

Friday, 25 October 2019

Government ignores inquiry evidence, while opposition mounts to union-busting bills

The Morrison Government has today re-committed to its extreme union-busting Ensuring Integrity and Worker Benefits bills, despite hearing from numerous experts and ordinary working people that the bills would attack their rights, leaving unions less able to keep them safe or fight for better pay and conditions.

By ignoring this evidence the Government has demonstrated that these bills are not about good policy but a blind attack on the union movement which will hurt millions of working people.

The ACTU welcomes commitments from the ALP and the Greens to oppose the bills outright. We also welcome Centre Alliance's opposition to the EI bill in its current form. We are however concerned that the changes suggested by Centre Alliance will fail to address the extreme and biased nature of the bill.

The senate inquiry into the legislation has heard from ordinary union members, academics, religious leaders and human rights lawyers that Ensuring Integrity would be an attack on the most basic rights of working people, reducing the ability of unions to protect workers and fight for pay rises, while also putting Australia out of step with the international community and in breach of our obligations under international law.

The inquiry also heard that the Worker Benefits bill would strip thousands of workers of invaluable services like suicide prevention and low-cost insurance.

Under Ensuring Integrity, unions taking even ten minutes protest action to protect the safety of workers and the general public could face deregistration, with union leaders barred from holding positions.

An independent international review has found this legislation is only comparable to laws passed by fascist dictatorships.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"This union-busting bill is an ideological attack on working people from a Government obsessed with eroding their rights and bowing to the whims of big business.

"The senators involved in this inquiry heard from ordinary working people who know that the EI bill will result in unions being shut down and silenced, leaving workers exposed to increased exploitation, wage theft and dangerous workplaces.

"To persist with these bills in the face of that evidence from ordinary Australians is a demonstration of the blind, ideological hatred for unions which drives this Government. All this while the Morrison Government turns a blind eye to systemic wage theft by businesses like Rockpool.

“We thank the ALP and the Greens for opposing these bills outright and Centre Alliance for making it clear that the EI bill as it currently stands is unacceptable. We call on senators from Centre Alliance and Pauline Hanson’s One Nation as well as Senator Jacqui Lambie to stand up for working people and vote against these bills.”

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