

Tuesday, 7 September 2010

## Independents break new ground in Australian politics with both stability and opportunity for change

The independents have broken new ground in Australian politics, says the ACTU.

Unions today welcomed the decision by the majority of the regional independents to back Julia Gillard and a Labor minority Government.

The decision gives the Australian community both stable and effective government and the opportunity to pursue new agendas on climate change, a more democratic Parliament and a renewed focus on inequality in the Australian community.

A national broadband network, decent hospital and health care wherever you live, better schools and training as well as a stronger economy that delivers job opportunities for all, are priorities the independents have singled out and which unions also strongly support.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence said:

“Independents Rob Oakeshott, Tony Windsor, Bob Katter and Andrew Wilkie have each made a well-considered decision. We look forward to consulting with them on issues of mutual concern.

“We welcome the improvements they are achieving in parliamentary and democratic procedures, recognition of Indigenous Australians and acknowledgement of regional Australians’ concerns.

“The continuation of a Labor Government offers political stability and a ready-made platform to build upon stronger rights and services for working people and their families throughout Australia.

“Working Australians will be relieved they are not facing a change to a Government led by Tony Abbott and the parties which brought in WorkChoices. In this election unions succeeded in obtaining a commitment from the Coalition to maintain fair work laws and not go back to WorkChoices. This is now the second election in a row in which WorkChoices has been decisively rejected by the Australian public.

“However, it was Julia Gillard who actually got rid of WorkChoices and it is her Labor Government in which working Australians can have most confidence.

“The ACTU believes that there is more to do in restoring workers’ rights – and we will pursue further improvements to the Australian industrial relations system that promote protections in an open and global modern economy.”

ACTU President Ged Kearney said:

“Union members around the country – nurses, teachers, public sector workers, building workers, university staff, manufacturing workers, mining workers and many others – will be excited by the opportunities created by the independents and this new Government.

“We have hopes and dreams for what they should deliver – decent and secure jobs, strong workplace rights, support for families, a sustainable economy and a tolerant and safe community.

“And we are determined to continue campaigning to make these dreams a reality.”

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