

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

WorkChoices limited award conditions, removed unfair dismissal protections, prohibited union activities & much collective bargaining, and introduced AWAs. The Fairness Test has since been initiated in 2007 to check possible abuses of WorkChoices, but its scope is limited.

The casual workforce in Australia has increased between 1984 and 2003 from 16% to 27%. (YCW)

Casual workers have no entitlements to paid holidays, carers or sick leave, or unpaid maternity leave. This particularly impacts women, as one third of the all female employees are casual. (ABS)

There are an estimated 300,000 clothing industry outworkers in Australia, who often earn under \$3/hr. (FairWear)

An inquiry into the impact of the government's 2005 WorkChoices legislation expressed 'serious concerns about the social and economic impact'. It found that employees were much less likely to raise issues of concern about health & safety or unfair pay & conditions as they feared they may be fired. This was of most concern with unskilled and vulnerable workers. The report also found evidence of 'a trend towards lower wages and conditions' for those on Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) and 'no evidence whatsoever of reciprocal productivity and flexibility gains for employees and employers'. (QIRC, 2007)

Ideas for this information sheet have been drawn from the Uniting Church in Australia's Federal Election 2007 resource kit, Growing a Nation of Hope.