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Government should be seeking unity, not stoking division

Australians are exhausted and sick of politically expedient division drummed up by a Government trying to shore up its position on the eve of an election campaign.

The Prime Minister is seeking to stoke division and to demonise wharfies who have worked tirelessly through the pandemic to keep the Australian economy moving, delivering the big corporations they work for record profits and are asking for basic job security and a reasonable pay rise from a shipping giant.

Australia has some of the lowest levels of industrial action in the developed world and productivity in our ports is consistently above international benchmarks. Workers at NSW Ports serviced 28 per cent more ships in September 2021 compared to September 2020, without any increase in the number of workers and using the same equipment. Shipping companies meanwhile have used the pandemic to jack up prices and expand their profits.

Over two years the cost of shipping a 40ft container has increased by approximately 500 per cent. Profits across stevedoring companies increased from an average of 9.9 per cent in 2019-20 to 20.8 per cent in 2020-21. Workers are asking for a reasonable pay rise and job they can rely on.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“The country does not need more division and conflict. We need to be bought together, not pitted against each other.

“Essential workers did their job around the clock the last two years in the hardest of circumstances. We want political leaders to recognise this and to understand that it is not reasonable we continue to experience record low wage growth whilst many big businesses, such as the multinational shipping companies, delivered bumper profits.

“The last thing our country needs is Governments wanting to take more rights off working people and siding with foreign multinationals over their own citizens. Instead they should be stepping up and doing the work to change our industrial laws to stop employers turning permanent jobs into casual jobs.

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