



AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 14 September 2006

ACTU/ALP BARGAINING PLAN: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS SACRIFICED TO UNION RIGHTS

Statement by Mr Peter Hendy, Chief Executive

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's largest and most representative employer and business organisation, has today expressed profound concern at the concurrent announcements this week by the Federal Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, and the ACTU to force collective bargaining on Australian employers and employees.

Weekend policy announcements by Mr Beazley and yesterday's National Press Club address by ACTU Secretary Greg Combet point to a joint plan by the political and industrial wings of the Australian labour movement to make collective bargaining compulsory in Australia. They would force employers and employees into collective bargaining. In many cases, this may not be bargaining at all and outcomes would be imposed on employers who refuse to meekly fall into step with trade union agendas.

This policy is all about replacing individual rights with so called union rights.

The collective bargaining proposals of Mr Beazley and Mr Combet would give unions and industrial tribunals an unprecedented power to control workplace relations and the setting of wages and conditions in Australia.

The proposals give unions extreme powers but ride roughshod over the rights of employers and non-union employees.

They are also unfair. A fair collective bargaining system must be voluntary, must include the freedom to say no and must not exclude the bargaining rights of individuals.

These announcements breach each of these fundamental principles. They force collective bargaining, they force agreements to be arbitrated (making them no longer agreements) and force collective agreements to override individual arrangements.

Employers will not accept these proposals for union control of bargaining in Australia. Aside from being unfair and extreme, they ignore the reality of workplaces where nine out of ten businesses have no union members and where 83 per cent of private sector employees are not in a union.

Together with the proposals to abolish AWAs and any form of statutory individual bargaining, these proposals are a backward looking rollback of more than ten years of workplace reform. The result would be low productivity, increased labour costs and restrictive union rules and work practices. This means fewer jobs and lower living standards.

Industry is looking for a workplace relations policy from the ALP which takes Australia forward, not backwards. These announcements ignore modern workplace realities and respond only to a trade union wish list.

For further information:

Peter Hendy	Chief Executive	02 6273 2311 / 0419 422 650
Peter Anderson	Director, Workplace Policy	03 9668 9950 / 0417 264 862
Brett Hogan	Director of Communications	03 9668 9950 / 0407 273 884

MR 93/06

www.acci.asn.au

LEADING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS