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Australians struggling to find work-life balance under Abbott's IR agenda

The Australia Institute's new report on work-life balance shows the Abbott Government and business lobby push to make people work longer for less is at odds with what working Australians want.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the findings of the *Walking the Tightrope* report were shocking but it is unsurprising that hardworking Australians are 'donating \$110 billion in free labour each year'.

"We know that job security is the number one issue for Australians," Ms Kearney said.

"We also know that when workers don't feel secure in their job they will feel pressured into doing unpaid overtime.

"How can we talk about being a country with an 8-hour day or 4 weeks annual leave if 40% of our workforce doesn't have that because they are in insecure work, such as casual or contract positions."

Ms Kearney said the report is further proof that the Abbott Governments workplace reforms will cut penalty rates, slash rights at work and undermine job security deliver for business at the expense of working people.

"Mr Abbott's has a clear anti-worker agenda that attacks basic workplace rights," Ms Kearney said.

This includes:

- The Fair Work Amendment Bill that goes further than the Howard Government did in stripping away protections around individual contracts
- A Productivity Commission review of Australia's entire system of workplace laws with draft terms of reference that may as well have been written by big business with the goal of scrapping penalty rates and other conditions that provide work-life balance
- Plans to set up an appeals body allowing employers to challenge and overrule decisions by the independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission
- Review of transfer of business protections for state public sector workers where their work is outsourced as well as the rights and protections for outworkers in the textile, clothing and footwear industry
- The Bill to amend the Fair Entitlement Guarantee that will cut protection of workers' redundancy payments where their employer is insolvent
- The Registered Organisations Bill that will hamstring unions in red tape ensuring they cannot effectively represent workers or campaign to raise community awareness

"Today's study shows Australians are already struggling to maintain work-life balance – yet Tony Abbott's is running a calculated plan to strip away workers' rights and wages.

"The Government has no mandate for these changes. It's an attack on the rights of millions of Australian workers that goes way beyond what was flagged at the election."

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