

Put yourself in their shoes

Meatworkers have award rates and conditions slashed by AWAs.



The Howard Government must be held accountable for these laws.

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Queensland meatworkers fear for their future after a major employer and dedicated supplier of meat to Coles supermarkets introduced condition-slashing AWAs.

Australian Country Choice, a Queensland meat production and processing company, recently overhauled its meat processing plant at Cannon Hill in south-east Queensland to boost production of retail-ready trays of meat for Coles supermarkets.

While several hundred existing employees of ACC are covered by an award-based enterprise agreement, 40 new workers at the revamped plant - half of whom are African migrants - were required to sign AWAs as a condition of employment.

There are plans to employ up to 300 people at the site.

The AWAs strip all entitlements aside from the basic sick and holiday leave guaranteed under WorkChoices for an hourly rate of \$16.20 an hour - just 29c more than the lowest hourly rate in the enterprise agreement.

Under the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement the maximum number of hours is 10, as opposed to 12 on the AWAs. The AWAs set no normal hours, so the workers can be asked to work any time around the clock.

There's no shift allowance or overtime, no holiday loading or public holiday penalties.

The workers spend a lot of time working in freezers, but the AWAs don't contain the cold temperature allowance included in the award.

The Howard government's new IR laws make it legal to offer new workers AWAs that are inferior to existing conditions. How is this fair, especially when it seems to exploit migrants? How is it fair to young people entering the workforce for the first time?