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WorkChoices challenged

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TASMANIA, the Northern Territory and the ACT will back the Labor states and unions in a constitutional challenge to the **Federal Government's** WorkChoices legislation.

All mainland states are fighting the Commonwealth on whether it can take control of state industrial relations matters.

The WorkChoices **law**, which passed through Parliament in December, aims to create a national industrial system that overrides those in the states. The states argue the **law** is invalid because it exceeds the Commonwealth's powers to pass laws dealing with corporations.

At a directions hearing on the challenge in the High Court yesterday Chief Justice Murray Gleeson allocated more time for the case and asked the parties to appear in court again on April 12 to determine whether they would be ready to move to a six-day hearing starting on May 4.

The case involves some of the highest-paid barristers in the country, with legal costs falling on **taxpayers**.

A decision could be made as early as September.

Regulations fleshing out the details of the WorkChoices **law** will be revealed at the end of the month. -- NASSIM KHADEM

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