

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

## Employer lobby furious that IR reforms are improving wages

Australian Unions have attacked big business employer group demands for an overhaul of the Albanese Government's Secure Jobs Better Pay reforms as a plan to weaken wages growth.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have called for the scrapping of the multi-employer bargaining reforms.

The Australian Industry Group also attacks multi-employer bargaining, claiming elements of the new system are 'unfair to employers.'

The calls from big business come in response to the release of an independent review's draft report into the Secure Jobs Better Pay reforms to workplace laws, on Monday.

The independent review of the Secure Jobs Better Pay reforms debunks these claims, finding no evidence to support them.

The review did find early evidence that the reforms are getting wages moving again, improving job security and closing the gender pay gap. The laws were also operating "appropriately and effectively" with 'minimal unintended consequences.'

It cited improvements to collective bargaining and wages, contributing to 0.7 percent growth in real wages in the year to September 2024 - more than was achieved under nine years of previous Coalition governments.

The Secure Jobs Better Pay reforms came into operation in late 2022.

The Business Council of Australia went even further, calling on the Government to reinstate a series of loopholes that have helped its big business members pay workers less for years. It has called for the repeal of Same Job Same Pay for labour hire workers, and to allow an employer to call anyone a casual employee.

The review said the reforms had revived collective bargaining, lifted the number of workers covered by them, resulting in overall wages starting to improve.

Peter Dutton and the Coalition sided with big business by voting against the reforms. We call on the Coalition to declare their positions on IR reforms prior to the election.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary, Sally McManus:

"Employer lobbyists want their wage cutting schemes back. They opposed these IR reforms because they oppose pay rises and two years later, they have not changed their tune.

"The independent panel rejected the employer groups claims that the reforms would have negative consequences, finding no evidence to support them.

"The independent panel says the early signs are positive, that collective bargaining is increasing, especially the coverage of workers under collective agreements. Wages have started to improve.

"The review shows real wages have picked up by more in the past 12 months than under all 9 years of the Coalition Government.

“Yet employer groups keep trying to take these measures away. This would mean the real wages that working people are finally starting to see would significantly weaken as well.

“The last thing working people need is a return to the decade of wages flatlining under the Dutton Coalition.

“These reforms greatly contributed to getting wages moving and that must be what bosses don’t like: having to pay people a cent more than they have to.”

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** Luisa Saccotelli (0400) 149 901