

WORKCHOICES LEGISLATION

838. Mr R.C. KUCERA to the Minister for Employment Protection:

While I am on my feet, as patron of the Welsh Society of Western Australia, I acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's gallery of Mrs Angela White.

Will the minister advise the house whether the Howard government is accurate when it says that Western Australian employees have nothing to fear from the WorkChoices legislation?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER replied:

I thank the member for Yokine for the question. The simple answer is no. Western Australian families and workers have a great deal to fear from this draconian legislation. When it was introduced in March, we had lived in hope that we may have been wrong and that some of the predictions made by members on this side of politics would prove to be wrong. Sadly, our worst fears have been founded. People have found that when they have signed an Australian workplace agreement, they are getting reduced rates of pay and fewer entitlements.

Mr T. Buswell: Provide specific cases in Western Australia.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: I will get that specific information for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. University of Sydney research shows that of the AWAs signed since March -

Mr T. Buswell interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not know whether the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is under the misapprehension that he asked the question. I am pretty sure that he did not. As a result, he should not interject. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has had three warnings. I will have him removed the next time he opens his mouth in relation to this question.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Research conducted by the University of Sydney shows that workers who have signed AWAs since March are receiving less pay and have fewer conditions. That was predicted by members on this side of the House, although we were hoping that we would be wrong. Even the workers who have maintained their pay and conditions under AWAs live in fear that their jobs, which they like and want to keep, will be lost tomorrow and without a reason being given. Many Western Australian men and women and mothers and fathers with families are afraid that their employment could be terminated at a moment's notice. In the past two months, almost 50 workers have telephoned the Western Australian Wageline to complain that they have been sacked at a moment's notice. I will give the house four examples from those 50 workers. I love the terminology "WorkChoices". One worker's work choice was to remain in his place of work, on the award. What happened? He was sacked!

Mr C.J. Barnett: In which state?

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: This is in Western Australia. Another woman in Western Australia - in the member's state; the member may have forgotten where he lives - aged 62, was sacked. Do members know why? She was too old! This is from John Howard, who has said we all need to work until we are a bit older! Another woman, a mother, was forced to resign because she wanted to stay at home to look after her sick child. She was told she could either come to work, or leave, so she had to leave. I now come to the best of the lot! Five months after being off work after brain surgery, a worker was dismissed on his second day back at work!