

Friday, 15 July 2011

## Tax reforms support more women into work: unions

Unions have welcomed measures within the Government's carbon price package that support more Australians to enter the workforce.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said unions were pleased that the Gillard government was tripling the tax free threshold to \$18,200 a year, meaning more Australians would be encouraged to work.

The thousands of part-time workers across Australia, made up mostly of women, will now be exempt from having to submit a tax return as part of new reforms to the tax system. Ms Kearney said based on the Government's calculations, 450,000 Australian part-time workers would now be better off.

"We know that there are thousands of women who want to work and make a vital contribution to the workforce, but income tax and the cost of child care eats into their wage, making it difficult for them to do so," Ms Kearney said.

"Sixty per cent, or 300,000 of these, are women who work part-time," she said.

"Unions do not often support tax cuts because we recognise they ensure Australians have access to decent education, health services, roads and other vital infrastructure.

"But we recognise this initiative will help people move from welfare to work, as well as help people who work part-time, particularly women. Unions are pleased these reforms will lift workforce participation. We are also pleased the tax reforms will encourage economic growth, through more Australians earning better incomes."

Ms Kearney said the reforms would build on the Government's initiatives contained in the 2011-12 Budget, designed to get more Australians into work, improve skills and create long-term opportunities for some of our community's most disadvantaged people.

"These new measures will complement the Budget initiatives, which included the allocation of \$3 billion over the next six years towards skills, training and productivity," she said.

Ms Kearney said unions had this week resolved to campaign in workplaces around Australia to help workers understand the facts about how a price on carbon will impact them.

The ACTU Executive this week approved an ongoing and widespread campaign which will involve visiting as many workers as possible to help them to understand the truth about the impacts of the carbon price.

"We intend to lay the facts bare, free of politics, for workers to judge for themselves. That is why we will embark on an education campaign, which will include an information package to be distributed within workplaces around Australia," Ms Kearney said.

Ms Kearney said that as a result of negotiations with the Government, unions had secured commitments to ensure the protection of jobs, compensation to households and families and funding for investment in new clean energy industries and jobs.

"We will work to provide reassurance to those workers in industries most affected by a price on carbon. Unions will not sugar coat this; we will explain the reality, unlike the scare campaigns which have been conducted around the country throughout the year."

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