

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

Tuesday 28 March 2006

THE AUSTRALIAN
FINANCIAL REVIEW

Builder cuts his labour costs casually

Author: Marcus Priest

Publication: Australian Financial Review (3,Tue 28 Mar 2006)

Edition: First

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

A Melbourne building firm yesterday became the first to fall foul of a union campaign to "name and shame" employers that take advantage of new workplace relations laws.

Late last week, three employees at Installex, a small firm in commercial and residential building, were told their employment would be terminated yesterday.

They were told if they wanted to continue working at the firm they had to sign individual contracts making them casuals on a lower hourly rate. As casuals, they are not entitled to sick leave and four weeks' holiday.

They were also asked to pay for the use of company vehicles previously provided free.

While they were paid out their accumulated entitlements, they were not given any redundancy pay.

Companies employing fewer than 100 staff are now exempt from unfair-dismissal laws, while larger firms can sack workers for operational reasons without fear.

Installex employs a small number of full-timers and lots of casuals.

The owner, Miles Williams, claimed he was forced to lay off the workers because there was no work for them on commercial building sites.

He said the terminations had nothing to do with the new laws, and were in accordance with the enterprise bargaining agreement covering commercial building sites, which entitled him to lay off workers with 48 hours' notice if there was no work.

"We have not had any work on a building site for some time and they've been offered work back in another part of the business for residential properties," Mr Williams said.

"I am continuing to employ them. If they continued on the enterprise

agreement I would not be able to offer them work and I would go broke."

He said the workers' new conditions would be more than the award minimum, but he admitted they would be getting paid less than before.

ACTU secretary **Greg Combet** said it was no coincidence the workers had been sacked on the first day of the new workplace relations laws.

"These people can thank John Howard," Mr Combet said. "If they had been made redundant last week, they would have been entitled to bring an unfair-dismissal case because their jobs are not really redundant. Clearly, there is still work for them."

The three workers are still considering their options.

Headline: Builder cuts his labour costs casually

Author: Marcus Priest

Edition: First

Section: News

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

Copyright © Fairfax