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## Time for business to stop blaming workplace laws for their failure to lift productivity, say unions

The imminent release of the Fair Work Act review must not be used by big business and employer groups as another opportunity to attack workers' rights, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said unions would vigorously defend any push by employers to return to reintroduce key parts of WorkChoices, which were so overwhelmingly rejected by Australian voters in 2007.

She said the release of the review should draw a line under the spurious arguments used by the business lobby that reducing rights at work would lift Australia's productivity growth.

"At the very start of this review process, unions set out a positive agenda for workplace laws to increase rights for Australian workers," Ms Kearney said.

"These included improvements to the safety net, rights to collective bargaining, dispute resolution and arbitration, right of entry, delegate rights and other organising rights, protection against unfair treatment, and work-life balance.

"In contrast, the vast majority of employer submissions failed to engage with the terms of reference or provide evidence in support of their policy prescriptions.

"Instead employer submissions overwhelmingly proposed a return to the worst elements of the WorkChoices regime which was decisively rejected by the Australian people in 2007.

"The public release of the review is now expected within days, and we look forward to seeing it bust many of the myths about Australia's workplace system that have been spread by employers to push an anti-worker agenda."

The ACTU Executive last week passed a resolution calling on the Government to continue to reject calls from business that would:

- Restrict proper access to dispute resolution including arbitration;
- Restrict collective bargaining (including rights to take protected industrial action);
- Undermine the right to organise and be represented by a union;
- Expand the use or scope of individual flexibility arrangements;
- Promote the use or scope of unfair individual contracts; or
- Reduce unfair dismissal protections for Australian workers.

Ms Kearney said any reasonable objective review would conclude that the Fair Work Act was achieving its objective of delivering fairness in the workplace and economic growth.

"It is lazy opportunism to blame the three-year old Fair Work Act for Australia's decade-plus slowdown in productivity growth," she said.

"The business lobby in Australia would do well to pay heed to NAB chief executive Cameron Clyne's sensible advice that the productivity debate needs to be broadened beyond calls to wind back the Fair Work Act."

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