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New ACTU report — Rising Inequality: An Australian reality

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has today released a new report that shows Australia is at risk of becoming an Americanised society of working poor if people are not given a pay rise.

Rising inequality is forcing working people into poverty, with the number of workers who are now on minimum or award wages rocketing a staggering eight per cent in six years to 2016.

The ACTU has produced this report because, while the Turnbull Government continues to throw its support behind the big corporations and a group of small elites, Australian workers and families are struggling to pay the bills.

And while many Australians are struggling to pay the bills, the Turnbull Government is attacking the very people who could help them get a pay rise – unions.

Unions have been on the frontline of collective change for more than a century and it is only through our work that working people see positive adjustments to their pay and conditions.

If the Government continues to try to destroy unions, and with them working people's rights at work Australia will be a fully Americanised society of high inequality and dead end jobs, with long working hours, no holidays, zero job security and poverty pay levels.

Key stats from report:

- Inequality is greater than at any time in the last 70 years;
- Income inequality is bad but wealth inequality is worse. The top ten richest Australians have over \$77 billion dollars between them;
- Number of workers on minimum award rates has shot up in the last few years - from 15.2% in 2010 to 23.9% in 2016;
- Workers share of national income is at its lowest level in over 50 years.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"This report shows that both wealth and income inequality are a problem in Australia."

"There are two ways the Turnbull Government can act to turn around inequality — make sure everyone pays their fair share of tax and act so working people have strong enough rights at work to get decent pay rises and secure jobs."

"But instead the Turnbull Government is going in the opposite direction. Every day they think up new ways to hurt working people and weaken their rights while they are giving corporations \$65 billion in tax cuts. These are the same failed policies that have caused inequality in the first place."

"Pay rises are at record lows, workers are getting a record low share of national income, jobs are being casualised, penalty rates cut and wage theft is a business model."

"Instead of addressing inequality as their priority, Malcolm Turnbull and Michaelia Cash are obsessed with attacking unions, the very people who are speaking out about inequality and campaigning to turn it around".

“Australian Unions are campaigning to change the rules for working people so they have better and stronger rights at work.”

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