

# Newcastle Trades Hall Council Report

U n i t y I n T h e H u n t e r

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## **New Liberal plan to scrap job protections will hurt young and vulnerable workers**

**Liberal leader Tony Abbott's promise to exempt small business from unfair dismissal laws will expose millions of Australian workers to no job security, say unions. The loss of protection from unfair dismissal would be a green light for employers to treat young people and other vulnerable workers badly – as occurred under WorkChoices – says the ACTU.**



ACTU President Sharan Burrow said as each day passed, it was more and more clear that the Coalition is wedded to WorkChoices and would not hesitate to reintroduce hardline industrial relations laws that would hurt Australian workers.

In an interview with a national newspaper today, Mr Abbott has described the removal of unfair dismissal protection for small business employees as "good policy".

Ms Burrow said the loss of unfair dismissal protection would worsen the effects of the Global Financial Crisis. It would undermine the job security of working Australians while unemployment is still rising and they need it most, she said.

"The loss of protection from unfair dismissal under WorkChoices was a disaster for working Australians, particularly young and vulnerable workers, and many women," Ms Burrow said. "Mr Abbott has also confirmed he would reintroduce individual contracts.

"This would allow employers to remove workers' pay and conditions like penalty rates, overtime pay and public holidays."

Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows workers on individual contracts earn up to \$8000 a year less than those employed on collective agreements.

Under WorkChoices, more than a million workers saw their real wages fall by up to \$90 a week.

<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Mediareleases/NewLiberalplantoscrapjobprotectionswillhurtyoungandvulnerableworkers.aspx>

# Newcastle Trades Hall Council 2010 Meeting Dates

Month	Date	Date
February	4th	18th
March	4th	18th
April	1st	15th 29th
May	13th	27th
June	10th	24th
July	8th	22nd
August	5th	19th <b>AGM</b>
September	2nd	16th 30th
October	14th	28th
November	11th	25th
December	9th	<b>17th Xmas Lunch</b>

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The NTHC Weekly Report is distributed to all affiliated unions, officials and delegates, community, political groups and other interested persons. Activists and delegates are encouraged to submit articles or matters of interest for the weekly subject to the Newcastle Trades Hall Council's editorial policy. Community Groups are also encouraged to advertise upcoming events of meetings in the weekly. Photographs taken from local, national and international events are most welcome. Please email articles, items of interest photographs to [gary@newtradeshall.com](mailto:gary@newtradeshall.com)

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# Secretary's' Report

Dear All

This is the last Newcastle Trades Hall Council newsletter for 2009.

The office will be closed between Christmas eve and January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010.

As we all know 2009 was an extremely busy year with issues and disagreements with our friends in the NSW ALP.

Hopefully now the NSW Government will get on with the job of governing and ensure they are not only relevant to the voters but start adhering to ALP Policy in relation to Privatisation etc.

Workers and their families do not deserve a Conservative Government in NSW and it is obvious that the Libs cannot win an election but the ALP can certainly lose.

At the same time as the NSW ALP is kicking itself to death the National Libs have had a massive swing to the extreme right with the election of Tony Abbot.

Abbot has dragged the old ach conservatives out of the cupboard and placed them on the front bench and is already threatening to take Industrial Relations back to the bad old days of WorkChoices albeit with a new name under the old guise of "choice".

Abbot has a terrible track record on welfare rights, women's rights, indigenous rights and most certainly workers rights.

He has shown he will push the most conservative line on a number of issues and clearly intends to vote against ANY issue or legislation the Labour Government puts up in the house of Reps or the Senate.

We must ensure as a movement that we counter the populist line that Abbot and his cronies will run and ensure all the workers and their families that we convinced to vote against Howard and conservatism are not swung back to Abbot with his simplistic and populist nonsense. This is our task from now until the next Federal Election.

On behalf of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council we wish you all a safe and happy holiday period and if you require any assistance over the break please ring Gary on 0438 550508.

**Yours In Unity**

**Gary Kennedy**

**Secretary**

**Newcastle Trades Hall Council**



# Westpac's 'community consultation' is a public relations sham, say Unions

This week's interest rate decision by Westpac is a slap in the face for customers and shows the bank is only paying lip service to community consultation, say unions. The ACTU and the Finance Sector Union have resigned from Westpac's Community Consultative Council in protest at the bank's decision to lift its interest rates by almost double the Reserve Bank.

In a strongly worded letter, [http://www.actu.asn.au/Images/Dynamic/attachments/6812/ACTU\\_FSU\\_letter\\_to\\_WBC.pdf](http://www.actu.asn.au/Images/Dynamic/attachments/6812/ACTU_FSU_letter_to_WBC.pdf) the ACTU and the FSU have accused Westpac's senior management team of being less than honest in its commitment to the Australian community.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow and FSU Acting Secretary Rod Masson attended a meeting of the WCCC on Monday afternoon, just 24 hours before Westpac became the first bank to respond to Tuesday's Reserve Bank meeting. Yet they were given no indication of the bank's plans.

Ms Burrow said the decision of Westpac to lift its home loan rates by 0.45%, compared to the official rate rise of 0.25%, was outrageous and showed some big banks had learn nothing from the Global Financial Crisis.

"Unions believe the third consecutive rate rise by the Reserve Bank was unnecessary and places extra financial pressure on working families when the economy is still fragile," Ms Burrow said.

"But Westpac's action to profit out of this decision is beyond the pale. No wonder banks are held in such appalling low regard by the Australian community when there is unconscionable behaviour like that of Westpac, which made \$3.4 billion in profit last year.

"On Monday, we sat down with senior executives from Westpac to talk about how to help home owners in financial hardship. They knew how the bank was going to respond to the Reserve Bank decision, yet they never gave us any indication.

"This is an affront to the Australian community and an insult to those who give up their time to work with the bank on community issues.

"It shows that for Westpac, community consultation is a public relations sham, and the bank has no real commitment to helping customers in financial hardship.

"By contrast, we welcome the decisions of some other banks, such as NAB, to only pass on the cost of the latest official rise in interest rates, not seek to boost their own profits from it."

FSU Acting Secretary Rod Masson said the decision by Westpac was short-sighted and would undermine the bank's strategy.

"Bank employees – our members – are at the frontline of having to deal with very angry customers after this decision," Mr Masson said. "Already, there is a strong backlash."

<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Mediareleases/Westpaccommunityconsultationisapublicrelationsshamsayunions.aspx>



## Abbott and Bishop give blessing to individual contracts

New Opposition leader Tony Abbott and his deputy Julie Bishop today both indicated support for individual employment contracts, in comments Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said showed their determination to bring back Work Choices-style AWAs.

Abbott in a newspaper interview today confirmed he saw a future for statutory individual contracts.

In what appeared to be a reference to Labor's decision to allow existing AWAs to continue until they expire, the former Workplace Relations Minister said he didn't see why the agreements shouldn't be allowed to continue permanently.

"Whatever they are called, if it's good enough for the Labor Government to have an individual, non-union statutory contract, I don't see why it can't continue," he said. The Liberal Party would adopt a policy favouring "freer, more flexible and fair labour markets" but would eschew the Work Choices name, he said.

Bishop - who publicly supported retaining statutory individual contracts while deputy to former Coalition leader Brendan Nelson - took a similar line on ABC radio this morning, saying employees should have the right to negotiate an employment contract with their employer.

"I've always found it to be quite un-Australian for the Government to make it illegal for a boss and their employee to sit down and negotiate an employment contract that suits both their purposes. And I hope that we'll be able to develop a positive policy along those lines," she said.

Prime Minister Rudd said he believed the comments clearly indicated the Opposition leadership duo wanted to bring back AWAs.

"I would suggest that the Liberal Party today should calmly reconsider what the Australian people had to say at the 2007 election on AWAs and on Work Choices, because the reality is, bringing back AWAs means bringing back Work Choices. And if you're bringing back AWAs and bringing back Work Choices it means stripping away such basic protections as penalty rates, over time and holiday pay," he said.

The ACTU said Abbott's comments showed he remained a staunch believer in Work Choices and that he was seeking to bring back the policy - if not the name.

"Day two of the Abbott-Bishop Liberal opposition, and the new leader has confirmed he wants to bring back AWAs, which stripped away pay and conditions and undermined the job security of hundreds of thousands of Australians," the peak body's president Sharan Burrow said.



"It won't be long before he announces the re-introduction of other elements of Work Choices, such as the removal of protection from unfair dismissal for three million Australians."

Abbott's reference to "free and flexible labour markets" - a line he has repeatedly used since becoming leader - would mean giving business the power to drive down wages and conditions at the expense of workers, she said.

# Liberals, Workchoices and individual contracts: the love that dare not speak its name

The Liberals' determination to bring back WorkChoices-style individual contracts is a threat to the pay, conditions and job security of working Australians, say unions. Under WorkChoices, Australian Workplace Agreements were used by employers to cut pay and take away basic conditions and the job security of Australian workers.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said new Liberal leader Tony Abbott's plan to bring back WorkChoices would be a disaster for working Australians in fragile economic times when unemployment is still rising.

Official data shows that workers on individual contracts earn much less than those employed under collective agreements – as much as \$8000 a year.

In a newspaper interview today, Mr Abbott has declared that he wants to retain individual contracts "whatever they are called". And his deputy, Julie Bishop, has backed him up.

Mr Abbott also said: *"Our policy will be to have freer, more flexible and fair labour markets without going anywhere near that dreaded policy that must not speak its name."*

Mr Abbott has previously described the end of AWAs as "a great leap backwards".

"Day two of the Abbott-Bishop Liberal opposition, and the new leader has confirmed he wants to bring back AWAs, which stripped away pay and conditions and undermined the job security of hundreds of thousands of Australians," Ms Burrow said.

"It won't be long before he announces the re-introduction of other elements of WorkChoices, such as the removal of protection from unfair dismissal for three million Australians.

"Mr Abbott is a staunch believer in WorkChoices and his track record shows that he cannot be trusted by Australian workers.

"Egged on by big business, he and Ms Bishop will reintroduce the Liberals' hardline industrial relations laws if they get the chance.

"When Mr Abbott talks of free and flexible labour markets, he means only one thing: giving big businesses the power to drive down workers' wages and conditions.

"It is ridiculous for Mr Abbott to claim WorkChoices was a boon for Australian workers.

"The fact is more than a million workers saw their real wages fall by up to \$91.49 a week under WorkChoices," Ms Burrow said.

<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Mediareleases/LiberalsWorkChoicesandindividualcontract-sthelovethatdarenotspeakitsname.aspx>



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# New national VET regulator will help boost standards and quality of training

Unions have welcomed the creation of a single national regulator of Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector as an important step towards higher standards in the sector.



The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to set up a new regulatory body that will begin operation in 2011.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said this was an important reform that would help ensure that the highest levels of quality and enforceable standards apply across all states and territories.

She said it was hoped that eventually Victoria and Western Australia, who will continue to regulate providers in their own states, would see the virtues of a single national regulator.

"Vocational education and training is so important to developing skills to support Australia's economic growth," Ms Burrow said.

"The sector is also a major domestic and export industry.

"The sector has long been crying out for a single national regulator to maintain clear quality and enforceable standards for all participants in the national training system, regardless of their state or territory.



"The inefficiencies and confusion from eight different jurisdictions had passed their use-by date. No other major industry is without national regulation.

"This is a good outcome for students, their future employers, and the Australian economy," Ms Burrow said.

<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Mediareleases/NewnationalVETregulator->



## One in Three campaign launched

A new campaign for male victims of family violence was launched on International Men's Day November 19th. The One in Three campaign is named after the little known fact that up to one in three victims of sexual assault and at least one in three victims of family violence is male.

Male victims of family violence often face barriers to disclosing their abuse. They are likely to be told that there must be something they did to provoke their partner's violence. They can suffer shame, embarrassment and the social stigma of not being able to protect themselves.

Alan, a male victim, finally summoned up the courage to talk to someone about his partner's ongoing sexual abuse. "Who to talk to for advice - family or friends? No way. I spoke to a doctor. She seemed to listen to my stammering for a few minutes and then while scribbling asked, 'What are you doing to make her behave that way?'".

Dr Elizabeth Celi, a Melbourne psychologist says, "Unlike physical violence, many of the forms of domestic violence and abuse faced by male victims are difficult to detect and hard for the man himself to defend against. A man's health is wrapped up in his identity. Attacking his self-worth through various forms of criticism, manipulation and intimidation are forms of emotional and verbal violence that we need to learn about as a society and say ENOUGH!"

The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the existence and needs of male victims of family violence; to work with government and non-government services alike to provide assistance to male victims; and to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence on Australian men, women and children. Supporters of the campaign include Dr Elizabeth Celi, Maggie Hamilton, author of *What Men Don't Talk About* and Steve Biddulph, author of *Manhood*.

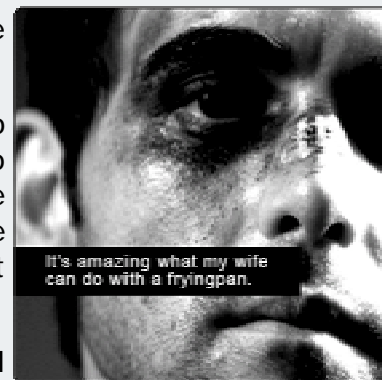
Hamilton says, "Until researching *What Men Don't Talk About* I had no idea about domestic violence towards men. I was shocked to discover this had touched the lives of several close friends - men of all backgrounds from manual labourers to professionals. While we remain silent on this issue, men continue to be hurt, to be ignored."

Biddulph writes, "With family violence, we had to address 'women and children first'; but in 2009, the troubling nub of violence is in families where both partners are violent, as well as those most hidden, where women hit men."

Violence is a miserable way to live, for perpetrator and victim, and for little children forced to watch. Today nobody approves of or accepts wife bashing. Husband bashing needs this same approbation and action."

While many services have rightly been established to support female victims of family violence, the needs of male victims remain largely unmet. Acknowledging this imbalance, the Western Australian Men's Advisory Network recently commissioned ground-breaking research by Edith Cowan University into the nature and extent of domestic abuse against men.

As well as the effects of violence on men themselves, their children can suffer a range of negative impacts on their behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning and social development.



It's amazing what my wife can do with a fryingpan.

*Once we believed only little girls were subject to sexual abuse, and so countless boys were abused. The same is now true of men. It's important we say no to all violence.*

**Maggie Hamilton,**

## 'Union-hater' Eric Abetz gets workplace relations portfolio

THE appointment of Eric Abetz as Opposition workplace relations spokesman is evidence of the Coalition's intention to bring back Work Choices, the Australian Workers' Union said.



Senator Abetz has won promotion to the key portfolio at the expense of Michael Keenan following a reshuffle announced today by Opposition Leader Tony Abbott.

AWU national secretary Paul Howes attacked the appointment, describing Senator Abetz as a "long-time foot soldier in the campaign to undermine workplace rights in Australia". "He enrolled in the army of union-haters in his university student days and he has never given up the ideological fight," Mr Howes said.

Mr Abbott wanted to see a return to Work Choice-style industrial relations laws in Australia, he said.

"So, no one should be mistaken. Eric Abetz backs Tony Abbott's dream of reintroducing large chunks of those hated laws."

<http://www.news.com.au/breaking-news/union-hater-eric-abetz-gets-workplace-relations-portfolio/story-e6frfku0-1225808208856>



(Continued from page 9)

Neglecting violence against men means neglecting these children as well.

On the international front, the Valley Oasis shelter in Lancaster, California, was the first in the USA to give refuge to victims regardless of their gender. "Our philosophy is that domestic violence is a societal problem," said Carol Ensign, the shelter's executive director. "Nobody deserves to get hit, whether they are 2 months old or 80 years old, whether they are a man or woman, child or teen."

A very small number of Australian domestic violence services have been trying to offer services to men but they need training, funding and support to be able to adequately service the needs of male victims of violence. Many workers in the domestic violence area recognise the desperate need to provide services for men and hopefully with increased community awareness of the problem we will see a change in service provision that caters to the needs of both male and female victims of domestic violence.

The One in Three website can be found at <http://www.oneinthree.com.au/>



**ONE IN THREE VICTIMS OF  
FAMILY VIOLENCE IS MALE**



# Abbott's promise to bring back WorkChoices will make jobs less secure: Unions

**New Liberal leader Tony Abbott's promise to bring back WorkChoices under a different name will mean the jobs of working Australians will be less secure if the Coalition is elected.**

Unemployment is still rising as the economy recovers from the GFC and working Australians cannot afford the loss of job protections which occurred under WorkChoices.

Yesterday the new Liberal leader indicated he would bring back WorkChoices under a different name. Mr Abbott said:

"The phrase WorkChoices is dead. No one will mention it again. But we do need to have a free and flexible economy."

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said: "This is a barely disguised promise by Mr Abbott to do the bidding of big business and bring back the Liberals' hardline industrial relations laws."

"It is code for a return to WorkChoices.

"It would be terribly unfair for working Australians to face even greater job insecurity when so many have lost their jobs or faced cuts to their hours of work through the GFC.

"There are almost 200,000 more Australians out of for work than there were a year ago and more than 220,000 people who want to work more hours.

"The Global Financial Crisis was brought about by greedy and reckless business executives and a lack of government regulation.

"Mr Abbott however, has signalled that he wants more freedom and flexibility for businesses.

"Working Australians know that 'flexibility' for businesses means that under the Liberals there would less government regulation and another attack on workers' rights.

"By stating that no one will mention WorkChoices again, Mr Abbott is also indicating the Liberals will again attempt to mislead the Australian public over the truth of their hardline IR policies"

The Liberals spent \$121 million on WorkChoices advertising in the lead up to the 2007 election.

Under WorkChoices more than three million Australians lost protection from unfair dismissal and many young and vulnerable workers saw their wages and conditions fall through the use by business of unfair AWA individual contracts.





# IR zealots Abott and Abetz plan to bring back Workchoices, remove No Disadvantage Test

Liberal Leader Tony Abbott's failure to rule out scrapping the No Disadvantage Test is a warning to working Australians that their pay and conditions will be at risk under a Coalition Government, say unions. ACTU President Sharan Burrow said Mr Abbott had let slip another sign that he intends to bring back WorkChoices by refusing today to guarantee the Coalition would retain the No Disadvantage Test for job contracts.

"The removal of the No Disadvantage Test under WorkChoices was political poison," said Ms Burrow. "It led to thousands of workers, including many young people and other vulnerable workers having their penalty rates, overtime pay, public holidays and other award conditions stripped away. "It was a key factor in the massive shift in public opinion against WorkChoices and which led to the eventual loss of the Liberals at the 2007 election."

Since his ascendancy to the Liberal leadership a week ago, Mr Abbott has flagged the reintroduction of WorkChoices-style individual contracts, the removal of unfair dismissal protection for employees in small businesses, and now, the scrapping of the No-Disadvantage Test.

In interviews, he has declared that the only thing wrong with WorkChoices was "the politics", and has talked in favour of "free labour markets", which is code for giving big businesses the power to drive down workers' wages and conditions. Ms Burrow said the appointment of hardliner Eric Abetz to the Shadow Workplace portfolio is another sign that the Tony Abbott-led Liberals plan to bring back WorkChoices Mark II.

"Senator Abetz and Mr Abbott are industrial relations zealots. "There is no doubt they want to bring back WorkChoices. "Senator Abetz was intimately involved with the Coalition's \$121 million promotion of WorkChoices and wrote the notoriously deceptive 'Protected By Law' WorkChoices booklet.

"He resisted the passage of the Fair Work Act this year, and in numerous speeches has defended WorkChoices, she said. "In uncertain economic times when unemployment is still rising, working Australians cannot afford a repeat of the loss of rights and protections that

occurred under WorkChoices," Ms Burrow said.



<http://www.actu.asn.au/Media/Mediareleases/IRzealotsAbbottandA->



# December 2009

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CFMEU  
Rally

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Politics in  
the Pub

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# SHAME FILE

## Help send 10000 Xmas cards to Kevin Rudd

Many of you will be getting caught up in the holiday rush sending cards to long forgotten friends, deciding on the perfect present for the kids from one to ninety-two, and enjoying or slaving over sumptuous meals.



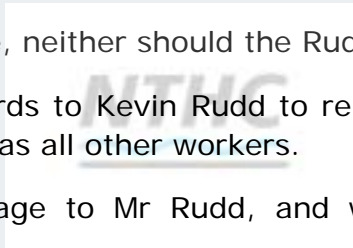
Take a moment to remember Ark Tribe and send a Christmas card to Kevin Rudd: <http://www.rightsonsite.org.au/subscribe/index.php?customlist=xmascard>

This Christmas Ark Tribe will spend the holidays with a prison sentence of up to six months hanging over his head, as he waits the outcome of his hearing.

He is charged with not attending an interview with the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

We've not forgotten about Ark Tribe, neither should the Rudd Government.

Help us send 10,000 Christmas Cards to Kevin Rudd to remind him that construction workers like Ark don't have the same rights as all other workers.



You can add your personal message to Mr Rudd, and we'll deliver your card in time for Christmas.

All we want for Christmas is to get rid of the coercive powers, which compel construction workers to attend a secret interrogation about workplace issues.

Seasons Greetings,

Dave Noonan and the Rights on Site campaign team

Support Ark Tribe - One law for all workers - don't jail Ark [Find out more](#)

**Shout your rally call for ark!**

As thousands of people get ready to rally behind Ark on 18 December, warm up your voice and send us your rally call

**Send Your Rally Call or message of support**

All we want for Christmas is one law for all workers

**Help us send 10,000 cards to Kevin Rudd with your Christmas wish**

**Send your Xmas card here**

**12** Days until Ark Tribe faces court (18 December)

- » [Follow Ark Tribe's case](#)
- » [Read messages to Ark](#)
- » [Listen to 'Stand Tall'](#)
- » [Tell your mates](#)

# SHAME FILE

## Statewide Industrial Action called

**STATEWIDE industrial action has been called for Wednesday 9 December over the TAFE dispute. Federation has called stop work broadcast meetings for all TAFE teachers and delegates from schools and OCAA worksites from 8.30am on Wednesday 9 December.**



The broadcast will start at 9am sharp.

Venues will be advised via this website by Monday 7 December.

Members attending the meeting are authorised to stop work for up to three hours. All TAFE teachers have been directed to stop work.

The NSW government has failed to resolve the dispute about the Department of Education and Training's appalling Workchoices-style changes to TAFE teachers' working conditions.

President of the Teachers Federation, Bob Lipscombe said:

"The new Premier, Kristina Keneally, has an opportunity to resolve this long-running dispute and so prevent statewide industrial action next week and into 2010. "If the DET succeeds in implementing these changes in TAFE, then it is clear that they will seek to undermine the working and learning conditions in schools in the next schools' Award."

A recommendation will be voted on calling for further industrial action in early 2010, should there be no resolution in the meantime.

[http://www.nswtf.org.au/media/latest\\_2009/20091204\\_stopwork.html](http://www.nswtf.org.au/media/latest_2009/20091204_stopwork.html)



Cartoon © Pope/The Canberra Times

# SHAME FILE

## Bleak future for sacked mill workers

The company will sell the Burnie mill in a bid to save a further 170 jobs. (ABC News) Unions say there are few job prospects for hundreds of north-west Tasmanian paper mill workers who are facing the sack. After a 10-month review, Paperlinx has announced it is shedding 252 jobs in the next few months.



The Wesley Vale mill, and parts of the Burnie mill, will close by the end of March. The company will try to sell the rest of the Burnie mill by June, in a bid to save another 170 positions. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union fears the final jobs toll will be more like 580.

The unions' state secretary Anne Urqhart says even more jobs could go, including those of contract workers for the maintenance company Silcar. "These are just the direct jobs that we're talking about and when we're talking about manufacturing we talk about one direct job equally somewhere in the vicinity of about four and a half other jobs out in the general community," she said. "So its absolutely huge the effect that these sorts of decisions that company's make have a flow-on in a smaller region like the north of Tasmania."

Ken Fraser from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union says many workers will struggle to find other jobs. "We will certainly be going to the State and Federal government looking at re-training options and all the rest of it for our members and hopefully the training that we can get may lead into other employment but, as your probably aware, there's not that many jobs floating around at the moment," he said. Glenn Stevenson has worked at the Wesley Vale mill for 24 years.

He says workers are not surprised by the announcement but they are not happy it has taken Paperlinx 10 months to make a decision. "People didn't know where they were going, they didn't know it was going to shut before Christmas, they didn't know what to do with their life," he said. "Some people even had other jobs to go to but they didn't want to lose there money, so they couldn't leave. "Blokes that are sort of 50 that have been there 20 or 30 years. "It's the only thing they've ever done so I don't know how it's going to effect them. "Hopefully they'll be able to pick up something but for the older people I don't know what they're going to do."

### Assistance package

The Tasmanian Government says it will expand an assistance package to include sacked paper workers. The Acting Premier, Lara Giddings, says the State Government is already working with the Commonwealth on a north-west assistance package, after McCain announced it is closing its Smithton processing plant.

"We'll now accelerate that process to take into account the impact of this decision, as well. The Treasurer says not every company can be propped up when it is in financial trouble. Mr Aird says the Government is still trying to create employment in the region.



# SHAME FILE

(Continued from page 16)

"That's why we supported the Excelior call centre, that's why we've supported the Australian Weaving Mills to protect those jobs where we can," he said. "We can't do it everywhere and in this instance there is no long term sustainable business package that could be put into place. "The company could never satisfy the requirement that it would be sustainable business."

## Community lifeblood

The paper mills have been the lifeblood of the north-west community for decades. The Deputy Mayor of Devonport, Maurice Hill, warns of dire financial consequences for the region.

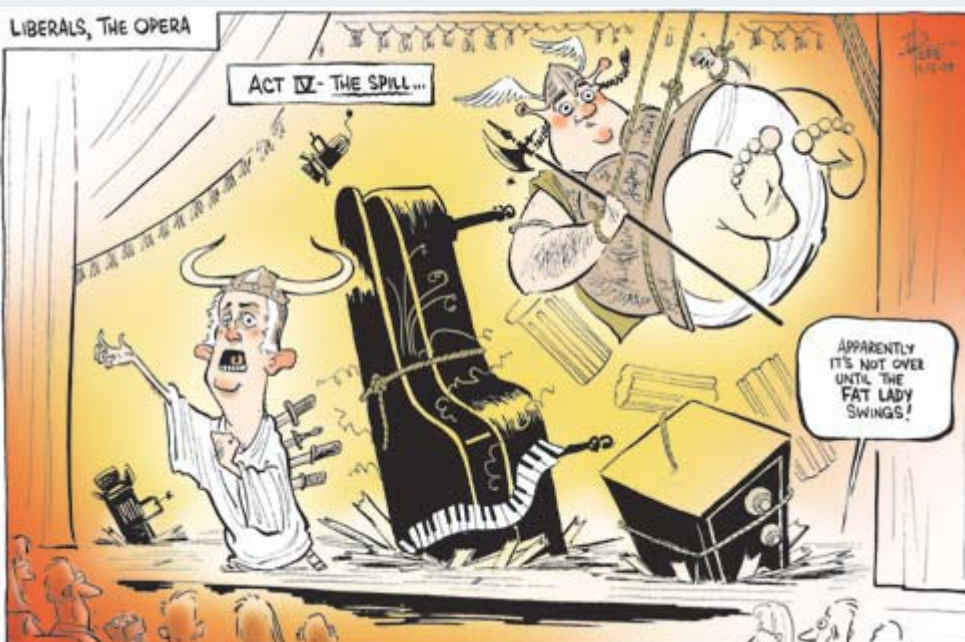
Alderman Hill is critical of the timing of the announcement by Paperlinx. "Just prior to Christmas is certainly a devastating time to be made aware of it," he said. "The economic and social affect that it's going to have on Devonport and the surrounding municipalities is certainly going to be significant," he said.

The Burnie Mayor, Alwyn Boyd, says the community was resigned to the possibility the region's two paper mills would not continue under their new owner. "There's been vibes for some time about this you know it's just a matter of when," he said. "People are sort of, I suppose, saying well you know we don't how long and it looks like sort of the news has given us some sort of finalisation." "It's been our heartbeat for a long time and that's how Burnie started really with the mill."

NTHC

The Latrobe mayor Mike Gaffney says the economic ramifications will be felt widely. "The indirect domino flow-on effect of that source of employment taking out is hard to come to terms with but you know people here are fairly resilient and the north-west coast has had its fair share of its knock backs over recent months, so I suppose it's to be expected to a certain extent."

The Federal Member for Braddon Sid Sidebottom says there has been a long history of under-investment in the two mills. "I think there's a long history of under-investment in the plants here," he said. "That's been commented on by almost everyone who's been observing this for some time and I can fully understand the angst of the workers about the uncertainty that's been hanging around this now for at least the last 10 months."



Cartoon © Pope/The Canberra Times

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/sto->

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## A massive victory for Eurostar cleaner - and what we must do

**I love getting an email like this on a Monday morning.**

"I am writing to thank you, your organisation and supporters for the solidarity and support displayed in the recent Carlisle Cleaners dispute in London," writes Mick Lynch, a member of the Executive Committee of RMT, a British union.

"I am glad to report that following two 24-hour strikes, the email/web campaign coordinated by Labourstart, and the media and political pressure we were able to exert, a settlement has been agreed."

It gets even better.

- The cleaners - who clean Eurostar trains - won a nearly 6% pay increase effective next year and another increase totalling nearly 10% over 13 months.
- The company has agreed that the London Living Wage is the benchmark for future pay agreements.

An agreement has been reached on bullying and harassment of staff, to mitigate the redundancy program, and to discuss pensions and sick pay in the next round. The workers ratified the agreement by a huge margin.

**This is what happens when workers stand their ground - and get support from their union and from trade unionists like yourselves around the world.**

Thousands of you sent messages to Eurostar. Your voices were heard. As another RMT official put it to me today, "this is *a massive victory for cleaners.*" Online campaigning works - let no one doubt this.

So here's my question to all of you: There are almost 53,000 of you on this list. But only 6,936 of you have sent off messages in support of workers at Vale Inco in Canada who've been on strike since July. **There are 46,000 of you who are reading this message who've not yet sent a message to this company.**

I'm appealing to every one of you - please take a few seconds and **send off a message right now:** [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=595](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=595) If you're one of the 6,936 who've already done this, thanks - but let's do more.

**Forward this message to other members of your union, to workmates, to friends and colleagues and family members.** We want 10,000 messages in the inbox of Vale's CEO, Roger Agnelli, before Christmas. We've helped win a huge victory for cleaners on Eurostar trains. Let's now do the same for our brothers and sisters walking the picket lines at Vale Inco.

# LabourStart

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## Strike at Nestle Tunisia after secret sale of ice cream factory

On 17 November 2009, workers at the Nestlé ice cream factory in Carthage were informed by a bulletin board notice that their factory had been sold to a consortium of local companies active in the food industry.

"In conformity with its policy of social responsibility," the notice read, "Nestlé has expended all efforts to preserve jobs, the rights of the workers concerned, and maintain the production site."

The only problem was that at no point prior to the sale would the company provide information to the union despite repeated demands in connection with rumours of an impending sale.

<http://www.iuf.org/den6350>

### Faster Discharges for Fast Food Bakery Workers?

Bakery workers of the US BCTGM Local 57 face a vicious assault on their working conditions and benefits by management of the "New Bakery of Ohio" in Zanesville, Ohio. The bakery is owned by and supplies the global fast-food company Wendy's/Arby's, with over 10,000 restaurants and USD 12 billion in annual sales. Besides slashing pensions and benefits, the company is proposing that all part-time employees (many of whom are part-time because they have family responsibilities) wait by their phones for four hours a day in case they are needed to work. If the part-time employee doesn't answer the phone call a message will be left on the employee's recorder and they must return the phone call within thirty minutes or will receive an infraction on their attendance record. If the part-time member doesn't answer the phone after five attempts they will automatically be discharged.

<http://www.iuf.org/den6348>

### IUF, ITUC Call for ILO Action on Jailed Iranian Sugar Union Leaders

<http://www.iuf.org/den6349>

### Recap Rerun: Short Memories, Missing Regulation

While defaults rise and growing numbers of private-equity backed companies continue their march to bankruptcy (though not necessarily losses for the funds which marched them there), the "creative" financial devices which helped fuel the buyout boom appear poised for a comeback. "Dividend recapitalizations" (taking on new debt to return cash to the buyout fund), "covenant light" (credit without conditions) and PIK loans (payment in kind, or funding debt by issuing new debt), among the presumed victims of the financial meltdown, are again being actively encouraged by Wall Street.

<http://tinyurl.com/yfgm5yx>

### Stop Nespressure! Support the Nestlé workers' struggle in Indonesia!

<http://www.iuf.org/nespressure/en/>





# 30 000 more troops will do nothing for Afghanistan's women and kids

Dear supporters of Afghan women,

to "protect the people of the USA", US-President Obama decided to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. They will continue to support those who hold political power in the country - the old warlords and criminals who are responsible for hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and for the desolate state of the country today.

When it comes to the safety of the people of the USA it is obvious that Afghanistan's women and girls count for nothing. Foreign troops have been in Afghanistan for eight years, but the situation of women and girls, which briefly improved in 2001 after the fall of the Taliban government, is again going from bad to worse.

The United Nations just published their report on Afghanistan. Here are a few excerpts:

Eight years after a U.S.-led invasion ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, the war-ravaged state is the most dangerous place in the world for a child to be born, the United Nations said on Thursday. It is especially dangerous for girls, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in launching its annual flagship report The State of the World's Children.

Afghanistan has the highest infant mortality rate in the world - 257 deaths per 1,000 live births, and 70 percent of the population lacks access to clean water, the agency said.

Some 317 schools in Afghanistan were attacked in the past year, killing 124 and wounding another 290, Toole (UNICEF regional director for South Asia) said.

"We have seen a drop in the number of children who are attending schools and particularly young girls. The most dramatic indication of back-tracking is the deliberate attacks against girls' schools," he added. "The space for women in public life is shrinking," warned Norah Niland, head of UNAMA's human rights unit and a representative of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Compared to 2005 fewer women participated in this year's elections and there is only one cabinet minister now (the minister of women's affairs) compared to three in 2003-2005.

Over 1,000 cases of violence against women were recorded in the Violence Against Women Primary Database (maintained by the government and women's rights groups in 21 of the country's 34 provinces from March 2006 to October 2007). Incidents recorded included rape, forced prostitution, forced marriage, physical attack, polygamy and harassment. "Some women are even sold and exchanged as commodities," said Zia Moballegh, acting country director for the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development, a Canadian organization.

Afghan women have one of the lowest literacy rates in the world: UNAMA says 90 percent of women in rural areas cannot read or write and the overall literacy rate among women is 12.6 percent.

You can read the full reports at: [www.sawa.australia.org/news.htm](http://www.sawa.australia.org/news.htm)





# French plan to force gender equality on boardrooms

**Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right party has put forward legislation that would see women make up half the figures in France's leading boardrooms by 2015, under a bold plan to impose gender equality on the male-dominated business world. In a bill submitted to the French parliament this week, all companies listed on the Paris stock exchange would have to ensure female employees made up 50% of their board members by 2015. If passed, a gradual implementation of the law would see businesses obliged to have women in 20% of board seats within 18 months, and 40% within four years.**

Jean-François Copé, president of the majority UMP party, said it could give a "much-needed electro-shock" to the French corporate world, long considered a bastion reserved for the male elite in which only 10.5% of board members in CAC 40 (French stock market index) companies are female. Referring to France's move in 2000 to encourage gender equality in politics, he said: "We must do to companies what we did in the public domain a few years ago and impose parity." The proposals, which would also apply to state-owned companies and non-listed firms with supervisory boards, will be debated next month and would need the approval of both houses of parliament to become law. Despite the historically entrenched opposition of business chiefs to quotas, advocates say the bill is the result of a sea change in public attitudes towards gender equality. Over the past year a series of French figures not known for their feminist stance have spoken out in favour of quotas. Daniel Lebègue, president of the conservative French Institute of directors (IFA), said his organisation had reluctantly decided they were the only way of encouraging progress. Nadine Morano, the secretary of state for the family, has said quotas are a "necessary evil", while the president of Areva, Anne Lauvergeon, recently admitted she had changed her mind about a strategy she nonetheless acknowledged as "humiliating". Véronique Préaux-Cobti, a leading businesswoman, said the discussions were a sign that times had changed. "In 2002, a huge majority would have been against," she told *Le Figaro* earlier this year. "Now, after years of good will with no change, there is a real realisation that things are not going to change on their own." Copé and the bill's other author, the UMP's Marie-Jo Zimmermann, are determined to capitalise on the change in public opinion to drive through the reforms. Inspired by the example set in Norway, where enforced quotas have led to 40% of director posts being occupied by women, they say they are willing to take on the "reserves" of several government ministers. Their boss, President Sarkozy, was congratulated in 2007 for appointing seven women to his 15-member cabinet. However three of those, including former Justice Minister Rachida Dati, have since been replaced, giving rise to one news weekly wondering if he was starting to show his true "macho" colours. France's failure to impose parity on its politicians, despite a constitution change in 2000 which had the aim of giving women a larger presence in the French parliament, is one of the reasons many people remain sceptical about this week's proposals. At the last election, only 18% of MPs in the lower house were women. Françoise de Panafieu, one of those MPs, hit out today at her own party for setting out quotas for the business world when it had failed to put its own house in order. "I prefer people setting an example to those giving lessons," she told *L'Express* magazine, claiming that Sarkozy's party had had to pay €5m (£4.5m) in fines after the 2007 elections for failing to impose parity.

## The Norway way

Norway was the pioneer in introducing legislation to boost the number of women on company boards, in 2003. The change in the law affected nearly 500 public companies, including 175 firms listed on the Oslo stock exchange. Ministers stipulated that businesses should increase the number of women on their boards to 40% or face the threat of closure. It unleashed an uproar in the Norwegian business community, with many protesting it was ridiculous to shut down a company because it lacked a woman on the board. Others argued that the law infringed the rights of shareholders to decide who they want as directors. But the threat worked and company owners duly complied. Norway now has the highest proportion of women on boards anywhere in the world with 44.2% – up from 6% in 2001. By comparison, in the UK, 12% of FTSE 100 directors are female and one in four boards are exclusively male. Sweden and Finland boast more women at leading companies at 22% and 17% respectively. The proportion of female directors among US Fortune 500 firms is 15.2%.



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