



Australian Council of Trade Unions

MEDIA RELEASE

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Recovery of global economy must place decent work at front and centre: unions

Decent jobs for all workers should be at the heart of government actions to steer the world economy out of the slump caused by the Global Financial Crisis, say unions.

Employment growth and the right to decent work must be the benchmark for economic recovery, said ACTU President Sharan Burrow on World Day for Decent Work 2009.

The annual global call to action by the worlds' unions carries the theme this year of 'Get the World to Work', and comes less than a fortnight after the G20 Leaders Summit in Pittsburgh, which committed to recovery plans that support decent work, help preserve employment, and prioritise job growth.

It is estimated that global unemployment is likely to increase by up to 59 million by the end of the year, while more than 200 million workers could be pushed into extreme poverty by the GFC.

"Employment with fair pay and decent conditions is the pathway out of poverty for tens of millions of people around the world," said Ms Burrow, who is also President of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

"Progress towards a recovery from the economic downturn and reform of the global economy must enshrine the principles of decent work and full employment.

"The downturn in the world economy over the past 12 months was made worse by an imbalance caused by a broken economic model.

"Over the years, real wages fell or stagnated while profit shares reached record levels.

"We must seize this opportunity to build a new global economy that puts decent jobs and social justice first."

Ms Burrow said although Australia had been shielded from the worst of the global recession, the decent work agenda applied equally here.

At its 2009 Congress in Brisbane earlier this year, for the first time the ACTU endorsed a Decent Work policy to improve the quality and dignity of work in Australia today.

The agenda's seven key components are an inclusive workforce, satisfying jobs, friendly workplaces, reasonable working hours, fair treatment at work, freedom, equality and dignity at work, and progressive use of technology.

The commencement of the Fair Work Act in July will provide a safety net underpinning employment in Australia, but unions intend to pursue and promote the decent work agenda over coming years through enterprise bargaining.

On World Day for Decent Work, Australian unions will be joining their counterparts around the world with a range of activities.

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