

O'Farrell Government's Attacks and Cuts

Since taking office in March 2011, Barry O'Farrell and his Government have made a number of cuts to funding, jobs, workers' rights and services. Here is an overview of what the workers of NSW have endured thus far.

Attacks on Workers' Rights

Taken Control of IRC and Frozen Wages

- The Government passed the *Industrial Relations (Public Sector Conditions of Employment) Act 2011*. Consequently the Government has given itself complete power to determine wage increases (or not) and conditions for public sector staff through Regulations which do not have to pass any votes in the Parliament.
- The Industrial Relations Commission has had its power to arbitrate wage disputes removed.
- So far, the Government has frozen wage increases for public sector workers at 2.5%. Whilst the O'Farrell Government has claimed this will not leave public sector workers worse off, the University of Sydney's Workplace Research Centre found that a nurse would be \$12, 232 worse off and a teacher \$14, 580 worse off each year had the O'Farrell policy been applied over the past decade.

Attacked Injured Workers

- Government amendments to the *Workers Compensation Act* saw significant cuts to the support and compensation provided to injured workers.
- The cuts to Workers Compensation means weekly payments will cease after 2.5 years and medical costs will stop being paid after 3.5 years for most injured workers.
- Additionally, workers will have almost non-existent coverage for accidents on their way to or from work.
- No lump sum payments can be made for pain and suffering, regardless of the severity of the injury.
- Changes to weekly benefits, medical costs and duration of payments are to apply as soon as possible to existing claims.
- The O'Farrell government attributed the needs for the cuts to a 'deficit' in WorkCover. The cuts have shifted the blame of the 'deficit' onto injured workers, with the Government hoping for a reduction in insurance premiums for employers.

Stripped Police of their Death and Disability Protection

- The Government's *Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Act 2011* severely cut the support and rehabilitation provided to police who are injured on the job, as well as support for families of police officers killed at work.

Attacked Workers' Rights to Bargain Collectively

- Currently before Parliament is the Government's *Industrial Relations Amendment (Dispute Orders) Bill 2012*. If this Bill is passed, it will increase fines for taking industrial action from \$10,000 a day to \$110,000 a day.
- It is also important to remember as mentioned above that unions no longer have the right to arbitration over wages and conditions and unlike the Federal industrial relations system have no legal right to strike through protected action.

Slashing Public Sector Entitlements

- The O'Farrell Government has applied to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission to change 98 different Public Sector Awards and enact massive cuts to entitlements and benefit.
- Some of the cuts include: slashing annual leave loading, cutting penalty rates for shift workers, removal of additional sick leave entitlements and parental leave.

No Consultation around Significant Industrial Changes

- By way of example The *Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Staff Employment) Act 2011* saw 13,000 TAFE teachers transferred to the Federal industrial relations system where they now fall under the *Fair Work Act*
- No consultations with unions or teachers were attempted prior to the introduction and subsequent passing of this Act.

Forcing Retail Workers to Work on Public Holidays

- The *Retail Trading Amendment Bill 2012* presented by the O'Farrell Government allowed all retailers to trade on Boxing Day.
- The Bill would have also lead to backroom staff and staff of small businesses working on Christmas Day and Good Friday. The Bill would have also seen the erosion of protections for bank workers who chose not to work on weekends and public holidays.
- Agitation from unions, churches and community groups saw this Bill removed from Parliament. However, Barry O'Farrell has indicated that the Bill may be reintroduced next year.

Attacks on Jobs

The O'Farrell Government's first budget in 2011, announced 5000 job cuts. In the 2012 budget a further 10,000 job cuts were announced.

Public Sector Job Cuts (to date)

- Rail Corp: 690 (November 2012)
- Primary Industries: 300 (November 2012)
- Board of Studies: 85 (October 2012)
- TAFE: 800 (September 2012)
- Public Schools, state wide: 600 (September 2012)
- Rural Fire Service: 120 (August 2012)
- Sydney Water: 300 (July 2012)
- Illawarra TAFE: 250 (July 2012)
- Office of Environment and Heritage: 350 (July 2012)
- Roads and Maritime Services: 400 (July 2012)
- Grafton Jail: 108 (June 2012)
- Forests NSW: 40 (June 2012)
- Rail Corp: 750 (May 2012)
- Department of Attorney General and Justice: 489 (Oct 2011)
- Department of Education and Communities: 292 (October 2011)
- Department of Trade and Investment: 248 (October 2011)
- Department of Transport: 200 (October 2011)

- Department of Finance and Services: 214 (October 2011)
- Department of Family and Community Services: 173 (October 2011)
- Department of Premier and Cabinet: 138 (October 2011)
- Industrial Relations Office: 19 (September 2011)
- Cronulla Fisheries: 147 (September 2011)
- Parramatta, Berrima and Kirkconnell prisons: 350 (September 2011)
- NSW Department of Health: 300 (August 2011)

Total: 7 363

Expected Public Sector Job Cuts

- 2400 job losses expected from education over next 4 years
- 900 job losses expected in Community Services over the next 4 years
- 3600 job losses expected in Health over the next 4 years
- 881 job losses expected in courts and prisons over the next 4 years
- 600 job losses expected in the corporatisation of Forests
- Job losses expected from rural services amalgamation
- Job losses expected from power privatisation plans
- Job losses expected from water privatisation plans

Hundreds of Regional Jobs to be Lost

- The O'Farrell Government will amalgamate Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA), Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) and Agriculture Extension services.
- This amalgamation will lead to offices being closed, the loss of hundreds of jobs lost and vital agricultural extension services most likely being removed.
- The Government has been planning this amalgamation for 18 months, yet they are still unable to clearly articulate the effect that the amalgamation will have on jobs or services.

Attacks on Our Community and Services

Allowed Shooting in Protected National Parks

- In a deal with the Shooters and Fishers Party, the O'Farrell Government has allowed shooters to hunt non-native animals in national parks.
- Such a move poses significant safety risks for workers as well as individuals and families visiting the park. Additionally, this hunting will have significant effects on the native wildlife within our protected national parks.

Destroying Local Jobs and Communities

- The downsizing and potential closure of Grafton Jail by the O'Farrell Government has seen the Grafton community rally to save their community. Despite the Government's commitment to invest in regional communities, O'Farrell has chosen to rip the heart out of the Grafton community, by cutting jobs and destroying the local economy.
- Grafton is not the first regional community to see public sector cuts from the O'Farrell Government and it won't be the last.

Privatised Electricity Generators

- Despite an election promise to the people of Lithgow, O'Farrell and his government privatised all generators across NSW.
- Not only will this significantly affect the jobs of those in the electricity industry, the people of NSW will see further increases to electricity bills into the future as a result.
- The Government has also not denied plans to privatise the poles and wires if they are returned to Government after the next election.

Cut School Funding

- The O'Farrell Government cut \$1.7 billion from education funding - \$201 million will be cut from public schools and \$116 million will be cut from private schools.
- Under these cuts, up to 1,800 teachers, TAFE teachers and support staff will be sacked.

Privatisation of Port Botany and Port Kembla

- The O'Farrell Government has passed legislation to privatise Port Botany and Port Kembla.
- The privatisation legislation does not place any control or restraint on the new private operators from increasing prices, charges and rents at the ports.
- Increases in port costs for suppliers will see these costs passed onto consumers through increased petrol costs which will in turn create greater pressure on costs of living.

Attacks on Fire Services

- O'Farrell plans to hit NSW households with a new tax to fund the state's emergency fire services, costing households an average of \$300 a year (on top of council rates).
- The new tax plans to reduce the contribution made to emergency services funding from insurance companies, providing them with an additional \$700 million in extra profits each year.
- The Government has also released plans to close up to eight fire stations a day, leaving large parts of Sydney without a fire truck in their station.
- O'Farrell is attacking the state's emergency services and making the people of NSW foot the bill.

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