



End of the road: Darren Kirwan, an electrician at Holden's Fisherman's Bend plant in Melbourne, will be among 2900 workers to lose their jobs when the company ceases domestic production in 2017. Photo: Mark Phillips/ACTU

Body blow for Australian manufacturing

Abbott blamed for Holden's demise

by **MARK PHILLIPS**

"Tony Abbott and his Government have turned their backs on this industry and the people in it."

- SA Premier Jay Weatherill

THE Federal Government has come under fire for not doing enough to keep GM Holden in Australia after the company announced it was ending domestic manufacturing.

The 11 December decision will mean 2900 Holden workers will lose their jobs in Adelaide and Melbourne, but will impact on up to 50,000 direct jobs in the automotive industry.

It also now throws into serious doubt the viability of Toyota continuing manufacturing operations in Australia.

Holden said it would discontinue vehicle and engine manufacturing and significantly reduce its engineering operations in Australia by the end of 2017.

The first mass-produced FJ Holden rolled off the production line at Fishermans Bend in Melbourne in 1948.

Managing Director Mike Devereux said Holden was the victim of "a perfect storm" and that the high Australian dollar was a key factor in the decision. The appreciation of the currency alone means that at the Australian dollar's peak, making things in Australia 65% more expensive compared to just a decade earlier.

However, taunts and goading from the Federal Government is also widely suspected to have been a factor, culminating in an extraordinary letter from Acting Prime

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Hall of Shame

New Senator Bob Day puts families first and workers last

BOB Day has been hanging out on the fringes of political power for a couple of decades.

He made his fortune as a property developer, and used that as a springboard to his first public position of President of the Housing Industry Association of Australia.

He was the inaugural President of the Independent Contractors Association, a front organisation that advocates a radical windback of workplace protections, and Secretary of the extremist HR Nicholls Society.

He has also contributed to right-wing think tanks the Institute of Public Affairs and the Centre for Independent Studies.

Day has always had political aspirations and over the years has been a serial candidate for

own money into the party.

This year he was rewarded by winning the fifth Senate position, despite his party receiving just 36,152 first preference votes, or 3.48%.

What this means is that from July next year, Day will be one of a handful of minor party Senators who will hold the keys to whether Tony Abbott is able to get his legislative agenda through Parliament or not.

The changes mean the Senate will take on a right-wing hue, and none more so than Day.

In his few public comments since he was elected, Day has provided some detail about how he views Australia's workplace system.

This month, he delivered a speech to the HR Nicholls Society calling for employers to be allowed to undercut the minimum wage.

This speech has slipped under the radar as the other main speaker at the dinner was Qantas chairman and former Rio Tinto CEO Leigh Clifford, but the industrial relations newsletter *Workplace Express*

by **MARK PHILLIPS**

The latest nominee to our Hall of Shame is an ultra-conservative new Senator who wants to abolish the minimum wage



political office.

But when he ran for the Liberal-held seat of Makin in Adelaide in 2007, he was resoundingly rejected by voters, suffering a 6.4% swing against him.

He next sought pre-selection to replace former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer in the bluechip Adelaide Hills seat of Mayo, but was beaten by Jamie Briggs, who was one of the key architects of WorkChoices.

Day spat the dummy and quit the Liberal Party after 21 years, and switched his allegiances to the small Family First Party to run against the Liberals. He failed dismally, winning less than 12% of the vote, but since then has poured hundreds of thousands of his

reported that Day told the dinner: "I do not believe there should be any law preventing people working on terms and conditions that suit them. For example, the Newstart Allowance . . . is worth about \$250 a week. The minimum wage is about \$620 a week. Yet anyone who offers or accepts anything between \$250 and \$620 is breaking the law," he reportedly said.

It is "absurd", Day went on to say, that "we don't permit anyone to work for anything between zero and \$620" and "it is about time we stopped dictating to people what they can and can't work for."

There can be no more worthy nominee to the *Working Life* Hall of Shame.

GET IN TOUCH

Want to know more or get involved? Contact our newsdesk by email at editor@workinglife.org.au or phone (03) 9664 7266. Or get in touch by Facebook ([facebook.com/ThisWorkingLife](https://www.facebook.com/ThisWorkingLife)) or Twitter ([twitter/thisworkinglife](https://twitter.com/thisworkinglife)).

Editor: Mark Phillips. Responsibility for election comment is taken by Dave Oliver, Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, 365 Queen Street, Melbourne 3000.

At Work

This is our community and we want to protect it

A small mining community is being ripped apart by a multinational company's treatment of its workforce. But, writes **Donna Bulloch**, they are not taking it lying down



Community pride: Collinsville residents make their feelings known about the destruction being caused by Glencore Xstrata's actions.

THIRTEEN years ago, I came to Collinsville never having lived in a small rural mining town but I soon grew to love the community and the people in it, and I gained a passion for the history of the area.

I married a local man, who is a coal miner, manage a local hotel/motel and have brought up two children in Collinsville.

There are not many communities still around that have such a long, strong and proud history like Collinsville does.

The community has a fire in its belly – and it is not ready to be extinguished just yet.

I can't bear to see small communities being ripped apart by Government and big multinational companies – who are becoming more ruthless in the treatment of their workers and the communities that they come into.

So it was an easy decision for me to get involved in the forming of a group that could represent the community and all of its issues – big or small. So in 2010 the journey began for Mining Communities United (MCU).

MCU is only one of many community representative groups across the Bowen Basin and we are always busy with the many challenges we face at the local level.

We have always been involved in many issues but the biggest one and the one that can damage the community the most is the employment

policies of coal companies, workers' camps, drive-in/drive-out (DIDO) and the fact they are taking away the choices for families in a resource community. This causes the development of unhealthy communities and slowly but surely kills entire towns.

In Collinsville, Glencore/Xstrata took over last December as owner-operator at the century-old coal mine.

Previous operator Thiess had already started the ball rolling by reducing the workforce by 95 – some by voluntary redundancies but most were made redundant by the company.

In March and April this year, another 15 were also made redundant.

THIS was the start of what I call "The Cobweb": the community started showing cracks, families started to leave, shops were closing or reducing staff hours, and people were starting to feel the financial burden of losing this many people from a small town.

The start of September saw Glencore shut the gates and cease production on the century-old mine site.

Overnight, 400 skilled experienced workers became unemployed – 160 living locally.

That's 160 pay packets taken from a town of about 2000 residents; 160 skilled experienced

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STAY STRONG COLLINSVILLE

Dig deep and fund the campaign to get the jobs back and to provide longer-term support for the sacked workers and their families.

Take action at:

<http://www.pozible.com/project/176378>

This is our community and we want to protect it

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workers that choose to live within approximately five or 10 minutes from the mine site.

This workforce has an established skills base and they have experience in a mine that has been known to have a high risk gas problem.

These are scary and difficult times and we are seeing it hurt so many people.

The community has tried to get Glencore officials to attend community forums, which are open discussions with all of the community.

Instead, the company has chosen to have Glencore Reference Group meetings with a select few (of which I am lucky enough to be a part of).

But this is not good enough. As I told the director of operations, Bill McKinstry – it was not good enough because it only has a select few invited, many businesses were not even present and there are many families who have been impacted.

So they then held a “business owners” meeting. Still not good enough.

The town and the residents are suffering – many shops have shut or cut staff hours or even put staff off, children are leaving the schools, houses are sitting vacant and families are living in limbo not knowing whether they should sit and wait for re-employment – or do they venture off in the hope they find a job where they can take their family. That is if they can rent or sell their homes. These are scary and difficult times and we are seeing it hurt so many people.

MY family is one of those in limbo.

My husband made the hard decision to take a redundancy in April. It took him three months to find employment and this seen him now become a transient worker. He now works away, driving approximately four hours to his camp, and has to stay there for approximately 10 days.

We have never been apart for more than about four days at a time, and this is hurting my daughter, as she is used to having her Dad home every night. She turns 10 in a few days and will not have her Dad there and this is first time this has ever happened.

We now face the dreaded tentacles of the spider’s web that Glencore has started. Do we sit and wait and see if they re-employ him, or do we move? Can we rent or do we sell at a loss, or do we wait for the good days to return?

Will they return?

This is one of the reasons that made myself, Laurie-Ann Williams and Jim Pearce pursue Glencore’s CEO Ivan Glasenberg.

We travelled to Sydney, with the hope of

meeting with him. If we could not meet with him, we had a letter ready to be delivered to him, but we also wanted to sit with company representatives in the hope that we could tell them first-hand what is happening in our community.

Glencore intends to start operating as soon as they can get a new workforce in place.

What we want is for the 160 local experienced and skilled workers to be given their jobs back. Why should they have to re-apply for a job that they lost because of a company and its choices,



not of their own fault?

They are pushing aside this skilled workforce in favour of a DIDO workforce who would more than likely be accommodated in camps.

Glencore has a horrid history in the treatment of people where they operate.

To make the situation worse our town, our community has been abandoned by a local conservative government that has not taken a public position on the treatment of workers, families and the community as a whole.

We have the support of state Labor MP Joann Miller who has spoken about our struggle in parliament, yet our local MP won’t help.

It is a tough challenge for Laurie-Ann and myself, Jim Pearce and the community as whole, but we do not intend on giving up.

We will keep going until we get noticed and get answers from the Ivan Glasenberg, even if this means chasing him throughout the world.

If he won’t come to us, we will go for him!

World News

Asbestos battle goes global

Through their overseas aid agency, Australian unions are working to eradicate deadly asbestos from developing nations in South-East Asia, like Laos and Vietnam



Deadly dust: Workers monitor noise and dust levels at a roof tile factory in Vietnam. Photo courtesy of Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

by **JULIE STRATFORD**

LAOS is a quiet, mostly rural South-East Asian country that is just starting on a path to industrialisation – but it is growing quickly.

The construction industry is booming and the economy is growing 8% every year. The workers in Laos' busy roof tile factories, however, have no idea they are working with a killer.

In Laos, asbestos is being used mainly in the production of roof tiles and concrete pipes. Laos is a relatively recent user of asbestos, but consumption is rising rapidly and could reach 9000 tonnes a year. It is handled, stored and transported with little concern for exposure to its deadly fibres.

The asbestos industry is promoting asbestos in developing countries as a cheap and useful building material, just as it once did in Australia. Workers and communities are being exposed to this deadly hazard without knowing it can kill, not only in Laos but in Vietnam as well.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA is working to change that. As the overseas humanitarian aid agency of the ACTU, APHEDA has been working with both the Lao trade union and relevant government ministries since 2010.

"We are sounding the warning," said APHEDA's Mekong Regional Representative Phillip Hazelton, "to workers and communities to put banning asbestos on the national agenda, and also help Laos do the long-term thinking on

the real costs of continuing to use asbestos."

In July 2013, this work took a big step forward through a national conference which kicked off the development of a Laos national strategy and helped Laos learn lessons from experiences in Australia, Japan and Thailand.

The two-day conference, the first of its kind in Laos, discussed asbestos exposure risks for workers and communities, including mesothelioma and asbestosis.

The conference heard lessons from Thailand's work towards banning asbestos use; medical statistics from Laos; the Japanese and Australian experiences and subsequent bans; and about the hundreds of thousands of people who have died or will die of asbestos-related diseases around the world.

It was the first time many of the participants had heard of the dangers of asbestos. Even the Lao Federation of Trade Unions had only become fully aware of the dangers after the APHEDA program commenced in 2010.

By the end of the conference, many officials had embraced the idea of an eventual total ban on asbestos – despite initial concerns over costs of replacement construction materials.

It may take years to eradicate this hazard from the Lao environment, but acting early will save many lives, save future health and clean-up costs, and build healthier, safer workplaces.

Julie Stratford is an Australian trade union trainer and ex-ACTU staff member now volunteering in Laos for one year with the Lao Federation of Trade Unions through the Australian Red Cross and supported by Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA.

End of the road for Holden

Three generations at Holden

HOLDEN veteran Alby Petraccaro thought the Lion's end was a day he would never see, a day he's sure his father would never have believed possible.

When Holden's gates shut in 2017, members of his family will have worked there in excess of 100 years in total.

The Adelaide plant union delegate is among 1600 workers at Elizabeth, the 1300 at the Fisherman's Bend engine plant and a stunned nation trying to conceive of life without local Holdens.

"People were in tears last night, I think about their families, their kids," said Mr Petraccaro (pictured), 58.

Holden has been part of his life since he was a toddler. His dad Lelio was working at the old Woodville plant by 1958 after coming from Italy and his uncle Nicola Iannella got a job there too.

"I can recall being in bed when Dad would get home from afternoon shift with his mates, lying there smelling the spaghetti he was cooking while they had a few wines," he said. "I remember the talk, the laughter in the kitchen, it's always been that way with Holden workers. People stick together.

"When I was going to school we had a Premier, Dad loved that car, and I was happy to follow him to Woodville in '82. Later I

went to Elizabeth.

"It's been a reliable job, it's put food on the table. It helped mum and dad pay the mortgage. It helped us buy our house and raise two beautiful children."



son Lee drove forklifts there for a year – until he was among hundreds retrenched.

The only consolation Mr Petraccaro can think of for workmates is now they have certainty until 2016-17 . . . then an uncertain working future.

"I just wish Hockey and Abbott, those eastern states politicians would come down from Canberra to see the impact of what they've done out here in Adelaide, in Melbourne too," he said.

"This did not have to happen, the arrogance of Hockey daring Holden to go. Now they will."

by NEIL WILSON

Mr Petraccaro's father died in 1984 but his uncle Nicola only retired from Holden stores a few weeks ago, aged 77, after a life of Kingswoods, Toranas, Monaros, Commodores and Cruzes. Even his

"I just wish Hockey and Abbott . . . would come down from Canberra to see the impact of what they've done out here."

- Alby Petraccaro

Abbott blamed for Holden demise

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Minister Warren Truss challenging Holden to either remain in Australia or leave.

The decision follows Ford's announcement earlier this year that it would cease local manufacturing in 2016.

It came a day after Mr Devereux appeared before the Productivity Commission to again make the case for continued government co-investment in the auto industry.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said the Government had shown "an appalling lack of leadership" and as a result of its inaction up to 50,000 direct skilled jobs would be lost and \$21 billion wiped from the national economy.

"The departure of Holden will sink the car industry in this country and the flow on effects for jobs and manufacturing will be cataclysmic," Mr Oliver said. "Tony Abbott's legacy will be as the Unemployment Prime Minister.

"The Government has no plan for future industries beyond the mining boom and under

their watch the car manufacturing industry has been demolished."

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union National Secretary Paul Bastian said the news was devastating for Holden employees.

"This did not have to happen," he said. "We knew heading into the election that the Coalition had plans to remove co-investment, but the entire industry hoped they would see sense and the impact of their decision. The Government has failed to come to its senses."

South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill said the announcement was a black day and would affect 13,000 jobs in his state alone.

"Tony Abbott and his Coalition Government have turned their backs on this industry and the people in it," he said.

"Holden had made it abundantly clear that if the support committed by the previous federal Labor Government remained on the table it would stay in Australia.

"By cutting funding and, in the past week, by attacking Holden, Tony Abbott and the Coalition have forced Holden out of Australia."

End of the road for Holden

If this government has a jobs plan, we'd like to see it

The Federal Government all but waved Holden out the door and appears to have no plan for jobs beyond the end of the mining boom, writes ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver



THE bloodline of any country is its workforce and Australia's has just taken a serious hit – a catastrophic blow that will affect hundreds of thousands of people.

The most striking aspect of what must be considered a very dark day for the Australian economy and its workforce is that the government all but marched Holden off our shores.

That is the clear message that will become a legacy for the Coalition: they are overseeing the end of the iconic domestic car manufacturing industry and have done nothing to save it.

Instead of fighting for jobs and industry the Government used a series of snappily dismissive retorts, thereby politicising the issue and causing General Motors to not even bother waiting for the Productivity Commission's report.

It was obvious to everyone that the Government had no appetite or plans for a car manufacturing future in Australia.

The ramifications of Holden's exit are extensive.

We know that Toyota is under "unprecedented pressure" to survive as the sole vehicle manufacturer in Australia. Components and other reliant industries will topple in the wake of a collapsing car manufacturing industry with estimates of up to 250,000 total job losses.

Along with the jobs and billions of dollars leaving our shore, will be significant expertise and innovation. Australia will well and truly have moved into importer territory.

That's why our Government's actions are so

illogical, especially when compared to global trends.

Other nations are fighting hard and investing to keep local industries and encourage exporting and innovation because they can see the urgency and value.

Pre-election, just four months ago, Tony Abbott was often pictured in news grabs wearing hard-hats and high-vis-vests, standing alongside some of the same workers who are now wondering what their future will hold.

It was a strategy to convince voters that the Coalition was on the side of workers and their jobs. They boasted about their commitment to workers and the economy in the form of two million new jobs to be created. But just months into their term we have had catastrophic losses with no indication of how this will be remedied.

Along with the Coalition's commitment to sever jobs in the public service, their dragging of feet with Qantas and now the destruction of car manufacturing in Australia we have to ask what is the plan for employment growth?

They are free marketeers willing to let the cards drop where they may despite the devastation and loss it will cause so many workers and our future ability as a nation to be innovative producers in a hungry global market.

Will this be the Government of Unemployment? How many jobs will be lost, sacrificed on the altar of the free market, at the end of this government's first term which is when the job shedding will really begin?

Get the full story:
workinglife.org.au

My Working Life

The battle may be lost but the war remains to be won



She became an accidental poster girl for the Big Steps campaign. Despite the recent setback, United Voice member Kerrie Devir is determined to continue fighting for professional recognition and decent pay for early childhood educators. She spoke to Ian Munro

THIRTY years after she began her life's work in early childhood education, Kerrie Devir could be forgiven for feeling a little frustrated about how the pendulum swings of national politics snatched away the gains for workers like her.

Kerrie, 47, became a poster girl for the United Voice Big Steps campaign for professional wages a bit by accident by agreeing to talk to the media about the need to professionalise the sector in order to keep experienced and dedicated people like herself.

But, after Labor's defeat on 7 September, the promised \$300 million fund to boost wages for early childhood educators has been stopped.

More than anyone, perhaps Kerrie had a right to be upset, but as she sees it a win for the sector is only a matter of time.

As Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd put early education on the agenda and the move was endorsed by his successor, Julia Gillard.

"You can't put that genie back in the bottle any more, as if we are not important and valuable," says Kerrie. "A Prime Minister acknowledged us. No educator is going to let you put that genie back."

Kerrie says the Big Steps campaign over the past four years has changed early education and its practitioners in profound ways.

"Childhood educators spend most of our time with children. We don't have a lot of time to network to become informed about the bigger picture. What this campaign has taught

educators is that there are meetings happening that decide things about us: how much we are to be paid; what conditions we should expect and what is required of us by government and families

"We had never thought that we were entitled to be part of these meetings before this campaign. The department would present us with new standards, new rules and it's given to you at a staff meeting. We have always just absorbed this and done it.

"I have not worked in this profession my whole career to walk away and see it less than it was. I don't want to see good educators struggling the way I do. I want to leave it better. The union campaign and the union are both about getting a seat at that table where decisions are made about us."

Kerrie has seen the profession evolve out of hospital-based mother craft nursing to early childhood educators; from certificate courses to associate diplomas and on to full diplomas in childcare.

Along the way she has lost many colleagues who have left the sector simply because it could not support them or did not adequately value their skills.

Kerrie says that she will never own her own home, nor can she imagine being able to afford to retire. Her own finances are irretrievable, no pay rise could make up for three decades of inadequate pay, but she wants better life for those who will follow her.

NOMINATE A WORKPLACE HERO

The opportunity to nominate your best and fairest of 2013 is coming soon. For further information about the annual award categories and nomination process contact **Michelle Ryan** on (03) 9664 7379 or email:

mryan@actu.org

Opinion

How to create WorkChoices Mark II in four easy steps



by **SALLY McMANUS**
Secretary of NSW/ACT
Branch of the ASU

The WorkChoices dream has not gone away for Abbott and big business. They have had six years to regroup and learnt from past mistakes

CAN you imagine how shattered the likes of Tony Abbott and his mates in the HR Nicholls Society were when WorkChoices was finally abolished?

I can picture them watching in horror as the magnificent uprising of union members in the Your Rights At Work campaign gathered pace across the country. No amount of wall-to-wall Government advertising selling WorkChoices could turn around public opinion.

By the end of 2007 with election day closing in, the Your Rights At Work army of union activists were everywhere and unstoppable. The Government was swept from power and a Prime Minister had lost his seat.

More devastating than the election result would have been seeing 25 years of work by the HR Nicholls Society pulled apart, ridiculed, reviled and comprehensively rejected by the public.

We have the Mad Men of the Liberal Party's PR company to thank for encapsulating with such cynical and brilliant irony the whole agenda in just one word – WorkChoices. The striking yellow branding of WorkChoices became hated and a symbol of unfettered power to employers. In three short years,

everything WorkChoices stood for became so despised in the minds of the public that even today Abbott cannot mention the word.

WorkChoices was not something former Prime Minister John Howard dreamt up after he won the Senate in 2004. It has been a coherent agenda of the hard right amongst employers since the late 1980s, but has now become mainstream for corporate Australia.

In 1986, Liberal Party pups like Peter Costello and big business decided on a shared agenda to mount a war against working people and their unions so they could overturn the rights that generations of Australian unionists had won, so that bosses would rightfully decide everything.

THE WorkChoices dream has not gone away for Abbott and many others in corporate Australia. They have had six years to regroup. This is what they have learnt:

- The union movement has the organisational capacity and resources to defeat attempts to reintroduce WorkChoices. Under-estimating this capability was a fatal mistake in 2005.
- It was a mistake to go after working

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How to create WorkChoices Mark II in four easy steps

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people's rights before taking proper account of the capacity of the union movement. Unions must be weakened first as they are the only organisations who provide effective resistance.

- The electoral and political risks of introducing aspects of WorkChoices are potentially severe. The groundwork was not laid in 2005. This groundwork needs to be done by others and not the Government so as to minimise political and electoral fallout

So this time Tony Abbott has a twin strategy: dirtying the reputation of the union movement in the eyes of the public at the same time making their day-to-day operations as difficult as possible. While they do this, the Coalition will run a series of inquiries and reviews to lay the groundwork for WorkChoices v2.

This plan has been cooked up with corporate Australia, the likes of the Business Council of Australia, whose job it will be to do the running on the PR side of the campaign, with the willing assistance of the Murdoch press.

This is how they will do it:

Step 1: Go after unions

Despite the disgraceful behaviour of several former leaders of the HSU, Australians generally like and trust unions.

A strong majority believe that the country is better off with unions in most studies that have been done on the topic. The HSU scandal has opened up for Abbott a new front for this part of his strategy which is to find as much dirt as possible (real or imagined) to throw. This is all designed to weaken the trust of the public in unions and put unions on the defensive.

This part of their strategy has already started. The Abbott Government hopes that it can both take the high moral ground and demonstrate that the HSU was not just "one bad apple". They can use the findings to justify further fishing exercises.

Step 2: Make business run the campaign

About a year ago, confident of a Coalition win at the election, the Business Council of Australia became organised. Since then, we have seen a chorus of CEOs lining up to push the WorkChoices agenda.

Their themes are similar: abolish or reduce penalty rates, taking away workers' rights, limit collective bargaining, cut the minimum wage.

They are campaigning. They have a theme. It's not called WorkChoices. It's not about taking away rights (yet), it is all about jobs and

"productivity". Get ready for the show they will put on in 2014.

Step 3: Hide behind inquiries and reviews

Inquiries give the impression of outside legitimacy and authority. You get to stand at arm's length. It's a tried and true trick to minimise fallout for decisions. A massive industry has now grown up around it.

Abbott has shown had no shame whatsoever with his selections for the Commission of Audit, which is to be headed up by the very people who will gain financially from recommendations that involve privatisation – the Business Council of Australia. Talk about putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank!

The centrepiece of Coalition IR policy is the full review of the whole Fair Work Act conducted by none other than the Productivity Commission. This will be nothing but a singing and dancing show for employers to lay the ground-work for WorkChoices v2.

The second big review due early next year is a full review of all Awards. Remember, a key part of the WorkChoices agenda is to take rights out of Awards so wages and conditions have the potential to fall a long way before they reach a threadbare safety-net. Employers have already signalled a full scale assault on one part of take home-pay – penalty rates.

Step 4: Hide behind the new ultra right-wing Senate

For a long time now, we have seen the "balance of power" in the Senate held by parties of the centre or the Left, such as The Greens or the Democrats.

They have often insisted on amendments to legislation as the price of supporting it, but such changes have usually not been to the detriment of workers.

A whole new world of Senate politics awaits us come 1 July 2014 and it will be a horror show for working people.

This new Senate provides great opportunities for Abbott to do more than he promised and more than he might have dreamt of in his first term of Government. And, he doesn't have to make these proposals himself.

After business have been running their campaigns and the various inquiries have delivered him what business wants, he can use the new Senate to finish the job.

I think Abbott's strategy is clear for all to see if you follow what he and other WorkChoices devotees are up to.

After all, knowing or predicting your opponents' strategy is vitally important to building your own.

Get the full story:
workinglife.org.au

Ask Us

Don't let your work Christmas party end in embarrassment



by RIGHTS WATCH

The end of the year can be a fun time at work, but the office party can be fraught with danger. Here's a handy list of do's and don'ts

HELEN asks: I have been with this company for about 14 years. Last night our boss took us all out for dinner to celebrate the end of the year. I don't normally drink at all as I just don't really like the taste. But one of the girls insisted on buying me a drink and said she'd get me something not too strong I'd really like. It was very nice and I drank it and then had a couple more. I don't remember a lot about the evening but someone must've taken me home because I woke up on my couch. I got a phone call today from one of my friends saying I'd been really loud and horrible and had been sick in front of people in the restaurant. I'm due to go into work tomorrow and I am so ashamed about what happened and I'm worried I'm going to get the sack.

Please don't beat yourself up about this – you're not the first person this has happened to and you certainly won't be the last.

The person who should be feeling bad is your colleague who knew you weren't a drinker but went ahead and bought you cocktails without telling you what was in them or how strong they might be.

It's important that you do go into work. Not turning up, tempting though it might be, will only reflect badly on you and make any problem worse. Would you feel comfortable about apologising upfront to your boss and those who were there about any awkwardness you might have inadvertently caused?

Explain that you're not used to alcohol and that the strength of the drinks caught you off guard (I'd avoid though blowing the whistle on your drink buying colleague to your boss – though you might want to let them know privately that you didn't appreciate it!).

Chances are this will have all blown over. If though you find that your boss isn't very understanding and that you are in trouble, write a letter apologising and saying that you regret what occurred, it was unintentional and won't happen again.

The end of the year can be a really fun time at work – but every year people find themselves in trouble for office-party related reasons. Here's a handy list of do's and don'ts:

1. If it's unacceptable behaviour at any other time of the year, it's unacceptable behaviour at an office party.

2. No matter how friendly they are, your boss is still your boss. Don't after a few drinks decide to tell them what exactly what they're doing wrong. You'd think twice about saying it in the lift at work so don't say it at the bar.

3. Kris Kringle is fraught with danger. Just because you think nude calendars make an hilarious gift doesn't mean someone else won't find it offensive.

4. Even though they're out of hours, office parties are still work events. Pace yourself. It's one thing to face your mates after a really messy Saturday night – it's quite another to walk into the staffroom first day back after everything went horribly pear shaped.

GOT A PROBLEM AT WORK?

You've come to the right place. Share your workplace issues with our other readers and get free advice from the Australian Unions helpline if you have a problem with your pay, entitlements, health and safety or anything else at work.

Phone 1300 4 UNION (1300 486 466).

How to chase up back payments

CHRIS asks: I have just finished my carpenter and joinery apprenticeship, and straight away got some shopfitting work as my own subcontractor. I worked two weeks and sent away my first invoice for the first three days worked, and got paid the day after which was all well and good. I then worked another week-and-a-half, put that invoice through on a Friday morning early December, and I have still seen no payment into my bank account, which is now leading me to start running out of money whilst applying for new jobs. Can you help me out please?

Congratulations on finishing your

apprenticeship!

As you're self-employed (as opposed to working for someone and being paid wages under a Tax File Number) in order to chase up the money you're owed you'll need to make a civil claim through the Small Claims Tribunal in your state.

This will involve paying a fee, the amount of which will depend on how much you're claiming. You don't mention what State you are working in, so I can't give you any specific details, but the website of the tribunal in your state should be able to provide you with all the information you need.

All the best with your new business.

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