

Address by ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver
National Reform Summit
Sydney
Wednesday 26 August 2015

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Firstly let me acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

The Australian Union Movement has a long and proud history of working in a tri-partite way, that's with business and government, to ensure that the living standards of people in Australia are not only protected but are improved.

As the community sector has increased its engagement with us we have welcomed them to the table, turning a once tri-partite approach into a quad-partite approach.

Today's summit is an exciting opportunity to bring us all together and find ways to continue the work of building better living standards for all people in Australia.

The four areas of work today;

- Lifting productivity and workforce participation
- Fiscal policy
- Tax reform
- And Sustainable retirements.

are all key parts of the economic and social policy framework that make up the living standards of people in this country.

We are happy to continue our tradition of engagement in economic and social reform.

We want to engage on the high road of reform. Not the low road of reducing wages, stripping conditions or cost shifting onto workers.

Having said that let me say this - we are committed to open, frank and productive dialogue on reform.

- Improving skills and educational attainment for workers across all levels
- Facilitating and improving infrastructure
- Nurturing research, development and innovation— as we stare down the abyss of the mining boom and property boom where is the innovation boom
- Addressing the inequities in our tax and transfer systems
- Removing the barriers to workforce participation
- Creating a supportive environment for investment, particularly in new economy jobs of renewable energy and advanced manufacturing
- Addressing the challenges of digital disruption and the changing nature of work

These are the areas of reform where we must find common ground.

Today, and the weeks of work that have led up to today, are about finding those areas where consensus does exist.

It won't surprise you to know that we are not subscribers to the Thatcherite notion that all consensus is the abandonment of ideals

Rather we believe that achieving consensus where possible is vital to achieving genuine long lasting reform.

Of course we will not always agree.

There will be times when we must debate each other but those debates should not dissuade us from reaching common ground wherever and whenever we can.

The Australian Union movement engages with business, (we have a long proud record) government (where we can, where we haven't been locked out) and the community sector because we know that there are many good ideas across society and many people who share our commitment to improving the living standards of people in this country.

It is in the interests of people that economic and social reform is pursued.

The economy is not a being. It doesn't have a heartbeat, a brain or a soul. It is an abstract.

But the community does. And the community is made up of millions of everyday people making everyday decisions.

The decisions people make in order to improve their living standards.

Unions are committed to long term reforms which focus on growing our economic prosperity

We must focus reform efforts to build our economy and boost our competitive advantages. Investing in new technologies, exporting opportunities, value added industries, high skill and high quality jobs.

We want to make the pie larger and we are determined that workers get their share.

Part of this discussion must deal with how we address growing inequality.

Austerity doesn't work. The European experience has shown the world that you cannot cut your way to growth.

We are here because we want to participate. We want to be part of these efforts.

But the work doesn't end today. A well worded communiqué alone is not the solution to these issues.

History will judge whether or not this summit was a success based on our commitments to implement the actions we have promised.

And to do that we will need the engagement of everyone who is here and those who are not, particularly our political leaders.

Ends.

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