

Tuesday 9 May 2023

Budget acts on wages, health, energy transition and cost of living

The Albanese Government has taken another step towards delivering on its mandate to get wages moving for working people and to provide cost-of-living relief.

This budget continues the huge task of fixing a decade of Coalition neglect and failure. Real wages have fallen for the past two years, and while tonight's budget predicts real wage growth by early next year, there is a long way to go for workers' real wages to recover fully.

Full employment and wage growth are good for the budget and the economy. More people in jobs and higher wages (and therefore taxes) have driven the biggest improvements in the budget bottom line.

The ACTU welcomes the 15% pay rise for aged care workers, most of whom are women providing quality frontline care to older Australians. More must be done to deliver wage rises in the care economy, including in early childhood education and care, and for Government to lead the way by lifting public sector wages.

There is also an urgent need for action to deliver more secure jobs, stamp out wage theft and close loopholes that allow employers to drive down wages.

Unions back the establishment of the National Net Zero Authority to support workers and communities affected by the move to a net-zero economy.

The ACTU supports the Government's work on progressing gender equality through extending the single parent payment and lifting aged care workers' wages. Further action is needed to properly value women's work, pay super on paid parental leave and remove the activity test for childcare.

We support important measures to alleviate cost-of-living pressures, including energy bill rebates, more affordable childcare, cheaper medicines and the historic investment in Medicare that expands access to free healthcare.

Increases to JobSeeker and rent assistance are a start, but more is needed to lift people out of poverty.

We welcome the government's efforts to ensure companies that profit from selling Australia's resources and multinationals pay their fair share of tax.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"This budget shows us that more people in work and higher wages are not just good for workers but for the entire economy. It contains measures to lift wages, including a 15% increase for aged care workers.

"After a decade of neglect and policies that have driven down wages, getting wages moving is still one of the biggest challenges for the economy.

"The Government's support of increases to the minimum wage and new laws that boost workers' bargaining power and pay equity rights are crucial, but more urgent action is needed to lift wages in the care economy and the public sector and deliver stronger laws to combat wage theft and insecure work.

“The ACTU supports the cost-of-living measures in this budget, the historic improvements in Medicare and the commitment to gender equality through making childcare more affordable and extending supporting parents’ payments.

“We finally have a government that takes climate change seriously, reflected in the National Net Zero Authority that will provide real solutions and job opportunities for workers and communities impacted by Australia’s energy transition.”

ENDS

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