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Employer call for ‘flexibility’ is a pay cut for workers

Employers are trying to cut the wages and conditions of millions of award workers under the guise of increasing ‘flexibility’.

The ACTU is fighting against the Australian Industries Group’s (AiG) claim under the review of modern awards currently underway in the Fair Work Commission.

Under its proposal, AiG is trying to remove provisions in the Fair Work Act that ensure workers’ are better off overall when negotiating changed or flexible working conditions.

However, the Fair Work Act and award system already provides flexibility for employers to change an employee’s hours of work, overtime and penalty rates – AiG’s claim would simply remove the safeguards that ensure employees are not disadvantaged by this process.

AiG claims its flexibility provisions would benefit workers with caring responsibilities, such as women with children or employees who care for elderly parents, however these employees are in fact more likely to be disadvantaged by the proposal.

The AiG claim would allow employers to pressure workers into trading away wages and conditions in exchange for flexible hours to meet their caring responsibilities – without the safeguards currently in the Fair Work Act that ensure the employee is not unfairly disadvantaged.

The ACTU has lodged a submission with the Fair Work Commission in response to the AiG claim and will fight against the proposal.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“We know when an employer calls for greater flexibility what they are really trying to do is cut the wages and conditions of their employees.

“We want a fair and level playing field for both employers and employees but this claim by AiG would leave workers with little room to negotiate a fair outcome

“What the AiG is asking for would ultimately cut wages and give employers full control over when and how an employee works.

“Every worker deserves decent pay and conditions at work, and the ability to negotiate a fair balance between work and family life.”

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