

## AWA statistics sound alarms

LEAKED figures show that almost half of all Australian Workplace Agreements have stripped away protected conditions, with many agreements illegally omitting minimum entitlements.

The figures, obtained by Fairfax newspapers, show 45 per cent of AWAs lodged with the Office of the Employment Advocate (OEA) removed all conditions supposedly "protected by law" under WorkChoices legislation.

The figures also showed that 27.8 per cent of the agreements examined by OEA staff may have broken the law by undercutting minimum employment entitlements.

The Government has been refusing to release the statistics, which also show one in three AWAs provided no wage rises during the life of the agreements.

South Coast Labour Council secretary Arthur Rorris said the figures were an indictment on the Howard Government's industrial relations reforms.

"It's not just the odd one that has got away - it appears to be systemic," Mr Rorris said.

"The Federal Government feigned indignation over the union ad campaign which uses figures far less damning than these from last year, but we can now see the situation is even worse than we predicted."

Mr Rorris stressed that the erosion of working conditions would be exacerbated in the Illawarra, where unemployment remains higher than the national rate.

"If this is what's happening nationally when unemployment is coming down, imagine what's happening in the Illawarra where unemployment remains high," he said.

"In this region, you can't just quit and get another job if conditions get too bad - there's pressure on workers to keep quiet and not complain."

Mr Rorris said the leaked figures would make it hard for the Federal Government to deny the effect of their reforms on working families.

Federal Industrial Relations Minister Joe Hockey said the figures were misleading.