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Abbott and Liberals will go back to WorkChoices by removing protection from unfair dismissal

Tony Abbott has confirmed that the Liberal Party would slash protection from unfair dismissal for working Australians if it wins power this year.

Media reports today indicate that planning is well underway by the Liberals to reintroduce one of the key elements of WorkChoices, the lack of protection from unfair dismissal.

Unfair dismissal protection for Australian workers, including those in small business, was reintroduced less than a year ago, but already the Liberals are planning to take it away again, said ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence.

“Under WorkChoices, employers had the freedom to sack workers on a whim,” Mr Lawrence said.

“Young people, women and other vulnerable workers were sacked unfairly.

“Now, they are at risk again. Under the planned policy of Tony Abbott and Eric Abetz, if you work for a small business, you could be sacked without any reason, no matter how loyal you have been to that employer.

“Mr Abbott is now trying to play clever number games to hide the true impact of his plans, but it doesn’t make any difference to the fact that the Liberals are planning to make life much harder for working Australians.

“Well over half of Australian employers have five or less staff. It may appeal to some employers to take away unfair dismissal, but it will be bad news for workers’ job security.”

Mr Lawrence said the Liberals’ plans to take away protection from unfair dismissal came alongside proposals to reintroduce WorkChoices-style individual contracts, destroy the award system and cut penalty rates.

Over the weekend, Senator Abetz revealed his true colours by addressing the annual dinner of the extremist industrial relations think tank, the HR Nicholls Society, where he pledged to abolish the award safety net standard of minimum hours of work.

“Senator Abetz’s speech to the HR Nicholls Society was a not-so-thinly-veiled attack on Australia’s unique award system, which underpins every workplace in Australia,” Mr Lawrence said.

“Behind closed doors, he confirmed that the Liberals would dearly love to weaken awards to the point where they provided no protection for workers.

“Senator Abetz, the author of the original WorkChoices booklet, is on the record as wanting to remove penalty rate payments for working on public holidays and to cut annual leave loadings.

“The Liberals are the party of WorkChoices and they cannot be trusted by Australian workers.”

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