

Oposition wary of IR changes

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Some federal Opposition members are criticising the Government's industrial relations changes, despite promising to support the bill in the Lower House of Parliament.

The Government's Fair Work Bill is being debated in the House of Representatives.

The Opposition says it will let the bill go through to the Senate but is reserving the right to move amendments.

Opposition workplace relations spokesman Michael Keenan says he is deeply concerned that the bill will increase unemployment.

"Just as Australians understand that the Labor Party stands for deficits, they also understand that Labor stands for unemployment," he said.

"The Deputy Prime Minister risks becoming the empress of unemployment."

Liberal backbencher Stuart Robert says the Government's bill breaks a list of promises, particularly about the unions' right of entry to workplaces.

"These are things Mr Deputy Speaker did not vote for, in fact the Australian people were expressly and explicitly told the exact opposite," he said.

"They were told that many of these features would not be in any new legislation."

But Labor MP Greg Combet says the Government's bill must be passed intact to improve the rights and conditions of workers.

"The Fair Work Bill does represent a huge improvement in the rights of the working people of this country, and represents a tremendous step forward in respecting fundamental values of fairness and justice and decent treatment," he said.

Labor backbencher Jim Turnour says the bill balances the interests of Australian workers and their employers.

"This legislation delivers on Labor's commitment to deliver fairness and flexibility into the Australian workplace, the commitment we made to the Australian people at the last election," he said.