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PM admits IR sacking spree fears

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THE Howard Government admits its new **industrial** relations laws are being misused by ruthless bosses as an opportunity to sack people.

The Government yesterday voiced concern about a series of sackings in the days since the new system became law, but Prime Minister **John Howard** is promising ``good news" reports will follow the bad.

Workplace Relations Minister **Kevin Andrews** warned opportunistic bosses to ``take a deep breath" and educate themselves about the legislation.

``It may well be that the employers have jumped the gun and are acting in a way, which doesn't take account of their full range of obligations," Mr Andrews said on ABC television yesterday when referring to one instance of wholesale sackings.

``I think all should take a deep breath, particularly the employers themselves, because I suspect some people believe that the **union** rhetoric, that this is a totally deregulated **workplace**, is correct and that's not right."

Mr Andrews' warning to employers to calm down follows a series of reports about businesses, particularly those with fewer than 100 employees, using the new laws to sack staff. One abattoir is reportedly using the new laws to offload people and place workers on 24-hour contracts, while another sacked its entire workforce then put fewer staff back on with a \$180-a-week pay cut.

Mr Howard said it would not be long before the good aspects of the laws would be revealed.

Labor's **workplace** spokesman **Stephen Smith** said the Government was trying to dupe Australians.

``This is not about employers jumping the gun. It's about a gun being held to the head of Australian employees by **John Howard** and his legislation," he said.

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