

Tuesday, 27 April 2021

## ACTU warns 2021 Budget will be judged against wages crisis, insecure work and women's participation

In a speech to the National Press Club on Tuesday ACTU President Michele O'Neil will launch *For a Stronger, Balanced and Inclusive Recovery* – a report which highlights the weaknesses in the recovery and proposes solutions which the Morrison Government could act on immediately to protect working people and build greater resilience in the economy.

The report lists four central problems with the recovery: the extremely rapid growth of insecure jobs, historically low wage growth (despite strong growth in profits) which threatens consumer spending, and the overall unevenness of the recovery, with many sectors and millions of workers still struggling.

In her speech, Ms O'Neil argues that the Government has actively pursued a low wage strategy, and after 8 years in Government, the Coalition have overseen the longest and most painful decline in wage growth of any Government since the Great Depression.

The ACTU report outlines key demands for the Budget:

- Measures to arrest the record low wages crisis, and the surge in insecure work
- Continued JobKeeper for workers and sectors still in crisis
- Increased Government economic activity in the real economy, including an expansion of vital public and community services, and a sustained program to improve public infrastructure.
- Major investments for the Aged Care crisis, and funding and a model linked to better staffing levels and quality care
- Public and community housing developments.
- Strategy to support investment in key strategic industries.
- Investment in the energy transition

The speech and report will also lay out the test for the Government on real commitment to gender equality and women's workforce participation, including:

- Free, universal quality Early Childhood Education and Care,
- 26 week Paid Parental Leave scheme available to be shared between parents,
- 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave in the National employment standards
- Implementation of the full 55 recommendations in the Respect@Work report including obligations on employers to prevent harassment and the restoration and expansion of funding for domestic, family and sexual assault services.

### Attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

“This is a fragile moment for Australia's recovery. The virus is still causing immense damage around the world.

“We survived the worst of the pandemic by investing in people's health and their jobs.

“We cannot afford to gamble the recovery on trickle-down economics with more hand-outs to business or the already well-off.

“The budget must outline a plan to reverse low wage growth, arrest the growth of insecure jobs, address gender inequality and the massive shift of the nation’s prosperity into the hands of a few.

“This budget is also a test of whether the Government has listened to the concerns of women over the last few months, or whether we will see just more lip service and spin.”

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