# Australia

## Identity, Fear and Governance in the 21st Century

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**Juliet Pietsch and Haydn Aarons**

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# 9. WorkChoices: An electoral issue and its social, political and attitudinal cleavages

Murray Goot and Ian Watson

From the moment John Howard announced his plans to reshape industrial relations, WorkChoices changed the political debate. The legislation represented the biggest shake-up of industrial relations policy since Stanley Bruce's ill-fated attempt, nearly 80 years earlier, to repeal the *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act* (Lee 2010, Ch. 6). Yet, as the Treasurer's press secretary would later lament, WorkChoices 'seemed to come out of nowhere' (Savva 2010, 214; also Lewis 2008, 178–9). It provoked the trade union movement into mounting 'one of the most brilliant campaigns in Australia's history' (Kelly 2009, 306), failed to mobilise large parts of the business community in its defence (Howard 2011, 580, 585) and, with Labor committed to dismantling the legislation, began to spell the end of the Howard Government; like Bruce, Howard lost both the prime ministership and his own seat.

In this chapter we show how—thanks to the government, the trade union movement and the Opposition—the issue of industrial relations was transformed, virtually overnight. More precisely, we show how it went: from an issue of low electoral importance to an issue of high importance; from a policy, or series of policies, over which electors were divided to a policy on which opinion ran largely one way; and from something of a political strength for the government to something that loomed as a fatal weakness. Had respondents not rated the issue highly, WorkChoices would not have shifted votes, no matter how widespread the opposition. Had respondents been divided over the merits of the legislation, the government might have gained as many voters as it lost. Had respondents not seen a real difference between Labor and the Coalition on industrial relations it would not have affected their support for either party no matter how the issue was regarded (see Butler and Stokes 1969, Ch. 15 for the *locus classicus* of this model; for an earlier analysis of survey data on WorkChoices that omits the second condition, see Wilson 2005, 294).

Nonetheless, as this chapter shows, data from the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) together with data from public opinion polls commissioned by the press and surveys commissioned by others—notably the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)—need to be handled with care. Indeed, there were moments where the outcome of the party battle might have depended on what the diverse data on public opinion—from polls, focus groups and the feedback from MPs—were taken to mean. Just how survey respondents regarded the legislation in relation to their vote very much depended on the other issues they were asked to rate. In responding to the issue, the options open to respondents also mattered; for example, the size of the opposition to the legislation was partly a function of whether the relevant question encouraged a non-committal response. In some cases, a reframing of the issue changed the balance of opinion; reactions to the unfair dismissal legislation were a spectacular instance of this. And on a number of the issues associated with the legislation the government was able to claw back some of the lost ground: whether the legislation would lead to higher wages, whether it would be bad 'for the average worker', and whether union powers in the workplace should be enhanced are examples of this. In the end, while the modification of the legislation made some aspects of the Coalition's reforms more acceptable to the electorate and while the gap over which of the two parties would best handle industrial relations might have narrowed, neither may have done much to stem the flow of votes to Labor.

WorkChoices brought to the surface a number of deep-seated cleavages in Australian society. In terms of social structure, there was the cleavage between young and old as well as the cleavage between unionists and non-unionists. Politically, there was the cleavage between respondents who thought of themselves as 'left' or 'right' as well as the cleavage around how respondents intended to vote. And in terms of attitudes to industrial relations there were cleavages over the classic issues of class: union power and employer prerogatives—a reflection of the attempt to remove what Howard characterised as 'the privileged position of the trade union movement' by means of 'aiding', as Paul Kelly put it, 'one side of the class divide' (Kelly 2009, 304, 307; also Norrington 2006, 102).

## The rise of industrial relations as an election issue

The Howard Government's announcement to the parliament, on 26 May 2005, that it intended to introduce new industrial relations legislation—officially known, from November 2005, when it was introduced to the House of Representatives, as WorkChoices (Stewart and Williams 2007, 31) and rushed through the Senate in early December (Singleton 2008, 80–1)—transformed industrial relations from an issue of relatively low importance to an issue of high importance. In the Australian Election Study (AES) conducted after the October 2004 election, fewer than one-third (30 per cent) of the respondents named industrial relations as 'extremely important' when 'deciding about how to vote'; in a ranking of 12 issues, industrial relations tied for tenth. After the 2007 election, when the AES went back into the field, no fewer than two-thirds (67 per cent) of the respondents said industrial relations had been 'extremely important' when 'deciding about how to vote'; out of 11 issues, industrial relations tied for first. Asked, directly, in the 2004 survey to say which issue on the list 'was most important to you and your family during the election campaign', just 2 per cent named industrial relations; no issue on the list was less important. Asked after the 2007 election which issue had been most important, 16 per cent named industrial relations; only one issue, 'health and Medicare' (20 per cent) outranked it.

The rise of industrial relations as a voting issue was not something that simply happened in the course of the 2007 campaign. Nor was it a 'sleeper issue', as Roy Morgan Research suggested (cited in Muir 2008, 77), stirred into wakefulness in mid-2006 after the bulk of the new, wide-ranging legislation came into effect (see Lewis 2008, 177). Its rise dates from the government's announcement of WorkChoices and the ACTU's mobilisation against it. From an issue that at the end of 2004 had virtually disappeared from the range of concerns respondents volunteered to Morgan as among 'the three most important things the government should be doing something about' (Norton 2007–08, 25, for the data), industrial relations was rated 'very important' by many more respondents after the first of the ACTU's advertisements—most memorably, the 'Tracy' advertisement—went to air from Saturday, 18 June 2005 than it had been for years before (Muir 2008, 66–7, 217n.19). In a Newspoll conducted on the same weekend as the ACTU's advertising the proportion of respondents saying industrial relations was 'very important' to how they 'would vote in a federal election' was 41 per cent—a substantial rise from the 31 per cent registered by Newspoll in June 2004, the last time this question had been asked. By early October, as the government's campaign shifted up a gear, roughly half of the respondents (49 per cent) rated industrial relations 'very important'. In February 2006 the corresponding figure (48 per cent) was virtually unchanged. In October, however, it rose to 54 per cent after a second wave of ACTU ads had gone to air in June and the Labor leader, Kim Beazley, had promised to 'rip up' WorkChoices (Muir 2008, 71, 77). Two years later, in mid-October 2007, notwithstanding that the Senate had passed The Workplace Relations Amendment (A Stronger Safety Net) Bill in June (Muir 2008, 28), the figure (49 per cent) was still high.

While half the respondents may have thought the issue 'very important', how did industrial relations rank in relation to other issues? In June 2005, as in June 2004, out of the 17 issues listed by Newspoll, industrial relations ranked either second or third-last. Even in October 2006, when the list was cut back to just six issues, industrial relations ranked below health and Medicare (82 per cent), education (78 per cent), welfare and social issues (66 per cent), national security (64 per cent) and leadership (56 per cent). In November 2007, shortly before the election, a Galaxy survey across seven marginal seats found 'industrial relations' ranked fourth out of six issues: of those who had ‘made up’ their mind, 54 per cent said it had been the ‘most influential’ issue when they were ‘choosing the party’ for which they would vote.

But where respondents were restricted to naming the one issue that would be most important to them—or even the three issues that would the most important—industrial relations appears to have been more potent than the Newspoll or Galaxy data suggest. In October 2006, according to Nielsen, industrial relations (named by 17 per cent of its respondents) came second after health and hospitals (24 per cent) as ‘the most important’ issue (out of nine) helping respondents decide their ‘vote at the next federal election’; even in March 2007, when industrial relations (nominated by 15 per cent) slipped to fourth it was no more important than health and hospitals (19 per cent), the economy (17 per cent) or the environment (16 per cent). In March 2007, ‘the industrial relations laws’ were nominated by 15 per cent as ‘the single most important issue that will decide how you vote at the federal election this year’ by those interviewed by Essential Research on behalf of the ACTU; only ‘health care’ (19 per cent) was nominated by more. Asked to nominate, from the same list of 12, the three issues that were ‘likely to be the most important’ in deciding ‘how you vote’, ‘the industrial relations laws’ (37 per cent) came in third behind health care (52 per cent) and education (45 per cent). And in late October 2007, across 25 of the Coalition’s marginal seats, ‘the industrial relations laws’ (13 per cent) came in third as the most important issue (out of 11) and fourth (with 30 per cent nominating it) as one of the top three.

In an election-day poll, conducted by Auspoll, those who regarded ‘industrial relations and WorkChoices’ as ‘very important’ were 11 times more likely to vote for the Australian Labor Party (ALP) than for the Liberal-National Party (LNP); for ‘global warming’, the second-most important issue, the odds ratio was five (Watson and Browne 2008, 5–6). And in the AES, conducted by mail after the election, ‘industrial relations’ (16 per cent) came second to ‘health and Medicare’ (21 per cent); but for unionised respondents and Labor voters, industrial relations was the most important issue (Bean and McAllister 2009).

## Fear of WorkChoices

### Awareness

At first, word that the government was to legislate spread slowly. But after the Prime Minister outlined the legislative changes to parliament and the ACTU started to run its television ads, word spread quickly. Earlier, in May 2005, before Howard had addressed the parliament, more than half the employees interviewed for the ACTU said they had heard 'hardly anything' (37 per cent) or 'not much' (25 per cent) about the government's 'plans to make some major changes to the industrial relations laws'. But by the beginning of July, after the unions' campaign had commenced, 83 per cent of those interviewed by Nielsen said they had 'read or heard' something 'about the federal government's changes to industrial relations, known as WorkChoices'; in a Morgan poll taken later that month, 79 per cent reported having 'read or heard about the federal government's proposed industrial relations reforms'; and in August, three-quarters of the employees interviewed for the ACTU across 41 marginal seats said they had heard 'a lot' (41 per cent) or at least 'some' (36 per cent). In subsequent polling, the proportion saying they had 'read or heard' something hardly moved; Morgan repeated its question in October 2005, and Nielsen did so several times until March 2007. Those not made aware of the government's legislation soon after Howard had spoken, it seems, were destined never to be aware of it at all.

But having read or *heard* about it did not necessarily mean respondents felt they *knew* 'about it. In the AuSSA, conducted between August and December 2005, about half the respondents said they knew 'a lot' (10 per cent) or at least 'something' (42 per cent) about the 'changes' involved in the government's 'reforming' of 'the Australian industrial relations system'. Two years later, in the AuSSA conducted between July and November 2007, these figures—'a lot' (13 per cent) or at least 'something' (47 per cent)—had increased only slightly.

## Opposition

With awareness came opposition—in part, Liberal polling is said to have shown, because 'people could not understand why the reforms were necessary' (Savva 2010, 214). Between July 2005 and March 2007 there was to be little change in either the size of the opposition or its strength. In the six Nielsen polls conducted in this period, the majority (57–59 per cent) of those who had 'read or heard' about the legislation either 'opposed' or 'strongly opposed' the 'changes', with those strongly opposed (34–41 per cent) outnumbering those in favour of the changes; few (5–8 per cent) were strongly in favour. Across the samples as a whole, roughly half (47–49 per cent) 'opposed' or 'strongly opposed' the 'changes'. Among those who told Morgan, in July and October 2005, that they had 'read or heard' about the 'reforms', similar proportions (59 and 61 per cent respectively) disagreed with the measures; no more than 22 per cent agreed with them. Again, once we include those who had not read or heard of the 'reforms', the proportion disagreeing with them is lower (47 and 49 per cent, respectively). In April 2006, when Morgan did not ask whether respondents had read or heard about the 'reforms', the proportion saying they disagreed with them rose to 55 per cent. Other polling, conducted for the ACTU in March

2006 (across 24 marginal Coalition seats) and in March 2007 (nationally)—this time with no attempt to filter respondents according to whether they had read or heard about the issue—showed fewer respondents 'not sure' (10–15 per cent) about 'the recent industrial relations measures introduced by the Howard Liberal government', but more (62–65 per cent) opposed to them. Revisiting Coalition marginal seats in October 2007, the ACTU discovered that opposition to the government's 'industrial relations measures' had slid to 56 per cent.

If filtering made a difference, so did response options. Responses to an AuSSA question in 2005, repeated in 2007, which included a neutral option, show the lowest levels of opposition (40 and 39 per cent, respectively) to the legislation, with levels of approval (19 and 24 per cent) similar to those reported by Nielsen and Morgan. The proportions that 'neither approve[d] nor disapprove[d]' (22 and 24 per cent) or said they couldn't choose (20 and 14 per cent) were greater than those reported as not having read or heard of the issue or not stating a view (about one-third of the Nielsen and Morgan samples). These differences confirm what the (unfiltered) ACTU polls and the 2006 Morgan poll suggest: where levels of opposition were relatively high, the 'don't knows' were relatively low; and where there were fewer 'don't knows', more respondents were opposed. But even in the AuSSA strong disapproval of WorkChoices (19 and 15 per cent) easily outweighed strong approval (5 and 6 per cent).

The more respondents thought they knew about WorkChoices the more likely they were to oppose it—if not in absolute terms then in relative terms. Of those in the 2007 AuSSA study who said they had 'a lot' of knowledge, 64 per cent disapproved of WorkChoices compared with 39 per cent (40 per cent in 2005) in the sample as a whole; 30 per cent approved of the legislation compared with 24 per cent (19 per cent in 2005) in the sample as a whole. This is a ratio of 1.7 to the benchmark for the opponents and only 1.3 among supporters. And the more respondents thought they knew, the stronger were their feelings. Of those with 'a lot' of knowledge, 43 per cent 'strongly' disapproved in 2007, while 15 per cent 'strongly' approved. Compared with the sample as a whole, the ratio for the strong opponents was 2.9 and for the strong supporters 2.5.

Other data suggest not only that respondents were much more likely to oppose WorkChoices than to support it; they thought it 'bad for Australia', 'bad for the average worker'—a finding that by April 2007 Howard (2011, 584) was especially worried about—and that it would 'make Australian society less fair'. In October 2005, 50 per cent of those interviewed by Morgan said that 'the industrial relations reforms' would be 'a bad thing for Australia'; only 29 per cent said they would be 'a good thing'. In April 2006, the corresponding figures were 52 per cent and 27 per cent. In May 2005, research for the ACTU found that—from what they knew of 'the government's general position on these types of matters'—38 per cent of the employees interviewed believed changes to the laws were likely to be 'bad for the average worker' rather than 'good' (16 per cent) or 'make no difference'. In August, following the start of the unions' Your Rights at Work campaign (Muir 2008, 66), 64 per cent of the employees interviewed in marginal seats believed the changes to 'the industrial relations laws' were likely to be 'bad for the average worker' rather than 'good' (10 per cent) or would 'make no difference'. In March 2007, the 'bad' figure was 62 per cent; but by October—after the government had advertised a new safety net in May and amended the legislation to incorporate it in June (Muir 2008, 28)—that figure had dropped to 51 per cent. It 'is a pity', said one supporter of the legislation, that 'the pollsters did not explore opinions about the reforms' fairness more' (Norton 2007–08, 23). They did. In October 2005, Ipsos Mackay reported that more than half (53 per cent) of its respondents thought 'the federal government's planned changes to the workplace relations system' would 'make Australian society less fair'; little more than one-third thought the legislation would generate 'no change' (10 per cent) to society or make it 'fairer' (19 per cent).

## Self-regard versus solidarity

What about self-interest? Much of the polling focused on this. In July 2005, just 10 per cent of those interviewed by Morgan thought they would be 'better off'; 42 per cent thought they would not be 'better off', the remainder not having read or heard about the 'reform' (21 per cent) or not stating an opinion (27 per cent). In October the ratio of 'better off' to 'not better off' was 7:34 and, in April 2005, 13:49. Had Morgan asked whether respondents thought they might be left not only 'not better off' but 'worse off', the conclusion would have been quite different. In a poll conducted by Ipsos Mackay, in October 2005, 7 per cent said the planned 'changes' would leave them and their family 'better off'; 35 per cent said it would leave them 'worse off'. In a Nielsen poll, conducted that month, 7 per cent said 'the planned changes' would make them 'better off' and 31 per cent said they would leave them 'worse off'; as with the poll conducted by Ipsos Mackay, a plurality of respondents thought the changes would make 'no difference'. In subsequent surveys the corresponding ratios of 'better off' to 'worse off' were 8:27 (June 2006) and 7:19 (March 2007). A Newspoll series, from October 2005 to March–April 2007, restricted to respondents who were full-time or part-time workers, revealed a similar pattern, though both the proportion saying the changes would make them 'better off' and the proportion saying the changes would make them 'worse off' were slightly greater. And in a survey conducted in March 2007 for the ACTU, 10 per cent said 'the laws' would be 'good' for them 'personally', while 25 per cent thought the laws would be 'bad' for them 'personally'.

However, among those interviewed in late June 2007 by Ipsos Mackay, immediately after the 'Stronger Safety Net' amendment had become law, almost as many (40 per cent) agreed (7 per cent 'strongly') as disagreed (42 per cent; 22 per cent 'strongly') that the 'fairness test' 'for individual contracts known as Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs)', applied 'to those earning up to $75,000', would 'ensure fairness for employees working under AWAs'. And while Howard (2011, 585) would lament that the restoration of the 'no disadvantage test' had little effect on public opinion, by October, in the ACTU surveys, opinions about what the laws meant personally—'bad' (19 per cent) and 'good' (16 per cent)—were almost evenly balanced.

## The Coalition's framing

The ACTU's 'first mover' advantage—an advantage it used to set the terms of the debate (Lewis 2009, 208)—left the government in its wake. The 'positive' argument for WorkChoices, advanced by the government in early newspaper advertising to promote the changes—that the legislation would mean 'an even stronger economy, more jobs, and higher wages' (Muir 2008, 145)—was easily trumped. In an ACTU survey conducted across 24 Coalition marginal seats, in February–March 2006, less than one-third of respondents (30 per cent) agreed with the government's claim; half (50 per cent) disagreed. Among 'soft voters'—those who: intended to either vote for or give their second preference to the Liberals in a national election but to Labor at a State election or vice versa; weren't 'firm' about their party choice; didn't know their voting intention; or didn't know to which party they leaned—the distribution of opinion, 26:60, was even more lopsided.

Some elements of the argument were more persuasive than others. Asked in August 2005, on behalf of the ACTU, whether the 'proposed changes to employment laws will produce a stronger economy', 40 per cent of respondents agreed it would; a bare majority (50 per cent) disagreed (8 per cent did so 'strongly'). When the question was repeated in March 2007, the gap had narrowed: 42:45. In October and December 2005, Newspoll also reported a quite small gap between the proportion of respondents who thought the 'changes to the industrial relations system' were 'bad' or 'somewhat bad' for 'the Australian economy' (40 and 43 per cent, respectively) and those who thought the changes 'good' or 'somewhat good' (31 and 38 per cent). Subsequent surveys, however, showed a larger gap: 15 percentage points (April 2006), 13 (December 2006) and 19 (February–March 2007)—the last as big as the gap reported in February–March 2006 in relation to the government's more comprehensive claim.

Asked in July 2005 whether 'business will benefit' from 'the new laws' and 'this will lead to more jobs', only 33 per cent of respondents in a Galaxy poll agreed it would; very few (11 per cent) thought 'the government' had 'done enough to explain the new industrial relations laws so people do not feel their jobs and conditions are threatened'. In August, asked on behalf of the ACTU whether the 'proposed changes to employment laws will produce more jobs', one-third (32 per cent) of respondents again agreed it would; nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) said it wouldn't (17 per cent believing this 'strongly'). When the question was repeated in March 2007, the gap had narrowed hardly at all: 33:58. The Newspoll story is rather different. From October 2005 to March–April 2007 it reported a variable but smaller gap—between 3 and 12 percentage points—in the proportion of respondents who thought the 'proposed changes' would be 'good' rather than 'bad' for 'creating jobs'.

It was on the question of whether WorkChoices would lead to higher wages that the government's credibility was weakest. 'From what you understand about these proposed changes', Galaxy asked respondents in July 2005, 'are you worried that employers may use the new laws to force workers into accepting lower pay and worse conditions?' Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of respondents said they were 'worried'. Asked a month later, on behalf of the ACTU, whether the 'proposed changes to employment laws will produce better pay', no more than 20 per cent of those interviewed agreed it would; no fewer than 75 per cent said it wouldn't (20 per cent believing this 'strongly'). When the question was repeated in March 2007, the gap had narrowed—22:66—but was still large.

Opposition to WorkChoices was reflected, too, in opposition to other assumptions about, or aspects of, the new legislation. In 2005 and again in 2007, AuSSA data show two-thirds of respondents (69 per cent in 2005, 64 per cent in 2007) agreeing that 'award wages are the best way of paying workers and setting conditions'; few (12 and 15 per cent, respectively) disagreed. Respondents also agreed that 'individual contracts favour the employer over the employee': 47:18 (2003), 53:16 (2005) and 49:17 (2007). In the ACTU's surveys, in February–March 2006 and March 2007, more than two-thirds of the respondents agreed that 'individual contracts give too much power to the employer'—the difference between these and the AuSSA being largely explained by the absence in the ACTU polls of a 'neither agree nor disagree' option. Support in the AuSSA for the view that 'employers and employees should be able to negotiate pay and conditions directly' was even more one-sided: 64:18 (2003), 57:20 (2005) and 63:14 (2007). Some insight into the reasoning behind these responses may be afforded by the polling conducted for the ACTU. In February–March 2006 (across 24 Coalition marginal seats) and March 2007 (nationally), roughly two-thirds of the respondents agreed that: 'collective bargaining gives power back to workers, which is a good thing'; 'collective bargaining means better job security for workers'; and 'collective bargaining sets the standards for workers across the economy' (compare the discussion in Norton 2007–08, 23).

## The unions

Marginalising collective bargaining through WorkChoices meant reducing the presence of unions; indeed, for leading members of the government, reducing the power of unions in the workplace mattered most (see Aubin 1999, 91ff; Errington and van Onselen 2007, 187, 270). But respondents rejected this goal too. With attitudes since the 1980s becoming more—not less—'pro-union' (Peetz 2006, 40), this should come as no surprise. In the 2005 AuSSA, half the respondents (52 per cent) disagreed that 'unions should have less say in how wages and conditions are set'; in 2007, the weight of opinion was still against it, 29:42. With 'studies around the world' showing 'unions obtain higher wages for their members' (Peetz 2006, 89), two-thirds (65 per cent) of those interviewed in Coalition marginal seats, in February–March 2006, agreed that 'union collective agreements deliver better wages and conditions for workers'—a figure that rose to 69 per cent in a national survey conducted in March 2007. Almost as many (62 per cent) agreed that 'union collective agreements are the best means of giving workers a say in their workplace'—the corresponding figure in March 2007 being 65 per cent. And little more than one-third (38 per cent) agreed that 'collective bargaining gives unions too much power in workplaces'—a figure, however, that rose to 48 per cent in March 2007. And in the face of a WorkChoices agenda designed both 'to make it easier for corporations to legally exclude union officers' and to discourage 'collective bargaining by exposing unions and their members to fines and damages' (Peetz 2006, 135–6, 193), two-thirds (67 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively) of those interviewed for the ACTU in February–March 2006 and March 2007 supported 'laws that allow unions to enter workplaces' while 64 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively, opposed 'laws making it easier for the government and employers to sue or fine unions and workers when they take industrial action'.

## Unfair dismissal

Another point of contention—one with a much higher profile for small business, the Your Rights at Work campaign and for the media generally—was the unfair dismissal laws. Asked if they agreed with the proposal 'that unfair dismissal laws should be abolished for employers with 100 staff or less', two-thirds of those interviewed by Morgan in July 2005 (67 per cent) and again in October (71 per cent) said they disagreed. In the ACTU surveys, roughly three-quarters of the respondents in February–March 2006 (72 per cent in Coalition marginal seats) and March 2007 (76 per cent) supported 'unfair dismissal laws that protect workers'. In the AuSSA, an even greater proportion agreed in 2005 (79 per cent) and again in 2007 (85 per cent) that 'there should be a law to protect all workers in Australia against unfair dismissal'. In 2007, as the proportion disagreeing dropped to single figures (7 per cent), the proportion agreeing 'strongly' rose, from 29 to 38 per cent.

Some attributed the 'predictably low levels of support for change' to the inevitable outcome of 'pollsters' inquiries on unfair dismissal laws' that formulated 'at least partly leading questions' (Norton 2007–08, 24). Others were emboldened to see in the unfair dismissal laws the 'strongest and clearest' opposition to WorkChoices (van Wanrooy 2007, 198; Wilson 2005, 291). Argument and counterargument, reframing the issue in the ACTU's March poll, shifted the AuSSA figures but didn't turn them around—the majority of respondents (59:30) saying they were more inclined to agree with the unions' argument that 'every worker no matter what the size of the business should be protected from unfair dismissal' than with the government's argument that 're-introducing unfair dismissal laws would cost jobs and be an unnecessary burden on small business'. By March 2007, faced by 'almost daily adverse reports' in the media of the 'unpopular impacts' of WorkChoices (Lewis 2008, 180) and adverse polling (Howard 2011, 583), the government was forced to act. But Liberal Party research is said to have suggested that far from mollifying voters, the move was 'seen as a trick or ploy to win the election'—a sign that Howard cared about his 'battlers' not 'as people—just as voters' (Savva 2010, 217, 273). Sentiment was more evenly divided over the proposal 'that the probationary period for new employees be extended from three to six months': 43:47 in Morgan's July poll, 41:54 in October.

There was also support for the 'no disadvantage test'—dropped under the original WorkChoices (Peetz 2006, 9)—to be brought back. Of those interviewed for the ACTU in February–March 2006 and March 2007, the majority (55 and 61 per cent, respectively) supported 'a law to stop individuals from under-cutting award conditions'. Although in April a form of the 'no disadvantage test' was restored, on the evidence of the polls its absence does not appear to have been among the most objectionable features of the legislation.

## Support

Notwithstanding widespread objection to most aspects of WorkChoices—and many aspects, far from not being 'truly put to the test publicly' (van Wanrooy 2007, 176), were tested in the polls before the legislation was introduced—some aspects did appear to meet with majority approval. One was the idea that employees would 'be able to cash in two weeks of their annual leave'. In the Morgan poll conducted in July 2005 this was supported, 55:39; in October, 55:40; but a fuller account of the consequences of this change may have changed the result (Wilson 2005, 291). Another was the idea of a 'single national industrial relations system', approved by 51 per cent of respondents in 24 Coalition marginal seats in February–March 2006, and by 58 per cent in a national poll conducted for the ACTU in March 2007. But for the ACTU a centralised system was not a bone of contention—whatever it might have said in public (Hartcher 2009, 60–1).

The government might have taken greater comfort from the fact that when the campaign against the new laws was cast as an issue of union credibility, opposition to WorkChoices lost a good deal of its bite. Thus, in July 2005, when asked by Galaxy if they thought ‘the union campaign has been appropriate’ or whether ‘the unions have created undue fear in the community’, respondents divided 43:41. Asked in March 2007 whether they agreed or disagreed that ‘unions are scaremongering about John Howard’s new industrial relation laws and the people will see in the next few years that things will not have changed for the worse’—a line of argument that some public opinion analysts sympathetic to the new laws had encouraged the government to accept (for example, Norton 2005, 38)—44 per cent of those interviewed on behalf of the ACTU agreed but less than half (48 per cent) disagreed.

## Labor as the preferred party on industrial relations

Even if respondents opposed WorkChoices—including almost all its assumptions, features and perceived consequences—and rated the issue of high importance to the way they would vote, industrial relations would have made very little difference to the outcome of the election if the parties were not easily distinguishable, with voters preferring Labor over the Coalition on the issue, or vice versa.

At the time Howard announced WorkChoices, Newspoll suggested that Labor was the preferred party to handle the issue of industrial relations but its margin over the Coalition was not large. From October 2002 to June 2004, a few months shy of the 2004 election, Labor’s lead over the Coalition, almost always in single figures, averaged about 7 percentage points. WorkChoices changed that. From June 2005, when it opened a lead of 12 percentage points, to October 2007, less than two months before the 2007 election, Labor’s lead over the Coalition averaged more than 18 percentage points. On one view, it was business support for the Coalition’s changes that had helped open the gap: ‘You could hear them thinking, *Isn’t Howard meant to be the mate of the battler? What’s he doing running the same argument as the boss who happens to be screwing me?*’ (Megalogenis 2008, 345; emphasis in the original).

That the gap wasn’t larger may reflect one or both of two things: a sense that the Coalition had softened its position, perhaps through the introduction of a ‘no disadvantage test’ (noted above); or a sense that Labor’s opposition to WorkChoices wasn’t sufficiently clear—and not only under Kim Beazley (cf. Lewis 2008, 182–3). Though few respondents in the ACTU’s polling in early 2006 or early 2007 thought ‘federal Labor’ supported ‘the federal government’s new industrial relations laws’ (6 and 8 per cent, respectively, thought this), as the election approached a larger number thought ‘Kevin Rudd and the Labor Party’ had been ‘not tough enough’ (32 per cent) than thought they had been ‘too tough’ (12 per cent) ‘in opposing the Howard Government’s IR laws, such as unfair dismissal, removal of penalty rates and protecting conditions like four weeks’ annual leave and public holiday pay’. While more than two-thirds of those interviewed in March rated Rudd ‘good’ (72 per cent), almost as many (68 per cent) said ‘I would like Kevin Rudd to stand up more strongly for ordinary working people against John Howard’s industrial relations laws’. If Rudd’s ‘industrial relations package, due for release before the May budget, fell short of public expectations’, Megalogenis remarked, ‘he could still blow the election’ (2008, 342).

In the ACTU’s August poll, the majority (55 per cent) endorsed the proposition that ‘Rudd should maintain a strong stand against the Howard Government’s IR laws, including issuing a pledge to fully restore unfair dismissal rights of workers, and holiday and other penalties’. In doing so, they rejected the proposition ‘that Kevin Rudd and the ALP should moderate its [sic] position on the Howard Government’s IR law and accept most of the changes Howard has instituted’; only 33 per cent endorsed this. The majority (58 per cent) also agreed they ‘would like to see Kevin Rudd and the ALP stop waffling on the IR issue and take a strong, tough stand against the Howard Government’s workplace policies’. The same proportion also agreed they ‘would like to see Kevin Rudd clearly state that he will get rid of the Howard Liberal Government’s IR laws and restore unfair dismissal protections and penalty rates the day he gets into office’.

However much respondents wanted Labor to be ‘tougher’ a connection between Labor’s stand on WorkChoices and its improvement in the polls is difficult to gainsay. Seeking to explain ‘the dramatic turnaround in Labor’s fortunes’ revealed by the results of the first Nielsen poll, taken on 1–3 July 2005, after the union movement’s National Week of Action, John Stirton, the poll’s director, noted that ‘for the first time in a long time there is a clear point of differentiation between Labor and the Coalition on a matter that is very important to many voters’ (ACNielsen 2005). In October 2005, Ipsos Mackay reported 35 per cent of its respondents saying ‘the planned changes to the workplace relations system’ had made them ‘less likely to vote for the Coalition’; only 7 per cent said it had made them more likely to vote for the Coalition. And in mid-2006 a Morgan poll had Labor support jumping to 53.5 per cent after Beazley ‘promised to “rip up” the industrial relations laws’ (Muir 2008, 77). Asked, in a post-election poll for the ACTU, whether they had ‘changed the party’ they ‘intended to vote for because of the IR laws’, 13 per cent said they had.

Since the election a number of attempts, of varying sophistication, have been made to quantify the size of Labor’s gain (see, for example, Bean and McAllister 2009, who use the AES; Lewis 2009, 205, 210, who cites ACTU research; Megalogenis 2008, 340, 362–3, who cites Labor research; and Spies-Butcher and Wilson 2008, 2011, who use the AES). While we doubt the size of Labor's gain can be calculated with any precision—attitudes to industrial relations may have been as much a consequence of favouring Labor as voting Labor was a consequence of the party's position on industrial relations—the fact that Labor did gain is undeniable; accounts of 'what went wrong' in the Howard years that have nothing to say about WorkChoices are clearly incomplete (for example, Manne 2008).

## Structural, political and attitudinal cleavages

WorkChoices was one of the key issues in the 2007 election. It also raised the profile of the trade union movement after a long period of dormancy (Spies-Butcher and Wilson 2011) and with a membership in steep decline (Muir 2008, 9, 15; Peetz 2006, 54). Not since the 1998 waterfront dispute (Trinca and Davies 2000) had the sight of trade unionists marching in the streets and rallying around the countryside featured so strongly. In terms of the amount of money spent by the union movement on television advertising (Muir 2008, 39–40) not to mention market research, Australia had never seen anything like it.

Are the divisions that WorkChoices brought to the fore reflected in the survey data—in particular, divisions related to labour-market location and the workplace? Where in this do broader social divisions around income and class identity fit? Do voting patterns supplant or augment these divisions? And what other aspects of industrial relations mattered most when respondents assessed their opposition to—or support for—WorkChoices?

To answer these questions, we fit three models to responses to the 2007 AuSSA question on WorkChoices. In each case the outcome being modelled (using multinomial logistic regression)[1] is the approval scale, ranging from 'strongly approve' to 'strongly disapprove'. The first is a *structural* model, involving demographic variables—sex, age, education, income and occupation—and variables related to the workplace: employment sector (public/private), industry type, workplace status (supervisory/non-supervisory) and union membership. The second is a *political* model, incorporating not just voting intention but also class identity, social status and political self-placement (from left to right).

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[1] Approval scales are often modelled using ordinal logistic regression, but particular statistical assumptions must be satisfied (the 'proportional odds assumption') to use this approach. The failure of this assumption with these data required that we fit either a multinomial logistic model (in which the ordinality of the data is ignored) or a binomial logistic model (with just two categories, for and against). We favoured the first option because it retained more information about the strength of opinion—something highly relevant in this context.

The third is an *attitudinal* model, which incorporates several other items on industrial relations issues from the AuSSA study. The top-line results from all the substantive items have been noted already.

The way in which these models relate to each other is important. Each model adds to the previous one, such that as one moves from structural to political to attitudinal, the net effect of each variable in the preceding model is weakened. Our interest lies in the extent to which the structural variables still have some purchase as we incorporate more of the political and attitudinal variables. Since the attitudinal variables are more highly correlated with the issue of WorkChoices, they are bound to become quite dominant in the third model. This model also has the usual problems of circularity, of trying to explain attitudes by recourse to attitudes, without being at all certain as to which attitudes come first (contrast van Wanrooy 2007, 183–4). Nevertheless, the strength of various associations—even when they cannot be deemed effects—is of value because it helps map the terrain on which the battle over WorkChoices was fought.

The multinomial models are shown in detail in Appendix 9.1 where both coefficients and standard errors are presented. Here the results are shown in Table 9.1 as relative risk ratios. As with odds ratios, they need to be understood in terms of two sets of contrasts. One contrast is between what respondents say about the dependent variable—those who ‘strongly approve’, ‘approve’, ‘disapprove’ or ‘strongly disapprove’ of WorkChoices are contrasted with the neutral position: ‘neither approve nor disapprove’. This, in turn, is based on another contrast between the various categories of the explanatory variable;for example, in the structural model the figure ‘1.5’ for retired persons in the ‘strongly disagree’ category means a person who was retired (compared with someone not yet retired) was 1.5 times or 50 per cent more likely to ‘strongly disagree’ with WorkChoices rather than to feel neutral about it. As it happens, the same person was 1.2 times more likely to ‘strongly agree’ with WorkChoices than to feel neutral about it. There is nothing illogical in this. Moreover, most of the small differences between the relative risk ratios and 1.0 are not statistically significant; as a glance at the standard errors in Appendix 9.1 shows, neither 1.2 nor 1.5 differs significantly from 1.0 (though since these are shown as coefficients what matters is the difference from 0.0). Where the ratios are larger, the most common pattern is for one end of the scale (‘strongly agree’ or ‘strongly disagree’) to be dominant; with union membership, for example, the ratios are 0.4 for ‘strongly agree’ and 6.2 for ‘strongly disagree’. Generally, one looks for relative risk ratios that are large (more than 2.0) and, where the sentiment is unimodal, one reads off which category of the variable favours that sentiment.

**Table 9.1 Approval Scale for WorkChoices, Combined Results for Models**

| | M1: Structural | | | | M2: Political | | | | M3: Attitudinal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | D | SD | SA | A | D | SD | SA | A | D | SD |
| (Intercept) | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Sex: Male | 2.1 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.9 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 1.7 | 2.9 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 1.5 |
| Age: 25–34 | 2.9 | 1.4 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 3.4 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 3.0 | 1.1 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Age: 35–44 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 3.5 | 1.9 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 2.9 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Age: 45–54 | 4.5 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 4.9 | 2.3 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 | 2.2 | 0.8 | 0.7 |
| Age: 55–64 | 8.8 | 3.9 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 7.2 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 6.9 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 0.7 |
| Age: 65 and over | 6.4 | 4.3 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.4 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 0.4 |
| Workplace: Retired | 1.2 | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Education: Early leaver | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Education: Before year 12 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Education: Year 12 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.4 |
| Education: Trade qualifications | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 1.4 |
| Education: Other TAFE | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Income: $400 < $800 pw | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 0.9 |
| Income: $800 < $1000 pw | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.7 |
| Income: $1000 < $1500 pw | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Income: $1500 < $2000 pw | 1.6 | 2.3 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| Income: $2000 or more | 1.5 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Occupation: PMC | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.9 | 1.2 | 1.4 | 0.8 |
| Occupation: Blue collar | 0.6 | 0.8 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| Position: Supervisory | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 1.0 |
| Position: Non-supervisory | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.9 | 1.1 |
| Sector: Public | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 1.2 |
| Union: Current member | 0.4 | 0.6 | 2.9 | 6.2 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 2.6 | 5.3 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| Union: Previous member | 0.4 | 0.8 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.5 |

| | M1: Structural | | | | M2: Political | | | | M3: Attitudinal | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | A | D | SD | SA | A | D | SD | SA | A | D | SD |
| Class: Upper/upper middle | | | | | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| Class: Lower middle | | | | | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| Class: Working | | | | | 2.0 | 0.8 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| Left–right: Left | | | | | 0.9 | 0.9 | 2.7 | 5.1 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 2.5 | 4.3 |
| Left–right: Right | | | | | 4.0 | 1.9 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 3.6 | 1.8 | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| Status: Low | | | | | 0.7 | 0.7 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Status: Top | | | | | 1.5 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Voting: Coalition | | | | | 3.8 | 3.8 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| Voting: ALP | | | | | 0.7 | 0.7 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 2.3 |
| Voting: Other | | | | | 1.1 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.2 |
| Voting: Greens | | | | | 0.4 | 0.7 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| Indiv.: Agree | | | | | | | | | 0.6 | 0.9 | 4.1 | 7.6 |
| Indiv.: Disagree | | | | | | | | | 3.8 | 2.2 | 1.5 | 2.0 |
| Direct: Agree | | | | | | | | | 8.2 | 2.7 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Direct: Disagree | | | | | | | | | 1.5 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 3.1 |
| UnionPower: Agree | | | | | | | | | 11.2 | 2.9 | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| UnionPower: Disagree | | | | | | | | | 3.6 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 4.2 |

Notes: Models based on multinomial logit, with outcome being approval scale for WorkChoices ('neutral' as reference category). Models included industry as a control. This table does not show industry results, but the tables in Appendix 9.1 do. Omitted categories are: Female; Aged under 25; Not retired; University qualifications; Income under $400; Occupation other; Managerial position; Private sector; Never a union member; No class identification; Middle of left–right scale; Middle status; Voting informal; 'neutral' category for last three items. All categories (except 'Voting') are coded as treatment (or 'indicator'). Voting is coded using effect coding, such that the comparison is with the group mean. Abbreviations: WorkChoices = 'Thinking about this new workplace relations system [WorkChoices], do you approve or disapprove of the reforms?'. PMC = professional-managerial class. Status = where place self on social scale (top, middle, bottom). Indiv. = 'individual contracts favour the employer over the employee'. Direct = 'employees and employers should be able to negotiate pay and conditions directly'. UnionPower = 'unions should have less say in how wages and conditions are set'. Population = all respondents in the IR module. Missing values replaced with imputed values, using multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE). N = 2698.

Source: Combined results shown as relative risk ratios (similar to odds ratios) based on models shown in Appendix 9.1.

Where possible, the omitted category, which forms the basis of the comparison, is a middle or neutral category or a category with little intrinsic interest—for example, 'other'. But some variables need to be treated with caution. For example, in Table 9.1 the high ratios for respondents aged fifty-five to sixty-four (8.8) and sixty-five or over (6.4) who 'strongly approve' of WorkChoices are derived by comparing their responses with those aged eighteen to twenty-five—a group that 'strongly opposes' WorkChoices. If a different age group had been chosen as the reference group, the ratios for the older groups would be considerably lower. Voting intention is different. The coding scheme used here ('effects coding') compares each category with the group mean. This is more meaningful for voting since a comparison with those who intend to vote 'other' (that is, for a minor party) is not particularly informative.

Multinomial logit results are best presented as predicted probabilities—an approach that presents figures in a more meaningful light. The probabilities are predicted by 'plugging' values into most of the variables in the model equation. These values are generally the modal value or the mean, while other variables in which we are interested are allowed to assume different values so as to illustrate the strength of particular effects. In Table 9.4, for example, the variables for union membership and occupation are allowed to vary across their range of values, with all other variables set at their modal value. Since the absolute predicted probabilities reflect the values plugged into the equation, these are not generally of great interest. Rather, the *changes in probabilities* are what matter: what happens, for example, as one moves from current union membership to never being a union member, or from what the Ehrenreichs (1979) call the professional-managerial class (PMC) to blue-collar work.

## Structural model

Our interest lies in the extent to which various demographic differences explain attitudes to WorkChoices. In the case of the relative risk ratios (Table 9.1) it makes sense to present the divisions at their sharpest—hence, the contrast of oldest to youngest, lowest income to highest income, and so on. This allows us to illustrate the strength of these divisions most dramatically. It also allows us to examine how much these divisions weaken as additional variables (political and attitudinal) are included.

Beginning with age and the long version of the scale, we see a strong contrast in the level of agreement—especially strong agreement—between older respondents (fifty-five plus) and the youngest group (eighteen–twenty-four). This would be weaker had we chosen a middle-aged group as our reference; however, our choice of reference group helps draw attention to how wary younger respondents were of WorkChoices—its impact on the wages and working conditions of the young were highlighted in the media throughout the campaign (see Muir 2008, 188–90, for the unions' attempt to target young voters)—and how supportive older respondents were of it (contrast the discussion, based on bi-variate data, in Wilson 2005, 286). The retirement variable shows that the association with age is not wholly reducible to a lack of contact with the workplace. Neither is the association with age the result of job seniority, since managerial positions are also included in the model. The addition of a variable for voting intention shows older supporters of the Coalition were not the only ones causing the association with age (Goot and Watson 2007, Table A2), though they certainly influenced it (the relative risk ratio drops from 6.4 to 4.0 when voting is included).

Union membership is one of the strongest associations in the model; the differences across panels in Table 9.2 are quite pronounced. But within panels, there is still a considerable age association: for current union members disapproving of WorkChoices (short scale), it is 19 percentage points between the under twenty-fives and those aged sixty-five or more; however, except when compared with the over sixty-fives, the under twenty-fives are not all that different from the other age groups. For previous union members, the age gap between youngest and oldest is still very large (25 percentage points), but again the gap is much less evident in relation to the other age groups. Among those who were never union members the gap between youngest and oldest is just as large, but the distinctiveness of young people is more evident, with a gap of at least 8 percentage points between them and any other age group. The upshot of all this is that, irrespective of how one presents the relative risk ratios, the age association is a strong one, even in the presence of the variable with the largest impact in the model.

By way of contrast, consider Table 9.3, which focuses on position in the workplace—as a manager, supervisor or neither. This cleavage is not an important one (as the relative risk ratios in Table 9.1 show) and the differences across panels do not amount to much. But within panels the age effect (short scale) is again large: 25 to 27 percentage points (youngest respondents compared to oldest).

What of the labour-market divisions between the professional-managerial class, blue-collar workers and other (mainly clerical and 'pink-collar') workers? The relative risk ratios in Table 9.1 suggest only weak associations between occupation and responses to WorkChoices. The predicted probabilities confirm this: differences within panels (that is, between occupations) are trivial compared with the differences between panels (Table 9.4). In the case of workplace position, neither the differences between panels nor the differences within panels are substantial (Table 9.5). In short, divisions around the labour market and workplace do not count for much.

## Table 9.2 Predicted Probabilities, Union and Age

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Current union member** | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 0 | 2 | 16 | 36 | 45 | 3 | 81 |
| 25–34 | 1 | 4 | 20 | 35 | 39 | 5 | 75 |
| 35–44 | 1 | 5 | 18 | 35 | 42 | 6 | 76 |
| 45–54 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 33 | 45 | 7 | 78 |
| 55–64 | 2 | 8 | 14 | 34 | 42 | 10 | 76 |
| 65 and over | 2 | 14 | 22 | 29 | 33 | 16 | 62 |
| **Previous union member** | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 0 | 5 | 29 | 36 | 30 | 6 | 66 |
| 25–34 | 1 | 9 | 33 | 33 | 24 | 10 | 57 |
| 35–44 | 1 | 11 | 29 | 33 | 26 | 12 | 59 |
| 45–54 | 2 | 13 | 25 | 31 | 29 | 15 | 60 |
| 55–64 | 3 | 17 | 23 | 32 | 25 | 20 | 57 |
| 65 and over | 3 | 25 | 31 | 24 | 18 | 28 | 41 |
| **Never union member** | | | | | | | |
| Under 25 | 1 | 9 | 41 | 30 | 18 | 11 | 49 |
| 25–34 | 4 | 14 | 43 | 26 | 13 | 18 | 39 |
| 35–44 | 3 | 18 | 39 | 26 | 15 | 21 | 40 |
| 45–54 | 5 | 21 | 33 | 25 | 16 | 26 | 41 |
| 55–64 | 8 | 26 | 29 | 24 | 14 | 34 | 37 |
| 65 and over | 7 | 34 | 35 | 16 | 8 | 41 | 24 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on structural model in Appendix 9.1.

## Table 9.3 Predicted Probabilities, Union and Occupation

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Current union member** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 1 | 6 | 17 | 44 | 32 | 7 | 76 |
| Blue collar | 0 | 4 | 16 | 36 | 44 | 4 | 80 |
| Other | 1 | 5 | 18 | 35 | 42 | 6 | 76 |
| **Previous union member** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 2 | 12 | 27 | 40 | 19 | 14 | 59 |
| Blue collar | 1 | 8 | 28 | 36 | 28 | 8 | 64 |
| Other | 1 | 11 | 29 | 33 | 26 | 12 | 59 |
| **Never union member** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 4 | 19 | 35 | 30 | 11 | 24 | 41 |
| Blue collar | 2 | 13 | 38 | 30 | 17 | 15 | 46 |
| Other | 3 | 18 | 39 | 26 | 15 | 21 | 40 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on structural model in Appendix 9.1.

### Table 9.4 Predicted Probabilities, Class and Union

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Managerial** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 3 | 18 | 29 | 36 | 14 | 21 | 50 |
| Blue collar | 1 | 12 | 31 | 34 | 22 | 13 | 56 |
| Other | 2 | 16 | 32 | 30 | 19 | 19 | 50 |
| **Supervisory** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 2 | 17 | 28 | 34 | 19 | 19 | 53 |
| Blue collar | 1 | 11 | 29 | 31 | 28 | 12 | 59 |
| Other | 1 | 15 | 30 | 28 | 25 | 17 | 53 |
| **Non-supervisory** | | | | | | | |
| PMC | 2 | 12 | 27 | 40 | 19 | 14 | 59 |
| Blue collar | 1 | 8 | 28 | 36 | 28 | 8 | 64 |
| Other | 1 | 11 | 29 | 33 | 26 | 12 | 59 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on structural model in Appendix 9.1.

### Table 9.5 Predicted Probabilities, Class and Union

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Current union member** | | | | | | | |
| Upper/upper middle | 1 | 10 | 29 | 28 | 33 | 11 | 61 |
| Lower middle | 0 | 8 | 26 | 27 | 39 | 8 | 66 |
| Working | 1 | 7 | 27 | 31 | 34 | 7 | 65 |
| None | 0 | 9 | 31 | 24 | 35 | 10 | 60 |
| **Previous union member** | | | | | | | |
| Upper/upper middle | 1 | 19 | 41 | 22 | 17 | 19 | 39 |
| Lower middle | 1 | 16 | 39 | 23 | 22 | 16 | 45 |
| Working | 1 | 13 | 41 | 26 | 19 | 14 | 45 |
| None | 1 | 17 | 44 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 38 |
| **Never union member** | | | | | | | |
| Upper/upper middle | 2 | 21 | 48 | 18 | 10 | 23 | 28 |
| Lower middle | 1 | 19 | 48 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 33 |
| Working | 2 | 15 | 49 | 22 | 12 | 17 | 33 |
| None | 1 | 20 | 52 | 16 | 11 | 21 | 27 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on political model in Appendix 9.1.

## Political model

With our second model, the results become more interesting, not least because they cast doubt on the claim that public opinion on industrial relations reform is ‘unideological’ (Norton 2005, 38) and confirm the importance—even in a ‘post-ideological’ age—of the categories ‘left’ and ‘right’ (Goot 2005, 108ff; Noel and Therien 2008, Ch. 2). While those identifying as ‘working class’ are more inclined than those with no class identification to support WorkChoices—as, more predictably, are the ‘upper class’—neither result is statistically significant; and most of the relative risk ratios (around 1.0) among those who ‘strongly disagree’ with WorkChoices show no relationship either. As Table 9.1 also shows, however, when it comes to thinking of themselves as ‘left’ or ‘right’, the results are more striking. Those who place themselves on the right (7–10 on a 10-point scale) strongly support WorkChoices (a relative risk ratio of 4.0 compared with those in the middle of the scale), while those on the left (0–3 on the scale) are strongly opposed (a relative risk ratio of 5.1). These effects are independent of voting intention. The relative risk ratio for Coalition respondents who supported WorkChoices is 3.8; for Labor respondents who opposed it, 2.8.

**Table 9.6 Predicated Probabilities, Left–Right Scale and Union**

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Current union member** | | | | | | | |
| Left | 0 | 2 | 8 | 23 | 66 | 2 | 89 |
| Middle | 0 | 8 | 26 | 27 | 39 | 8 | 66 |
| Right | 1 | 15 | 25 | 22 | 38 | 16 | 59 |
| **Previous union member** | | | | | | | |
| Left | 0 | 6 | 17 | 27 | 49 | 6 | 76 |
| Middle | 1 | 16 | 39 | 23 | 22 | 16 | 45 |
| Right | 2 | 27 | 35 | 17 | 19 | 29 | 36 |
| **Never union member** | | | | | | | |
| Left | 1 | 9 | 26 | 27 | 37 | 10 | 65 |
| Middle | 1 | 19 | 48 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 33 |
| Right | 4 | 30 | 41 | 14 | 12 | 34 | 25 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on political model in Appendix 9.1.

We can illustrate these differences with predicted probabilities. For self-assigned class, stratified by union membership, there are trivial differences within panels but big differences between panels (Table 9.6). On the left–right scale, by contrast, the differences within panels are generally greater than between panels. For current union members, for example, the difference between left and right in terms of opposing WorkChoices (89 per cent compared with 60 per cent) is 29 percentage points. For someone on the left, by comparison, the difference between being a union member and never having been a union member is 25 percentage points (89 per cent compared with 64 per cent). However, this doesn't apply uniformly since for someone on the right the same difference is 34 percentage points (Table 9.7).

### Table 9.7 Predicted Probabilities, Voting and Union

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SA | App. | Neut. | Dis. | SD | App. | Dis. |
| **Current union member** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 1 | 31 | 38 | 20 | 10 | 32 | 30 |
| ALP | 0 | 2 | 15 | 33 | 50 | 2 | 83 |
| Other | 0 | 8 | 26 | 27 | 39 | 8 | 66 |
| Greens | 0 | 3 | 20 | 34 | 43 | 3 | 76 |
| None | 0 | 3 | 37 | 28 | 32 | 3 | 60 |
| **Previous union member** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 2 | 42 | 40 | 12 | 4 | 44 | 16 |
| ALP | 0 | 6 | 27 | 34 | 33 | 6 | 67 |
| Other | 1 | 16 | 39 | 23 | 22 | 16 | 45 |
| Greens | 0 | 7 | 35 | 32 | 26 | 7 | 58 |
| None | 1 | 5 | 54 | 23 | 17 | 6 | 40 |
| **Never union member** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 3 | 44 | 42 | 9 | 2 | 47 | 11 |
| ALP | 1 | 7 | 37 | 32 | 23 | 8 | 55 |
| Other | 1 | 19 | 48 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 33 |
| Greens | 0 | 9 | 45 | 29 | 18 | 9 | 46 |
| None | 1 | 6 | 64 | 19 | 10 | 7 | 29 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on political model in Appendix 9.1.

Looking at voting intentions, there are strong differences within panels as well as between them. As Table 9.7 shows, even ALP respondents who were never union members opposed rather than supported WorkChoices—55 per cent to 8 per cent. Among Coalition respondents, union membership neutralises support for WorkChoices with virtually no gap between the proportions who approve (32 per cent) and disapprove (30 per cent). Greens are paler versions of Labor respondents. If they are union members, their opposition is close to that of ALP supporters (76 per cent compared with 83 per cent). Greens who were never union members are only a little more likely than Labor voters who were never union members to oppose WorkChoices (46:55) but no more likely to support it (9:8).

**Table 9.8 Predicted Probabilities, Voting and Left–Right Scale**

| | Full scale | | | | | Short scale | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **SA** | **App.** | **Neut.** | **Dis.** | **SD** | **App.** | **Dis.** |
| **Placing self on left** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 3 | 33 | 35 | 20 | 9 | 36 | 29 |
| ALP | 0 | 3 | 15 | 34 | 48 | 3 | 82 |
| Other | 1 | 9 | 26 | 27 | 37 | 10 | 65 |
| Greens | 0 | 4 | 20 | 35 | 41 | 4 | 76 |
| None | 1 | 3 | 37 | 29 | 31 | 4 | 59 |
| **Placing self in middle** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 3 | 44 | 42 | 9 | 2 | 47 | 11 |
| ALP | 1 | 7 | 37 | 32 | 23 | 8 | 55 |
| Other | 1 | 19 | 48 | 19 | 14 | 20 | 33 |
| Greens | 0 | 9 | 45 | 29 | 18 | 9 | 46 |
| None | 1 | 6 | 64 | 19 | 10 | 7 | 29 |
| **Placing self on right** | | | | | | | |
| Coalition | 9 | 56 | 28 | 5 | 1 | 65 | 6 |
| ALP | 2 | 14 | 36 | 26 | 22 | 16 | 48 |
| Other | 4 | 30 | 41 | 14 | 12 | 34 | 25 |
| Greens | 1 | 16 | 43 | 23 | 17 | 18 | 40 |
| None | 4 | 11 | 60 | 15 | 10 | 15 | 24 |

Notes: Absolute values reflect choice of values inserted into predictions. Relative values are most meaningful.

Source: Predicted probabilities based on political model in Appendix 9.1.

Finally, consider Table 9.8, which shows voting and left–right self-placement. This table helps net out the unique effects of each. As one would expect, left-leaning ALP voters are almost uniformly opposed to WorkChoices (82 per cent disapprove) while right-leaning Coalition voters are just as uniformly in favour (82 per cent approve); however, respondents who placed themselves on the right but favoured Labor were anti-WorkChoices, 48:16. On the other hand, those who put themselves in the middle and who intended to vote for the Coalition were much more likely to be pro-WorkChoices: 47:11. Finally, for those on the left who intended to vote Coalition (an uncommon combination), the gap closes, but approval of WorkChoices is still slightly higher than opposition, 36:29. In short, voting intention is stronger than left–right self-placement, though the latter should not be discounted—its impact is still considerable. But whatever the importance of voting intention, as we shall shortly see, it is not (contrary to van Wanrooy 2007, 188) the variable that is most important. (For a very different way of segmenting the electorate, used in the Your Rights at Work campaign, see Lewis 2009, 212–13).

## Attitudes model

The inclusion of attitudes to industrial relations to explain attitudes to WorkChoices is somewhat circular unless one can establish a pattern of causality. Nevertheless, a third model, based on attitudes to industrial relations issues other than WorkChoices, is useful for exploring the issues that shaped the terrain of the struggle.

In our third model the political dynamic becomes more transparent, at least for those respondents (nearly one-third of the sample) at the extremes: 'strongly' in favour of WorkChoices or (three times as numerous) 'strongly against'. Clearly, for the small proportion of respondents who 'strongly' approved of WorkChoices, the view that 'unions should have less say in how wages and conditions are set' was a dominant consideration; Model 3 shows a relative risk ratio of 11.2 for this issue (Table 9.1). For strong supporters, the ability of 'employees and employers…to negotiate pay and conditions directly'—understood, presumably, as a situation in which unions were absent—was also important (a relative risk ratio of 8.2). Among strong supporters of WorkChoices, disagreeing that 'individual contracts favour the employer over the employee' featured as well (a relative risk ratio of 3.8).

By contrast, those who 'strongly' disapproved of WorkChoices saw the fundamental issue as one of the powerlessness of employees vis-a-vis employers (a relative risk ratio of 7.6). The value of unions in determining 'how wages and conditions are set' was also important (a relative risk ratio of 4.2), as were the problems with direct bargaining (a relative risk ratio of 3.1).

# Conclusion

Despite the long campaign around WorkChoices, there is no evidence that awareness of it grew between mid-2005 and mid-2007 or (contrary to the expectation of van Wanrooy 2007, 185) that views about it became increasingly polarised. On a number of issues the government was able to claw back lost ground. That support for some aspects of the legislation increased in the months leading up to the election may have reflected both the government's decision to amend its legislation and the limits of the unions' campaign. In the end, to say of the government's own advertising that 'the more the government spent, the more the public attitude turned negative' (Lewis 2009, 208) looks like triumphalism.

Opposition to WorkChoices was never the majority position of respondents in the polls, if we take into account the sizeable proportions who said they either had not read or heard about it or were aware of the legislation but had no view on it; but it was the majority position for those who had read or heard about it and they made up the bulk of the electorate. Nor, offered a middle option, was disapproval the majority position of respondents in the AuSSA. But as in the polls, respondents in the AuSSA were more likely to approve than disapprove and those who did disapprove were roughly three times as numerous as those who approved to do so 'strongly'. Not only was WorkChoices opposed in the polls; so too was almost every aspect of the legislation and the assumptions behind it. From mid-2005, when the legislation made its initial impact on the parties' standing in the polls, those who mentioned WorkChoices in connection with their party choice were much more likely to be (intending) Labor voters than (intending) Liberal voters.

Hugh Mackay, a qualitative researcher, acknowledges that, in the opinion polls, reaction to the legislation was 'deeply unpopular'. But in his research the 'initial [sic] response' in 2006 was 'rather muted', even 'acquiescent' (2008, 250–1). This is a puzzle the polls, in the nature of the case, can do little to solve. Howard, too, notes that in 2006 Liberal MPs 'suggested no great public resentment against WorkChoices'. He 'regularly telephoned' those in marginal seats and '[t]o a man and a woman virtually, they said that few people raised particular cases with their offices, and the general advice I continued to receive was that…we should stick it out and eventually public opinion would come around' (Howard 2011, 583). But by the time of the NSW election, in March 2007, Howard's biographer and Liberal candidate Pru Goward acknowledged that WorkChoices had done the Liberals damage—'that a discredited state government could campaign on a federal issue, and get away with it, surely meant that Work Choices was poison' (Megalogenis 2008, 339).

In the electoral battle over WorkChoices, the ACTU set the terms of the debate. Had the Liberals succeeded in framing the debate, much of the unions'—and Labor's—campaign might have been blunted. The extent to which the polls adopted one side's agenda rather than the other's is another matter. If Howard saw the new laws as a way of boosting employment (Howard 2011, 487, 547, 573, 583–4), perceptions of the impact WorkChoices might have on employment were something to which the newspaper polls paid little attention. On the other hand, 'fear of job insecurity'—the fear that 'would destroy WorkChoices' (Kelly 2009, 384; also Savva 2010, 223)—didn't figure much in the published polls either. That Labor adopted the ACTU's framing and was able to convince much of the electorate of its commitment to the abolition of WorkChoices is important. Among those who argue that since the early 1980s the economic policies of the Coalition and Labor have converged around neo-liberalism, not all are prepared to concede that WorkChoices—an issue that goes to the foundations of the Liberal and Labor parties—constitutes an exception (see, for example, Lavelle 2010, 61–2; Lewis 2008, 169, 184). Nonetheless, industrial relations along with education and climate change were the issues Rudd singled out as the key issues on which Labor sought to distinguish itself from the Liberals (van Onselen and Senior 2008, 24). While it may be an exaggeration to say that under Rudd WorkChoices was 'dismantled' (Dyrenfurth and Bongiorno 2011, 189; cf. Megalogenis 2008, 349), according to critics on the right, not only was WorkChoices swept away, the new broom left the labour market 're-regulated' (Howard 2011, 659).

Were respondents concerned more with the impact of the legislation on society as a whole or on their own self-interest? According to Andrew Norton (2007–08, 20–2, also 2005, 37)—from the right, ironically—social solidarity trumped self-interest. According to Shaun Wilson, ironically on the left, and Peter Wilson, a key player in the ACTU's advertising campaign, opposition to the legislation has to be understood in terms of the personal impact respondents thought the changes were likely to make (Wilson 2005, 285, 292, 294, 296, 297; Lewis 2009, 209). Much of the media's analysis also took it as self-evident that self-interest was the principal driver (see, for example, Megalogenis 2008, Snapshot #17). The survey evidence, however, supports the view that social solidarity was more important. While many respondents thought the legislation would leave them worse off—something Howard had not been able to deny (Megalogenis 2008, 341)—their numbers were not nearly as large as the numbers who said they opposed the legislation.

The presence of electoral cleavages—or their absence—around WorkChoices tells us a good deal about contemporary Australian politics and society. Younger respondents, many of them relatively new entrants to the workforce, felt especially vulnerable; they were one of the unions' target groups (Muir 2008, 65, 188–90). The importance of union membership itself in structuring views about WorkChoices should not surprise. As the strongest and certainly most consistent predictor of Labor voting (Goot and Watson 2007, 270), union membership was not only the legislation's most important workplace target; it was also its most important political target. That occupation, workplace position, income and education had little bearing on attitudes suggests not that blue-collar workers supported the legislation—an assumption consistent with the notion of 'Howard's battlers'—but that they were not strongly opposed to it. This, in turn, suggests the analytical shortcoming of inferring political interests from class location (class-in-itself) rather than seeing these interests as something fashioned in struggle (class-for-itself). In their own way, both the importance of how respondents intended to vote—Liberal-National, Labor and the Greens—and the importance of their left–right self-placement testify to this. The struggle around power and the perception of power are also evident in the importance of attitudes to unions and management in explaining the strong views about WorkChoices—both for and against. There were no deep social divisions that WorkChoices tapped into. Rather, it was an ideological struggle with the lines between left and right, Labor and the Coalition, unions and bosses drawn quite sharply. Views about WorkChoices mapped onto demographics only in relation to age and union membership; other class, labour-market and workplace divisions did not feature. The struggle itself—in particular, the mobilisation by the labour movement—was crucial. The terrain of power and individual vulnerability shows how industrial relations attitudes played out.

For the supporters of WorkChoices, the core issues were union power and the freedom to bargain. Individual powerlessness did not feature in this perspective. Among opponents of WorkChoices, by contrast, unions were seen not as part of the problem but as facilitators, with the key issue the vulnerability of individuals in the workplace—a vulnerability that required unions for protection and exposed the risk of individual contracts that WorkChoices sought to promote. This was a prominent theme in the ACTU television campaign, which emphasised the vulnerability of the individual worker. It is no surprise, then, that the ACTU was able to mobilise so effectively against WorkChoices by exploiting themes of fear: the fears were real, and were keenly felt by many.

Looking back to the 1980s and 1990s, the 'remarkable period in which economic policies could be implemented in defiance of public opinion but without causing electoral defeat', Norton suggests that 'the political conditions for further reform' will only re-emerge when economic conditions are 'sufficiently bad' (2007–08, 27). But while much of the prosperity that characterised the Howard years has disappeared, and calls for the resurrection of WorkChoices are not difficult to hear, the political conditions that might lead to the reintroduction of such legislation—a Coalition government in control of the Senate, a union movement without resources and a Labor opposition wholly indifferent to mobilised opinion—are not presently on the horizon.

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# Appendix 9.1

## Details of Modelling

**Table A9.1 Results for Multinomial Logit Model: Structural model (coefficients and standard errors in parentheses)**

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **S. approve** | **Approve** | **Disapprove** | **S. disapprove** |
| (Intercept) | –3.454<br>(0.864) | –1.744<br>(0.402) | –0.684<br>(0.308) | –1.763<br>(0.380) |
| Sex: 2 | 0.736<br>(0.224) | 0.211<br>(0.140) | –0.011<br>(0.130) | 0.650<br>(0.151) |
| Age: 25–34 | 1.062<br>(0.782) | 0.317<br>(0.351) | –0.219<br>(0.236) | –0.358<br>(0.292) |
| Age: 35–44 | 0.959<br>(0.779) | 0.698<br>(0.335) | –0.105<br>(0.227) | –0.159<br>(0.274) |
| Age: 45–54 | 1.498<br>(0.770) | 1.031<br>(0.333) | –0.000<br>(0.229) | 0.078<br>(0.272) |
| Age: 55–64 | 2.180<br>(0.76t0) | 1.367<br>(0.332) | 0.095<br>(0.234) | 0.051<br>(0.278) |
| Age: 65 and over | 1.861<br>(0.772) | 1.456<br>(0.340) | –0.490<br>(0.262) | –0.615<br>(0.323) |
| Retired: Retired | 0.150<br>(0.297) | 0.136<br>(0.190) | 0.414<br>(0.196) | 0.382<br>(0.237) |
| Education: Early leaver | –0.370<br>(0.422) | –0.545<br>(0.266) | –0.434<br>(0.239) | –0.638<br>(0.281) |
| Education: Before year 12 | 0.210<br>(0.335) | –0.175<br>(0.226) | –0.581<br>(0.215) | –0.700<br>(0.253) |
| Education: Year 12 | –0.504<br>(0.419) | –0.109<br>(0.244) | –0.530<br>(0.222) | –0.830<br>(0.270) |
| Education: Trade quals | –0.338<br>(0.378) | 0.035<br>(0.231) | –0.098<br>(0.212) | –0.313<br>(0.247) |
| Education: Other TAFE | –0.477<br>(0.288) | –0.280<br>(0.181) | –0.278<br>(0.164) | –0.468<br>(0.195) |
| Income: \$400 – under \$800 pw | 0.029<br>(0.275) | 0.167<br>(0.158) | 0.298<br>(0.137) | –0.095<br>(0.168) |
| Income: \$800 – under \$1000 pw | -0.053<br>(0.382) | 0.043<br>(0.232) | –0.198<br>(0.206) | –0.228<br>(0.235) |
| Income: \$1000 – under \$1500 pw | 0.260<br>(0.331) | 0.345<br>(0.206) | 0.019<br>(0.188) | –0.147<br>(0.217) |
| Income: \$1500 – under \$2000 pw | 0.471<br>(0.425) | 0.834<br>(0.281) | 0.234<br>(0.271) | –0.046<br>(0.322) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| Income: $2000 or more | 0.421<br>(0.380) | 0.596<br>(0.267) | −0.332<br>(0.294) | −0.288<br>(0.341) |
| Occupation: PMC | 0.431<br>(0.250) | 0.167<br>(0.159) | 0.261<br>(0.153) | −0.222<br>(0.187) |
| Occupation: Blue collar | −0.553<br>(0.321) | −0.284<br>(0.178) | 0.142<br>(0.155) | 0.140<br>(0.178) |
| Industry: Agriculture | 0.581<br>(0.541) | 0.482<br>(0.343) | −0.553<br>(0.395) | −0.874<br>(0.585) |
| Industry: Mining | 0.695<br>(0.545) | −0.565<br>(0.429) | −0.006<br>(0.358) | 0.082<br>(0.428) |
| Industry: Manufacturing | 0.485<br>(0.481) | 0.484<br>(0.276) | 0.227<br>(0.257) | 0.483<br>(0.310) |
| Industry: Utilities/construction | 0.831<br>(0.468) | 0.421<br>(0.280) | 0.051<br>(0.259) | −0.447<br>(0.336) |
| Industry: Wholesale/retail | 0.394<br>(0.424) | −0.057<br>(0.257) | 0.024<br>(0.227) | 0.061<br>(0.295) |
| Industry: Accommodation | −0.013<br>(0.544) | −0.082<br>(0.305) | −0.677<br>(0.294) | 0.064<br>(0.336) |
| Industry: Transport | 0.761<br>(0.533) | −0.178<br>(0.347) | −0.165<br>(0.293) | −0.403<br>(0.357) |
| Industry: Business services | 0.969<br>(0.402) | 0.182<br>(0.246) | 0.015<br>(0.225) | 0.357<br>(0.281) |
| Industry: Government | 0.181<br>(0.619) | 0.511<br>(0.295) | 0.448<br>(0.261) | 0.161<br>(0.312) |
| Industry: Education | 0.043<br>(0.603) | 0.016<br>(0.311) | −0.160<br>(0.275) | 0.143<br>(0.329) |
| Industry: Health | −0.171<br>(0.528) | 0.042<br>(0.270) | −0.085<br>(0.241) | −0.008<br>(0.304) |
| Position: Supervisory | −0.474<br>(0.268) | −0.023<br>(0.165) | −0.042<br>(0.164) | 0.321<br>(0.200) |
| Position: Non-supervisory | −0.769<br>(0.266) | −0.313<br>(0.163) | 0.149<br>(0.154) | 0.387<br>(0.193) |
| Sector: Public | −0.625<br>(0.363) | −0.249<br>(0.188) | −0.290<br>(0.165) | 0.243<br>(0.189) |
| Union: Current member | −0.948<br>(0.437) | −0.432<br>(0.224) | 1.072<br>(0.166) | 1.820<br>(0.190) |
| Union: Previous member | −0.837<br>(0.230) | −0.195<br>(0.133) | 0.518<br>(0.125) | 0.851<br>(0.159) |

Notes: Outcome (dependent) variable: approve or disapprove of WorkChoices, on five-point scale (with 'Neutral' and 'Can't choose' combined as reference category). Omitted categories are: Female; Aged under 25; Not retired; University qualifications; Income under $400; Occupation other; Industry other; Managerial position; Private sector; Never a union member.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

**Table A9.2 Results for Multinomial Logit Model: Political model (coefficients and standard errors in parentheses)**

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| (Intercept) | –5.167<br>(1.030) | –2.349<br>(0.488) | –1.448<br>(0.386) | –2.644<br>(0.478) |
| Sex: 2 | 1.006<br>(0.244) | 0.384<br>(0.153) | –0.075<br>(0.137) | 0.539<br>(0.163) |
| Age: 25–34 | 1.230<br>(0.811) | 0.222<br>(0.372) | –0.141<br>(0.247) | –0.372<br>(0.313) |
| Age: 35–44 | 1.252<br>(0.807) | 0.647<br>(0.354) | –0.099<br>(0.239) | –0.222<br>(0.295) |
| Age: 45–54 | 1.593<br>(0.799) | 0.854<br>(0.352) | 0.011<br>(0.241) | –0.039<br>(0.294) |
| Age: 55–64 | 1.974<br>(0.790) | 0.905<br>(0.352) | 0.252<br>(0.247) | 0.096<br>(0.301) |
| Age: 65 and over | 1.389<br>(0.802) | 0.856<br>(0.359) | –0.339<br>(0.280) | –0.613<br>(0.353) |
| Retired: Retired | 0.108<br>(0.323) | 0.174<br>(0.202) | 0.361<br>(0.209) | 0.274<br>(0.262) |
| Education: Early leaver | –0.075<br>(0.459) | –0.385<br>(0.287) | –0.218<br>(0.259) | –0.168<br>(0.315) |
| Education: Before year 12 | 0.160<br>(0.368) | –0.275<br>(0.245) | –0.234<br>(0.231) | –0.210<br>(0.281) |
| Education: Year 12 | –0.408<br>(0.444) | –0.145<br>(0.266) | –0.390<br>(0.237) | –0.719<br>(0.297) |
| Education: Trade quals | –0.400<br>(0.417) | –0.024<br>(0.253) | 0.185<br>(0.228) | 0.165<br>(0.277) |
| Education: Other TAFE | –0.487<br>(0.315) | –0.350<br>(0.198) | –0.003<br>(0.177) | –0.004<br>(0.216) |
| Income: $400 – under $800 pw | –0.201<br>(0.294) | 0.115<br>(0.171) | 0.281<br>(0.145) | –0.101<br>(0.183) |
| Income: $800 – under $1000 pw | –0.337<br>(0.412) | –0.066<br>(0.249) | –0.192<br>(0.217) | –0.225<br>(0.257) |
| Income: $1000 – under $1500 pw | –0.265<br>(0.366) | 0.103<br>(0.230) | 0.016<br>(0.201) | –0.171<br>(0.239) |
| Income: $1500 – under $2000 pw | –0.007<br>(0.468) | 0.669<br>(0.303) | 0.213<br>(0.291) | –0.118<br>(0.357) |
| Income: $2000 or more | –0.467<br>(0.433) | 0.143<br>(0.293) | –0.248<br>(0.320) | –0.033<br>(0.384) |
| Occupation: PMC | 0.557<br>(0.264) | 0.209<br>(0.170) | 0.262<br>(0.163) | –0.278<br>(0.208) |
| Occupation: Blue collar | –0.423<br>(0.346) | –0.117<br>(0.194) | 0.083<br>(0.163) | 0.075<br>(0.193) |
| Industry: Agriculture | –0.022<br>(0.580) | 0.188<br>(0.371) | –0.616<br>(0.421) | –1.052<br>(0.628) |
| Industry: Mining | 0.489<br>(0.592) | –0.755<br>(0.455) | 0.186<br>(0.374) | 0.414<br>(0.458) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| Industry: Manufacturing | 0.264 | 0.296 | 0.213 | 0.518 |
| | (0.511) | (0.301) | (0.270) | (0.334) |
| Industry: Utilities/construction | 0.432 | 0.130 | 0.192 | −0.136 |
| | (0.501) | (0.305) | (0.270) | (0.357) |
| Industry: Wholesale/retail | 0.177 | −0.206 | 0.109 | 0.244 |
| | (0.450) | (0.278) | (0.239) | (0.316) |
| Industry: Accommodation | −0.253 | −0.305 | −0.555 | 0.278 |
| | (0.572) | (0.326) | (0.308) | (0.364) |
| Industry: Transport | 0.242 | −0.635 | −0.051 | −0.247 |
| | (0.568) | (0.373) | (0.312) | (0.395) |
| Industry: Business services | 0.892 | 0.067 | 0.049 | 0.384 |
| | (0.430) | (0.266) | (0.237) | (0.303) |
| Industry: Government | −0.188 | 0.281 | 0.490 | 0.252 |
| | (0.657) | (0.325) | (0.274) | (0.335) |
| Industry: Education | −0.227 | −0.159 | −0.167 | 0.120 |
| | (0.648) | (0.340) | (0.290) | (0.353) |
| Industry: Health | −0.413 | −0.150 | −0.037 | 0.056 |
| | (0.562) | (0.298) | (0.253) | (0.325) |
| Position: Supervisory | −0.331 | 0.096 | −0.139 | 0.136 |
| | (0.290) | (0.178) | (0.174) | (0.221) |
| Position: Non-supervisory | −0.516 | −0.058 | 0.004 | 0.137 |
| | (0.283) | (0.174) | (0.166) | (0.215) |
| Sector: Public | −0.531 | −0.262 | −0.286 | 0.263 |
| | (0.383) | (0.205) | (0.174) | (0.206) |
| Union: Current member | −0.752 | −0.241 | 0.946 | 1.667 |
| | (0.457) | (0.241) | (0.175) | (0.207) |
| Union: Previous member | −0.606 | 0.014 | 0.360 | 0.659 |
| | (0.247) | (0.144) | (0.132) | (0.171) |
| Class: Upper/upper middle | 0.506 | 0.152 | 0.206 | −0.020 |
| | (0.464) | (0.262) | (0.249) | (0.304) |
| Class: Lower middle | −0.003 | 0.022 | 0.265 | 0.283 |
| | (0.463) | (0.251) | (0.232) | (0.277) |
| Class: Working | 0.711 | −0.234 | 0.354 | 0.083 |
| | (0.469) | (0.264) | (0.229) | (0.277) |
| Left–right: Left | −0.060 | −0.102 | 0.988 | 1.628 |
| | (0.570) | (0.287) | (0.169) | (0.184) |
| Left–right: Right | 1.396 | 0.652 | −0.177 | −0.011 |
| | (0.228) | (0.146) | (0.183) | (0.242) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| Status: Low | −0.328 | −0.420 | 0.290 | 0.250 |
| | (0.456) | (0.251) | (0.168) | (0.200) |
| Status: Top | 0.401 | −0.055 | 0.146 | 0.007 |
| | (0.249) | (0.154) | (0.142) | (0.177) |
| Voting: Coalition | 1.329 | 1.327 | −0.707 | −1.528 |
| | (0.301) | (0.158) | (0.129) | (0.225) |
| Voting: ALP | −0.301 | −0.310 | 0.711 | 1.028 |
| | (0.364) | (0.182) | (0.098) | (0.126) |
| Voting: Other | 0.113 | 0.354 | −0.054 | 0.251 |
| | (0.471) | (0.228) | (0.165) | (0.205) |
| Voting: Greens | −0.990 | −0.317 | 0.421 | 0.562 |
| | (0.841) | (0.320) | (0.172) | (0.210) |

Notes: Outcome (dependent) variable: approve or disapprove of WorkChoices, on five-point scale (with 'Neutral' and 'Can't choose' combined as reference category). Omitted categories are: Female; Aged under 25; Not retired; University qualifications; Income under $400; Occupation other; Industry other; Managerial position; Private sector; Never a union member; No class identification; Middle of left–right scale; Middle status; Voting informal. All categories (except 'Voting') are coded as 'treatment' (or 'indicator'). Voting is coded using 'effect' coding, such that the comparison is with the group mean.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

## Table A9.3 Results for Multinomial Logit Model: Attitudinal model (coefficients and standard errors in parentheses)

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| (Intercept) | −8.883 | −3.604 | −2.121 | −3.967 |
| | (1.314) | (0.543) | (0.426) | (0.567) |
| Sex: 2 | 1.078 | 0.422 | −0.155 | 0.406 |
| | (0.268) | (0.163) | (0.147) | (0.180) |
| Age: 25–34 | 1.114 | 0.084 | −0.248 | −0.522 |
| | (0.885) | (0.385) | (0.263) | (0.342) |
| Age: 35–44 | 1.054 | 0.469 | −0.285 | −0.543 |
| | (0.876) | (0.368) | (0.255) | (0.324) |
| Age: 45–54 | 1.574 | 0.786 | −0.213 | −0.423 |
| | (0.869) | (0.364) | (0.258) | (0.325) |
| Age: 55–64 | 1.925 | 0.785 | −0.047 | −0.385 |
| | (0.863) | (0.365) | (0.266) | (0.332) |
| Age: 65 and over | 1.070 | 0.615 | −0.505 | −0.972 |
| | (0.879) | (0.374) | (0.300) | (0.390) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| Retired: Retired | 0.322 | 0.259 | 0.277 | 0.179 |
| | (0.356) | (0.216) | (0.224) | (0.287) |
| Education: Early leaver | 0.044 | −0.398 | −0.161 | −0.145 |
| | (0.495) | (0.304) | (0.277) | (0.347) |
| Education: Before year 12 | 0.234 | −0.258 | −0.003 | −0.089 |
| | (0.406) | (0.261) | (0.249) | (0.318) |
| Education: Year 12 | −0.597 | −0.240 | −0.372 | −0.801 |
| | (0.485) | (0.282) | (0.251) | (0.328) |
| Education: Trade quals | −0.414 | −0.063 | 0.323 | 0.325 |
| | (0.449) | (0.267) | (0.244) | (0.306) |
| Education: Other TAFE | −0.380 | −0.374 | 0.004 | 0.009 |
| | (0.340) | (0.209) | (0.190) | (0.239) |
| Income: $400 – under $800 pw | −0.250 | 0.017 | 0.253 | −0.126 |
| | (0.318) | (0.180) | (0.156) | (0.201) |
| Income: $800 – under $1000 pw | −0.234 | −0.071 | −0.282 | −0.324 |
| | (0.444) | (0.261) | (0.231) | (0.284) |
| Income: $1000 – under $1500 pw | −0.276 | 0.123 | 0.035 | −0.128 |
| | (0.400) | (0.241) | (0.215) | (0.266) |
| Income: $1500 – under $2000 pw | −0.063 | 0.699 | 0.171 | −0.130 |
| | (0.522) | (0.320) | (0.310) | (0.393) |
| Income: $2000 or more | −0.540 | 0.040 | −0.286 | −0.032 |
| | (0.473) | (0.308) | (0.340) | (0.427) |
| Occupation: PMC | 0.659 | 0.209 | 0.325 | −0.191 |
| | (0.288) | (0.178) | (0.173) | (0.228) |
| Occupation: Blue collar | −0.320 | −0.058 | 0.083 | 0.097 |
| | (0.372) | (0.204) | (0.174) | (0.213) |
| Industry: Agriculture | 0.016 | 0.281 | −0.815 | −1.350 |
| | (0.645) | (0.400) | (0.448) | (0.665) |
| Industry: Mining | 0.417 | −0.783 | 0.160 | 0.182 |
| | (0.667) | (0.483) | (0.403) | (0.520) |
| Industry: Manufacturing | 0.562 | 0.343 | 0.124 | 0.294 |
| | (0.542) | (0.317) | (0.289) | (0.366) |
| Industry: Utilities/construction | 0.370 | 0.138 | 0.147 | −0.307 |
| | (0.548) | (0.325) | (0.285) | (0.390) |
| Industry: Wholesale/retail | 0.521 | −0.011 | −0.003 | 0.063 |
| | (0.489) | (0.299) | (0.255) | (0.342) |
| Industry: Accommodation | 0.131 | −0.143 | −0.612 | 0.231 |
| | (0.612) | (0.346) | (0.324) | (0.397) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **S. approve** | **Approve** | **Disapprove** | **S. disapprove** |
| Industry: Transport | 0.541 | −0.569 | −0.288 | −0.679 |
| | (0.632) | (0.394) | (0.337) | (0.433) |
| Industry: Business services | 1.145 | 0.137 | −0.037 | 0.188 |
| | (0.469) | (0.286) | (0.254) | (0.329) |
| Industry: Government | −0.075 | 0.393 | 0.515 | 0.184 |
| | (0.713) | (0.348) | (0.291) | (0.367) |
| Industry: Education | 0.174 | 0.072 | −0.190 | −0.033 |
| | (0.699) | (0.360) | (0.309) | (0.390) |
| Industry: Health | −0.416 | −0.104 | −0.050 | −0.085 |
| | (0.607) | (0.320) | (0.270) | (0.356) |
| Position: Supervisory | 0.028 | 0.233 | −0.216 | 0.017 |
| | (0.317) | (0.189) | (0.186) | (0.243) |
| Position: Non-supervisory | −0.028 | 0.157 | −0.060 | 0.057 |
| | (0.317) | (0.186) | (0.177) | (0.235) |
| Sector: Public | −0.542 | −0.265 | −0.342 | 0.167 |
| | (0.430) | (0.217) | (0.185) | (0.226) |
| Union: Current member | −0.163 | 0.052 | 0.542 | 0.981 |
| | (0.498) | (0.257) | (0.190) | (0.232) |
| Union: Previous member | −0.530 | 0.048 | 0.216 | 0.374 |
| | (0.268) | (0.152) | (0.141) | (0.189) |
| Class: Upper/upper middle | 0.148 | −0.014 | 0.204 | 0.043 |
| | (0.506) | (0.279) | (0.267) | (0.343) |
| Class: Lower middle | −0.293 | −0.141 | 0.128 | 0.145 |
| | (0.497) | (0.269) | (0.250) | (0.315) |
| Class: Working | 0.494 | −0.359 | 0.178 | −0.068 |
| | (0.505) | (0.281) | (0.247) | (0.314) |
| Left–right: Left | 0.034 | −0.173 | 0.903 | 1.462 |
| | (0.585) | (0.295) | (0.181) | (0.204) |
| Left–right: Right | 1.281 | 0.560 | −0.139 | 0.038 |
| | (0.247) | (0.154) | (0.193) | (0.264) |
| Status: Low | −0.239 | −0.279 | 0.284 | 0.231 |
| | (0.498) | (0.263) | (0.180) | (0.223) |
| Status: Top | 0.318 | −0.142 | 0.053 | −0.102 |
| | (0.274) | (0.163) | (0.151) | (0.193) |
| Voting: Coalition | 0.874 | 1.092 | −0.637 | −1.410 |
| | (0.321) | (0.163) | (0.137) | (0.237) |
| Voting: ALP | −0.245 | −0.246 | 0.566 | 0.834 |
| | (0.389) | (0.187) | (0.105) | (0.139) |

| | Approve or disapprove of WorkChoices | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S. approve | Approve | Disapprove | S. disapprove |
| Voting: Other | 0.140 | 0.360 | −0.067 | 0.199 |
| | (0.502) | (0.235) | (0.175) | (0.227) |
| Voting: Greens | −0.578 | −0.123 | 0.367 | 0.410 |
| | (0.875) | (0.328) | (0.187) | (0.236) |
| Indiv.: Agree | −0.440 | −0.092 | 1.419 | 2.024 |
| | (0.328) | (0.161) | (0.137) | (0.210) |
| Indiv.: Disagree | 1.326 | 0.783 | 0.423 | 0.708 |
| | (0.254) | (0.168) | (0.218) | (0.329) |
| Direct: Disagree | 0.423 | −0.023 | 0.463 | 1.132 |
| | (0.954) | (0.351) | (0.199) | (0.225) |
| UnionPower: Agree | 2.417 | 1.059 | 0.099 | 0.293 |
| | (0.380) | (0.160) | (0.178) | (0.272) |
| UnionPower: Disagree | 1.286 | 0.433 | 0.832 | 1.425 |
| | (0.459) | (0.188) | (0.138) | (0.194) |

Notes: Outcome (dependent) variable: approve or disapprove of WorkChoices, on five-point scale (with 'Neutral' and 'Can't choose' combined as reference category). Omitted categories are: Female; Aged under 25; Not retired; University qualifications; Income under $400; Occupation other; Industry other; Managerial position; Private sector; Never a union member; No class identification; Middle of left–right scale; Middle status; Voting informal; 'Neutral' category for last three items. All categories (except 'Voting') are coded as 'treatment' (or 'indicator'). Voting is coded using 'effect' coding, such that the comparison is with the group mean.

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2007.

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