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Rinehart's call to pay workers \$2 a day out of touch and just plain wrong

Gina Rinehart is not only Australia's richest person, she is also clearly the most out of touch and cold-hearted Australian, based on her latest attack on workers and their rights, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said it was almost inconceivable that anyone would consider paying workers \$2 a day a fair concept, let alone the richest person in the country advocating for it.

"If Gina Rinehart seriously thinks Australians should be competing with African workers who are paid \$2 a day, then she has no idea about fairness or equality – the values on which Australia was built," Ms Kearney said.

"It's time we stopped listening to people like Ms Rinehart, who continually shows she has no interest in using her wealth to grow Australian jobs or support the local economy and now she appears to be suggesting we should look to Africa for our future.

"Perhaps she wouldn't feel so buoyant about the African workplace relations system if she personally had to work surrounded by war, poverty and disease – let alone live on such abysmal wages. Ms Rinehart's attitude is an insult to millions of working Australians."

Ms Kearney said Ms Rinehart continually displayed contempt for the people who worked for her.

"Her recipe would take Australia down the path of a nation divided between a super-wealthy elite and an underclass of working poor," Ms Kearney said.

"Last week she was advocating for a cut in the \$85 a day rate of the national minimum wage and today she appears to be saying that cut should go down to \$2 a day, or Australia won't be able to compete with the likes of Africa.

"Australians are lucky they live in a country such as ours, where people with views like Ms Rinehart's do not automatically translate into reality. But Ms Rinehart would do well to remember that she has also prospered because the opportunities for all in Australia are far in excess of those offered in most African countries.

"There is no evidence that cutting minimum wages will lead to more employment. This fallacy has been rejected again and again by the independent tribunal that sets the minimum wage.

"If it was the case, then why does the United States, where the minimum wage is well below that of Australia, have an unemployment rate almost twice ours?

"The most prosperous and stable economies are those that are well-regulated, have a well-paid workforce and a healthy respect between employers and employees.

"Gina Rinehart's views are stuck in the nineteenth century and have no place in modern Australia."

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