

Thursday, 29 August 2019

## Legal community speaks out against ‘unprecedented’ EI bill

A coalition of public interest and human rights legal groups has spoken out against the Morrison Government’s attack on working people’s basic rights through the Ensuring Integrity bill, recommending that the bill not be passed in a submission to an ongoing senate inquiry.

The Human Rights Law Centre released a statement accompanying their submission to the Senate inquiry into the laws. The statement was also issued on behalf of the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Community Legal Centres NSW.

The statement says that the extraordinary legislation, which it notes “would be unprecedented in comparable democracies around the world”, is “unnecessary, unreasonable and will undermine workers’ ability to stand together”.

The legal organisations see that the EI bill as an attack on freedom of association and the right for working people to organise and run their own unions.

“At a time when wage theft is making headlines and wage growth is at record lows, it’s clear that Australians need the advocacy of trade unions to level the power difference that exists between working people and their employers. Instead of supporting workers’ ability to join together, this law would hinder unions’ ability to perform their primary function of standing up for the rights of working people,” Human Rights Law Centre legal director Emily Howie said.

EI is an unprecedented attack on the basic freedoms which all working people should be able to count on and will only make it harder for Australia to confront the crises of low wage growth, wage theft and insecure work.

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:**

“The EI bill is an extreme and dangerous attack on the basic legal freedoms of all Australian workers.

“That the legal community would speak out against a piece of IR legislation shows the astonishing, ideologically-driven overreach of the Morrison Government.

“The Morrison Government should abandon its policy of continuing to suppress wages and enabling rampant wage theft by attacking the very organisations which protect workers and their conditions.

“This is a government which is unashamedly trying to remove the most basic rights of working people.

“We welcome the decision of these legal groups to stand up for working people and against this piece of legislation, and call on all parliamentarians to ensure this bill does not become law.”

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