

Wednesday, 4 September 2019

ACTU calls for Porter to side with working people over big business to get economy moving

The peak body for working people has written to Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter ahead of his planned review of the Fair Work Act, urging him to tackle key areas of reform that are holding back working people's rights and the national economy.

The letter outlines four critical areas of reform a review should focus on – record-low wage growth, insecure work, the proliferation of wage theft, and a persistent failure to deliver equal pay for women.

Australia is in the midst of its lowest sustained wage growth since World War II. A chorus of voices from across the political spectrum have voiced the need for working people to get a fair share of the wealth their work produces.

We have the highest proportion of temporary workers of any OECD country, and one of the highest rates of insecure work.

We have seen one wage theft scandal after another, with existing enforcement efforts and penalties failing to meaningfully address widespread and systemic theft of wages. Wage theft has become a default business model in some sectors.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency recently announced an ongoing 14 percent full-time pay gap between men and women.

The correspondence comes after government interventions in numerous court cases on the side of large businesses in cases running against working people, and government backbenchers publicly backed extreme proposals by fringe business lobbyists.

So far, business lobby demands have included allowing business to convert any permanent jobs to an insecure casual job, reducing protections against unfair dismissal and letting employers pay people less than award rates.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"The big problems holding Australia back are low wage growth, insecure work, wage theft and our ongoing failure to close the pay gap for working women.

"These problems will not solve themselves. They require action from the Federal Government to fix them.

"All of the proposals for the review that have been put up by the big business lobby will reduce wages and make jobs more insecure. Scott Morrison and Christian Porter should reject them outright.

"Working people deserve leaders who are on their side.

"The Morrison Government has persistently chosen to side with big business against working people, in court and in Parliament.

"Unless the Morrison Government addresses these issues in the Porter Review, it's simply another case of Scott Morrison and Christian Porter siding with big business over the working people they are elected to represent."

Media contact: Kate Shuttleworth 0447 418 726; ACTU Media: 03 9664 7337