

## ACTU seeks to strengthen right to disconnect, as Dutton promises to abolish it

Today the ACTU lodged its submission to the Fair Work Commission on the right to disconnect being incorporated into modern awards.

The submission advocates for a clause that holds employers accountable for proper staffing and planning to minimise out-of-hours contact, arguing that employers being disorganised is not an excuse for not paying workers.

The right to disconnect allows workers to refuse unreasonable work-related communication outside of working hours, which is essential for a healthy work-life balance. The right would also ensure employers properly compensate employees for working out of hours. The right was passed by Parliament in February, and is set to become operative on August 26, 2024, for non-small business employers, and August 26, 2025, for small businesses.

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton has vowed to eliminate the right to disconnect if the Coalition wins the next election. On Friday, the Coalition was defeated in the Senate when it attempted to pass two amendments – one to abolish the right to disconnect in its entirety, and another to eliminate it for employees of small businesses.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“Unions are arguing that awards clearly set out workers’ rights to have a life outside work. Changes in technology and work arrangements cannot be used to undermine the right to be paid for the work you do and to have the right to disconnect.

“Peter Dutton wants Australians to work longer hours for lower wages while they face cost-of-living pressures.

“The right to disconnect is an important part of addressing cost-of-living, because people deserve to be paid wages for every hour they work.

“Peter Dutton’s promise to take away the right to disconnect shows just how out of touch he is with working Australians. Abolishing this right would worsen the work-life balance of families and create more burnout and stress in people’s lives.

“A healthier workplace is a more productive workplace.

“Establishing a clear separation between work and the rest of our lives is important for improving mental health and enabling all of us to spend quality time with our loved ones.

“Peter Dutton is more interested in appeasing big business than standing up for everyday Australians who are trying to juggle work and life with the wages they earn.”

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** Cameron Warasta 0447 159 467