

Defend our Jobs and Living Standards Against Attacks

20. JOBS YOU CAN COUNT ON

1. Australians expect their government to build an economy that works for everyone, not just the few. Despite this, inequality is at a 70 year high; millions of people cannot find enough work, if they can find a job at all; wage growth is at record lows; wage theft is rampant; and more and more Australians are in insecure work. Employers are increasingly undermining working conditions by using non-standard forms of employment such as casual contracts, sham contracts and fixed contracts. As well as unprecedented systematic exploitation of temporary visa workers.
2. The problems we are facing are a direct result of neoliberal policies that have attacked unions, eroded the rights of working people, and allowed employers to exploit inadequate industrial laws. Many workers have watched as good, secure jobs left their communities, only to be replaced with low wage, precarious work, if they were replaced at all.
3. Employment policy in Australia in the modern era has been predicated on the dual assumptions that any job is a good outcome, and that even low paid, marginal work is a pathway to decent full-time employment. These assumptions are both deeply flawed.
4. Good, secure jobs are of enormous benefit to individuals, families and societies. Good, secure work plays a vital role for individual workers and groups of workers in constructing their social identity, as well as providing for higher standards of living.
5. Governments must be committed to creating more jobs, but they must improve the quality of those jobs, if they are to develop a prosperous, productive and harmonious society.
6. Growth of precarious work, casual employment, labour hire, freelancers and 'gig' workers has undermined good jobs and forced many workers into a low wage poverty trap. This long trend has been accelerated by digital job platforms and contracting out which is often used to avoid industrial laws.
7. There is nothing inevitable about the future of Australian jobs, they will be what we make them. To improve jobs, we must focus on three key challenges:
 - a) Overhaul the broken laws that fail to protect Australian workers;
 - b) Encourage the growth and development of local industries that provide good, secure jobs through good industry policy; and
 - c) Address gender inequality, discrimination and marginalisation.

Fixing broken laws

8. Attacks on workers' basic protections have gone too far. We will reverse the cuts to penalty rates, raise the minimum wage, change our industrial relations laws to ensure that hard won rights and protections are not stripped away. Priority areas for our industrial relations framework include:
 - a) Creating more secure jobs;
 - b) Improving workers' rights and living standards;
 - c) Creating a strong, fair and independent umpire with the power to protect workers;
and
 - d) Ensuring that workers get a pay rise through fair bargaining rules.