

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

Monday 20 March 2006



Minister to vet strikes and pay

Author: Brad Norington

Publication: The Australian (001, Mon 20 Mar 2006)

Edition: 1 - All-round Country

Keywords: **ACTU (1), Greg (1), Combet (1)**

THE Australian Industrial Relations Commission will become the Howard Government's weekly reporting agency on strikes, as part of an assault on the power of unions.

The changes, which will put Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews in a position to rule over industrial battles, were announced in regulations issued yesterday before controversial new workplace laws come into force next Monday.

The regulations require the commission to provide Mr Andrews every week with a list of applications for legally protected union strikes and secret ballots.

As well, the authority that will take over approving wage agreements, the Employment Advocate, will be required to send Mr Andrews a copy of all agreements every three weeks. The new reporting schedule will put the minister at the centre of a new Howard workplace regime that the Government argues will deregulate the labour market by putting negotiations in the hands of employers and employees.

ACTU secretary **Greg Combet** said yesterday the reporting provisions were among the most extreme contained in new regulations because they turned the commission and the Employment Advocate into "spy agencies".

"This is Kremlin-like control and scrutiny," Mr Combet said.

Continued -- Page 2

From Page 1

"For a Government that professes freedom of contract and the individual, it is extremely interventionist."

Mr Combet said the minister would be able to intervene in industrial disputes and quash anything he disapproved of in wage agreements, using the Government's corporations power in the Constitution.

Under the Government's changes, Mr Andrews will be free to use the regular reports sent to him on union activity in conjunction with broad new

``essential services" powers that will allow him to ban industrial strikes if he considers them a threat to public welfare or the economy.

He will also be free to have wage agreements struck out and union officials fined up to \$33,000 if they do not comply with government requirements.

A spokesman for Mr Andrews said yesterday the minister wanted reports on a more regular basis. ``There is nothing particularly suspicious -- we just want to be kept informed," he said.

The spokesman said the new reporting role of the Employment Advocate every three weeks was ``nothing particularly new" because it was taking over a similar duty of the industrial commission when it had the job of approving pay agreements.

Government regulations for the workplace laws yesterday spelled out precisely for the first time what unions can and cannot legally include in wage agreements in future.

Anything the Government regards as not linked to the employment relationship will be banned. It will be illegal for agreements to contain provisions allowing for protection from unfair dismissal, allowing for vocational health and safety training or limiting the right of employers to use non-union labour hire firms or independent contractors.

Headline: Minister to vet strikes and pay

Author: Brad Norington

Edition: 1 - All-round Country

Section: Local

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

Copyright © News Ltd