

Friday 15 December, 2017

Racist work-for-the-dole program must be scrapped

Statement from ACTU Secretary Sally McManus

The ACTU has renewed calls for the Community Development Program to be scrapped after a Senate inquiry into the Program found that the program is causing harm to its overwhelmingly Indigenous workforce.

The racist work-for-the-dole scheme does not pay wages for the 25 hours of work participants have to do every week in order to receive welfare benefits, hands out penalties at a rate and magnitude higher than any other employment scheme and forces workers to work without OHS protections, leave entitlements superannuation or worker's compensation in the event of injury at work.

We reject any further reviews. All workers should be paid legal wages for work. This program is racist and denies people basic rights all other workers receive. The Government should focus on real jobs in regional and remote communities instead.

The ACTU is committed to ensuring all workers in Australia are protected by Australian law and are paid a legal wage for their work.

This Abbott/Turnbull program should shame all Australians. Minister Nigel Scullion, whose lack of action despite a mountain of evidence that his program has failed and is causing harm, is alarmingly negligent.

We further condemn the decision of the Minister to release a review of the program. We don't need a review. We need the program scrapped.

Statement from ACTU Indigenous Officer Lara Watson

The ACTU has been talking to people affected by this program since it began and we've been hearing what the Minister refuses to, that it is ripping employment and money out of communities, leading to desperation and hunger.

We have had an open invitation for the Minister to meet with the only organisation which is representing workers in CDP, the FNWA, and with ACTU leadership, since mid-2016, but this has gone unanswered.

The program must be scrapped, Indigenous workers must be given the same rights, opportunities and treatment before the law that all workers in Australia should be able to expect.

ENDS

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