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## Ted Baillieu is the Grinch who stole Christmas from Victorian workers: unions

Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu is the only Australian leader to deny workers a public holiday to compensate for Christmas Day this year falling on a Sunday.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said Mr Baillieu was behaving like the Grinch who stole Christmas, forcing Victorians who have to work Christmas Day to do so for far less compensation than their counterparts in the rest of the country.

“In every other state, workers will get an additional public holiday, while in Victoria workers will have to go to work for the normal Sunday rate,” Ms Kearney said.

“This means not only will these Victorian workers miss out on spending one of the most important days of the year with family and friends, but they will not even be compensated fairly.

“Also, Victorian workers ordinarily rostered to work on a Sunday cannot refuse to work on Christmas Day for family or religious reasons, unlike in other states.

“Christmas Day should be declared a public holiday in every state and territory to protect all employees and provide consistency and certainty.

“It would be in the interests of both employers and employees if there was a uniform approach in all states and territories so that the Sunday was treated as a public holiday for those who had to work on it, with an additional public holiday the following Monday.”

Ms Kearney said the ambiguity surrounding Christmas Day and weekends was settled in all other states and territories last year, by them having the sense to declare an additional public holiday in such circumstances.

“Despite the fairness shown across the rest of Australia, Mr Baillieu is prepared to go it alone and be the Grinch who stole Victorian workers’ Christmas,” she said.

“It is totally unfair that workers in Victoria can be forced to come into work on Christmas Day. No-one wants to see a nurse, waiter, kitchen assistant or convenience store worker being forced to come in on Christmas Day because they cannot afford not to.”

Ms Kearney said if 25 December was prescribed as a holiday, awards and agreements clauses would ensure public holiday penalty rates would be paid on the day.

“As a matter of principle, we think that all employees working on Christmas Day should get some form or penalty rate, to compensate them from time away from their family and friends, and time spent working on a day that everyone else enjoys off,” she said.

“But the most important thing is that by declaring 25 December to be a public holiday, under the National Employment Standards workers would be able to refuse to work on Christmas.”

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