

only increased CCTR from 30 per cent to 50 per cent; we have taken steps to expand the childcare workforce including through fee relief for people who want to be childcare workers, new investments in childcare early educators and, of course, our proposals to expand the number of childcare centres by 260.

**Mr Abbott**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. Is she ruling out reducing the subsidy?

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The Deputy Prime Minister is responding to the question.

**Ms GILLARD**—I am responding to the question and I am indicating the supply-side measures that would make a difference, including the new 260 childcare centres that the government is committed to delivering.

From an opposition with no solutions in this area when they were a government, what I anticipate is that the shadow minister opposite wants to go on some cheap fear campaign to raise concern amongst parents that either the changes in CCTR will not benefit them or for some reason their subsidy or benefits will be cut off. Such a fear campaign would be a grossly untruthful act of irresponsibility. This is a government that is delivering CCTR changes and making a very simple and legitimate point, and one I am surprised is not unanimous across this House—that is: we do not want to see unfair pricing practices in child care.

#### Workplace Relations

**Ms BIRD** (2.38 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion. Would the minister update the House about the progress of the government's substantive workplace relations reforms? What would be the effect of a return to the Howard government's style of policies on workplace relations?

**Ms GILLARD**—I thank the member for Cunningham for her question. I know that she is interested in fairness and balance in Australian workplaces. I am asked about the progress of the government's substantive workplace relations changes. Of course, the government have already delivered our transition act, which stopped the making of new Australian workplace agreements. In relation to the substantive legislation, we are doing the thing the Howard government refused to do—that is, we are consulting on the details to make sure that the legislation is right, not a complex mess. Not only are we going to be delivering the policies we promised the Australian people; we want to make sure that the legislation is in an appropriate form and not the sort of complex mess that caused confusion amongst employers and employees.

Of course, apart from bringing industrial relations extremism to this country, what we know came with the Howard government's Work Choices changes was

an avalanche—a blizzard—of advertising material. Just yesterday in the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations estimates hearing, we were told that the previous government spent a staggering \$137 million on promoting Work Choices—\$137 million ripped out of the purses and wallets of hardworking Australians to featherbed a desperate government and to try and prosecute its political agenda with money that ought to have come from the Liberal Party. This staggering total included \$44 million on the first Work Choices advertising campaign, \$58 million on the second Work Choices advertising campaign and \$35 million on the employer adviser program.

I am asked: what would the effect of a return to the Howard government's workplace relations policies be? Given that blizzard of advertising, it pays to recheck some of the things that were said in the Work Choices advertising by members opposite when they were in government. I would specifically seek to remind the House of the example of Billy. We used to hear a lot about Billy last year. Billy was a case study in the Work Choices propaganda. Billy was a minimum wage worker who lost all of his protected award conditions for not one cent of compensation: overtime, gone; penalty rates, gone; annual leave loading, gone—all of his award conditions without one cent of compensation. Of course, members opposite defended as fair and reasonable that a minimum wage worker should lose all of those award conditions for not one cent of compensation.

It amazes me, given their defence of that policy, why it never occurred to them in government: how did Billy pay for his petrol? How did Billy pay for mortgage? How did Billy pay for his—

*Ms Julie Bishop interjecting—*

**Ms GILLARD**—'He had a job,' the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says—exactly what the Prime Minister said in defending Billy's case as fair and reasonable. I thank her for her confirmation that driving people back to minimum wages with no award conditions is still Liberal Party policy. I thank her for that confirmation.

There we have it: the Liberal Party still committed to Work Choices. If the Liberal Party are still committed to Work Choices, they are committed to that rip-off of working people. All of the carry-on we have seen from members opposite about their supposed concerns about cost of living pressures on working Australians, supposed concerns about petrol, supposed concerns about childcare costs and supposed concerns about grocery costs—all of this melts away in an avalanche of hypocrisy given they are committed to minimum wage workers bearing the brunt of their industrial relations extremism.