

**SAFETY NET ABOLISHED**

Prior to the passage of the Howard Government’s IR laws, almost all working Australians enjoyed the protection of a strong award system. Around 1.6 million Australian working people rely only on awards to protect all their pay and conditions. Millions of other workers have relied on awards to underpin their basic rights and conditions. The Howard Government has abolished the award safety net.

The Government’s new IR laws:

- Take away any requirement for agreements to be consistent with award rights, and strip down agreements to just five minimum conditions: a minimum hourly rate, 10 days sick leave, 4 weeks annual leave (2 weeks of which can be “cashed out”), unpaid parental leave and a maximum number of weekly working hours.
- Preserve the 38 hour week in theory - but there are no guarantees of extra pay for overtime, weekends, shift work or public holidays. There will be no rostering limits on when you will be asked to work these hours. Therefore, you could be asked to work 50 hour weeks for half the year. And since they will be averaged out over a year, your employer can refuse to pay you overtime.
- Remove protection for important rights like: limits on when you can be required to work, overtime pay, weekend or night work rates, work related allowances and annual leave loading.

Before the election of the Howard Government	Since election of Howard Government in 1996	Under the Howard Governments IR laws, from 2006
<p>The independent Industrial Relations Commission decided what should be in each award after hearing from employers and employees or unions.</p> <p>No Government interference about award matters.</p> <p>Agreements had to provide for wages and conditions that were at least as generous as the award</p>	<p>Awards reduced to 20 allowable matters.</p> <p>Limits on part time and casual employment removed.</p> <p>Right to consultation about job losses removed.</p> <p>Powers of Industrial Relations Commission to set fair award conditions and settle disputes reduced.</p>	<p>Basic rights no longer enshrined.</p> <p><b>Gone - Overtime pay</b></p> <p><b>Gone - Standard hours of work</b></p> <p><b>Gone - Allowances</b></p> <p><b>Gone- Weekend and shift work rates of pay</b></p> <p><b>Gone - Annual leave loading</b></p> <p><b>Gone - Redundancy pay</b></p> <p>To remove these conditions, an employer need only say the agreement does not cover them.</p> <p>The only guaranteed provisions for workers on agreements are the five minimum conditions.</p> <p>The new minimum standards will be 38 hour week (averaged over 12 months); 4 weeks’ annual leave (2 of which can be cashed out); parental leave of 52 weeks unpaid leave, and personal leave of a maximum 10 days per year.</p>

**Free confidential assistance can be obtained from the ACTU’s Union Helpline, for both union members and non-members: 1300 362 223.**