



## WorkChoices actor fined for employee rip-offs

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March 14, 2008 03:27am

Article from: [\(http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/\)](http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/)

Herald Sun

AN actor who appeared in a Howard government WorkChoices ad has been fined \$7500 for ripping off young employees.

Damien Richardson was also ordered to pay more than \$14,000 to two youths employed in his painting business.

Mr Richardson played a beanie-wearing father in the ad campaign to promote the controversial IR reforms.

In the ad, he said: "I'm being told employers can rip off young kids."

This was followed by a Workplace Authority post-it note saying: "No They Can't!"

But the Howard government pulled the ad after it emerged the federal Workplace Ombudsman was investigating Mr Richardson for alleged breaches of IR law.

The ombudsman prosecuted Mr Richardson, claiming he owed Erin Gebert \$12,238 and Phil Graham \$1792 in wages.

He was also prosecuted for failing to keep job records, failing to issue pay slips and not paying special allowances.

Mr Richardson did not appear in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court yesterday, but a tape was played of his calls to an ombudsman inspector.

In one call, he said he wanted to prove Mr Gebert wrong because of the defamation he had suffered in media reports.

"It's a joke . . . he was only a labourer, a subcontractor," he told the inspector.

"This should be thrown in the rubbish bin but I'm prepared to go to court."

Magistrate Kate Hawkins said Mr Richardson had not filed a defence and had resisted ombudsman efforts to resolve the matter.

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