

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF COMMONWEALTH  
WORKCHOICES LEGISLATION**

**Organisation:** Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work Committee  
**Name:** Ms Ruth Lamont  
**Position:** Secretary  
**Telephone:**  
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**Theme:**

**Summary**

MILTON ULLADULLA RIGHTS AT WORK

Working towards re-establishing a fair system of  
Industrial Relations in Australia and to ensure social  
justice and equity for all Australians.

20/07/06

**The Director  
Social Issues Committee  
NSW Parliament**

**Please find enclosed copies of submissions made to the Federal Labour Parliamentary Taskforce from our group. These outlined the impact of Workchoices Legislation in our local community and our concerns for the future.**

**Thank you for accepting written statements and we regret we cannot present these in person.**

**If we can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.**

**Sincerely**



**Ruth Lamont  
Secretary Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work Committee  
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44553309**

# **Milton - Ulladulla Rights at Work**

Submission to the Federal Labor Parliamentary taskforce on industrial relations  
6<sup>th</sup> July 2006, Bomaderry NSW.

Milton Ulladulla rights at work was formed in November 2005 following a visit to Milton by the 'Your Rights at Work' bus tour organized by Unions NSW. From very small foundations this group has grown in size and scope to now encompass a broad cross section of the Milton – Ulladulla community. This group has remained clear in it's intention to avoid alignment with any political party and this has enabled the group to establish effective relationships with a wide variety of community members including; church representatives, young people, pensioners, sole parents, unionists, business owners, self funded retirees, tourism operators in addition to a core group of concerned workers. Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work has conducted several awareness raising activities including stalls at the Milton markets, a community forum, public meetings to coincide with the 'Your Rights at Work bus trip in May 2006 and has initiated a local reward program for employers who have maintained fair wages and conditions for their employees despite the introduction of the Workchoices legislation. Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work exists to re-establish a fair system of industrial relations in Australia in order to ensure social justice for all Australians.

The imposition of the Workchoices legislation in March 2006 led to immediate impacts upon the Milton Ulladulla community. Milton/Ulladulla rights at work group has been informed of cases where young workers have been required to work for periods of only 1-2 hours and then asked to return to work 3 hours later in order to clean up. Young workers have been asked to sign Australian workplace agreements (AWA's) that contain severe reductions in conditions and shift penalties in return for minor increases in hourly pay rates, cleaners at a local tourist park were told to sign AWA's that effectively reduced their hourly rate from \$14 to \$10 dollars per hour or to 'finish up'. The loss of protection against unfair dismissal under Workchoices has led to local workers losing their permanent jobs under the false claim of operational necessity only to find that these same jobs have been advertised a week later as casual positions. Although many people have spoken to the members of Milton Ulladulla Rights at work about losses and exploitation under the new laws most have been reluctant to publicise their experiences fearing that such attention would limit future work opportunities in the local area.

Substantial social and economic risks exist for small tourist towns like Milton and Ulladulla under the workchoices legislation. Specifically, tourism, food and beverage and accommodation industries in the Milton – Ulladulla area rely upon domestic, short stay patrons for the vast majority of their business. Milton Ulladulla is easily accessed by visitors from Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra and offers reasonably inexpensive holiday experiences. This accessibility has resulted in strong patronage of the local tourism and hospitality industry by working families and others who derive the majority of their income from wages and salaries. The likelihood of substantially reduced wages, reduced leave entitlements, reduced job security and increased unpredictable of working hours resulting from the Workchoices legislation will lead to a substantial downturn in

demand for tourism and hospitality services in these areas. The effects to the economy of Milton-Ulladulla of such a downturn are likely to flow on to other industries as well. Workchoices is likely to impact upon young home buyers due to their reduced access to housing finance when casually or discontinuously employed thus leading to reduced demand in the local building industry. Lower wages amongst local residents will lead to reduced demand for retail items during in slow tourism periods thus reducing the viability of many local business that rely on local trade to survive the slow periods of winter and autumn.

In order to re-establish a fair system of industrial relations in Australia The Milton/Ulladulla Rights at Work group respectfully suggests that consideration should be given to the following policy positions;

- 1) Legislation is required to reverse the primacy of AWA's over collective agreements for all workers
- 2) All industrial instruments must contain provision to ensure security and tenure of employment.
- 3) Protection is required to ensure access for all workers to the assistance of a union.
- 4) The re-establishment of an independent federal industrial relations court is essential to a fair and just system of industrial relations
- 5) The re-establishment of minimum wage standards that are linked to current and sensitive measures of actual living costs is essential to long term social and economic prosperity.
- 6) The protection and strengthening of occupational health and safety standards and practices within all workplaces is essential.
- 7) Legislation is required to protect and extend workers rights to paid maternity leave, meal breaks, shift penalties, a minimum of four weeks annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, superannuation, trade union training and union access to workplaces.
- 8) The protection and strengthening of the rights of casual employees through the enactment of 'secure employment legislation' that establishes that casual workers must be offered a permanent position after a reasonable period of continuous casual employment.

The 'Your rights at work' campaign has been successful in uniting workers and community members in their opposition to the workchoices legislation. On numerous occasions members of the public have accepted that Workchoices is socially and economically damaging legislation but have also expressed frustration that the ALP has not yet articulated any clear alternative industrial relations policies. A limitation to the success of local campaigning has resulted from the fact that the local groups have not been able to draw upon any endorsed labor party candidates to attend and represent the ALP at forums and community events.

Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work strongly endorses statements made by Hon. Kim Beasley, leader of the Australian Labor Party regarding the scrapping of AWA's and will welcome further statements regarding the ALP's intentions to return fairness to Australian workplace relations. Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work congratulates the

Federal Labor Parliamentary Taskforce for it's initiative in conducting this series of hearings.

Milton Ulladulla Rights at Work.

**Additional submission from Louise Allen – Milton Public School Teacher, and NSW Teachers Federation representative.**

My name is Louise Allen and I work as a teacher at Milton Public School. I feel honoured and privileged to work in the field of Public Education. I am lucky to spend my day with brilliant kids, I have the pleasure of meeting and interacting with their fantastic families and I constantly experience a sense of great pride when I work with a staff who are dedicated, caring, loyal, professional, often inspirational and always a lot of fun to be around.

I value our working conditions. I appreciate my two hours release-from-face-to-face-teaching per week so I can get some of my preparation, planning and marking done during paid working hours. I accept that I have the right to paid sick leave. I value the five days of family and community leave that I am entitled to every two years so I can care for my two sons should they get sick, so I can attend my sister's wedding near Albury and so I can travel to a close friend's mother's funeral in Maitland. After ten years service with the Department of Education I am extremely thankful for long service leave. I acknowledge our transfer system that allowed me to teach for four years in Broken Hill and then gave me the security of transferring to a less isolated region. My holiday leave loading pays for my family's Christmas presents, and this year, petrol to travel there! People before me have fought very hard to ensure that my employer must

guarantee to provide these working conditions.

Next term I will be studying a Government unit with my year six class entitled, "Discovering Democracy". We will learn how the Ancient Greeks invented Democracy and how Plato thought "Governing" was an expert craft. How people had to be trained to do it fairly, and that not all citizens were suitable to lead or make decisions for the group. We will marvel at the development of the British monarchy over the centuries and learn of the dangers of kings with absolute power. We will see how wealthy barons and bishops consulted with such kings to make all the decisions and how the serfs, the workers, had no rights at all. We will see how our government, though based on a much older system, has had a democratic element added to it. We will learn of the Myall Creek Massacres, how the forty hour week was won and how women got the vote. My experience from teaching this unit has shown me that students are usually horrified to learn how unfair many societies have been in the past and they usually develop renewed respect for values such as equity, justice and a fair go for all.

That is why I cannot tolerate the fact that my children, your children, or any of the children I teach will now leave school to enter a workplace that has vastly changed. Our children have the right to a job, they have the right to an agreed upon fair minimum wage and no individual workplace agreement. They have the right to a daily lunch break and a uniform allowance where relevant and paid overtime. They

have the right to justice, fairness, equity and protection from unfair dismissal. They have the right to the working conditions that were fought so hard for last century. They are Australian citizens who should be protected from exploitation. And they most definitely have the right, should a ruler ever come along with absolute power, dollar signs in his eyes, privatisation at the back of his mind and a legal blueprint guaranteeing to reduce the fair go working class Australian way of life, to stand up collectively and say NO! We will not tolerate it, we will not accept it and we will not allow it!

So, please, I implore you, do everything in your power to remove John Howard and his party from Government and repeal immediately this unfair and unacceptable legislation. Thank you.

Louise Allen -- President of the Milton Ulladulla  
Teacher's  
Association

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