

Friday, 22 November 2019

## Statement from ACTU President Michele O’Neil on release of government amendments to EI Bill

These amendments do not go nearly far enough in addressing the concerns of working people.

Working people from every union, all over the country have raised the alarm about this dangerous and extreme Bill which could have union leaders sacked, unions put into administration or unions shut down entirely because of simple paper work errors or people exercising their right to protest.

These amendments are a desperate attempt by the Morrison Government to convince the crossbench that this Bill is something other than a dangerous and hypocritical exercise in union-busting, right at the time Scott Morrison has announced his desire to cut workers’ rights. Every union and every worker will be impacted by this law.

We appreciate that many crossbench senators have been engaging constructively with unions, and they do not want to pass a bill that attacks ordinary working people or engages in union-busting. Unfortunately, contrary to the claims of the government, these amendments do not stop those attacks.

The amendments proposed by the Morrison government do not limit the extraordinarily wide range of grounds on which a union can be deregistered and for which a union official can be disqualified. These still include simple paperwork mistakes, for which unions are already disproportionately punished.

Effectively the Morrison government is asking the Senate to support laws that would never apply to banks or business and which they would never apply to themselves or their political parties.

For example, banks have been accused of money laundering, supporting terrorist organisations, charging fees to dead people and supporting child exploitation. This week Westpac is been accused of 23 million breaches of criminal law. Despite all this, there are no proposals to ban bank board members, appoint administrators or shut the doors.

If the tests in these amendments, and this Bill, were applied to politicians, political parties or corporate executives many would not be able to continue to hold office or run corporations.

The Minister has been caught out misleading the Parliament and the public about the effect of this Bill in the past. It is clear he has kept it hidden simply to avoid further public scrutiny.

These amendments are another attempt to deceive the Australian public about the Government’s true motivation for the Ensuring Integrity Bill. As Scott Morrison let slip in a speech to the business lobby; he wants to strip away our minimum wages and conditions system, which is something that the union movement will never accept.

These amendments do not fix this Bill and it should be opposed.

We will now meet with the crossbench Senators and ask them to only consider their final position on the bill after they have heard from and considered the views of those directly affected and experts in this area of law. This proposed Bill will have serious implications for all Australian workers and should be treated with the utmost care.

**ENDS**

**Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200**