

# Media Release



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## **Untold damages: Booklet details impact of WorkChoices on working women**

One woman lost her job after 18 years, another woman had her hours of work repeatedly threatened. A group of women were told to meet their union in a toilet block and another group were not allowed to have a say over their new job contracts. These are the real stories outlined in a new booklet produced to inform politicians about the detrimental effect that WorkChoices is having on Australian women.

Concerned that the experiences of many women have not been told and that the new industrial relations laws will not be strong enough, representatives from the Australian Services Union (ASU) and Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) and women workers launched **Untold Damage: Why women need new IR laws** in Canberra today.

The booklet details how women workers have been the hardest hit under WorkChoices and calls for new laws and rights – beyond the scrapping of WorkChoices.

ASU branch secretary Ingrid Stitt said women had an important role to play in the growth of Australia's workforce and economic prosperity but WorkChoices had left a trail of destruction.

"Women have been ripped off, lost their jobs, shift allowances and penalty rates and many have become more vulnerable and insecure in their workplaces," Ms Stitt said.

"We know the government is close to finalising its new IR laws and we need to make sure that amongst all the negotiations, the stories of the workers affected most by WorkChoices are told and that our politicians are held to account.

"Our politicians cannot miss the opportunity that they have now to make the working lives of women in Australia a whole lot better.

"New laws – beyond the scrapping of WorkChoices – are needed to protect working women."

TCFUA Victorian secretary Michele O'Neil said while women workers were the hardest hit under WorkChoices many of their stories had not been told.

"These stories may not normally be front page news, but they are the stories of some of the most vulnerable members of Australia's workforce. These are the stories of women working in factories, their own homes, sweatshops, call centres and customer service.

“WorkChoices has had a huge detrimental effect on women working for smaller companies, in part-time and casual positions and for women in lower paid industries it has further entrenched their disadvantage.

“WorkChoices took away their protections from unfair dismissal, it has removed decent standards, reduced the ability to collectively bargain and stopped my union being able to enter sweatshops and check workers’ pay and conditions.”

“This is the moment when the Federal Labor Government can make a real and lasting difference. We are calling on Julia Gillard to go further than her public statements and deliver substantial law reform for working women. Once you have read this booklet you cannot deny the urgency and importance of the changes proposed.”

Through seven case studies **Untold Damage: Why women need new IR laws** gives an insight into the experiences of women working under WorkChoices in 2008.

The booklet outlines what is needed to redress the damage across six areas: the right to collectively bargain, freedom of association, union right of entry, the award system, unfair dismissal and an independent umpire.

Ms Stitt and Ms O’Neil, who have been joined by some of the women who feature in the booklet, will use the booklet to lobby federal parliamentarians in Canberra.

Ends

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