

Monday, 12 December 2011

## Unions welcome appointment of Bill Shorten as new Workplace Relations Minister

Australian unions welcome the appointment of Bill Shorten as Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and look forward to working with him to progress the agenda for rights at work for all Australians, including those in insecure work.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said Mr Shorten had shown a commitment to working people throughout his career first as a trade unionist and now as a Member of Parliament.

“Bill Shorten is someone working people can trust and unions know and can work well with,” Mr Lawrence said. “Throughout his time at the Australian Workers’ Union, Bill Shorten was a strong advocate for the interests of his members and all working Australians, standing up for jobs, for decent pay and conditions, and for rights at work.

“We expect to have a good working relationship with Mr Shorten to continue building on the Fair Work Act and advancing rights at work.

“The ALP National Conference recently amended its platform to strengthen the collective bargaining system and ensure workers had enhanced rights to bargain for secure jobs.

“We look forward to working with the new Minister to implement these changes so collective bargaining is more effective for all workers, including the 40% employed as casuals, on short-term or fixed contracts, labour hire, or other forms of insecure work. The future of work in Australia must be productive workplaces with good, secure jobs, where rights are protected and workers are valued.

“It was also important that reforms to superannuation, including raising the Super Guarantee to 12%, are carried through, and it is appropriate that Mr Shorten will continue to drive those changes.”

Mr Lawrence said the outgoing Minister for Workplace Relations, Chris Evans, had made sure that the benefits of the Fair Work Act were spread through Australian workplaces and not undermined by a concerted campaign by employers.

“Senator Evans has shown a positive attitude to productivity, recognising that it is achieved through skills, training, investment in plant and equipment, and engagement with workers, not through cutting pay and conditions,” Mr Lawrence said.

Mr Lawrence said unions also welcomed the expansion of Climate Change Minister Greg Combet’s portfolio to include Industry and Innovation.

He said a price on carbon pollution and industry policy went hand-in-hand, and Mr Combet had a strong understanding of the impact of industry change on workers and their communities.

He said the restructuring of the skills and industry portfolios brought considerable ministerial experience to these areas that are crucial to delivering decent jobs for working Australians.

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