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\$50 pay cuts for young workers on the cards with Tony Abbott's plan to bring back WorkChoices: new union ad campaign launched today

Australian workers will suffer cuts to their pay and conditions and lose protection from unfair dismissal under Liberal leader Tony Abbott's plan to bring back WorkChoices, warns a new national union TV ad campaign launched today.

The new ads herald the beginning of a major effort by unions to remind Australians of the damage caused by WorkChoices and the risk of a return to the Liberals in the federal election due this year.

"We want to make sure the public is aware of Tony Abbott's commitment to hardline industrial relations policies," said ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

"Tony Abbott was a key Minister in the former Liberal Government that introduced WorkChoices.

"Now, he wants to bring it back. He just won't call it WorkChoices," said Ms Burrow.

At a recent meeting with business executives, Mr Abbott said he will remove protection from unfair dismissal for workers in small business and bring back individual contracts — two basic features of WorkChoices.

You know, at four elections running, we had a mandate to take the unfair dismissal monkey off the back of small business and we will once more seek that mandate. At four elections running, we had a mandate to introduce statutory non-union contracts and we will seek to renew that mandate. Tony Abbott, 12 Feb 2010

Under the Rudd Labor Government, all workers, including those in small businesses, have protection from unfair dismissal and new AWA individual contracts are banned.

"It is very worrying that Mr Abbott recently promised a new policy that would enable employers to negotiate job contracts with school age young workers and dramatically reduce the minimum number of hours the workers would be paid," Ms Burrow said.

"Mr Abbott's new policy means employers would be able to call in young workers and send them home after as little as half an hour. It could reduce young workers' take home pay by about \$50 a week.

"The Liberals have also flagged changes to penalty rates which would put at risk the pay of hundreds of thousands of Australians who work public holidays, late at night and on weekends."

Under WorkChoices, workers were pushed onto AWA individual contracts with 65% losing penalty rates and 25% no longer having public holidays.

"Working Australians and their families cannot afford a return to WorkChoices under Tony Abbott," said Ms Burrow.

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