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Whatever the name – Government agenda is anti-worker

The Employment Minister Eric Abetz has a clear agenda to chip away at workplace laws protecting workers rights, wages and conditions by ‘evolution not revolution’.

“Whatever the Government calls it and however they plan to do it, the end result is still the same – workers will be worse off under the Government’s anti-worker agenda,” said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

“The Fair Work Amendment Bill due before the Senate will strip away current protections around individual contracts and make it easier for employers to force workers to give up their penalty rates.

“Most people signing these individual contracts do so under pressure to keep their jobs, particularly when starting a new job.”

The Government’s proposed laws go even further by making employees sign a statement that effectively signs away their right to compensation, said Ms Kearney.

“So even if a court finds that an agreement was so unfair that it should never have been entered into in the first place, the worker may never be able to recover their lost wages.

“It doesn’t matter what the Government calls this bill – it’s simply an anti-worker agenda to appease employer groups with individual contracts that go further than the Howard Government.”

The Fair Work Amendment Bill:

- Takes away protections for workers on individual contracts that can cut wages, including weekend and penalty rates
- Gives employers a veto over industrial action
- Allows employers to not pay-out some annual leave if a worker is sacked or leaves a job
- Reduces the rights of workers to talk to their union at work if they need help
- Gives mining and construction employers a special deal that allows them to write their own Enterprise Agreements

Eric Abetz has spelt out a clear agenda to attack worker’s rights and wages, said Ms Kearney.

“The Government is starting with the Fair Work Amendment Bill in the Senate before it launches a Productivity Commission review of workplace laws with terms of reference that may as well have been written by big business.

“Mr Abetz can repeat his mantra of ‘evolution not revolution’ all he likes - but no one should be fooled. This is the first step of the Coalition’s agenda to strip away worker’s rights and wages.

Ms Kearney said the Abbott Government went to the election promising workers would benefit, or at least not be worse, off under a Coalition Government.

“The Government has no mandate for these changes. It’s an attack on the rights of millions of Australian workers that goes way beyond what was flagged at the election.”

Unions will be urging the crossbench Senators to protect workers and vote against the bill.

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