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Prime Minister calls time on crisis response with 2 million out of work or needing more

The Prime Minister's opening address for 2021 at the National Press Club today will do nothing to alleviate the stress felt by over two million underemployed and unemployed Australians.

The address comes at a time where the increased JobSeeker benefit is being reduced by \$100 a fortnight until it reaches its pre-pandemic, unliveable rate of \$40 per day. JobKeeper – another hard-earned, vital wage subsidy scheme to come out of the pandemic – is set to end in March.

The Prime Minister is insisting that Australians need to reach into their pockets and spend to save our economy. But at the same time he is cutting JobKeeper and JobSeeker, moves which will compound almost 8 years of record-breaking low wage growth and drive down vital domestic spending.

Modelling by Deloitte released last week predicted that it would take up to five years for Australia's wage growth to reach 2 per cent.

The end of the JobKeeper program will see an unknown number working people lose jobs and hours with no additional government support.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil,

"It's very simple; Australians can't spend money that they don't have. The more money is in working peoples' pockets, the better off our economy will be.

"This Government is trying to pass an Industrial Relations bill which will make work more insecure, and will lead to cuts in take home pay and conditions for working people.

"There is a very real possibility that employers will not be able to retain staff without the JobKeeper scheme, leaving thousands of Australians unemployed or without enough hours to sustain themselves and their families.

"The Prime Minister is demonstrating that he has no understanding of the uncertainty facing millions of Australians. The Australian economy has not recovered, and the burden is being shouldered by working Australians.

"Many industries like tourism and hospitality are still reeling, and this is not the time to cut support."

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