



**Sharon Grierson MP**  
Federal Member for Newcastle

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**THE LAST OF THE REAL FAIR PAY DECISIONS**

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson said today that the welcome increase of \$17 a week for low-paid Australians would be the last time the independent Australian Industrial Relations Commission decided on changes to the minimum wage.

The AIRC has, as it has done over its long history of minimum wage setting, made a decision based on fairness and equity for workers and the long-term needs of the Australian economy.

Next time around, however, the minimum wage decision will be made by the Government's hand-picked "Fair Pay Commission".

But with this Government's record of attempting to screw down wages, there is nothing fair about putting it in charge of the minimum wage.

If the Government's submission (of only \$11 a week) in the current minimum wage case had been accepted by the AIRC, wages would have risen by less than inflation. That's a wage cut.

If the Government's submissions over the past 9 years had been accepted, workers on minimum wages would be \$50 a week worse off. That's \$2,600 a year.

It is estimated that 60% of all Novocastrians of working age earn less than the minimum wage of \$484.40 per week. That's \$25,188 per year.

The Government's suggestion that this is too much is an insult to working people.

Fresh from voting themselves a \$120 a week tax cut, Howard Government Ministers will be voting in July to abolish the minimum wage protections provided by the AIRC.

This Government clearly doesn't want a fair deal for low-paid workers. Putting it in charge of the minimum wage is like putting Scrooge in charge of Christmas.

It's a fair bet it won't be there for long.

**For more information contact Sharon Grierson on 4926 1555**

**Canberra**  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Ph: 02 6277 4221  
Fax: 02 6277 8461



**Newcastle**  
427 Hunter Street  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300  
Ph: 02 4926 1555  
Fax: 02 4926 1895  
[www.sharongrierson.com](http://www.sharongrierson.com)