

Friday 8 March 2019

Working women need urgent change

International Women's Day is a reminder of the barriers women still face in getting a fair go at work and in the lead up to the federal election the peak body for working people calls for the rules to be urgently changed for working women.

Today, women are still paid less in the workplace, they are routinely sexually harassed, and they are more likely to be in insecure work and they are the workers who lost penalty rates.

Women are paid 14.1 percent less than men - an average of \$239.80 per week less, are more likely to be working in casual and insecure work, to not have access to paid family and domestic violence leave to make themselves and their children safe and work in award-dependent roles that are vulnerable to penalty rates cuts.

The rates of sexual harassment in Australia are alarming - 85 percent of women have experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The ACTU calls for deep reform of Australia's workplace relations rules to make them fair for women, including introducing ten days paid domestic violence leave, ensuring workplaces are free from sexual harassment, restoring penalty rates and removing restrictions on bargaining. We know that to change the rules for working women we will need to change the government.

Changing the rules for working women includes:

- Establishing a living wage in the wages system.
- The removal of restriction in the bargaining system that prevent women earning a fair wage. Women must be able to collectively bargain.
- The payment of superannuation on every dollar that women earn, including on paid parental leave and unpaid parental leave.
- Stronger powers for the Fair Work Commission to proactively tackle gender inequality.
- Giving the Commission the power to hear and determine sexual harassment and sex discrimination claims and implementing stronger effective pay equity provisions.
- The right for employees with parenting and caregiving responsibilities to receive – not merely request – family friendly working hours.
- The provision of ten days paid family and domestic violence leave.
- The restoration and protections of penalty rates.
- A proper definition of casual work.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus

“The Morrison Government has failed working women - this is why we need to change the Government this year. We must urgently change the rules for working women.

“Our workplace rules and structures are failing working women. Women face an unfair, uphill battle at every turn. Women are paid 14.1 percent less than men, and are retiring with less, often in poverty.

“We need ten days paid domestic violence leave. We need to be safe at work.

“It’s up to our leaders to show the courage and strength required to make work fair for women.”

Quotes from ACTU President Michele O’Neil

“Everyone should go to work free from fear of harassment and unwanted sexual attention.

“For many women today in Australia this is not the reality. Our workplace laws have failed women who have or are experiencing harassment at work.

“It’s women who make up the majority to workers in insecure work. We need the rules change to create more secure jobs that stop workers being forced into long-term casual and contract work.

“We are fighting to change the rules to make work fair for women. We must fix bargaining so that women are negotiating with real decision makers who have the capacity to say yes to fair pay rises.

Change the rules for working women report - <https://www.actu.org.au/our-work/publications/2018/change-the-rules-for-working-women-gender-equality>

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