

Friday 27 August 2021

7,000 Toll workers forced to strike against dangerous Uberisation of industry

7,000 Toll workers have made the difficult decision to strike for 24 hours, in protest as one of the largest trucking companies in Australia seeks to replace permanent workers with an Uber-style system of insecure, short-term contracts and external contractors on lower pay.

The crisis at Toll mirrors the entire trucking industry as Linfox, Bevchain, Startrack and FedEx all seek to follow the AmazonFlex model which is now affecting jobs at Toll, and outsource and underpay an insecure workforce.

More Australians die as a result of workplace accidents in the trucking industry than in any other. By cutting pay, conditions and making work more precarious, these employers are putting the lives of drivers and the community at even greater risk.

The Federal Government tore down an independent tribunal five years ago which was investigating risks to safety in road transport caused by big retailers squeezing conditions. Since then, 205 truck drivers have been killed.

On Wednesday, a Senate report tabled in Parliament called for a new, industry-led body to set universal and binding standards in the transport industry. The ACTU joins the TWU in calling on the Federal Government to urgently act on these recommendations.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“With 205 workers killed on our roads in the last five years, truck driving is Australia’s deadliest industry. Workers have been left with no choice but to strike and fight against Uberisation of their industry that could lead to both the loss of secure jobs and more deaths.

“Wealthy retailers, manufacturers and oil companies are raking in billions whilst relentlessly trying to undercut the trucking workforce that continues to risk their lives to keep this country functioning during the pandemic.

“While secure Australian jobs are under attack, the Federal Government is turning a blind eye. The Morrison Government needs to step up and ensure that workers are protected and that the use of short-term contracts and casual employment are regulated.

“These workers have literally helped carry Australia through the pandemic. They have worked relentless hours and had their own health put at risk. They should be appreciated and respected, not forced to take strike action.

“Workers could lose everything if these companies are allowed to replace their entire workforce with cut-price insecure workers.”

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