

Tuesday, 22 October 2019

Porter rushes in with new attack on workers' rights

Morrison Government's Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter will immediately bring forward legislative changes removing rights to negotiate for better pay from workers involved in infrastructure projects and employed on greenfield agreements.

Greenfield agreements are made before any worker is employed on the project and currently have a maximum four-year term, after which the workers have the right to negotiate their pay and conditions.

The Government's proposal changes all of that at the urging of big businesses like Chevron, Woodside and PHP. Under the proposed laws, these greenfield agreements could run for the life of a project. Some projects can take between and five and ten years to build. That's up to ten years without the right to negotiate a pay rise.

The announcement pre-empts the Government's own consultation process which had called for submissions by 1 November and now seeks to lock in big business profit margins at the expense of workers' rights to collectively bargain.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"Greenfields agreements by their nature don't have any input from the workers covered.

"Extending the life of greenfields agreements is a denial of the right to collective bargaining. It serves just one purpose – to stop workers from negotiating pay rises.

"Despite Prime Minister Morrison's promise that any reforms to industrial laws would lift wages, this is all about stopping workers from negotiating higher pay.

"The Minister has reneged on his promise that any changes would lift wages. He's also reneged on his promise to consult properly before introducing change.

"In Australia, we have a wages crisis and among the most restrictive collective bargaining laws in the developed world. Instead of fixing the problems that they helped create, the Morrison Government is making it harder for working people to get ahead.

"The only way we will improve wage growth in this country and re-start economic growth is if working people are able to negotiate for better pay.

"The Minister is working with his backers behind the scenes to sell out Australian workers, the Australian public deserves better."

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