

Tuesday, 27 July 2010

Abbott and Liberals exposed as having no plan to close the pay gap for working women

The pay equity gap between men and women would not be closed by a Liberal Opposition which is more interested in exploiting it to reduce the cost of its unrealistic paid parental leave scheme, say unions.

Rather than suggesting how to raise the average pay of women to the same level as men, Tony Abbott and the Liberals would prefer to keep women's pay low to reduce the cost impact of their PPL proposal, said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

Today, the Liberals' Finance Spokesman Andrew Robb has admitted there is a gender pay equity gap, but there is total silence from the Opposition about how to close it, Ms Kearney said.

"Across the average of men and women, men do typically earn more money." (Andrew Robb quoted on ABC Online, 27 July 2010).

"Under the former Liberal Government's WorkChoices laws, pay inequality grew for the first time in 25 years, with cuts to real minimum wages, the removal of the award system that allowed for test cases to lift basic conditions, and the use of individual contracts," Ms Kearney said.

"Today, as a consequence, the gender pay gap is 18%, with the average woman worker earning \$239 a week less than the average male. Women earn \$1 million less than men over their working lives.

"Labor's new Fair Work laws for the first time provide an avenue for cases to be launched on pay equity grounds, and unions are currently pursuing a landmark test case to lift the pay of workers in the female-dominated social and community services sector.

"The Labor Government has been supportive of this case, but typically, Tony Abbott and the Liberals have been silent on how to close the pay gap for women.

"Despite his apparent recent conversion, Tony Abbott has a lifelong record of disdain towards the issues that matter to working women.

"He famously said a national paid parental leave scheme would only be introduced his 'dead body'. He begrudgingly allowed Labor's scheme to pass into law – an historic reform by the Labor Government that follows decades of campaigning by unions and women's groups.

"Tony Abbott knows his own parental leave scheme has no chance of ever becoming reality, but he continues to mislead working women.

"Tony Abbott simply cannot be trusted by working women."

Media contact:

Mark Phillips ph (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; mphillips@actu.org.au