



**ACTU**

australian council of trade unions



**JOBS  
YOU CAN  
COUNT ON**

**FACTSHEET**

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**Change  
THE  
RULES**

Australian  
Unions  
Join. For a  
better life.

**Secure Jobs.  
Fair Pay.**

# **Our Jobs You Can Count On strategy is a clear and comprehensive pathway to plot a course away from increased casualised, insecure, lower paid work towards decent, secure jobs that workers and their families can count on.**

**It will provide the foundation for a booming national economy and enhance the security and stability of work for millions of Australians.**

The union movement is campaigning hard to Change the Rules of Australia's labour laws, to address the big problems of inequality and insecure work that are the result of a generation of failed trickle-down economic and labour policies. Our proposals will go a long way to improving work, giving workers meaningful rights and a fair say at work, and lifting wages.

Australia also needs a strong plan to create more and better jobs throughout the labour market. Part of the problem faced by workers, in addition to outdated and ineffective industrial laws, has been a shortage of decent work: there are not enough jobs being created relative to the number of people who need work, and too many of the jobs that have been created are in low-wage, insecure, precarious positions.

Australia needs an ambitious job strategy, to go along with Changing the Rules. That way, we can offer Australians hope of finding a decent job – as well as confidence they will be treated well when they get one.

Our plan for Jobs You Can Count On aims to stabilise and restore job quality, at the same time as dramatically expanding the quantity of work available. We specifically aim to support local business through effective policies to create more high quality, secure local jobs through:

- Moving to an even playing field by fixing the broken laws and regulations that are failing to protect workers in Australia.
- Encouraging the growth and development of local industries to provide good, secure jobs.
- Addressing gender inequality, discrimination and marginalisation.

## **PART 1: MOVING TO A MORE EVEN PLAYING FIELD**

Australia is getting wealthier but big corporations and the very rich have used their power to rewrite the rules to take more of the gains while Australia experiences greater inequality and many are being left behind. Australia's industrial laws have radically changed 5 times in 25 years. The Fair Work Act was designed to get rid of WorkChoices. It served its purpose at the time, but it isn't purpose-built for the new economy.

Corporations are now deliberately organising both their capital and their workforce to avoid the legal protections that do exist.

Industrial laws have always existed with one primary purpose, that is to address the inherent power imbalance that exists between employers and workers. That imbalance has never been greater. Our laws need to change.

The attack on basic protections for workers has gone too far. We have to restore basic worker rights that have been lost. We need policies that help move our workplaces towards a more even playing field and achieve basic rights for workers in the workplace again.

We must reverse the cuts to penalty rates, raise the minimum wage, change our industrial relations laws and look at ways we can help support trade unions.

The priority areas for our industrial relations framework are:

1. Creating more secure jobs.
2. Improving workers' rights and living standards.
3. Creating a strong, fair and independent umpire.
4. Make bargaining fair so workers can get a pay rise.

## **PART 2: CREATING GOOD JOBS BY PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING LOCAL INDUSTRY**

In order to create more and better jobs, we need to promote, support and encourage local industry.

Decades of the dominant 'trickle-down' neo-liberal economic ideology have delivered policy settings that favour large corporations and wealthy individuals on the basis that market forces alone will eventually see the benefits of growth filter down to the rest of society.

The reality is much different. Some of the most successful countries and industries are those where governments have worked in collaboration with industry to provide support. We need to support Australian industry to create local jobs.

To create good jobs and support local industry we must:

- Support local jobs and industry through targeted assistance. Support should be given to those industries that provide wider benefit to Australia and its people;
- Ensure our trade agreements benefit local industry and workers. The purpose of international trade agreements signed by Australia should be to maximise the economic benefit to Australians through trade. Unfortunately, the Government has lost sight of this objective. We must ensure that Australia benefits from trade agreements going forward;
- Support local jobs and industry through government procurement. The focus on lowest cost procurement, regardless of other wider economic benefits, needs to stop. Government procurement rules should explicitly encourage local suppliers, manufacturers and service providers;
- Foster demand by improving wages, government investment and supporting exports. Good job creation requires fostering demand for the locally produced goods and services that workers would produce. We must encourage household spending by raising wages, boost government investment and infrastructure, and encourage demand for Australian exports;
- Create skills for the future by improving education, training and apprenticeships. The purpose of education is not simply to develop narrow skills benefiting specific individual employers and workplaces, but to equip people with the general skills that benefit the economy and workers more broadly;

- Ensure a just transition for industries and sectors undergoing transformation, creating industry plans for innovation and technological change which includes measures to assist workers to transition to jobs in emerging industries. Innovation is crucial to our future prosperity, but we must ensure that everyone benefits from new technology, not just the few;
- Have strong public and private infrastructure investment. Strong capital investment in both the private and public sectors of the economy is crucial to job-creation and economic performance;
- Create good, secure jobs in the private sector. Private sector service jobs have been a major source of new employment in Australia in recent decades, but all too often are dominated by low-wage, insecure jobs. We must support the creation of good, secure jobs in all industries;
- Protect and create good, secure jobs in public services. Trying to reduce fiscal deficits through privatisation and large cuts in social programs and services does not support the economy or improve the public service. New jobs in education, health care, and other caring and human services have played a crucial role in supporting overall employment and incomes;
- Create good jobs in clean energy and environmental industries. Scientists and economists alike agree that a transition toward a less polluting, more sustainable economy is essential. We need policies and investments to support the growth of sustainable industries that have so much job-creating potential.

## **PART 3: POLICIES TO FIGHT GENDER INEQUALITY, MARGINALISATION AND DISCRIMINATION**

Attaining more equity in employment outcomes, with consequent benefits for family, community and individual wellbeing, is essential to an inclusive and fair Australia.

Systematic discrimination, inequality, and marginalisation mean that millions of Australians have not shared in the prosperity that comes with decent work. Pro-active measures must be taken to help systematically disadvantaged and rural and remote communities overcome economic and social barriers, and gain full access to their fair share of the decent work resulting from our plan.

Measures to accomplish this include addressing the widening gender pay gap and women's continued depressed labour force participation through measures including the provision of accessible, affordable, quality child care, improvements to paid parental leave, enforceable rights to family friendly work arrangements and paid domestic violence leave, stronger pay equity reporting and support for girls and young women at all levels of the education system to enter non-traditional careers.

**Having a good job – one that is meaningful, safe, secure, and fairly paid – allows Australians to earn a living, support their families and contribute to the economy and society.**

**When jobs are abundant, well-paid and secure, stronger wellbeing and esteem improves, living standards rise and both household and government budgets improve.**

**Our jobs strategy will create more high quality, secure local jobs and when combined with the strengthening of employment regulations through reforms to workplace and industrial relations policy, we will drive a broad improvement in job quality – enhancing the security and stability of work for millions of Australians.**

Find out more at [actu.org.au](http://actu.org.au)

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