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New employer election wish list demands a return of wage-cutting schemes

The ACTU today warns that a pre-election wish list by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) will restore the wage cutting schemes used by companies like BHP and Qantas to reduce workers' wages and conditions.

ACCI's newly released pre-election priorities document 'Agenda for Business' calls for a reversal of the Closing Loopholes Bill, to scrap multi-employer bargaining provisions and to re-open the labour hire and casual work loopholes.

The closing of the labour-hire loophole, known as 'Same Job Same Pay', prevented companies from implementing wage-cutting schemes by using low-paid labour-hire workers doing the same work as their in-house directly employed co-workers.

The legislation has already led to permanent jobs and significant pay rises for workers across the economy such as flight attendants, miners, warehouse and logistics workers, and meatworkers.

The casual work loophole effectively allowed an employer to label any employee a casual in their contract of employment and created barriers for casual employees to become permanent. The closing of this loophole is delivering greater job security for all workers.

The multi-employer bargaining laws allowed workers to seek fairer wages and conditions when negotiating collectively with employers. This has delivered wage increases for workers in early childhood education, the community sector, private schools, disability and aged care.

The reforms led to a surge in workers covered by collective bargaining agreements, from 1.8 million prior to the reforms to 2.2 million since the new laws were passed. The extra 400,000 Australians covered under collective agreements are estimated to have added \$6.3 billion to workers' wages in the last year.

The Coalition voted against the Closing Loopholes Bill in Parliament and has publicly committed to repealing significant elements of it. These include scrapping multi-employer bargaining and re-opening the labour hire and casual work loopholes.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"It is unsurprising that big business is making pre-election demands to take away workers' rights. They want their wage-cutting schemes back. Every Australian should be deeply concerned that the real wage growth they have just started to see after a decade of wage suppression under the Coalition is now at risk.

"We know that if big business has an opportunity to cut wages, most of them would take it. The good employers who do not, are then competing with those who do. We must not let big business get their way in this election.

"Peter Dutton and every Coalition MP voted against closing wage-cutting loopholes. If they are elected, the gains working people have made are at risk. You cannot be serious about helping ordinary people with cost-of-living pressures while supporting big business wage-cutting schemes."

ENDS

Media Contact: Cameron Warasta (0447) 159 467