



Are you one of the many Australians concerned about your right to enjoy a fair, just and dignified life at work (whether employed or out of work) and after work in your leisure and family time?

The work and social benefits we all enjoy today did not fall from the sky, nor were they freely given by governments or companies in a spirit of generosity. They were won through the process of working people joining together and

campaigning for them. This struggle has been both a political and an industrial struggle.

All of these conditions were won by working people acting *collectively*. Trade unionism is an essential ingredient in a healthy, functioning civil society. We are all members of a collective – individuals acting together in a spirit of community. This is what makes us human.

The so-called WorkChoice laws, as well as related laws such as Welfare to Work, have as their aim the destruction of this collective spirit. This breaking down of society into isolated individuals will see worker pitted against worker, family against family, in a constant struggle to retain decent working conditions and a dignified and rewarding life outside of work.

**These laws are anti-social and anti-human.**

***“Poll after poll demonstrated that the Australian people don’t agree at all with anything we’re doing on this – we have minority support for what we’re doing.”***

Senator Nick Minchin, speaking to the conservative H R Nicholls Society about the IR laws

### Who Are We?

WorkLife is an alliance of groups and concerned individuals, working together to build community awareness of the inherent unfairness and backwardness of the newly-passed laws.

We are people with a diverse range of opinions and experiences who come together united in our belief that this new industrial regime is not in the best interests of working people, families, the general community, or the economy.

The alliance is broad-based, comprising members or representatives of:

- Community and social action groups
- Concerned individuals
- Political parties and political groups
- The trade union movement



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**The majority of Australians do not support these new laws and so we need to make our voices heard. Only when there is a massive groundswell of visible public opposition will the government be compelled to change these laws.**

### Our Purpose

*WorkLife has been formed for the purpose of bringing groups and individuals together in an alliance campaigning to raise awareness in the community about your right to a fair, just and dignified life at work (whether currently employed or out of work) and after work in your leisure and family time.*

### General Principles

The general principles that inform the specific aims and objectives of WorkLife are that:

- Trade unionism and collective bargaining are

essential elements of a healthy, democratic, civil society

- All employees, especially the lowest paid and the most vulnerable, are entitled to fair and equitable pay and working conditions
- Industrial disputes be resolved through negotiation, including the use of independent conciliation and arbitration processes
- There must be a balance between work and the enjoyment of family and community life
- Work-related legislation and welfare-related legislation must be mutually supportive without diminishing the rights of those in work, those out of work, and those in need of special support to maintain a decent standard of living
- Work-related legislation must work to promote full-employment under fair and just working conditions.

**Healthy, functioning families and communities depend on these principles. Justice and human dignity depend on them. Australian society depends on them.**

***"The value of each worker is not as a commodity, but as a person ..."*** -- National Council of Churches 30.07.05 (Sydney Morning Herald)



### WorkLife aims to:

**Campaign** for the scrapping of all inequitable workplace and related legislation, including:

- Workplace Relations Act 1966 (Work Choices Amendment) and Regulations
- Welfare to Work Act
- Proposed independent contractor legislation
- for new workplace and related welfare laws based on the principles of fairness, justice and dignity for all Australians

### Promote

- collective bargaining and trade unionism as essential to a modern, democratic society
- awareness of these issues in the community

**Dr Peter Jensen**, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney:

*"This nation and its political leaders must be committed to ensuring optimum working conditions for the nation's workers; right of workers to maintain strong unions; a living wage that will mean everyone has the ability to provide for themselves and their families the necessities of life, and the preservation of leisure time for families to be together for rest and recreation and to maintain their relationships."* -- The Age, 06.08.05

### How do we operate?

WorkLife is an alliance that meets regularly to discuss and coordinate activities to achieve our stated aims.

We are a democratically-run alliance that welcomes anybody who shares our aims. You can participate to the extent you feel comfortable or able. You can come along just to listen, or to share your views or your experiences.

### What are we going to do?

The alliance is committed to raising awareness of the issues and to campaigning for the total repeal of the new legislation.

To this end, we see ourselves:

- Organising speakers' forums, and public meetings and conferences

- Disseminating literature, leaflets, etc via community stalls and mail-box drops



- Undertaking research, collecting stories and data, and publishing the results
- Participating in public events such as rallies and protests against the new legislation
- Lobbying government and influential groups
- Networking with others having similar aims.

**What are people saying?**

**George Pell**, Catholic Archbishop of Sydney:  
*"This Bill will increase the "Americanisation" of the Australian workplace in some unfortunate ways through its hostility to unions and by further increasing the wage differentials between the very rich and the prosperous (with skills that the market rewards) and those battlers at the*

*other end of the spectrum."* -- Archdiocese website, 27.11.05

**Peter Reid** works for Bushman Tanks where all staff are on individual contracts. His working life rolls through weekends and public holidays in a four days on, four days off rotation. There are no penalty or overtime rates or meal allowances, just an hourly rate.

*"I had no choice but to sign the AWA. They said if you want to work here, that was at the beginning, I had to sign it. I had no choice. They didn't explain it to us that well. You read it and don't understand it that well. We are tank makers, not legal experts."*

(Reid receives \$792 a week for 48 hours work. Under the relevant Award, Peter Reid would receive \$1,114.56 a week.) -- The Age, 05.07.05

