



Dr Chris Burns

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

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TERRITORY GOVERNMENT DEFENDS WORKERS' RIGHTS

The NT Government will continue to stand up for the rights of Territory workers, despite Federal legislation introduced today, Public Employment Minister Dr Chris Burns said.

“We have endured the Federal Government’s \$55 million advertising campaign selling the message that working people in Australia will be better off with lower pay and worse conditions,” Dr Burns said.

“This morning, the Federal Government finally revealed details of its industrial relations agenda in a Bill it aims to rush through Parliament.”

The 687-page Bill, which comes with a 566-page explanatory memo, was introduced to Parliament this morning.

It will be referred to a Senate committee for inquiry. Submissions to the committee must be lodged by 9 November, in just seven days time.

“Canberra refused to guarantee that Territorians will not be worse off under these new industrial relations laws,” Dr Burns said. “Now we know why.”

The *Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Bill 2005*:

- Removes the right to protection from unfair dismissal for the majority of Australian workers;
- Strips the power of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to act as an independent umpire in creating and maintaining awards;
- Establishes the Orwellian-named “Fair Pay Commission” to set the minimum wage;
- Encourages the spread of Australian Workplace Agreements, while reducing the protection they offer to workers.

“According to the Bill, AWAs can ‘exclude or modify’ award conditions, including annual leave, public holidays, penalty rates and overtime,” Dr Burns said.

“It is unacceptable that Territory workers will be forced to choose between accepting poorer conditions or losing their jobs.”

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