

Thursday 20 December 2018

Government's heartless timing on Industrial Manslaughter response

Jobs and Industrial Relations Minister Kelly O'Dwyer has released an inadequate and hurtful Government response to the Senate Inquiry findings in October into industrial deaths.

After initially calling for a swift response to the inquiry, families of workers killed at work called on the Minister not to release the response in the lead-up to Christmas as it would deepen their trauma.

The timing and content of the response is not only against the wishes of many families affected by deaths at work this year but also fails to provide the strong and decisive action needed to address the hundreds of industrial deaths which occur every year in Australia.

The Minister has failed to adopt senate Inquiry recommendations for the establishment of a national system of uniform industrial manslaughter laws to keep workers safe.

The Senate Inquiry also recommended that unions and families be given the right to bring cases under the new laws on behalf of workers and that the health and safety framework needs to respond to the poor safety outcomes from insecure forms of work, such as labour hire. The Minister has failed to commit to act on this recommendation.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"This is a totally inadequate response to an issue of such national importance – 115 workers in this country have died at work this year, 15 of them since the Senate inquiry report was released in October.

"Families expressly asked the Minister not to release their response to the Senate Inquiry into industrial deaths in the lead up to the Christmas, which is the first without a loved one for many of these families.

"We urgently need national, uniform industrial manslaughter laws enshrined in OHS legislation.

"Employers take too many negligent and unacceptable risks with workers lives every day. An effective deterrent is overdue."

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien

"One death or injury at work is one too many. We need to change the rules so that every worker in Australia, from the construction of offices to the gig economy, can rely on a safe and healthy workplace.

"We know that workers in insecure work are 50% more likely to be killed at work.

"Everyone has the right to come home safe from work but every year hundreds of people don't.

"When deaths at work are caused by the disgraceful actions of reckless bosses who can't be held to account due to inadequate laws, we have to change the rules."

ENDS

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