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ACTU accuses Gina Rinehart of oligarch-style influence over the Coalition

The ACTU has criticised billionaire mining magnate Gina Rinehart for behaving like an oligarch for trying to buy influence over the Coalition's industrial relations policy.

Disclosures from the Australian Electoral Commission have revealed that Gina Rinehart is the Coalition's second-largest donor, channeling \$500,000 in political donations to the Coalition using multiple accounts through her company, Hancock Prospecting.

It's clear that Australia's richest person is seeking to buy her way into shaping workplace laws that will drive down wages for working people.

Rinehart's influence over Coalition policies is clearly on display given the Coalition's commitment to scrap multi-employer bargaining and re-open the labour hire and casual work loopholes, which has allowed mining companies to cut wages and conditions.

Rinehart has also recently hosted fundraisers for Peter Dutton, charging guests \$14,000 a head, an amount just below the threshold that would require donors to be publicly listed.

She is also thought to be the major backer of the IPA – the influential Liberal Party-aligned think tank that has called for the abolition of the minimum wage and the dismantling of workplace rights and protections.

In March 2024, when Opposition Leader Peter Dutton flew to Perth for just an hour to attend the 70th birthday party of Gina Rinehart, before returning to Melbourne to campaign on cost-of-living. When asked about his relationship with Rinehart, Dutton said:

"I was very proud to be at Gina Rinehart's 70th birthday. I consider her to be a dear friend, a great Australian and Australia's most successful businesswoman."

In a speech given to the Sydney Mining Club on 23 August 2012, Rinehart claimed that Australian wages were too expensive and too uncompetitive:

"Africans want to work, and its workers are willing to work for less than two dollars a day. Such statistics make me worry for this country's future."

In a 2012 article in the Australian Resources and Investment Magazine, Rinehart wrote:

"If you're jealous of those with more money, don't just sit there and complain. Do something to make more money yourself – spend less time drinking or smoking and socialising, and more time working."

"Why not ask whether lowering the minimum wages and lowering taxes would make employers hire more people?"

The Opposition Leader has yet to condemn Rinehart's comments. Instead, the Coalition has committed to reversing the industrial relations reforms of the Albanese Government, despite an independent review finding they were operating as intended to get wages moving again.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"Democracy should belong to the people, not an oligarch like Gina Rinehart, who wields massive influence over Peter Dutton and thinks Australians should work for two dollars a day.

“No billionaire should be able to use their limitless resources to influence politics to scrap workers’ rights.

“Big mining money influence over the Coalition is dangerous. It’s no coincidence that the Coalition has committed to re-opening wage-cutting schemes for big business and has refused to rule out any cuts to penalty rates. Workers can’t afford to lose any rights at work.

“The wages of working-class Australians are on the line this election. Peter Dutton should publicly condemn Rinehart’s attacks on decent wages and rule out any cuts to penalty rates. The Coalition wants to restore wage-cutting schemes used by big business.”

ENDS

Media Contact: Cameron Warasta (0447) 159 467