

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

Wednesday 22 March 2006



Pay could drop below base wage

Author: Cath Hart

Publication: The Australian (002,Wed 22 Mar 2006)

Edition: 2 - All-round First

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

WEEKLY or monthly pay packets could be less than the federal minimum wage if employers take advantage of a "pay averaging" clause in the newly released Work Choices regulations.

Unions and the federal Opposition slammed the arrangement yesterday, saying it made it easier for bosses to exploit workers.

The Howard Government's new industrial relations regime, which will come into effect next Monday, requires any shortfall in workers' pay to be "made up" within a 12-month period agreed to between employers and employees.

The rule, which is contained in 592 pages of regulations and supplementary material released on Sunday, is most applicable to seasonal workers, such as fruit-pickers.

ACTU secretary **Greg Combet** said the move broke a Howard government promise to protect the minimum wage of \$12.75 an hour.

"The problem is that there is no real way for workers to make sure that employers keep their promise other than to try and take their boss to court in an expensive legal action," Mr Combet said.

"Your boss will be able to say, 'I'll pay you \$8 an hour in the off-season and then double that when business is good', but if you get laid off in the meantime or business never really picks up, then workers are going to be ripped off."

Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews rejected the claim and said in a statement the more "flexible" arrangements would benefit workers.

"The claims that employers can pay employees below the minimum wage is wrong and misleading," he said.

"Benefits to the employee would include the certainty of a regular wage to enable them to meet regular financial obligations such as mortgage payments."

Employers and employees can agree to a period of up to 12 months within

which the wage guarantee for the employee may be satisfied.

``In other words, it requires both the employer and the employee to consent to more flexible arrangements," Mr Andrews said.

This is not the first time questions have been raised about the effect the new regime will have on the minimum wage.

Opposition industrial relations spokesman Stephen Smith said yesterday the regulations were ``a crass and over-reduction of the bargaining power of employees in the workplace".

Headline: Pay could drop below base wage

Author: Cath Hart

Edition: 2 - All-round First

Section: Local

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

Copyright © News Ltd