Following decisions by the State Industrial Relations Commissions in NSW and WA yesterday, Award rates in the Northern Territory will be $20 less than those jurisdictions.

“The Commissions in both jurisdictions have brought down decisions to increase the minimum wage safety net,” said Minister for Public Employment, Dr Chris Burns.

“As a result, I have concerns about the minimum wages being paid to Territory workers on Federal Awards. These workers will also have to wait until the end of the year to find out if they will get any increase at all.

“Because we are a Territory, our workers are captives of the Federal industrial relations system,” he said. “Those on minimum wages are the most vulnerable if we get left behind.

“Once upon a time, Federal Award workers were at the front of the queue for wages and conditions but it is apparent that they will now drag behind State jurisdictions.”

As part of the Federal Government’s Work Choices legislation, the power to set minimum wages was taken away from the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and given to the newly formed Fair Pay Commission.

“The Australian Industrial Relations Commission and its predecessors had been setting minimum wages for 100 years, and the now the so-called Fair Pay Commission is dragging the chain,” said Dr. Burns.

“When we said that ordinary Territorians would be worse off under Work Choices we were called scare mongers by CLP politicians both local and Federal.

“But already we have clear evidence of how working Territorians are being denied reasonable and affordable wage increases because of Work Choices and the CLP must be held to account for their unreserved support for this unfair legislation.”

In August last year, the CLP was given an opportunity to express its concerns about Work Choices when Dr. Burns moved a motion in the Territory Parliament.

“Make no mistake, the CLP backs Work Choices to the hilt and working Territorians should remember that particularly at the next Federal election.

“The Member for Solomon, David Tollner recently told an audience that his fingerprints were all over Work Choices,” said Dr. Burns. “Presumably this means that Mr. Tollner did more than just read it.”

“I dispute claims by Federal Workplace Relations Minister, Kevin Andrews, that people aren’t worried about Work Choices. Since the creation of the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate by the Territory...
Government, over 90 inquiries have been received. That means that there are 90 Territorians concerned about the effect that *Work Choices* will have on them.”

*Contact: Michelle Fraser* 8901 4010 *or* 0407 642 011