



Australian Council of Trade Unions

MEDIA RELEASE

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Job security is number one issue for workers: unions call for inquiry into greater protections

Job security is the number one issue for working Australians and their families and the Federal Government should examine the need for tougher regulations on businesses, say unions.

With already 170,000 more Australians out of work as a result of the Global Financial Crisis and a further 100,000 predicted to join job-seeking queues in the next six months, there needs to be greater protections for workers, said ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence.

A meeting of unions in Melbourne this week will consider proposals for tougher penalties on executives and directors of companies that collapse and fail to pay their employees.

Unions will also consider a call for the Federal Government to deliver on its policy to establish a major national Inquiry into workers' income security and job protection in 2010.

Mr Lawrence said the public inquiry early in the new year should be wide-ranging, involving workers, unions, employers, the welfare sector and Government.

It should examine regulations on businesses that provide greater job and income security for workers, including:

- Cuts to executive pay and bonuses to prevent short term risk-taking and a repeat of the GFC
- Better protection of workers' entitlements when companies go broke
- Greater rights for casual workers and contractors
- Limits on offshoring and the unnecessary loss of Australian jobs overseas

Mr Lawrence said the economic downturn of the past 18 months had highlighted shortcomings in the current system of income support for the unemployed and shown up once again the inadequacies of GEERS and current system of protection for employee entitlements.

"The Global Financial Crisis underscores the importance of protecting employee entitlements when companies collapse.

"How many times must we see workers left short-changed by corporate cowboys who gamble with people's livelihoods and make no provision for their entitlements?"

"These problems need to be fixed before the next downturn.

"Economic reform should not be about delivering greater flexibility for big businesses at the expense of the job and income security of working Australians and their families.

"The GFC shows that economic stability requires effective regulation that can deliver a balance between flexibility and security.

Mr Lawrence said the One.Tel judgement last week was also a timely reminder that more resources should be provided to the corporate watchdog and there should be tougher penalties for breaches of the Corporations Law."

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