

Free local newspaper

Welcome to the July issue of the *Cunningham Examiner*.

It will serve as a useful guide to what is happening in our local community.

The *Cunningham Examiner* will keep you up to date government policies affecting your daily life or community initiatives that will help us all.

We want to hear from you too. If you want to promote a community event or just make a comment either write to me at PO Box 387, Wollongong 2520 or send an email to Sharon.Bird.MP@aph.gov.au

Sharon Bird



Tax double-take

Are you enjoying your \$10 tax cut?

\$10 is the amount the majority of local workers receive from Peter Costello.

While high income earners have received substantial tax cuts, the majority of workers in the electorate of Cunningham will still pay 30 cents in the dollar tax.

Does the \$10 tax cut help in paying for extra private health insurance, or higher mortgage repayments, or higher petrol prices, or higher grocery bills?

Per Taxpayer	1995-96 per year	2006-07 per year	Increase per year	Per week	% increase
Income tax	9,372	11,755	2,383	46	25.4%
Indirect tax	1,966	3,576	1,610	31	81.9%
TOTAL TAX	11,338	15,331	3,993	77	35.2%
Average Earnings	37,980	44,281	6,301	121	16.6%

Note: All figures are expressed in constant 2006 \$
Sources: Commonwealth Budget Papers (1&3), ATO Taxation Statistics,
Australian Bureau of Statistics 6302.0 6401.0

In the last 10 years Peter Costello has raised an extra \$18.6 billion from 187 new taxes and charges – and it doesn't include the 10% GST.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures released recently confirm that the Howard Government raises \$223 billion or 25% of the total Australian economy.

A massive tax burden paid for by workers and small business. Taxes have risen twice as fast as real wages.

The table (left) is taken from Peter Costello's recent Budget papers.

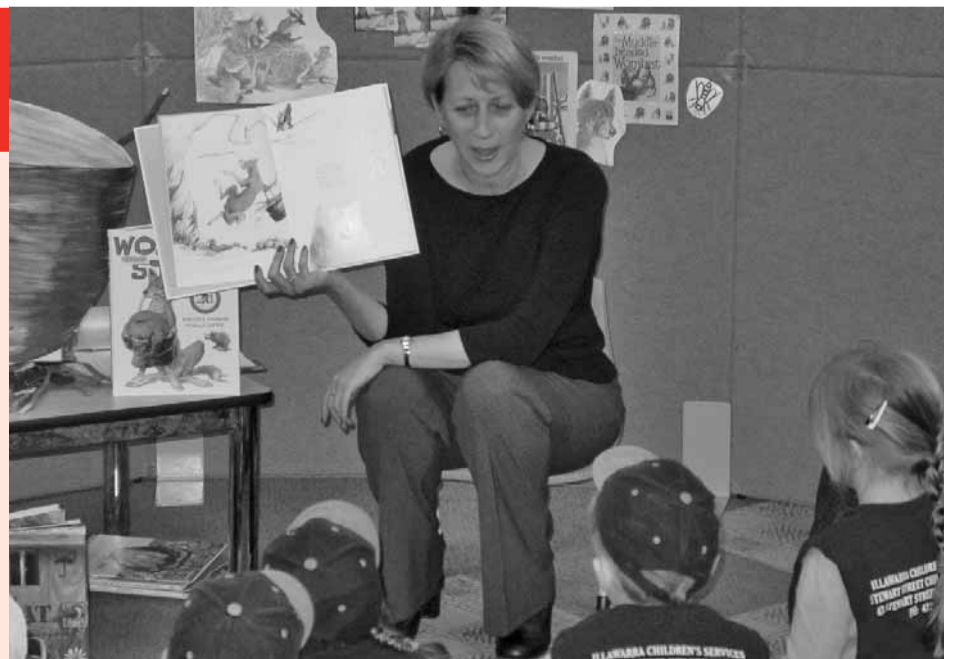
It shows that compared to 10 years ago, workers are paying \$77 a week extra tax in income and other charges.

While Mr Howard and Mr Costello give you \$10 with one hand, they both still have their hands in your pockets.

Labor's budget plan

Peter Costello's budget was a wasted opportunity to secure Australia's economic prosperity. Labor's budget plan would have focused on investing in Australia's future by:

- Funding child care places and ending the 'double drop-off' by building child care centres near local schools;
- Training Australians first: abolishing the unskilled foreign apprenticeship visa and abolishing TAFE fees for students enrolling in the traditional trades and child care;
- Connecting Australia by high-speed broadband at every home and small business; and
- Investing in our roads, rail and ports.



Labor will fund more child care places by building child care centres near schools.

SaverPlus is Enrolling families in Northern Illawarra

SaverPlus is a matched savings program that helps families to save for educational related expenses.

The program is delivered by The Benevolent Society in partnership with the ANZ Bank, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, The Smith Family and Berry St.

SaverPlus provides financial coaching, money management training and matches savings to:

- Support working, lower-income families to save towards education goals;
- Encourage savings habits; and
- Enhance money management skills.

To be eligible to join SaverPlus you or your partner must:

- Be aged 18 years or more;
- Have a current Health Care or Pension Card;
- Have income from regular employment and be able to produce two current payslips;
- Be able to demonstrate a capacity to save after regular expenses have been paid;
- Have a child in school during 2007 or 2008 **or**

97%
of SaverPlus participants reached their savings goal in 2005!



SaverPlus is a great way to help families save for the children's education.

- Be a person studying (or returning to study) on a course that will lead to an accredited vocation education certificate.

If you would like more information on SaverPlus or would like to enrol, please contact Elizabeth Wakefield, SaverPlus Relationship Manager on 4627 2792.

Superannuation changes

Superannuation and higher retirement income are a key priority for the Labor Party.

In the Budget changes were announced to the superannuation system. The Government has produced a detailed discussion paper outlining the proposals for change.

However, none of the changes announced in the budget have been implemented.

The proposals are subject to consultation, which is still underway. A summary of the Government's discussion paper is available from my office.



Through compulsory 9% employer contributions, Labor established the current superannuation system.

Disability and single parent pensioners hit with income cut

From 1 July 2006 disability and single parent pensioners will be slugged \$90 and \$55 a fortnight respectively under new welfare changes announced by the Howard Government.

This loss of income will make daily life for these Australians even harder.

The Howard Government has never explained just how cutting a person's disability or parent benefit will actually encourage these people to find work.

In addition, a shortage of child care places, TAFE and university places and a still very complex tax system adds to the disincentive of finding work.

Labor establishes petrol price inquiry

While John Howard refuses to give powers to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to monitor petrol prices, Labor has successfully established a Senate inquiry into petrol price setting.

Petrol prices are complex and international factors such as rising oil prices do have an impact.

But there is no satisfactory explanation on why prices go up so sharply at the weekend or at the beginning of public holidays.

Australian motorists and families deserve to know how petrol prices are set, why prices spike so high and why the ACCC can't effectively monitor petrol prices.

Petrol prices are impacting on family budgets and our tourism industry. The inquiry's terms of reference are available by contacting my office.

WorkChoices: A race to the bottom

Small business owners have told a Federal Parliamentary Labor Party Caucus Task Force that they fear the Howard Government's industrial relations legislation will provoke a wages race to the bottom.

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, a member of the Task Force, said that a report from the Task Force was handed to Labor Leader Kim Beazley.

The Task Force heard from 300 witnesses across 20 Federal electorates across Australia.

The other findings of the Task Force's 84-page report include:

- Family life and community activities are suffering as Mr Howard's extreme Industrial Relations laws remove flexibility and family-friendly provisions from workplaces;
- The removal of unfair dismissal protections is making working women less willing to make legitimate complaints about their workplaces and supervisors;

- Maternity leave conditions will become less available as workers are forced on to AWAs;
- Removal of the "No Disadvantage Test" is already starting to drive down wages and cut conditions for young Australians in the workplace;
- Permanent employees no longer have any more rights than casual employees;
- In regional areas, Australians are missing out on job opportunities and training opportunities because foreign workers are filling positions before they are offered to Australians; and
- The Howard Government's extreme workplace laws are compromising workplace safety.



Labor to abolish AWAs

A Labor Government will abolish Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs). There will be no statutory individual contracts.

These AWAs are at the very heart of Howard's unfair and extreme industrial relation's changes. The Federal Government is using them as nothing more than a means to cut wages, cut conditions, and undermine decency and fairness in our workplaces.

Labor's Pact with Middle Australia is: when you put in, you get back.

Under a Beazley Labor Government, when working Australians put in, they will get back a decent wage, security and reward. Since John Howard's extreme Industrial Relations laws came into effect:

- Every AWA has cut out at least one 'protected' award condition – such as leave loadings, overtime and penalty rates, shiftwork and public holiday loadings;
- Two thirds of AWAs scrapped leave loadings and penalties;
- More than half of the AWAs abolished shift loadings; and
- One in six AWAs took away every single protected award entitlement, leaving those workers the barest minimum conditions.

Three months ago that sort of conduct would have been illegal. Now, that sort of behaviour is protected by the Howard Government.

AWAs cannot be fixed. They must be rejected. When Labor wins Government, common law contracts will be underpinned by new minimum standards that will allow flexibility up, not down. There will be sensible transitional arrangements in place for current AWAs to run their course if both parties genuinely want them to.

Labor will rip up the Coalition's extreme laws and build a modern, flexible new industrial relations system based on Australian values.

Key facts on your working conditions

John Howard's favourite lawyer's – Freehills – were paid millions of dollars to help draft the WorkChoices legislation.

In a key document used in presentations to big businesses, Freehill's lets us know some key facts on your working conditions:

Snapshot of current agreement making

- Currently:
 - 40% of employees are on collective agreements
 - 2.4% are on AWAs
 - 20% are paid on awards
 - 10% to 15% covered by over-award arrangements
 - 20% to 25% by individual arrangements (excluding AWAs)
- Average annual wage increases between June 2004-5:
 - in agreements generally = 4% (down from 4.6%)
 - union collective agreements = 4.3%
 - non-union collective agreements = 3.5%
 - AWAs = 2.5%
- 46% of full-time employees work overtime regularly (over 33% don't get paid for it).
- Current industries with high wage outcomes include construction, mining and education, where skills shortages are having the greatest impact

Freehills

Free information kits, factsheets and DVDs

My office provides information kits on many different areas. If you wish to order any of the kits below, please fill out the form below and return to:

**Sharon Bird MP,
PO Box 387,
Wollongong 2520**

To order your free copies, please tick the items you want ...



- You and Your Government
- Child Support Scheme
- Guide to Australian Government Payments
- Pensioner Kit
- Veterans Kit
- Environment Kit
- Superannuation Kit
- Families Kit
- Youth Kit
- Do Not Call (Telephone) Kit
- Banking Information
- Connecting with Computers (DVD)
- Water Safety
- Net Alert (CD)
- Goals for Aussie Kids
- Safe Toys for Kids
- Keeping Baby Safe
- Cot Safety
- Fire Safety at Home
- Join my Email List



Mobile scam

The latest mobile phone scam sends missed call messages to unsuspecting users, urging them to dial premium rate phone lines. The scheme involves companies dialling random numbers and terminating the calls before consumers have time to answer.

If you call back you are directed to phone a premium 190 number to collect free mobile content and a chance to win a prize. It could take time to connect and further steps, such as sending an SMS to another premium line, to collect the prize. Given these are premium rate services you will be charged at a higher rate.

'My advice is simple. Don't call back any missed call numbers that you don't recognise,' said Sharon Bird.



Congratulatory messages

Sharon Bird's office organises congratulatory messages for 90th and 100th birthdays and couples celebrating their 50th and 60th Wedding Anniversaries.

It was great to see the messages received by Mr Danny and Mrs June Delaney from Bulli who recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary.



Sharon congratulates Mr and Mrs Delaney.

KEEP ME INFORMED

The best way to keep up-to-date about local issues is to be on Sharon Bird's email list.

JOIN MY EMAIL LIST

To join please complete the form on this page.

Your contact details

Name

Address

Email

Phone

Please mail to: Sharon Bird MP, PO Box 387, Wollongong, NSW 2520.