

## Liberal Party-aligned think tank proposes taking workers' rights back to the dark ages

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An industrial relations “blueprint” paper from the conservative HR Nicholls Society outlines a radical employers’ agenda designed to tear up protections for workers and deliver big business large scale wage cuts.

The paper from the Liberal Party aligned lobby group calls for the scrapping of awards, the abolition of unfair dismissal rights for workers in businesses with up to 50 employees and preventing any worker earning over \$125,000 from being covered by a collective agreement.

If adopted, the policy wish-list would result in more than 3.3 million Australians being kicked off awards and collective agreements and, in many cases, pushed onto a single lower minimum wage resulting in huge wage reductions.

The H R Nicholls Society paper, ‘The Employment Act: a Modern Blueprint for the Future of Work’ calls on the Federal Government to:

- Abolish all awards
- Abolish all award pay rates and replace them with one lower minimum adult pay rate set by the Productivity Commission
- Strip rights from independent contractors
- Strip safeguards in the National Employment Standards
- Abolish bargaining rights for everyone earning above \$125,000.
- Abolish multi-employer bargaining
- Introduce a new ‘no disadvantage test’ that would enable significant pay cuts
- Abolish redundancy pay and weaken unfair dismissal rights for employees at firms with up to 50 employees.
- Outlaw the right to strike for everyone earning above \$125,000
- Abolish rights for gig economy and road transport workers
- Reinstate labour hire wage cutting schemes by abolishing Same Job Same Pay rights
- Abolish the Fair Work Commission
- Restore the Australian Building and Construction Commission
- Abolish the Fair Work Ombudsman
- Cut penalties for employers who engage in wage theft

The HR Nicholls Society was formed in 1986 with the goal of seeking to radically wind back workplace rights.

It has close links to the Liberal Party with former Treasury Peter Costello a founding member, and key policies of the Society were included within John Howard's WorkChoices laws, particularly the use of individual contracts to strip away pay and conditions.

Last Friday's conference to launch the blueprint also included a speech by Liberal Party Shadow Minister, Michael Sukkar.

**Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:**

"If Peter Dutton adopts these policies all working people will have rights stripped from them.

"This is a policy agenda designed to do one thing – cut wages.

"Peter Dutton should denounce these policies and rule every single one out."

**ENDS**

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