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Morrison Government chooses more insecure work, lower wages

The Morrison Government's 2021 budget decisions will not improve the central issues facing working Australians - insecure work and low wage growth.

While the Coalition's rejection of austerity is welcome, the ACTU says the Morrison Government has failed to use the spending in this budget to tackle the underlying problems of low wages and insecure jobs, but is instead handing billions of dollars to business including in the critical areas of aged care, mental health and vocational training, with little accountability or strings attached.

The budget also fails to take decisive action to address the underlying issues which cause gender inequality. The women's budget measures are small, delayed and piecemeal and will do very little to improve the working lives of Australian women.

The ongoing refusal of this Government to address the systemic weaknesses in our workforce and economy made us vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic and are a threat to the strength and fairness of our recovery.

Low wage growth, gender inequity and insecure, unreliable work do not happen by accident, they are the result of deliberate policy decisions taken by this Government, which have been reinforced in this budget.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Insecure and unreliable jobs are a brake on economic growth, wage growth and a fair recovery. This budget has done nothing to create more secure, reliable employment or increase wages.

"The billions provided to business in this budget are given without strings attached and risk again ending up in the pockets of shareholders and CEOs. Any Government financial support to private businesses should be conditional on reliable, well paid jobs.

"Funding for aged care and early childhood education should improve wages and conditions for workers in those sectors. More reliable, more secure employment for essential workers means better services and a stronger economy.

"This Government has overseen the longest period of low wage growth on record, and despite rebounding profits this budget confirms that working people will not benefit from the recovery with real wage growth either negative or flat until 2023/24.

"The Prime Minister loudly claimed to be addressing issues of concern to women with the appointment of a team of new ministers. But this budget provides only small amounts of money for limited programs which fall short of the far-reaching change needed to close the gender pay gap or keep women safe in workplaces or their homes.

"This budget contains \$17.9 billion in tax write-offs for big business, and only \$1.1 billion for women's safety over the next four years. The Morrison Government has missed the opportunity to make the big structural changes needed by Australian women.

"The Morrison Government is becoming increasingly isolated in its refusal to set targets and take action to address climate change, leaving workers with an uncertain future. This budget continues the Government's chaotic response to climate change and fails to deliver the comprehensive climate and energy plan that workers, their families and communities need."

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