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## IR victory for workers

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WORKERS have won the first stand-off under the new industrial relations legislation.

Twenty-nine meatworkers at a NSW abattoir have had their sackings reversed, after the Federal Government questioned their employer's right to sack them and rehire them on lower wages.

**ACTU** secretary **Greg Combet**, speaking to the Herald Sun last night, hailed the decision as a victory for the workers.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews said yesterday that after an investigation conducted by his department the company had withdrawn its notices of termination.

Cowra Abattoir management is due to meet the workers again this morning to put a new offer on the table.

It may still result in redundancies, but is expected to be much more generous than the previous package which gave staff just five weeks' notice.

The abattoir sacked 29 workers in its beef and pig slaughter sections last Thursday and Friday, inviting them to reapply for 20 positions.

But the new positions paid up to \$200 a week less for the same work.

Workers condemned their employer's tactics, which had caused fear and concern among the workers, many of whom have dedicated decades of their working lives to the company.

A group of workers and a representative from the Meat Industry Employees Union yesterday met manager Ray Petterson to discuss how they could get a better deal.

Mr Petterson will hold another meeting this morning with the delegation.

A statement by Mr Andrews yesterday said a representative of the Office of Workplace Services, set up to deal with problems arising from the new regulations, met Cowra Abattoir management over the past few days to

outline its responsibilities under the new industrial relations laws.

The statement read: ``The OWS will ensure the rights and obligations of both workers and employers under the Workplace Relations Act are understood and enforced fairly."'

Employee Gary Bryant said yesterday it was a breakthrough for the workers.

``We've indicated that we're prepared to look at it (any new offer), but if it's not a satisfactory offer, then we'll take it to court."'

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