

# Individual contracts that undercut existing rights and conditions

“ Working people will lose their right to negotiate or bargain collectively. It will mean a drop in living standards. ”



## Important changes coming from 1 July 2005

*The Howard Government has said it will use its new Senate powers to take away many of your basic rights at work.*

*The Government wants to use individual contracts to undercut your existing rights and conditions at work.*

Currently 5 million Australian workers and their families rely on awards or collective enterprise agreements to protect their pay, conditions and living standards.

Unions believe that all workers should have the right to choose not to sign an individual contract and to bargain collectively with their workmates for wages and conditions. The Howard Government wants to change this by introducing workplace laws to force more workers on to individual contracts.

**The Howard Government introduced a new type of individual contract in 1996, called an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA).**

AWAs (Individual Contracts) were specifically designed to make it easier for employers to undercut award and collective agreement

conditions. AWAs allow employers to single out employees to force new working conditions on to them one at a time.

**AWA individual contracts are often used to give employers more control over your working hours, to reduce overtime pay, and to make more people casual.**

The Howard Government has spent millions of dollars pushing AWAs since 1996 and they now cover around 400,000 Australians.

It wants to change the rules to make it easier to get AWA individual contracts approved and to let employers offer them at any time.

These changes will make it harder for working people to negotiate with their employer collectively, forcing individual workers to accept lower wages and conditions.

More AWA individual contracts will mean less family friendly working hours and lower standards of living.

*Now the Government wants to make it even easier to force you on to an AWA individual contract:*

*“We should be trying to move to an industrial relations system where the predominant instrument is the individual contract.”*

*Peter Costello, Federal Treasurer, The Age, 19 Feb 2005*

### HOW THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT WANTS TO USE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS TO UNDERCUT EXISTING WAGES AND CONDITIONS

Before the Howard Govt was elected in 1996	INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS UNDER THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT		Business wishlist...
	Current situation - since 1996	Expected govt changes - 2005	
Individual contracts could only provide conditions better than those in awards and collective agreements.	<p>New type of individual contract - AWA - introduced.</p> <p>AWA can totally ignore existing conditions in collective workplace agreements and can undercut award conditions.</p> <p>Employers can legally lock workers out and refuse to pay them for months if they don't sign AWAs.</p>	<p>AWAs don't need to be approved before they come into operation.</p> <p>AWAs can override collective workplace agreements at any time.</p> <p>Over time, collective agreement will be irrelevant as all new starters are forced on to AWAs.</p>	<p>AWAs to last up to 5 years (currently 3 years).</p> <p>AWAs not assessed against awards at all, so they can undercut awards even more than is possible now.</p> <p>AWAs only need to meet 5 minimum conditions</p>