



Speech by

## Ms Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

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### WORKCHOICES

**Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.55 am): I rise to inform the House of the real impact that the federal government's WorkChoices legislation is having on women workers and working families. WorkChoices has already hurt thousands of women workers and working families who have lost protection from unfair dismissal laws and are finding it virtually impossible to defend their rights.

On the weekend I was talking to a young woman who had been working until recently in what she believed to be a good job until she was sacked by text message, with no explanation and reasons but was informed to bring back the keys. This is the second case that I am aware of where workers have been dismissed by SMS. Not only did this distress this young woman; she was most upset that the employer was able to get away with it and that she had no recourse whatsoever to defend her rights. This is happening to many workers throughout Queensland, particularly those in more vulnerable types of employment such as casual and part-time workers in hospitality and retail industries.

Low-skilled workers on AWA individual contracts have been found to earn on average \$106 less than workers on collective agreements. This has mainly come about by the loss of entitlements such as penalty rates, holiday pay, overtime payments, redundancy pay and rest breaks, and these workers were not entitled to compensation under the so-called fairness test. I have had many parents express concern and powerlessness at the loss of entitlements being experienced by their children and friends where inferior AWAs are offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

Research is also showing that the pay gap between men and women has widened under WorkChoices, with women on AWA individual contracts falling furthest behind and over the last three years women workers on average have been going backwards. It is plainly wrong that Australia's booming economy is leaving women workers worse off.

Interest rates are going up. Rents, particularly in my electorate, are going up. The price of petrol is going up. The prices of food and other basics are all increasing. Yet the standards for many working families are going backwards.

Time expired.