

Monday, 15 October 2018

ACTU welcomes new direction on trade

The peak body for working people has welcomed opposition trade spokesperson Jason Clare's private members' bill and related announcements on trade as a seismic shift in ALP trade policy.

The ACTU maintains its opposition to the TPP and its enabling legislation. The bill sets out a new course for trade in our country after years of damaging deals by the Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison government, which put big business profits ahead of working people.

The ALP's future trade policy will ensure that employers must hire locally before bringing in temporary workers. It will ban clauses that let foreign companies sue Australian governments in secret and unfair courts. And it will safeguard vital public services and our pharmaceutical benefits scheme.

It will also ensure that our governments can support Australian industry and the people who work in it when they make their purchasing and procurement decisions. It will help stop the flow of dangerous and unsafe goods onto our shores.

The ACTU also welcomes the ALP's commitment to remove unfair clauses that let business exploit temporary workers instead of hiring locals and let foreign companies sue Australian governments from existing trade deals.

The ALP has also committed to voting down any further trade deals that contain such damaging clauses between now and the next federal election.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"The recent commitments by the ALP, including those in this bill, are a big step forward for fairness. This will change the way our country does trade, and who that trade benefits.

"These changes ensure that working people's interests are prioritised and protected in future trade agreements, and that existing agreements are improved.

"The Abbott/Turnbull/Morrison Governments have consistently done deals like those with China and Korea that put big business ahead of working people. They have let businesses exploit temporary visa holders instead of providing good, secure jobs to local workers.

"They have signed away our sovereignty by letting foreign corporations sue Australian governments in secret offshore courts if we make laws they don't like. And they have endangered our public services and the PBS.

"Future deals will put working people first and past deals will be improved. We look forward to a future government pursuing a trade agenda that puts working people ahead of multi-nationals.

"Today's announcement puts the Government on notice that they will not get any more deals that include these damaging and unfair provisions past the parliament."

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