

Tuesday, 27 April 2010

New union campaign sends message to Liberals: “WorkChoices: whatever the name, never again”

Australian unions will today launch a new national advertising campaign aimed at exposing Tony Abbott’s plans to take Australia back to WorkChoices.

The union campaign will revive the key issue of the last Federal election and highlight the danger to working Australians and their families posed by Tony Abbott’s commitment to hardline industrial relations policies.

ACTU President Sharan Burrow, who will launch the campaign before more than 500 unionists at the ACTU Organising Conference in Sydney today, said working Australians could not risk reversing the advances made since the last election by returning to WorkChoices.

“Tony Abbott and the Liberal Party want to bring back WorkChoices, but disguise their plan by claiming that the name WorkChoices is dead,” Ms Burrow said.

“But actions speak louder than words, and every time Tony Abbott is directly asked he tries to hide his plan to resurrect the worst aspects of WorkChoices.”

In a secret address to business executives earlier this year, it was revealed Tony Abbott is promising businesses he will reduce protection from unfair dismissal for Australian workers and bring back WorkChoices-style individual contracts so employers can dictate pay, conditions and working hours.

“...We had a mandate to take the unfair dismissal monkey off the back of small business and we will once more seek that mandate... We had a mandate to introduce statutory non-union contracts and we will seek to renew that mandate.” - Tony Abbott, 12 February 2010 address to Qld Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The union campaign will include a new series of national television advertisements, information for union members and workplaces, and the latest social media technology.

The television advertisements, that begin screening today, feature real victims of WorkChoices talking about their experiences and why it should never happen again.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said unions would always push for improvements to workers’ rights and it was essential not to go backwards to the Liberal’s WorkChoices.

“The Rudd Labor Government’s changes are a good first step and more needs to be done to build on the Fair Work laws - especially for workers in the construction industry and those covered by awards,” Mr Lawrence said.

“The Australian public voted at the last election to get rid of WorkChoices and today our message to Tony Abbott is clear and simple: ‘WorkChoices: whatever the name, never again’.”

Media contact:

Mark Phillips ph (03) 8676 7266 or 0422 009 011; mphillips@actu.org.au

- copies of the ACTU TV ads are available on request