

[ [Previous](#) ] [ [Major News - ACTU Mentions](#) ] [ [Next](#) ]

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## Red faces averted

Author: Brad Norington  
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THE Howard Government has quietly dropped prosecutions against unions under its old workplace laws, avoiding a potentially embarrassing court case over squalid accommodation for a group of workers.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews confirmed yesterday that all prosecutions over the refusal of unions to comply with strike orders would be discontinued.

Mr Andrews said the decision meant that the prosecution of 72 maintenance workers employed by Eagle Engineering who went on strike at a central Queensland coal mine over the state of their accommodation would be abandoned.

``Any actions under the old system we've decided to draw a line in the sand and to say to employees there's a new system operating and that everybody should be aware of it now."''

The minister's decision comes just a week after the Government was embarrassed over forcing a Cowra abattoir owner to withdraw plans under new workplace laws to sack his workers and offer them jobs on lower pay.

The Government was in the middle of prosecuting 72 maintenance workers at the Goonyella Riverside coal mine who revolted after being forced to live in accommodation infested with feral cats, fleas and sewage.

**ACTU** secretary **Greg Combet** said the sudden decision showed Mr Andrews was ``in a panic and doesn't know what he's doing"''.

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