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Low-paid workers get \$20 a week rise

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VICTORIA'S lowest-paid workers could get a rise of \$20 a week following decisions by industrial relations tribunals in NSW and Western Australia.

In a rebuff to industrial relations changes by the Federal Government, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission full bench ruled unanimously in favour of a Unions NSW application for the pay rise.

The WA Industrial Relations Commission also unanimously decided to lift the adult full-time minimum wage by \$20 a week from July 7.

The Federal Government and employer groups had asked the NSW IRC to adjourn the case and freeze minimum wages until the new Australian Fair Pay Commission handed down its first nationwide wage decision this year.

The decision will affect Victoria's lowest-paid workers.

ACTU secretary **Greg Combet** said in Adelaide yesterday the NSW IRC was a benchmark for the AFPC.

In a statement released yesterday, the AFPC said: "The Australian Fair Pay Commission is aware of today's NSW state wage decision. The commission is . . . gathering information through consultation and research to fulfil its duty to set and adjust federal minimum wages, with a commitment to delivering its first decision before November 30, 2006."

David Gregory, general manager, workplace relations policy, at the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the state IRC decisions were among the factors the AFPC would take into account.

"I don't think it has any direct implications for Victoria or the Fair Pay Commission," Mr Gregory said.

Australian Industry Group chief executive Heather Ridout said the increase exceeded any safety net wage increase awarded by the Australian

Industrial Relations Commission.

"The decision is unhelpful at a time when the NSW economy is struggling, with growth well below the national average," she said.

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