

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

Monday 26 June 2006



PM `urging business to go easy on IR changes'

Author: Brad Norington
Publication: The Australian (008, Mon 26 Jun 2006)
Edition: 1 - All-round Country
Keywords: **ACTU (1), Greg (1), Combet (1)**

THE Howard Government has been accused of urging big business to ``go easy" and wait until after next year's federal election before taking full advantage of new workplace laws.

ACTU secretary **Greg Combet** yesterday said that ``mates" in the business community had told him the Government wanted employers to delay pressing the harsher side of the new laws, such as individual contracts and cuts to penalty rates, so voters would not be put offside. With unions preparing for nationwide protests on Wednesday, Mr Combet said they would not lose public support with the possibility to disruption of work.

He had ``plenty of mates in the business community, including big business", who did not support the thrust of workplace laws introduced in March but were not in a position to say so publicly.

``But what they say is this -- that there is a wide level of awareness, if you like, amongst big business that they should move forward cautiously, in the view of the Government, about implementing these changes because of the highly political nature of this," he said. ``And when you look around and see what's happening, big business hasn't really grabbed a hold of this agenda yet."

Mr Combet had no doubt that big business would use the Government's individual contracts, called Australian Workplace Agreements, ``against their own employees", but said it would take some time.

In the meantime, AWAs were mainly being used in small and medium-sized businesses, where many sackings had occurred.

``As those businesses come under commercial pressure, they use them to abolish penalty rates and the like," Mr Combet said on Network Ten's Meet the Press.

John Howard dismissed the accusation. ``As for unionists suggesting big

business have been encouraged not to push AWAs before the election, that's the first I've heard of it," the Prime Minister said.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews said it was ``complete nonsense" to suggest the Government had urged big business to go slow in implementing changes to neutralise what he said was a scare campaign being run by the unions.

``It has no basis and lacks credibility," he said.

Business leaders yesterday also disputed the allegation, with Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Peter Hendy saying he was ``pretty confident no one has actually said to me, `can you spread the word around?'".

``The reason they haven't is because it's so meaningless. Our philosophy is that decisions are made in the workplace and we don't send out centralised directives," he said.

Mark Triffitt, spokesman for the Business Council of Australia, was also unaware of the claim.

``Companies have their own programs or individual strategies for implementing the changes according to their own circumstances," he said.

Headline: PM `urging business to go easy on IR changes'
Author: Brad Norington
Edition: 1 - All-round Country
Section: Local

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

Copyright © News Ltd