

## Jobs, rights, fairness and equality on the agenda as unions prepare for 2012 ACTU Congress

Better protections for workers exercising their rights, a more balanced bargaining system and a range of improvements to economic and workplace conditions to help deliver secure jobs are all at the heart of a dynamic agenda for Australian unions leading into next week's ACTU Congress.

The ACTU today outlines its vision to create a better future for Australian workers with secure jobs and a stronger, more equitable economy, to be endorsed at next week's 2012 Congress.

Almost 1000 delegates representing workers from every industry and sector in Australia will attend the ACTU Congress at the Sydney Convention Centre from 15-17 May. ACTU President Ged Kearney said the triennial Congress – often referred to as a “Workers’ Parliament - was the largest and most important gathering of Australian unions.

In the lead up to Congress, draft policies have today been released covering industrial relations, social and economic policy and representation and organisation of workers. The policies are available at [www.actucongress.org.au](http://www.actucongress.org.au)

Ms Kearney said the Congress would outline a positive agenda for Australian workers against a backdrop of increasingly militant campaign by employers to destroy the hard-fought rights of workers.

“We will put forward solutions to counter this employer militancy, through better bargaining powers for workers and stronger representation rights, including a Charter of Delegates’ Rights,” Ms Kearney said.

“But we also have a growing number of workers engaged in insecure work who are often powerless against hostile employers who put profits before workers.

“In response, unions will call on the Government to strengthen the rights for employees in insecure work, and to improve their conditions of employment.

“Improvements need to be made to allow workers to bargain for job security, and to prevent big employers from holding the economy to ransom through their refusal to bargain in good faith.

“The agenda for wages and conditions will include lifting the minimum wage to \$660, improving rates of pay for young workers, and expanding the National Employment Standards.

“Australians unequivocally voted in 2007 for better rights at work and unions have subsequently achieved much success, including the negotiation of the Fair Work Act. But we are seeing a growing wave of attacks on the wages, conditions and job security of workers.

“This short-sighted approach will ultimately lead to a weaker economy. We know that a strong economy is underpinned by good jobs, a workforce in which everyone is given a chance to participate and in turn contribute to the economy.”

A comprehensive plan for economic and employment growth through vibrant service, manufacturing and resources sectors, alongside a strong public sector, will also be debated at the Congress, as will tax reform for a fairer and more inclusive society.

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