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ACTU will target the weaker links

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The **ACTU** will spend more than \$8 million in a political campaign aimed at defeating coalition MPs in marginal and strategic electorates by marshalling voter sentiment against the government's industrial relations changes.

The president of the main union body, **Sharan Burrow**, launched the campaign yesterday. She said the union movement aimed to make itself a marginal coalition backbencher's worst nightmare by setting up local networks of activists to work for their electoral defeat in the 2007 election.

The Senate voted in favour of the government's Work Choices Bill last week. Ms Burrow said the campaign would include national television advertisements, to air in 2006 and 2007, on the impact of the new industrial laws on working families, along with local press, radio and television advertisements in key marginal Liberal and Nationals electorates.

In addition, the union movement would work with local unionists, community groups and other activists to set up electorate-based networks to campaign against sitting coalition MPs in 29 federal electorates.

Ms Burrow said the **ACTU** had also established an email list of some 50,000 people, mostly from outside the union movement, who were concerned about the industrial changes and had said they would help campaign against the laws.

"I make this promise to the federal MPs who voted for these laws: we are here today to start a campaign that makes your jobs very insecure," Ms Burrow said.

The 29 lower house electorates targeted by the **ACTU** are concentrated in NSW and Queensland, the two states central to the outcome of the next election, which is due in 2007, but also include knife-edge seats in South Australia and Tasmania.

Nearly two-thirds of the seats are in regional areas or on the fringes of metropolitan areas and include electorates with high concentrations of families with young children.

In numerical terms, the Labor Party faces a difficult task in the election, needing to win 16 seats to defeat the coalition, something that would require a national swing in the two-party preferred vote of 5 percentage points.

But Labor's industrial relations spokesman, Stephen Smith, said yesterday it would take only 30,000 voters in key marginal seats to switch their votes from the coalition to the ALP for a change of government.

Caption :PHOTO: Backbenchers' worst nightmare: now it's personal. Photo: ANDREW TAYLOR

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