

Mining giants are riding high and can afford fair wages

Australian Unions are taking aim at the country's most powerful mining interests for lobbying the Coalition to undo the Albanese Government's new Same Job Same Pay rights which come into effect on the first of November.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus will today call out the Coalition's commitment to big business that if elected, it would review Same Job Same Pay rights unleashing a fresh round of wage cutting labour hire schemes.

Same Job Same Pay rights require companies to pay labour hire workers at least the same amount as directly employed workers; closing a loophole that big businesses like Qantas and BHP pioneered as a wage cutting scheme.

The Fair Work Commission can start making orders from 1 November, but already employers across the country have made the decision to abandon the use of labour hire to cut wages by bringing workers in-house or upping their pay. This has occurred in industries as diverse as warehousing, aviation, meat processing and mining. However, mining companies that have the deepest pockets are still fighting in the courts and politically to reverse the laws.

The mining industry generated \$253 billion in the past financial year. In the last decade, profits have increased by almost four times more than wages in the sector. Despite that, the mining lobby is determined to bring back the use of its labour hire wage cutting schemes.

The industry is so profitable that it could have funded a \$9,000 cost of living bonus for every worker in Australia this year and still remain the most profitable industry in the country, according to a new ACTU analysis.

The cost of the Same Job Same Pay reforms to the mining sector amounts to less than half a percentage point of annual profits – 0.016 per cent of annual profits.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

“The cost of paying labour hire workers fairly and equally pales in comparison to mining company profits, It is small change for them. However, it is not small change for the working people and their families who are seeing life changing pay rises because of these laws.

“This week thousands of workers will see pay rises flow through, many of them very significant because the Albanese Government withstood the campaign by big business last year to stop workers getting better rights. However, the big mining company owners and CEOs are demanding the Coalition restore their wage cutting schemes. Last month, Shadow Finance Minister, Jane Hume confirmed that these rights are under threat should they win the election.

“The thing is many big businesses will always be looking for ways to cut wages. They will always be looking for loopholes and legal schemes to increase their profits. The job of a government is to support Australian workers and their families by making sure this does not happen.

“The Minerals Council of Australia and Gina Rinehart talk about the new rights as threatening to increase workplace conflict and drive away investment.

“It is true mining investment is down, but not because of union efforts to win more job security for workers. Over the last decade, mining investment as a percentage of GDP has fallen from 9.2 per cent to 2.9 per cent. For every dollar the industry is reinvesting back into Australia, the industry and its shareholders are banking \$1.50 in profits. The biggest barrier to mining investment in this country is not workplace relations but the big mining companies’ own greed.”

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Media Contact: Luisa Saccotelli 0400 149 901