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Royal Commission a \$100 million political inquiry, say Unions

The Abbott Government has announced a \$100 million political inquiry to try to weaken unions despite refusing to find \$25 million to stop 3000 jobs in Shepparton from going overseas, Unions said today.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said Australians will be asking why Mr Abbott can afford a \$100 million political inquiry but can't spend \$25 million saving 3000 jobs at SPC.

"This is \$100 million for Mr Abbott's own political purposes," Ms Kearney said.

"If Mr Abbott had any interest at all in fighting corruption he would let the police get on with the job. Instead he has announced a \$100 million political inquiry to weaken unions."

Ms Kearney said this Royal Commission tells us a lot about the Government and who they are looking after.

"In the last two weeks, the Abbott Government has asked the Fair Work Commission to get rid of penalty rates, they have refused to support 3000 jobs in regional Victoria, they have attacked the take home pay of ordinary workers and now they have called for a Royal Commission into unions," Ms Kearney said.

"Australians want their Government to stand up and fight to keep jobs in Australia, they don't want their Government attacking take home pay.

"The real issue unions are fighting is to ensure wages keep up with the cost of living - and the Abbott Government has spent the last few weeks attacking ordinary factory workers and their take home pay.

"Make no mistake - this \$100 million political inquiry is designed to weaken unions so we can't stand up and fight for Australians' standard of living."

Ms Kearney said that any allegations of wrongdoing should be immediately referred to police - as Unions have done - and noted that, unlike Police, Royal Commissions do not have the power to arrest, charge or prosecute.

"The Union movement stands united against any proven corruption by any union officer or representative and believes that any allegations, whether they be against labour hire, building companies or individuals, union or otherwise, should be investigated by police," Ms Kearney said.

"We do not support the use of allegations to weaken the historic role of unions in making workplaces safer and fighting for decent wages and conditions for workers in Australia."

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