

FEDERAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LEGISLATION, IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND TAFE  
SECTORS

**880. Hon SALLY TALBOT to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Can the minister outline the impact of the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Bill 2005 on the Western Australian higher education and technical and further education sectors?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

Today is a very, very sad day in relation to the history of workplace rights and the rights of workers. If anyone on the opposition side went down to the Esplanade today, they would have witnessed just how disappointed the workers of Western Australia are, as are the workers across the whole of Australia. We are moving into very difficult times. I reflect on the decision made by my late father 40 years ago to leave his country of origin and come to this country because it was a country in which a worker could work a day for fair pay. The times will be changing, because the bill and the related legislation, such as the higher education workplace requirements, which passed the Senate on Thursday, will introduce Australian workplace agreements into Western Australian TAFEs and the university sector. AWAs will result in a reduction in wages and a reduction in the conditions of workers. That is exactly what the federal government's proposed industrial relations laws are all about. There is no doubt in my mind or in the mind of any other worker, that the laws will strip workers forced to sign workplace agreements of many of their existing protections. Under the proposed laws the Employment Advocate will merely be a post office for the lodgment of AWAs. The Employment Advocate will have absolutely no obligation to check that AWAs have been signed or that they have been consented to. An employee who wants a job will be put into a position of signing and accepting the conditions, as low as they might be; otherwise he can get on his bike. The AWAs will no longer be required to meet an award-based no-disadvantage test, and it will be lawful for employers to disadvantage employees in comparison with the relevant awards. The employers will be able to stipulate the conditions of employment in the AWAs. AWAs already pay less than any other industrial instrument in Western Australia. As wages are driven down, employees will have no choice but to accept substandard conditions. Employers will be able to remove award conditions such as overtime, shift penalties, loadings, meal breaks and penalties for working on weekends and at night.

If this is a positive move for this nation, I am very alarmed. I cannot see anything positive in the recent legislation that has gone through the Senate. This is a very sad day for workers in Western Australia. It is a very sad day for the Australian community generally. I do not know what my late father would think of today, but I do know that he would be bitterly disappointed, because the country that was supposed to give a fair go to workers is not a country that will provide a fair go to workers in the future. The federal government should hang its head in shame for -

**Hon Norman Moore** interjected.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The Leader of the Opposition should hang his head in shame, because he has just sat there; he does not care about Western Australian workers.

*Point of Order*

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** I have a point of order. The question was very specific about the effect of the industrial relations legislation on the higher education sector. As much as I am interested in the minister's personal comments about her own -

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** You don't like it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is addressing a point of order.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** There is no need for the minister to give us that sort of personal description of her views on this matter, which have nothing to do with the question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Has the Minister for Education and Training concluded her answer?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Yes.