

"The facts from cases like United Petroleum show that that vulnerable people are losing out under the Work Choices laws which are putting downward pressure on wages.

"It is also clear that John Howard and Peter Costello intend to take Work Choices further. Their denials on this issue cannot be trusted. They didn't even tell the public about Workchoices before the last election" said Mr Cocker.

"The Dept of Employment and Workplace Relations document shows the Government already has a plan to push an extra 1.5 million workers onto AWAs. The Government should come clean on which agencies will be put under pressure to offer AWA contracts as a condition for obtaining Federal Government funding if the Coalition Government is re-elected. Will it be our nurses or school teachers?"

"The rising costs of housing, petrol, childcare, health and food are already leaving working families struggling to keep their heads above water. There have been five interest rate rises since the last election and mortgage repayments are up an average of \$65 a week for working families."

"There is no way the Liberals' promised tax cuts can cover working families' rising living costs as well as the impact of Work Choices." said Mr Cocker

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