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Abbott's real agenda is to weaken unions so they are unable to stand up for workers' rights

Tony Abbott's latest stunt that has nothing to do with protecting workers' interests and everything to do with undermining unions so he can pursue a radical workplace agenda, says the ACTU.

Anyone who believes Tony Abbott has any concern for union members of low-paid workers should look at his record, said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

When in Government Mr Abbott supported moves to cut back protection from unfair dismissal, to reduce workers' rights to bargain collectively, and moved to allow employers to cut conditions with no compensation for workers.

The Liberals have repeatedly opposed a decent increase in the minimum wage, and they always support employers against workers taking action in pursuit of their rights.

"Mr Abbott and the Liberals are using the misconduct of a few officials in one branch of the Health Services Union to launch an attack on the entire union movement," Ms Kearney said.

"Mr Abbott's proposed "Registered Organisations Commission" will do nothing to tackle any future incidents of corruption, and will merely be a vehicle for a future Liberal Government to attack union members and officials.

"Unions are already subject to strong controls including mandatory annual reporting and independent audits.

"On top of this, unions are democratic organisations and members can vote out representatives who they believe are not acting in their interests.

"Make no mistake, there is absolutely no place for corruption in the union movement and the ACTU has already taken the unprecedented step of suspending the HSU's affiliation until it can show it is able to properly serve members.

"We also cautiously support Industrial Relations Minister Bill Shorten's decision to take court action to appoint an administrator to the HSU East branch, recognising the extraordinary circumstances involved.

"Any union officials found by a court to have misused members' funds or committed any other wrongdoing deserve to be punished under existing law.

"But there is no evidence that the actions of a few individuals in the HSU are widespread within the union movement.

"Mr Abbott's real agenda is the same one he has pursued throughout his career and the Liberals throughout history – weakening unions so they are unable to protect workers' rights.

"Just look at his record: Tony Abbott and the Liberals have never cared about working Australians."

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