

Tuesday, 7 October 2014

Royal Commission extension a political fix by Abbott Government, says ACTU

The nakedly political decision by the Abbott Government to extend the Trade Union Royal Commission by 12 months is based on their election timetable, ACTU Assistant Secretary Tim Lyons said today.

“The Royal Commissioner has explicitly said that he can complete the inquiry two weeks ahead of the original deadline, that he can make findings and recommendations in this time, and that he is not applying for wider powers or more time,” Mr Lyons said.

“And yet today the Government has extended the Royal Commission by 12 months.”

The letter from Royal Commissioner Heydon to the Attorney-General dated 2 October 2014 states:

“This letter is neither an application to widen the terms of reference nor an application to extend the reporting date.”

Mr Lyons said the Abbott Government is clearly using this Royal Commission to fulfil its political agenda to attack their political opponents.

“We are in the extraordinary position where the Royal Commissioner says ‘I can finish the job’ and the Government ignores that and says we are going to let this process run,” Mr Lyons said.

“Prime Minister Abbott and Attorney-General Brandis have made a decision that will see the Royal Commission run into the election timetables of Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, as well as the next Federal election despite the Royal Commissioner saying this is unnecessary.

“Our consistent view is that this Royal Commission is about attacking the ability of unions to deliver outcomes for working people - wages, conditions and safety.

“Today is World Day for Decent Work and while Australian Unions have been out fighting to improve the job security of thousands of Australian workers, the Federal Government has been focussed on attacking Unions.”

Mr Lyons said the trade union movement was committed to strong, democratic and accountable unions and that without effective unions, employment conditions in Australia would go backwards.

“Union-won conditions are a fundamental pillar of the decent living standards that Australians want protected,” Mr Lyons said.

“This Royal Commission is the Abbott Government's attempt to stop unions campaigning against the range of legislation already before the Parliament designed to weaken workers' protections.”

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