

## It's time to abolish Workchoices



ASU Assistant National Secretary Linda White and Branch Deputy Secretary Naomi Arrowsmith with QF IT members at a lunch time meeting to discuss QF EBA

**THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT'S WORKCHOICES IS HAVING A DAMAGING EFFECT ON COMMUNITIES AND THE NATION AS A WHOLE. IT HAS INCREASINGLY STRIPPED AWAY WORKERS CONDITIONS AND CREATED AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EMPLOYERS ARE GAINING GREATER POWER AND CONTROL.**

For workers in the airline industry, WorkChoices has had a particularly negative impact. This edition of Onesky News will focus on the Howard Government's WorkChoices policy and show how it will affect airline workers and the future of this industry.

### **WHAT WILL THREE MORE YEARS OF WORKCHOICES MEAN FOR US?**

Although Qantas may try to deny it, they are more than prepared to use WorkChoices to implement dramatic changes to the their workforce.

Under the umbrella of the Federal Government's industrial laws and their impact on workers especially through prohibited content, Qantas is further undermining your basic entitlements. Remember "prohibited content" is everything that the Howard Government has decided should no longer be covered by awards. This means that many of your union entitlements such as training for ASU delegates and activists, consultation with the ASU over use of temps and casuals, and paid time union meetings are all

prohibited matters and will no longer be able to be included in future EBAs.

The only way to attempt to protect these conditions is by putting them into a separate letter or agreement outside the EBA, which is what Qantas members are currently doing. These conditions and many others are in jeopardy.

If re-elected this November, the Howard Government has already indicated that it will beef up the IR legislation. This will see matters that can be contained within EBAs and Awards even further undermined.

The Howard Government introduced WorkChoices to increase profits for the big end of town at the expense of workers.

Many economists and academics who study workplace laws in other countries say that WorkChoices laws are not only unnecessary but are the harshest anti-worker laws in the Western world and will create a new generation of working poor. These are extremely draconian laws that even the so called "economic dries" like Margaret Thatcher, who was no friend of the unions, never dreamt of introducing.

If John Howard is voted back into office, have no doubt that Qantas will embrace further changes with open arms. It will take advantage of any extension to WorkChoices that Howard might surprise us with if re elected.

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# FROM THE INDUSTRY PRESIDENT



**AS THE FEDERAL ELECTION LOOMS WE FIND OURSELVES AT A FORK IN THE ROAD IN DECIDING WHAT TYPE OF SOCIETY WE WILL BE LEAVING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

The Howard government's none-core promises, treatment of refugees, deflection of blame to anybody but themselves and changing of the rules for accountability, is creating a harsh, uncaring and selfish society.

We can choose to give them approval to continue this process of creating an Australia that mirrors the United States in its treatment of its citizens, or we can choose to say we want more for our children than just a good economy.

The deceitful manner in which the extreme WorkChoices Legislation was locked away, until being gleefully produced, the day after the last election victory sends a clear signal to us all regarding what we can expect if Howard and Costello are re-elected.

In the Airlines Division we have seen the rise of ground handling providers and low-cost airlines competing with each other to cut award conditions and lower pay rates for members right across the industry. We know the management of many companies employing our members, are eagerly awaiting the re-election of the current federal government in order to fully take advantage of these vile anti-worker laws. Holiday pay, sick leave entitlements and shedding staff through the use of clauses referring to Operational or Structural reasons, will be used to slash the cost base of these companies and increase the pay of executives.

I urge you all to think long and hard about making your vote count toward a better Australia, for all Australians not just those in the boardrooms.

—Craig Carr, President, AST Division

Go to [www.asuservices.labor.net.au](http://www.asuservices.labor.net.au) to check the audited finances of the NSW and ACT (Services) Branch of the ASU for the year ended 30 June 2007. The Auditors have declared the financial reports present a true and accurate financial position of your union.

# FROM THE SECRETARY



**ON 24 NOVEMBER WE WILL FINALLY GET A CHANCE TO GET RID OF HOWARD'S WORKCHOICES AND STOP IN ITS TRACKS LAWS THAT HAVE JUST BEGUN TO EAT AWAY AT THE FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY.**

WorkChoices has given all ASU members reason to be concerned as our rights that we have taken for granted – penalty rates, overtime and allowances are at risk. WorkChoices has allowed employers to take away those conditions upon which working people depend. No wonder so many are turning against the Howard Government. You cannot expect to hurt working people so directly and seriously and be rewarded at the ballot box.

It's a tough task to defeat a conservative government and it doesn't happen very often. Most of us will only witness this a couple of times in our lives. Some members will remember the Whitlam election in 1972 after Labor's 23 years in opposition; others will remember the Hawke victory in 1983. Some members will not have experienced the excitement of the these events. If the Howard government is defeated, for members under 35, this will be the first experience of the people throwing out a long term conservative government. What an exciting night it will be and won't it be amazing if we wake up on the 25th November to a new era in Australian history!

We will be able to say goodbye to WorkChoices and feel proud that we did our part in ensuring the quality of life and working conditions for which we have fought so hard, are passed onto our children. We will be able to look back and see how close we came to seeing our rights disappear, but how hard we worked to make sure it didn't happen.

We will be able to say goodbye to division in our community. This Government was prepared to use scare tactics for political ends, regardless of truth or without a care for who they hurt or the long term damage to our workers' rights. Howard fostered fear; fear of aboriginal people taking "our land"; fear of refugees posing as terrorists who throw their children overboard or fear of Union bosses with muscles and tattoos coming to turn your lights out!

We will be able to say good riddance to a government of inaction and in denial on climate change, and feel relief that we finally have a Government that will take global warming seriously.

And we will be able to say good riddance to a government with a fantastical belief in privatisation and the free market's ability to deliver the essential services which are central to our standard of living in a fair society – health, education, childcare and aged care.

**LET'S MAKE HISTORY ON 24TH NOVEMBER AND GET RID OF WORKCHOICES AND SEND A MESSAGE THAT WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR GENERATIONS – DON'T MESS WITH WORKERS RIGHTS!**

## HOW TO CONTACT US

**PHONE SYDNEY 9310 4000**

**OUTSIDE OF SYDNEY 1300 784 278**

**SYDNEY** 39 - 47 RENWICK STREET REDFERN NSW PO BOX 1865  
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

**NEWCASTLE** PO BOX 2268 DANGAR NSW 2309

**LISMORE** PO BOX 1056 LISMORE NSW 2480

**ACT** PO BOX 1012 DICKSON ACT 2602

# WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?

## LUFTHANSA AGREEMENT A SUCCESS

**A STRONG COLLECTIVE AND UNITED WORKFORCE, NO MATTER WHAT THE SIZE, CAN BRING ABOUT CHANGE.**

After a lengthy negotiation period, staff at Lufthansa Airlines, have finally signed off on their agreement which guaranteed another year of stable working conditions.

The agreement, which was negotiated by ASU employee delegates and members, was an impressive demonstration of unity among a small group of employees.

In the new agreement, workers have resisted the introduction of discretionary pay rises based on performance assessments. Management refused to believe that this was what staff really wanted. They insisted on a re-ballot of staff, and unsurprisingly the vote did not change. All staff will now benefit from the 3.1% across the board pay increase based on the CPI and backdated. Most importantly, it is not performance based.

ASU Staff Delegate, Merilee Lewis, was pleased at the display of unity she saw amongst her workmates,

"Everyone stood together and they seem to be happy with the outcome, especially the 3.1% pay increase."

**"EVERYONE STOOD TOGETHER AND THEY SEEM TO BE HAPPY WITH THE OUTCOME, ESPECIALLY THE 3.1% PAY INCREASE."**

Despite the small size of the workplace, Lufthansa's ASU members consistently attended meetings and engaged fully in the negotiation process. They were very supportive of each other and determined that a consensus view on performance based pay rises was reached. As a group, they resisted a good deal of pressure from management to start the new pay system which they did not want.

Well done to all of the ASU members at Lufthansa.



## PETITION SIGNATURES SURGE AT SIT

**THE PETITIONS ADDRESSED TO KEVIN RUDD DEMANDING THAT HE STICK TO HIS POLICY OF A FAIRER WORKPLACE RELATIONS SYSTEM HAVE BEEN VERY POPULAR AT SIT.**

Over 1,500 signatures have been collected by ASU members. Members feel strongly that WorkChoices should be axed. In order to achieve this we have to change the Government and ensure that Kevin Rudd introduces new laws asap!

This is a great effort and shows the dedication amongst the majority of workers to look after the rights of workers. The word is out and airline workers are angry about WorkChoices.



Grant Snowden

# FEDERAL ELECTION 07: THE ASU PUT THESE QUESTIONS TO THE THREE MAJ

QUESTIONS	LABOR PARTY	LIBERAL PARTY
<p><b>1. Is your party committed to rescinding WorkChoices?</b></p>	<p>Mr Howard's unfair WorkChoices laws have gone too far. Labor's industrial relations policy, Forward with Fairness, will get the balance right in the workplace with both fairness and flexibility.</p> <p>Under Labor, the Howard Government's unfair WorkChoices laws will be abolished.</p>	
<p><b>2. Will your party commit to abolishing AWAs?</b></p>	<p>AWAs have resulted in working Australians losing penalty rates, overtime, shift allowance and redundancy entitlements with no compensation. AWAs will have no place under Labor's new industrial relations system.</p>	
<p><b>3. Will your party commit to the re-establishment of an Independent Umpire who can arbitrate disputes where necessary?</b></p>	<p>A Rudd Labor Government will create a new independent umpire to ensure fairness and balance in Australian workplaces. Federal Labor will establish Fair Work Australia – because Australian working families need a new industrial relations system with a fair and independent umpire.</p>	
<p><b>4. Will your party commit to reinstating unfair dismissal rights for workers even if they are employed by a corporation or employer with less than 100 staff?</b></p>	<p>Under John Howard's laws, hardworking Australians can be dismissed without warning for no reason or any reason. That isn't a fair or balanced system. Labor wants a system which balances the need to protect good workers from being sacked unfairly and the need for employers to manage their workforce.</p> <p>Labor will ensure that all Australian employees are protected from unfair dismissal. Our system will be a simpler, faster and less costly system to ensure claims are resolved quickly and with a minimum of fuss.</p>	
<p><b>5. Will you ensure that the Australian Federal Minimum Wage is increased annually through a transparent and independent process that prioritises the need for a living wage for working families?</b></p>	<p>Under Labor the independent umpire, Fair Work Australia, will make a Federal minimum wage determination annually. Submissions from all Australians will be encouraged.</p> <p>In adjusting minimum wages Fair Work Australia will be required to consider a range of social and economic factors such as equity, employment and inflation. Fair Work Australia will consider all the evidence available to it and make a decision which is fair to Australian working families, promotes employment growth, productivity, low inflation and downward pressure on interest rates.</p> <p>Under Labor, Fair Work Australia will be required by legislation to publish updated wage rates for all awards by 1 July each year.</p>	<p><b>The de ans qu</b></p>
<p><b>6. Under WorkChoices wage rates and classification arrangements are to be removed from Awards. Will your party commit to restoring these conditions to Awards?</b></p>	<p>A Rudd Labor Government will guarantee a decent safety net for working Australians. Labor's safety net will be in two parts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 legislated national employment standards for entitlements like annual leave, parental leave and redundancy pay. Awards will contain 10 minimum entitlements like penalty rates and overtime. Each award will also include an individual flexibility clause.</li> <li>• One of the 10 matters to be contained in awards will be minimum wages, including skill based classifications.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. Will you give workers the right to have a collective agreement if a majority in the workplace wish to do so?</b></p>	<p>Under Labor, if a majority of employees at a workplace want to bargain collectively, their employer will be required to bargain collectively with them in good faith. Good faith bargaining does not require bargaining participants to make concessions or sign up to an agreement where they do not agree to the terms. Instead, good faith bargaining encourages and assists employers and employees to consider the issues central to bargaining and work efficiently towards making an agreement. And Labor will ensure that each employee will have a choice about whether they want to be represented in bargaining, including by a union.</p>	
<p><b>8. Will your party commit to sign the Kyoto protocol on Climate Change?</b></p>	<p>Labor will immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol to help forge a global solution to climate change. Labor is committed to playing its part in forging a global solution through the processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).</p>	

# FOR PARTIES AND HERE ARE THEIR RESPONSES.

LIBERAL PARTY	THE GREENS
	<p>The Australian Greens are now the only party committed to abolishing the WorkChoices regime in its entirety. The Greens industrial policy calls for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The abolition of AWAs and no individual agreements that can override awards and collective agreements;</li> <li>• An enforceable right for employees to collectively bargain;</li> <li>• A strong, fair and enforceable set of minimum conditions for all employees;</li> <li>• A strong and viable award system;</li> <li>• Universal access to unfair dismissal protection and redundancy pay;</li> <li>• Workers' representatives to have the right to enter workplaces;</li> <li>• Restoration of the AIRC as the independent umpire in the industrial relations system;</li> <li>• Legal protection for democratic rights, including the right to strike.</li> </ul>
	<p>The Australian Greens are committed to abolishing AWAs and oppose any form of individual agreement that can override awards or collective agreements. We believe a 5 year transition period for abolishing AWAs is too long. AWAs undermine collective agreements and as such cannot form part of a fair and just industrial relations system.</p>
	<p>The Australian Greens' Employment and Workplace Relations policy calls for the restoration of the powers of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. An independent arbitrator is essential for a fair and just industrial relations system. We believe strongly in the role of the AIRC in setting minimum wages, deciding test cases on important workplace conditions and in resolving workplace disputes, including through arbitration if necessary.</p>
	<p>The Australian Greens are committed to restoring unfair dismissal protection for all employees. We do not believe there should be any exemption for small businesses and in particular businesses as big as 100 employees. Unfair dismissal laws are important in providing job security and empowering workers in the workplace.</p>
The Liberals inclined to answer these questions	<p>The Australian Greens believe that the role of setting minimum wages ought to be returned to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The AIRC is best placed, with the necessary expertise to set minimum wages in Australia. We support a framework for minimum wage-setting that prioritises the need for a living wage and provides a transparent and independent process. We opposed the establishment of the Australian Fair Pay Commission because it is not transparent and sets economic considerations above the Australian tradition of a living wage for working families</p>
	<p>The Australian Greens support a strong comprehensive award system, including wage rates and classification arrangements. The classification system is a very important part of a strong safety net. For award-reliant workers, the majority of whom are women, the classification system is essential for job progression, up-skilling and wage increases.</p>
	<p>The right to bargain collectively is essential to a fair and just industrial relations system. The Australian Greens are committed to ensuring that collective agreements are the primary means of setting wages and conditions. We support an enforceable right for workers to bargain collectively so that an employer is required to enter into collective agreements if a majority of workers wish to bargain collectively.</p>
	<p>The Australian Greens support Australian ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, and taking a leading role in negotiating a 'post-Kyoto' multilateral emission abatement treaty which includes binding emission targets for all countries.</p>

# FEDERAL ELECTION 07: THE ASU PUT THESE QUESTIONS TO THE THREE MAJ

QUESTIONS	LABOR PARTY	CO
<p><b>9.</b> Will your party commit to ensuring that: policies are developed to prevent Australian jobs being moved offshore? Will you commit to keeping QANTAS Australian owned?</p>	<p>A Federal Labor government will work with the industry and unions to ensure that Australia's aviation and aviation services industries are internationally competitive and world-class. That is the best way to keep jobs in Australia. Under a Federal Labor government Qantas will continue to be subject to the Qantas Sale Act which imposes foreign ownership limits.</p>	
<p><b>10.</b> 457 Visa's are being extensively used in the information technology industry and elsewhere. Does your party have any plans to ensure that workers on these visa's are not exploited or used to undercut Australian wages and working conditions? Will your party commit to protecting 457 visa holders should they question their own wages and working conditions? What plans do you have, if any, to police the use of these visas?</p>	<p>Unlike the Howard Government's administration of the 457 visa, Labor will require temporary work visa holders to be paid the same as Australian workers doing similar jobs. Labor will maintain the Minimum Salary Level as a base salary within the 457 visa program.</p> <p>Temporary skilled migration should only occur where the relevant position cannot be filled by an Australian. The vacant position must also be available to Australian workers with the requisite skills at the relevant market rate. Labor will ensure this has been tested before temporary work visas are issued and that overseas qualifications are verified by the appropriate Australian regulatory authority. Under Labor, 457 visa holders will also have access to the new industrial relations umpire, Fair Work Australia, and to unfair dismissal laws which will provide them with protection in the Australian workplace.</p>	<p>The de ans qu</p>

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# FOR PARTIES AND HERE ARE THEIR RESPONSES.

## COALITION

The Liberals declined to answer these questions

## THE GREENS

We need to be smarter in ensuring on-going employment opportunities for Australian workers. The Australian Greens believe that the future viability and sustainability of Australian industry requires planning involving key stakeholders and an important role for the Government. Instead of hollowing-out the manufacturing base, signing up to free trade agreements that in fact transfer jobs overseas to low-wage economies and setting low standards which mean that we lose industries here in Australia to our overseas competitors, we need instead to invest heavily in innovation and education.

The Australian Greens are committed to keeping QANTAS Australian owned. We are very concerned for the consequences in terms of safety and potential job losses if QANTAS was to be sold as it almost was earlier this year. We believe it is in the national interest for QANTAS to remain Australian owned.

There is a major skills shortage in Australia which the Howard Government has failed to address. This needs to be tackled through a combination of education, training and industry policy. This would reduce the need for overseas recruitment of labour. However, the existence of a global labour market means there will always be a need for a significant number of workers to be able to engage in temporary work in Australia. The visa system, including monitoring and enforcement, must operate to prevent such workers becoming a pool of exploited labour.

The most important step in ensuring 457 and other work visas are not used to undercut wages and working conditions is to restore and extend the role of unions in our workplaces. For example, right of entry provisions. No worker should be penalised for questioning their wages and conditions, but the vulnerability to visa cancellation and deportation of those on 457 visas, puts pressure on workers to remain silent and obedient. The Greens want to see specific legislation designed to protect workers that speak out.

In addition, the Department of Immigration should have additional resources to monitor the use of such visas by employers.

## QANTAS STILL TREATING EBA CLAIMS WITH CONTEMPT

**UNFORTUNATELY QANTAS MANAGEMENT IS STILL NOT LISTENING. YOU GUESSED IT; QANTAS MANAGEMENT IS PERSISTING WITH PLANS TO:**

- Reduce part time minimum hours .
- Recruit more casual staff and fewer full time employees.
- Cash out Annual Leave.

At the same time Qantas also wants to continue to:

- Pay level 2 wages to new Airport Host (queue comber) positions rather than maintaining the level 3.
- Cut the penalty payment for shifts starting at 4am from 22.5% to 15% (despite it having been paid for 30 years).
- Pay less than market rates in some areas.
- Provide no increase to the minimum 9% superannuation contribution.

Consider all of this in the context of the latest CPI figures. Any benefits of a small pay rise are eroded by living costs which are soaring. Just look at the cost of petrol and basic food items and you can see why Qantas workers are slipping backwards in pay terms.

And of course they expect us to sit by and watch while some of the executives pocket massive bonuses. Geoff Dixon's pay went up 27% last year. What reductions in his terms and conditions do you think he took to allow such a pay rise to be implemented?

### ASU MEMBERS TURN UP THE PRESSURE

The ASU YouTube ad targeting QF customers pointing out to them the connection between falling standards and falling



QF IT members at a lunchtime meeting on the progress of their EBA"

wage rates has hit home. The online video has reached the "most watched" list on YouTube. View the ad on Qantas' 'Maintain the Standards' website at [www.maintainthestandards.com.au](http://www.maintainthestandards.com.au)

Members are also taking steps to prepare for industrial action. Under WorkChoices a secret ballot has to be conducted by the Electoral Commission. Only union members can vote, however all details the ASU holds on members needs to be correct. Please contact the ASU office on 9310 4000 to update your details.

# WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?

## CASUALTY OF WORKCHOICES AT QANTAS DEFENCE SERVICES



QANTAS IS STILL REFUSING TO START NEGOTIATIONS ON AN AGREEMENT FOR QANTAS DEFENCE SERVICES STAFF AT RICHMOND.

Our preferred outcome is incorporating QDS employees in EBA8 because they are subject to the same wages and conditions as EBA7 provides. In an attempt to break the deadlock we have offered to do a separate agreement for QDS, even though the agreement only covers 25 staff.

Qantas has refused to do this, despite the fact that there are two separate agreements on site for the electricians (total of 23 staff) and the other aircraft trades (total of 204 staff).

QDS Delegate, Kevin Purves, explains the feeling in the workplace.

"Everyone is concerned about their future. We have

**"EVERYONE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. WE HAVE FAMILIES TO SUPPORT AND WITHOUT THE SECURITY OF AN EBA, OUR POSITIONS ARE TENUOUS."**

families to support and without the security of an EBA, our positions are tenuous."

It's hard to know why the company is taking this position other than waiting for the election to be over so they can see if Howard gets re-elected so they then have new air to use WorkChoices.

What are we saying is the next step?!

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