

EMBARGOED – 12:01am Tuesday, 17 March 2015

More workplace rights for women and casual workers and less power for bosses

ACTU President Ged Kearney will detail three key changes to Australia's workplace laws that unions will call for under the Productivity Commission inquiry into workplace relations at a National Press Club debate in Canberra today.

Ms Kearney will debate Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Kate Carnell at 12.30pm on Tuesday 17 March.

The three key changes the ACTU is calling for include:

- Pursuing a portable entitlements scheme for non-permanent employees and giving casual workers the legal right to become permanent employees
- Creating a new right for employees to return to work in their existing role on a part-time basis following parental leave
- Strengthening bargaining requirements in the Fair Work Act to include compulsory arbitration to resolve deadlocks that occurs when employers refuse to bargain in good faith

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"Australian workers are worried about their wages, job security and rights at work.

"You only have to look at the facts: the gender pay gap is at a record high of almost 19% and that one-in-two pregnant women are discriminated against in the workplace to know there is an urgent need for action.

"Compulsory arbitration will give working Australians the ability to fully exercise their rights to collective bargaining. It will act as a mechanism to break intractable deadlocks caused by an employer's refusal to bargain in good faith.

"There are 2.2 million casual workers in Australia – that's one in five Australian workers who deserve the respect and recognition of decent, secure work and entitlements.

"A casual conversion clause will recognise people who are permanent employees in everything but name and give them the recognition and respect of a secure permanent job.

"The Coalition Government is using the Productivity Commission inquiry into rights at work in an attempt to cut penalty rates, abolish the minimum wage, bring back unfair individual contracts and swing even more power to the employers."

"The government wants to swing the pendulum in favour of employers and take away rights at work.

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