



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

**WORKPLACE RELATIONS
AMENDMENT (CODIFYING
CONTEMPT OFFENCES) BILL 2003**

In Committee

SPEECH

Tuesday, 2 March 2004

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 2 March 2004
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Questioner
Speaker Collins, Sen Jacinta

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (6.46 pm)—Democrat amendments (12) to (15) insert new increases to penalties for breaches of awards and agreements. We appreciate that Senator Murray is seeking to introduce some sense of balance into this bill by increasing the penalties for what are more likely to be employer initiated breaches of the industrial relations system. However, this attempt is futile given that the federal inspectors who enforce these provisions rarely, if ever, seek penalties. There were no prosecutions in the last quarter, for instance, according to the department at estimates just two weeks ago. Because these penalties are so rarely enforced it is also impossible to say whether they are an adequate deterrent or not. For any review of these penalties to be effective it would need to occur in the context of the resourcing of the enforcement and compliance parts of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. In the current enforcement context a review of penalties is meaningless, and therefore Labor will not support it.