



## Workplace Rights under threat

The Australian Services Union – NSW has delivered a frightening analysis of the possible impacts of the Federal Government's proposed Industrial Relations changes. MHCC recently attended a briefing by ASU president, Sally McManus who painted a dire situation for the community sector if the Government carries out its plans, which include, abolishing the SACS Award.

In recent months the Federal Government has made a number of announcements which represent significant challenges to the maintenance of conditions of employment, long term funding and the quality of service standards in the SACS Industry. Announcement to date include:

- The use of the Corporations Power of the constitution, which will cause the abolition of the existing state award;
- The exemption of unfair dismissal laws for businesses that employ up to 100 employees;
- Removal of existing allowable award matters including: jury service, notice of termination, long service leave and superannuation.
- Small businesses will also be exempt making redundancy payments
- For reasons of increased workplace flexibility, provision will be made for the review of existing award wage and classification structures.

The proposed changes in industrial relations could affect community organisations in a most detrimental way including:

- Absence of Awards could reduce the community organisation's ability to influence Government to fund at an appropriate level
- Majority of the community agencies will not have any power to negotiate improved collective or individual contracts for staff as their funding will not be increased.
- Most community agencies do not have the capacity or resources (including legal advice) to the level of individual negotiations. Increased unrest and disruption to work will result from this.
- Trust will diminish between workers and employers and this will impact negatively on the operations of the organisation in the community sector which is built on co-operation and working together.
- Community services to disadvantaged and vulnerable people may decline and minimum standards may deteriorate if funding is reduced or if there are increased costs in a system based on individual negotiations.
- The possible loss of penalty rates will make it increasingly more difficult to attract people to shift work and extended hours.
- Without a legal base, some employers may reduce the categories of workers and this is dangerous given the complexity of the work undertaken in community agencies.
- Difficulties attracting and maintaining suitably qualified and experienced staff will occur
- Staff turnover will increase and cause increases in the cost of training and recruiting and raise issues of increased risk
- Increased competition could lead to asset stripping of not-for-profit agencies and be a cost driver for increased costs in providing community services.

For more information about the proposed changes visit: <http://www.asu-standingtogether.org/>

MHCC encourages you to express your concerns to Coalition senators and / or your local Federal member (for details visit: <http://www.aph.gov.au/>)

**Unions will be convening a National Day of Community Protest to protect the rights of working Australians on November 15. For more information visit: [http://actu.asn.au/work\\_rights/](http://actu.asn.au/work_rights/)**

**'View from the Peak'  
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