

Friday, 21 September 2012

Timely Federal Government action to protect state employees from insecure work: unions

The decision by the Commonwealth Government to protect the entitlements of state employees whose jobs are outsourced to the private sector is not only a major victory for those workers but shows the way for secure jobs in Australia, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the announcement by Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten would go some way to preserving job security for tens of thousands of workers employed by state and federal governments.

Ms Kearney said the use of privatisation and outsourcing was an insidious way of cutting pay and conditions and was feeding the growth of insecure work in the public sector.

The amendments to the Fair Work Act to be introduced by the Federal Government would protect those entitlements and remove the incentive for state governments to use privatisation as a way of undermining pay and conditions.

They would mean that when a position is outsourced, contracted, or privatised, the new employer would be required to maintain all existing pay and conditions. If a worker lost their job as a result of outsourcing, they would receive all redundancy entitlements they would have been due as a government employee.

Earlier this year, the Howe inquiry into insecure work identified the privatisation and outsourcing agenda of all levels of government as a major contributor to the growth of casual, contract and labour hire at the expense of permanent, secure jobs.

"What have until now been secure jobs are under threat from the governments of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, who are hell-bent on an agenda of privatisation, corporatisation and contracting out," Ms Kearney said.

"At the stroke of a pen, state governments are destroying job security so the private sector can swoop in to make profits by employing people on lesser pay and conditions.

"Tens of thousands of public sector workers in those states face losing their jobs, with many being replaced by contract workers. The action by the Federal Government will stop those workers being ripped off by Coalition governments."

Ms Kearney said there was a growing awareness in the community about the toll of insecure work, which makes up about 40% of the Australian workforce.

She said the *Social Justice Statement 2012-13* issued today by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference explicitly recognised the stresses that insecure work placed on family and social life.

"The Catholic Church has noted with concern the growth of casual and irregular work as one of the greatest social and economic challenges facing families," Ms Kearney said.

"Rather than adding to those strains, state governments should be committing to job security."

Media contact:

Rebecca Tucker: ph (03) 9664 7359 or 0408 031 269; email rtucker@actu.org.au