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Industrial disputes continue to fall under Fair Work Act, proving employer groups wrong

New figures on the level of industrial disputes released today reveal claims by employer groups are simply incorrect, say unions.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said the ABS industrial disputes data was stark evidence of the mythical statements being peddled by employer groups, whose mission was to force changes to the law for their benefit at the expense of workers.

“The number of disputes and the number of employees involved in disputes fell in the March quarter – and has fallen by almost one third since the Fair Work Act took effect,” Mr Lawrence said.

“Since the Fair Work Act took effect, there has been an average of 3.2 working days lost per 1000 employees, in comparison to the 18 months before the Act took effect, when there were 4.5 days lost per 1,000 employees.

“There is no evidence to suggest that the Fair Work Act has led to an increase in industrial action – rather the opposite is the case.

“Today’s figures also dismantle claims by business groups that yesterday’s decision by Fair Work Australia to allow workers to keep their right to protected industrial action when an employer refuses to bargain with them lead to widespread industrial disputes.

“This right has always existed – including under WorkChoices – and yesterday’s ruling merely restated it. It clearly does not mean industrial disputes will be, or have been, rife as a result.”

The ABS data shows:

- The number of disputes fell from 70 in the December quarter to 37 in the March quarter;
- The number of employees involved in disputes fell from 17,000 to 11,100 in the March quarter;
- The number of working days lost fell from 27,200 in December to 19,700 in the March quarter; and
- The number of working days lost per 1000 employees was 2.0, down from 2.7 in December.

“Employer groups have been spreading myths about the *Fair Work Act* for too long, distorting national debate and damaging public policy outcomes. But these new figures reveal the truth and the employer groups must now accept the reality – that Australia is better off and fairer thanks to the *Fair Work Act*,” Mr Lawrence said.

“There is no evidence employers are worse off under the *Fair Work Act* and it is time business groups moved on from their obsession with dismantling the Act to instead engage with workers and unions to meet the shared challenges facing the national economy. It is time to move on and stop re-fighting the fights of the last decade.”

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