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Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs)

The use of AWAs undermines employee job security and severely restricts their working rights and conditions.

Under an AWA the award safety net is lost and five (5) minimum conditions only apply

- Employees can no longer rely on awards to ensure their rights to annual leave loading, classification based pay structures, redundancy provisions and protection from unfair dismissal. An employer does not have to include award conditions in an agreement.
- The “no disadvantage test” is gone. In the past, all agreements (including individual contracts) had to provide for wages and conditions that were at least as generous as the award. The Howard government has abolished the award safety net and replaced it with just five (5) minimum conditions.
- The five (5) minimum conditions an employer can legally offer are: a minimum wage of \$511.76 per week; a 38 hour week averaged over a year; 4 weeks annual leave; 52 weeks unpaid parental leave; and paid personal/carers leave of a maximum of 10 days per year including sick leave.

Individual (AWA) contracts can be offered at any time

- Employees can be offered an AWA at anytime even if a collective agreement is in place and it only has to include the five (5) minimum conditions.
- It is legal for employers to offer employees a new job or promotion on the condition that they accept and sign an AWA.

All previous rights and conditions can be overridden

- Once an AWA is signed it overrides all previous agreements and awards. If the workplace rights and conditions in the employee’s current collective agreements and award are not included in an AWA they are lost forever. AWAs can last for up to five (5) years.

Job security is threatened

- The normal expectation of maintaining employment conditions is gone. AWAs have a finish date and an employer can simply choose not to renew the agreement.

...Ends

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“The Queensland Independent Education Union represents over 14,500 non-government education sector employees including teachers, principals, school support staff, grounds and maintenance staff, early childhood education staff and employees in business, international and English language colleges.”

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