



FAR SOUTH COAST COMMUNITY & UNITED UNIONS

## \$20 Pay Increase for South Coast Workers Blocked by WorkChoices

*Media Release: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2006.*

The Howard government's takeover of the NSW industrial relations system means that the wage increase of \$20 a week granted by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission on June 26<sup>th</sup> will not flow to far south coast employees who work under a NSW award and work for an incorporated business.

Only employees who work on award wages for unincorporated businesses such as partnerships and sole traders that fall outside the federal system will get the increase. Everyone else, the vast majority, will have to wait until the end of the year to see whether they get a pay rise from the Howard Government's new Fair Pay Commission.

Co-convenor of the Far South Coast Community and United Unions, Phil Morgans said:

"It is clear that the Howard Government's WorkChoices system is stacked against workers who are most in need of a wage rise. Before WorkChoices came into force in March, the vast majority of employees in the region were protected by the NSW industrial relations system that provided regular annual wage rises such as the one handed down a few days ago. Now these employees are at the mercy of the Fair Pay Commission, which is under no obligation hand down any wage rise at all, never mind matching the NSW increase."

At a government run WorkChoices seminar at the Bega RSL on 28<sup>th</sup> June, an officer from the Office of the Employment Advocate told seminar participants that the Fair Pay Commission would probably grant minimum wage increases below those granted by the traditional industrial tribunals and then only every 18 months to two years or so. He also said that rises granted by the Fair Pay Commission might only flow to some workers and not others. He gave an example where low paid workers in the hospitality industry might get an increase but not tourism workers. "It will all depend on the industry's capacity to pay" the officer told the seminar.

Mr. Morgans said, "This is a blow to the many thousands of employees on the coast who are in desperate need of a wage rise to cover the mounting cost of petrol, food and housing following recent interest rate rises. It is common for people to face a 100km round trip to and from work in this area and with petrol at \$1.50 a litre, this means they are spending up to \$15 a day or more just to get to work. If this alone isn't justification for a wage rise of \$20 a week then nothing is."

The Howard Government's delay in delivering a pay increase to NSW award wage workers means thousands of employees on the far south coast will have missed out on an extra \$520 by the time the Fair Pay Commission hands down its wage rise, if any.

**ENDS**

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