

30 December 2015

A tale of two Commissions: Government attempts to justify assault on penalty rates

The release of the Trade Union Royal Commission's final report, just days after the Productivity Commission's workplace relations review, is further evidence that the Royal Commission has been used by the Coalition Government to pursue its own political ends.

This Royal Commission was a political exercise from the start. The Coalition Government will attempt to use the Royal Commission's findings to weaken unions and the Government's political opponents as it gears up for a 2016 assault on penalty rates.

It is clear from the timing of the Royal Commission's report that these two reports were always designed to attack the rights and pay of working people and undermine unions who defend their rights and pay.

The ACTU rejects any accusation of widespread corrupt, unlawful behavior in the union movement. We take a zero-tolerance approach to unlawful conduct, whether in the union movement or elsewhere. Isolated instances of unlawful conduct must always be referred to the police. Unions stand united to ensure any individuals convicted should feel the full force of the law. There is no place for crooks in our movement.

The ACTU welcomes sensible discussions about best practice governance. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull must allow space and time for these discussions to occur. This report should not be used to rush legislation that removes employee rights.

While the Government has spent \$80 million taxpayer dollars on its Royal Commission, they have slashed education, health and services, while threatening to cut peoples' penalty rates and rights at work.

Unions will not be distracted from our goals in the coming election year to build a better future for Australian workers, by defending them from the Government's planned cuts to penalty rates, rights at work and important services like Medicare and education.

Quotes attributable to Dave Oliver:

This Royal Commission was a biased and politically motivated exercise from the start. It was always about prosecuting an ideological agenda to cut workplace conditions.

The release of this report, just a week after the Productivity Commission recommended slashing penalty rates, show this Government's real intention to slash living standards for working families.

I reject any assertion of widespread, unlawful corrupt conduct. There is no evidence of systemic, corrupt conduct in the union movement. Over five thousand union officials and tens of thousands of delegates across the country defend employees working conditions and make workplaces safer every day.

We are very happy to have a sensible discussion about further reform that will deliver the best governance standards for union members. However, this cannot come at the expense of the capacity of workers to engage collectively, fight for improved wages and conditions and safer workplaces.

Between 2009-13, 837 workers in the industries investigated by this Royal Commissioner have died doing their job. We are very concerned some recommendations will make it harder for workers to raise safety concerns in their workplace.

This Royal Commission went back 30 years, spent \$80M taxpayers' money, examined 505 witnesses and has found only a handful of matters to prosecute.

We call on Prime Minister Turnbull not to rush through any legislation until such time as we've had an opportunity to have these discussions with the government, the Labor party and the cross-benchers.

We will not let debate about these findings distract us from our core business - protecting the real interests of working families and building a better future for all Australians.

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