

Monday 6 September 2021

Not one voice representing working women at Summit.

The Morrison Government's National Summit on Women's Safety boast representatives from business and the law, but not one representative of working women on any panel over the two days, despite the workplace and financial security being on the agenda.

Unions have been at the forefront of campaigns over many decades for equal pay, maternity and parental leave, family and domestic violence leave, and the battle for real rights for women to report sexual harassment and legislated rights to take action.

Respect@Work may be a relatively new report, but the battle for equal rights, including safety, for women at work has been the core work of unions for a long time.

To be left off the agenda is not only an insult to the women who belong to their unions, but to the many women at the workplace with rights delivered to them by women in the union movement.

Also absent are frontline workers who deal with the impacts of violence against women every day.

The summit comes on the back of the Government failing to implement the vast majority of the 55 recommendations from the Respect@Work report.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"There are 6.5 million working women and two out of every five women at work experience sexual harassment.

"Yet the Government has left out of this summit the voice and representatives of working women.

"It shows how little they care about real change, and real rights at work that could protect women.

"Last week, they voted against amendments that would have placed a positive duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment, and their exclusion of union voices shows again a Government more interested in their political problems than ensuring women have decent representation and real rights at work.

"They also voted against providing 10 days paid leave to all women experiencing family and domestic violence, which a third of women at work can already access thanks to union agreements.

"The voices of business are very well represented. But equality and safety at work has not been delivered by business lobbyists, but by many generations of women who have joined their unions and demanded change.

"Women at work have been insulted and ignored by this Government, and this summit will not turn that around."

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