



Sharon Grierson MP

Federal Member for Newcastle

Media Release

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WORKING WOMEN STRUGGLE UNDER HOWARD

On International Women's Day (8th March 2007), we should pause to examine the effects of the Howard Government's policies on women in our community, Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson says.

"The research is piling up to show the Howard Government's extreme industrial relations agenda is hitting women and their families hard," Ms Grierson said.

"John Howard's industrial relations laws are specifically designed to push people onto Australian Workplace Agreements, but recent ABS figures show that women on AWAs earn up to \$4.70 an hour less than those on collective agreements."

"Across the private sector, the real average earnings of women has fallen by 2 percent since the introduction of WorkChoices a year ago, according to academic research."

"A Relationships Forum Australia report released this week also found that Australians have comparatively long working hours, high levels of weekend and night work, and significant levels of casual employment."

"If this isn't bad enough, the majority of AWAs are abolishing overtime and penalty rates, so workers aren't even being rewarded for having to work longer."

"And when you factor in child care costs that have gone up 65% over the past five years, making ends meet while balancing work and family life is just getting harder and harder."

Federal Labor has already announced policies to ease the pressure on working families by:

- repealing John Howard's extreme industrial relations laws and restoring fairness in the workplace; and
- making make childcare for accessible and affordable by providing extra financial assistance to build up to 260 additional childcare centres on primary school grounds and other community land in partnership with childcare providers.

"On International Women's Day, the Howard Government should follow Labor's lead and offer relief from its hardline agenda for Australian women."

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