

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1530**  
**Asked on 30 November 2006**

**QUESTION:**

**MRS CUNNINGHAM ASKED THE MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL)-**

With reference to the passing of Work Choices legislation and as many Queensland workers are now covered by this Federal legislation-

- (i) Can State Industrial Relations offices continue to give workers advice in workplace disputes, even if in the Federal jurisdiction?
- (ii) When will the Workplace Rights Office begin operating?

**ANSWER:**

- (i) The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations had responsibility for delivering information and compliance services for people covered by Federal awards and certified agreements under a Federal Government contract until 30 June 2006.

With the introduction of Work Choices the Federal Government did not extend the contract. The Federal Government established the Office of Workplace Services (OWS), its own information and compliance service to deal with Work Choices.

In evidence before the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee, the Director of the Commonwealth's OWS provided the following information in respect of the first six months of operation of the OWS (nationwide):-

- OWS employed 119 inspectors nationwide
- OWS acted on behalf of 3000 employees and recovered over \$5M
- In Queensland the OWS had 6 offices
- Over 20 litigations of civil breaches of the new Act in the courts.

When compared with the activities of the Queensland industrial inspectors it demonstrates that the workers of Australia have been abandoned by an under resourced enforcement regime for the Work Choices legislation.

The Queensland Inspectorate reports the following activity during the same period:-

- employed 68 inspectors (compared to the 119 employed nationwide by the OWS)
- adjusted \$4.4M in wages (compared to the \$5M recovered nationwide by the OWS)

- audited 1278 employers covering 11 642 employees (compared to the nationwide OWS figure of 3000 employees)
- prosecuted 119 employers (compared to the nationwide figure of over 20 by the OWS)
- Operated from 17 offices in Queensland compared to the OWS operating from 6 offices in Queensland.

As part of the Queensland Government's response to Work Choices, it has established the *Fair Go Queensland Advisory Service* to help both workers and employers.

The Fair Go Hotline, as it is known, was established on 5 December 2005. It is a telephone service which assists workers who have suffered any unfairness in the workplace because of the Work Choices legislation, or employers who are seeking assistance with the complexities of the legislation.

The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations continues to provide information and compliance services through Wageline and the industrial inspectorate to those who are still covered by Queensland's industrial relations laws. In this respect, it is estimated that up to 40 per cent of employees remain under Queensland jurisdiction.

Since 5 December 2005 the hotline and Wageline have had over 11,000 calls relating to Work Choices.

- (ii) The Workplace Rights Office will begin operating in 2007.