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Last chance for Baillieu to give Vic. workers the right to spend Xmas Day with their family

Today is the last chance for the new Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu to do the right thing by the state's workers and declare Christmas Day a public holiday.

Victoria's two houses of Parliament will sit today for the first time since the state election, and Mr Baillieu should make a gesture of goodwill to workers by gazetting the public holiday, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said it was disappointing Mr Baillieu had so far ignored calls to fix an issue which will affect thousands of Victorians who are rostered to work on Saturday December 25.

Because Christmas Day is on a Saturday, the Victorian Government has declared the following Monday as a substitute public holiday.

But this means that workers rostered on to work on 25 December (and on Boxing Day) will not have right to refuse to work for family or religious reasons and will not receive public holiday penalty rates as compensation for being apart from their family and friends on Christmas Day.

Thousands of workers in hospitals and nursing homes, shops and hotels, public transport, security and other industries which operate around the clock will receive only the normal Saturday rate of pay on Christmas Day.

"The sitting of Parliament today provides Mr Baillieu with the perfect opportunity to do the right thing by proclaiming Christmas Day as a public holiday for those who have to work on it," Ms Kearney said.

"We welcome the fact that an additional public holiday has been declared the following Monday, but that is no help for workers who are rostered on the Saturday.

"If Ted Baillieu is genuinely concerned about Victorian workers he should announce this change today."

Ms Kearney said the South Australian Government had also so far failed to make Christmas Day a public holiday, but the governments of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have made the change after the issue was brought to their attention by the ACTU.

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