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## Barnett and Abbott hiding secret plan to bring back WorkChoices for West Australian workers

The West Australian Liberal leader Colin Barnett and his federal counterpart Tony Abbott are hiding a secret plan to bring back WorkChoices for West Australian workers, say unions.

More than 300,000 West Australian workers are in danger of losing penalty rates, overtime pay, public holiday pay and their protection from unfair dismissal from the WA Government's planned industrial relations changes.

The President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions Ged Kearney (pronounced 'Jed') today joins WA workers in a protest outside Colin Barnett's Perth office calling for the release of the plan.

Soon after the Barnett Liberal Government was elected, it commissioned a review of Western Australian workplace laws by former Howard Government lawyer, Steven Amendola.

The terms of reference for the review specifically include the reintroduction of the worst aspects of WorkChoices and its precursor, the former Court WA government's IR laws, including:

- Individual contracts (AWAs) that cut workers' take home pay and conditions
- Cuts to unfair dismissal protection
- Cuts to minimum wages and the award safety net of penalty rates, overtime, annual leave, sick leave, overtime pay, allowances and other basic job conditions.

Up to 300,000 Western Australian workers — about 30% of the WA workforce — could face big cuts to their pay and conditions and rights from the 'WA WorkChoices Review'.

The WA Liberal Government received the 'WA WorkChoices Review' report in December 2009, but despite repeated requests from Labor and unions has refused to release it to the public.

The review was conducted by extreme anti-workplace rights lawyer Steven Amendola, formerly an advocate for Tony Abbott and Peter Reith when they were IR Ministers in the Howard Government.

"There is less than two weeks to go before the federal election and it is clear that Colin Barnett is trying to help Tony Abbott con West Australians over WorkChoices," said Ged Kearney.

"Tony Abbott is keeping the door open for bringing back WorkChoices under another name and Colin Barnett has a secret plan in his bottom drawer.

"The Liberals cannot be let off the hook from explaining what they really have in store for West Australian workers. In this election all we have so far are a series of glib slogans and contradictory statements from Tony Abbott and the WA Liberals that show they cannot be trusted on WorkChoices.

"It is an appalling abuse of the Australian public's right to know who and what they are voting for that the Liberals haven't released a detailed IR policy and that Colin Barnett is hiding the report from the WA WorkChoices Review.

"Working Australians will remember that WorkChoices was brought in without public scrutiny or approval by a Liberal Government of which Mr Abbott was a senior member. This election is shaping to be a re-run of the Liberal Party's previous dishonesty on workplace relations," Ms Kearney said.

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